

# **A study on Academic Dishonesty in Higher Education – A literature review**

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## **I. Introduction**

The issue of improper academic behavior of the students have been reported as back as the inception of the idea of grading academic performances of the learners by an instructor and will continue till the system exists (Sharma 1980). It is heartening to note that there is no decrease in the tendency of academic dishonesty. Reasons are many and a lot of concerted efforts have been put into practice to control the incidence of the same. Universities and educational institutions are trying to put more stringent academic integrity measures to mitigate the incidence of academic dishonesty and cheating. Globally, different countries have come up with Academic integrity Policy and subsequent instructions have been issued to the universities and educational institutions working in. Academic honesty and integrity are the foundation of educational institutions. "Without maintenance of high standards of honesty, members of the instructional faculty are defrauded, students are unfairly treated, and society itself is poorly served" (UNC Charlotte, 2009). Instructors are primarily responsible for maintaining and enforcing academic honesty and integrity. "Students are obligated not to violate the basic standards of integrity, and they are expected to take an active role in encouraging other members to respect those standards" (UNC Charlotte, 2009). Academic dishonesty on college campuses has been the subject of much research in recent years. "Cheating in higher education is rampant ... and students of business are among the most dishonest," declared Levy and Rakovski (2006, p. 736). The decline of academic integrity began some time ago, and appears to be continuing (Kisamore et al 2007).

## **II. Definitions**

### **a) Academic integrity**

Academic integrity is the commitment to and demonstration of honest and moral behavior in an academic setting. Academic integrity embodies the fundamental core values of fairness, honesty, trust, respect, and responsibility, and from the student's perspective equates to not cheating, lying, or stealing. Academic integrity is the cornerstone of truth, high ethics and academic quality to promote credible intellectual inquiry and knowledge sharing. Academic dishonesty is very wide in its scope and encompasses various forms of dishonest behaviour observed in Schools and Colleges.

### **b) Academic Dishonesty**

Academic dishonesty is defined as a student's use of unauthorized assistance with intent to deceive an instructor or other such person who may be assigned to evaluate the student's work in meeting course and degree requirements. It consists of any deliberate attempt to

falsify, fabricate or otherwise tamper with data, information, records, or any other material that is relevant to the student's participation in any course, laboratory, or other academic exercise or function' (Delta College, 1999).

### **c) Cheating**

Cheating is defined as fraud, deceit, or dishonesty in an academic assignment. It includes using or attempting to use materials, or assisting others in using materials that are prohibited or inappropriate in the context of the academic assignment in question.

### **d) Honor codes**

An academic honor code or honor system is a set of rules or ethical principles governing an academic community based on ideals that define what constitutes honorable behaviour within that community. The use of an honor code depends on the notion that people (at least within the community) can be trusted to act honorably. Those who are in violation of the honor code can be subject to various sanctions, including expulsion from the institution. Honor codes are used to deter academic dishonesty and should be taken seriously at all times.

## **III. Objectives**

The objectives formulated for the study are the following:

1. To understand the factors influencing dishonesty among students
2. To identify various measures to mitigate academic dishonesty among students

## **IV. Methodology**

This study is based on extensive review of literature on various topics like Academic dishonesty, cheating, honor codes and other related aspects related to academic mis behaviors in educational institutions. The information have been collected from the various issues of journals like Journal of Business Ethics, Research in Higher Education, Academy of Management Learning & Education, and The Journal of Educational Research.

## **V. The results & Discussions**

The results and discussions are presented in the study in two headings such as a) Factors influencing academic dishonesty and b) Various measures to mitigate academic dishonesty.

### **a) Factors influencing academic dishonesty**

Factors influencing academic dishonesty is majorly divided into internal and external factors.

### **Internal Factors**

i) Demographic factor.

It is evident from studies that academic cheating was influenced by age and gender. There are different results observed about the influence of gender in academic dishonesty. Students of younger ages cheating more than the elder ones ( Mecabe 1998).

ii) Personality characteristics

One major contribution influence of academic dishonesty is identification of individual factors, including age and the personality characteristics of Prudence and Adjustment, related to aspects of academic misconduct. More over students with low self efficacy doesn't feel that academic dishonesty is unethical(Elias Z Rafik, 2009).

iii) Ethical belief

Ethics are the set of moral principles that guide a person's behavior. These morals are shaped by social norms, cultural practices, and religious influences. Ethics reflect beliefs about what is right, what is wrong, what is just, what is unjust, what is good, and what is bad in terms of human behavior. Studies observed that Self-reported ethical beliefs have the most effect on behavior. Indirect effects are found and for those of their peers (Pratt and McLaughlin 1989).

vi) Academic performance level

The level of performance of students are also having a bearing in the academic dishonesty. Students tends to cheat to score marks. Serious cheaters across all professional schools were more likely to be younger and have a lower grade point average ( Klein A Helan etal 2007).

### **External Factors**

The major external factors which influence academic dishonesty are given below:

i) Peer behavior

The students are greatly influenced by the behavior of their peers in academic dishonesty. They are persuaded to do unethical this by looking at how the fellow students are doing. Peer dishonesty is the most influential predictor of intent to cheat (Teodorescu & Andrei 2008).

ii) Quality and relevance of the courses

Many a times the dishonest behavior occurs due to the aspects related to the course in which the student is enrolled. The relevance of the course and quality in the conduct of it also becoming as an aspect which lead to the dishonest behavior of the students. Its is evident from this observation "Quality and relevance of courses also affects one's

probability of cheating on exams”(Teodorescu & Andrei 2008 ). If the students are disinterested for the subject or the course is conducted in improper way, it will lead to the students to dishonest behaviour.

iii) Penalty on dishonesty

Even though, the colleges are having honor codes implemented but the way by which it is implemented was also questionable in many of the educational institutions. There were situations in which the students are studying freely in the colleges after they caught for cheating and not penalized (McCabe & Trevino, 1997). There is not proper enactment of punishment as envisaged in the honor code, if not in the disciplinary guidelines. This creates in the minds of students that dishonesty is allowed by the institution.

iv) No honor codes

While comparing the incidence of academic dishonesty in educational institutions, lower at institutions that have strong academic honor codes (McCabe & Trevino, 1993). The existence of honor code is becoming as a disciplinary measure which restrict the students to entering in to academic dis integrity activities. Non existence of honor code clearly indicates that the educational institution is either unaware or not interested to come up with a control measure for academic dishonesty.

v) Certainty of reporting

Another important influence of cheating behaviour is the observance of not reporting to the authority from the faculty members or the students while the incidence occur in educational institutions. This happens when either there is no proper guidelines issued to the faculty members about that or its an irresponsible act from the part of them. In any case it reflects the non interest from the part of educational institutions to curtail academic dishonesty.

## **b) Various measures to mitigate academic dishonesty**

- i) **Strict implementation of honour codes:** each and every educational institution should come up with honor codes and implement effectively. The laid down conditions in terms of the punishments to be carried out with out any delay or bias ness. They proposed that moral norms are more likely to be activated and influence behavior under honor codes, because in honor code environments students are given responsibility for detecting violators, deter- mining guilt, and assigning penalties. Faculty members and school administrators need to constantly articulate and enforce standards that address

- cheating behavior. There should also be laid down instruction on reporting of any kind of behaviour which qualifies as academic dishonesty.
- ii) Appropriate Punishments : If the punishments as per the disciplinary policy or honor code, students are less likely to do dishonesty. Students opined that they would not cheat because of the punishment imposed to the students they caught(Miller Arden etal 2011)
  - iii) Students friendly environment in the educational institutions: Students indicate that they are less likely to cheat on campuses that have a community atmosphere, where faculty members are committed to the courses they teach and care about their students, and where they (the students) are aware of their institution's policies concerning academic honesty.
  - iv) Ethically sound faculty members: the behavior of the faculty members also have identified as the reason for cheating. If the teachers are ignoring any kind of cheating behavior students will be getting confidence on undertake dishonest activities and it will become as a motivation to them.
  - v) Adoption of changes in pedagogy: In order increase the interest among students for studies and preventing them to indulge in dishonest practices, pedagogy of each courses should be changed. The pedagogy may be focusing more on the participation from the students. Experiential learning or activity-based learning can be implemented to boost the interest of the students towards subjects.
  - vi) Academic integrity as a part of curriculum: Each university or standalone educational institution should include academic integrity in the curriculum of study irrespective of scheme or specialization. This will help in reminding the students and faculty members about the importance of academic integrity and how it helps in character building of the students. It was proved from the study that participants in the business ethics treatment course experienced significant positive increases in moral efficacy, moral control and moral meaningfulness(May R Duglas etal 2014).

## **VI. Directions for future research**

Studies have generally used survey techniques to test theories about the individual and contextual characteristics that are thought to influence cheating in educational institutions. Other methods such as experimental method to understand, control and change the academic dishonesty among students. The literature review has also revealed that not much studies have been conducted in India with regard to the academic integrity/Dishonesty. According to Ministry of HRD, GOI, the gross enrollment ratio in higher educational institutions has increased from 25.8 in 2017-18 to 26.3 in 2018-19, while in absolute terms the enrollment increased from 3.66 crore to 3.74 crore students

in the 18-23 age group. It may be interested to explore that how exactly academic dishonesty present in Indian educational institutions. Moreover, most of the studies were concentrating on the reasons for academic integrity but not the measures to reduce the incidence of academic dis integrity. Future research should focus on antecedents of academic integrity culture as building a strong culture will discourage academic dishonesty without the added expense involved with monitoring academic conduct. Further, because the approach to enhancing institutional ethics lies with tomorrow's citizens, the results of this study are encouraging in stimulating further research into the multivariate relationships between ethical beliefs and their corresponding ethical behaviors, and the prediction of the latter from the former( Mccabe L Donald etal).

## **VII. Conclusion:**

It is evident from the study that academic mis behaviour is a global phenomenon, which has very crucial impact among the students and academic institutions. Academic integrity could be enhanced by clearly communicating standards of ethical conduct, adopting honor codes, building in mechanisms that make it easier to detect academic dishonesty and report such behavior, and using appropriate penalties that could serve as a deterrent. Mere introduction of honor code may not be sufficient, continuous reminders may help in not indulging into academic dishonest behaviours(Bing N Mark etal 2012). Moreover, strict disciplinary measures to be taken if know about any kind of cheating occurred. Faculty members are the focal point in front of the students. Therefore, they should be provided with awareness and training on honor codes and disciplinary measures and procedures. The uniqueness of the issue is so clear that, with few exceptions, there is no difference in cheating behavior from one domain to another whether it is arts, science, medicine, engineering, business etc. (Kisamore et al 2007).

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