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Academic cheating among students: pressure of parents and teachers

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Abstract

During the past decade, problems concerning cheating among students have become increasingly apparent in schools and academic institutions. Academic cheating is not a new phenomenon, but a well-known problem in many countries, as well as in the India. Cheating likes to use any means to achieve an unfair and unjust privileges that include: lying, concealing the truth, deceive, deceit and violation of trust (Romney & Steinbart 2003). Academic cheating has become a serious problem at schools and colleges. Academic cheating is defined as representing someone else's work as your own. It can take many forms, including sharing another's work, purchase a term paper or test in advance, paying another to do the work for you. The main purpose of this paper is to predict academic cheating, based on some factors (home environment, peer pressure, school environment, academic anxiety, learning style). Parents and teachers may also increase pressure on their kids when they compare them to their siblings. This paper conveys the contribution of teacher, parents and academic integrity to fight against academic cheating.

Keywords: Academic cheating, Students, Parents, Teachers and Pressure

1. Introduction

Cheating means copying from other students during exams, one of the forms of misconduct that has become one of the biggest concerns of educational institutions (Wilkinson, 2009)^[19]. Cheating involves the possession, communication or use of information, materials, notes, study aids or other devices not authorized by the instructor in an academic exercise, or communication with another person during such an exercise. Many students cheat just to receive a passing grade and impress their parents and teacher. Academic cheating is caused by many reasons; parental pressure, teacher pressure and poor time management. Many students may cheat to impress their parents, hoping that bringing home a good grade may lead to them receiving several good compliments and rewards. Teacher pressure will generate the need for students to cheat academically. Academic cheating is a growing concern among adolescents in schools worldwide. It is a problem that starts in elementary school and goes on through college. Previous research shows that academic cheating is a serious problem in all educational levels in the entire world (Mc Cabe, Terivino, & Butterfield, 2001)^[9]. Academic cheating is defined as an illegal change of a grade, the use of helping materials during a test without permission or representing someone else's work as one's own. Academic cheating is also every other act of dishonesty on behalf of a student, a teacher or professor in an academic environment. It is believed that academic cheating is wide-spread across all levels of education while it usually begins among students at the age of 10 to 14.

Forms of Academic Cheating

Cheating can take the form of crib notes, looking over someone's shoulder during an exam or any forbidden sharing of information between students regarding an exam or exercise. Many elaborate methods of cheating have been developed over the years. For instance, students have been documented hiding notes in the bathroom toilet tank, in the brims of their baseball caps or up their sleeves. Also, the storing of information in graphing calculators, pagers, cell phones, and other electronic devices has cropped up since the information revolution began. While students have long surreptitiously scanned the tests of those seated near them, some

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Students actively try to aid those who are trying to cheat. Methods of secretly signalling the right answer to friends are quite varied, ranging from coded sneezes or pencil tapping to high-pitched noises beyond the hearing range of most teachers. Some students have been known to use more elaborate means, such as using a system of repetitive body signals like hand movements or foot jerking to distribute answers. Students have developed new techniques of cheating. However the old techniques are still dominant in the college campuses. Some of the old techniques include bringing notes to class and having information written on water bottles, pens and gum wrappers. Cheaters are using technology to undermine academic integrity and students are becoming innovative in their cheating methodologies. Students are now using cell phones to get the exam information, communicate with others outside the exam room to obtain answers and searching for answers on the web during an exam and such techniques are posing a new challenge to the today's educators (Johnson and Martin, 2005) [7]. Academic cheating is any type of cheating that occurs in relation to a formal academic exercise. It can include:-

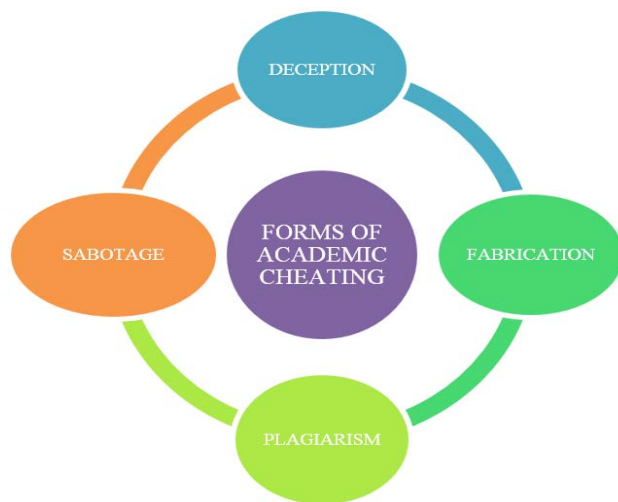


Fig1: Forms of academic cheating

Deception is providing false information to a teacher or instructor concerning a formal academic exercise. Examples of this include taking more time on a take-home test than is allowed, giving a dishonest excuse when asking for a deadline extension, or falsely claiming to have submitted work. This type of academic misconduct is often considered softer than the more obvious forms of cheating, and otherwise-honest students sometimes engage in this type of dishonesty without considering themselves cheaters. It is also sometimes done by students who have failed to complete an assignment, to avoid responsibility for doing so.

Fabrication is the falsification of data, information, or citations in any formal academic exercise. This includes making up citations to back up arguments or inventing quotations. Fabrication predominates in the natural sciences, where students sometimes falsify data to make experiments "work". It includes data falsification, in which false claims are made about research performed, including selective submitting of results to exclude inconvenient data to generating bogus data. Bibliographical references are often fabricated, especially when a certain minimum number of references is required or considered sufficient for the

particular kind of paper. This type of fabrication can range from referring to works whose titles look relevant but which the student did not read, to making up bogus titles and authors. Researchers might be tempted to fabricate data to make a series of startling discoveries, publish the results and thus impress those that are in their field, this is another kind of academic dishonesty that is at times happens in researcher (Robert, 2002) [14].

Plagiarism is the submission of another's work as one's own original work (in a paper, project, or in an online class discussion board posting) without proper acknowledgment of the source- whether the original work is published or unpublished, printed or digital. Since 2000, discussions on the subjects of student plagiarism have increased with a major strand of this discussion centring around the issue of how best students can be helped to understand and avoid plagiarism. Given the serious consequences that plagiarism has for students there has been a call for a greater emphasis on learning in order to help students avoid committing plagiarism.

Sabotage is when a student or professor prevents others from completing their work. This includes cutting pages out of library books, deleting data off of classmate's computer or otherwise wilfully disrupting the experiments of others. Sabotage is usually only found in highly competitive, cutthroat environments, such as at extremely elite schools where class rankings are highly prized. Poor behaviour and the low level disruption of other students' learning, however, are extremely common in all educational settings. Some medical-school librarians have noted that important articles-required reading for key courses-are frequently missing from bound journals-sliced out with razor blades, scalpels, or other sharp blades.

It may occur unintentionally and the authors may not realize what they have done is ethically undesirable and other times it may be a determined act. Other times researchers may mishandle the human subject against the code of ethic as other forms of academic cheating. Finally institutional administrators may manipulate statistical data so that institutions may appear more appealing than they are and perception is substituted for opportunity, which ensures that integrity is less significant than impression (Robert, 2002) [14]. Researchers can manipulate data in favour of what they want to achieve. Other forms of academic cheating such as copying test responses from a classmate; taking exams for other people; failure to cite other peoples work; taking exam home and purchasing research papers and one assumes it is his/her work. Also actions such as breaking the office or teachers file to access the test or answer key; sabotaging peers on going work or gaining illegal access to school computer to change official grades are all forms of academic dishonesty (Petress, 2003) [11].

Etiology of Academic Cheating

There are many reasons for engaging in academically dishonest behaviour. A numbers of studies have identified some of the reasons why students choose to engage in academic cheating. Students cheat because their cost benefit analysis shows that cheating pays the ability to succeed is held above all else, and if students have to cheat to get into the right graduate school or get the right job, they will often do it. Shropshire's conclusions support the notion that there is evidence of positive reinforcement for cheating when not caught (Shropshire, 1997) [16]. There are many reasons that

students justify for cheating: lack of time, poverty, uncaring instructors, laziness, peer pressure, poor role model, fear of failure and technology has done cheating to be done easily (Robert, 2002) [14]. Some students feel pressure to get better grades and some students struggle academically and feel that cheating is their only path to any kind of success. With tremendous pressure and competition for grades, some (students) will cheat or plagiarize to maintain a high GPA, which can please parents, result in selection to school leadership roles, and impress corporate recruiters (Moeck,2002) [10]. Some students feel that engaging in academically dishonest behaviours is not a serious offense and others do not realize that they have broken any rules. Also important is the fact that with current technology, engaging in academically dishonest behaviour has never been easier. The causes of academic dishonesty are as numerous as the different ways students have found to cheat on their homework. One of the newer causes of academic dishonesty has to do with the plethora of information that can be gathered with the click of a button on the Internet.

Factors Enhance Academic Cheating

Academic dishonesty is a growing concern amongst students for better grades (Bushweller, 1999) [4]. It occurs in elementary school, middle school, high school and even in college. Research in this area have shown that one-third of elementary students are engaged in cheating and the rate dramatically increases when they entry into the higher classes and in high school reaches its peak (Cizek, 1999) [5]. Some reasons identified for the rise of academic cheating include pressure from teachers, parents, and peers. The school environment, home environment, educational anxiety and ever changing technology also contribute to the rise of academic cheating.

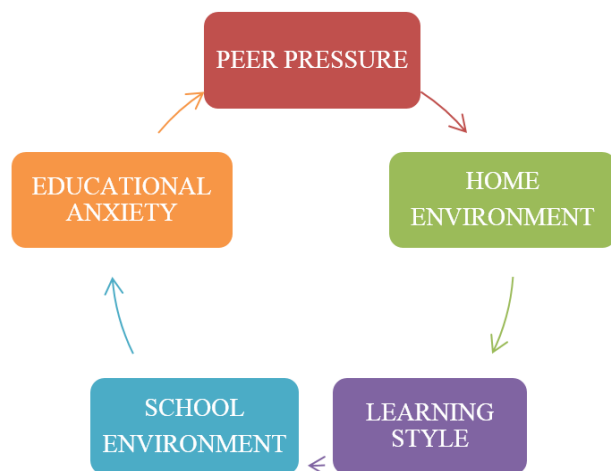


Fig 2: Factors enhance academic cheating

Peers can also be influenced by what their peer group is doing. If peers in their peer group are choosing academic dishonesty, then they are more likely to do the same (McCabe, 1999) [8]. Adolescents are at a time in their life where peer influence and peer pressure are high (Rettinger & Kramer, 2007) [12]. Adolescents are influenced by what their peers do and they form their peer groups around similar interests. Peer influence is at its highest at this point in their lives. If an "unpopular" student is approached by a group of "popular" peers who want an assignment or a past exam, and they say that the "unpopular" student can join their group of

friends if they give them what they want, chances are the "unpopular" student will give them what they want.

Home environment refers to the conditions where we live. The old saying "The most important work you do takes place with in the walls of your home". Children and young adults learn a large portion of their knowledge at home. Some homes have many activities that stimulate children thinking as well as computer, books and puzzles. Parents may be heavily invested in their children cognitive development and spend time with them on learning. Academic dishonesty is more likely to occur with parental pressure to get good grades (Taylor *et al.* 2002) [18]. For some adolescents, parental pressure is high at this age in regards to academics (Strom & Strom, 2007) [17]. Adolescents sometimes take risks to please their parents or perform higher than their siblings or peers. Academic cheating is the result because adolescents believe that if they cheat then they are going to get the grade that they desire or that their parents desire.

School environment is where academic cheating takes place. There are many reasons why an adolescent may choose academic cheating over academic integrity. Adolescents compete against each other for class rank. Class rank helps them edge their way into competitive institutions and colleges. Some elite colleges take only the best students. We know that students have different IQ. So, week & average students try to takes admission in best institution through a wrong way i.e cheating. Politics in a school may also play an important factor for who gets caught and disciplined accordingly when they engage in academic dishonesty (Riera & Di Prisco, 2002) [13]. Teachers have some influence on how to set up their classrooms, as well as goals set and attained throughout the academic school year. Teachers can have mastery goal structure or performance goal structure in their classroom. Mastery goals focus on learning and improvement, whereas performance goals are based on grades and what one can do to be at the top (Anderman & Midgley, 2004) [2].

Learning style's likes cognitive, affective and physiological behaviour is that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with and respond to the learning environment (Keefe, 1979). In the present era there are so many approaches of learning style. Students learn in many different ways. Some students are visual learners, while others are auditory or kinaesthetic learners. If student don't use appropriate learning style and want to score good marks, in that situation student use slip or other unfair means to copy.

Educational anxiety is the combination of anxiety and academic anxiety. Students have many anxieties related to education like pressure by parents and schools to achieve top scores has created stress levels among students. A student always wants to stand first for that they use unfair means. The students know cheating is wrong but they feel like the most important thing they do is get the grades, by hook or by crook. In fact, much of the research on academic cheating has been centred on elucidating possible psychological reasons why students engage in cheating behaviours. Most prominently, variables significantly related to cheating include test anxiety, impulsivity, intelligence, self-esteem, locus of control, social desirability and guilt (Alarape & Onakoya, 2003) [1].

Prevention of Academic Cheating

Academic cheating is a widespread problem in schools and colleges. Students often are more aware than faculty members that other students are engaged in acts of academic cheating.

Promoting Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is the moral code or ethical policy of academia. This includes values such as avoidance of cheating or plagiarism, maintenance of academic standards, honesty and rigor in research and academic publishing. Academic integrity means honesty and responsibility in scholarship. Academic assignments exist to help students learn; grades exist to show how fully this goal is attained. Therefore all work and all grades should result from the student's own understanding and effort. It is up to each individual to make a commitment to integrity, but much can be done to create an ethical "culture" at home and school. An ethical culture is a climate that promotes honest and honourable conduct and discourages dishonest, deceitful and dishonourable behaviour. In an ethical culture it's easier and more rewarding to do the right thing than the wrong thing and everyone is expected to be concerned with discerning and doing the ethically right thing. Monitor exams to help students maintain academic integrity and promptly confront any suspicious conduct. Various strategies can be applied to enforce academic integrity in the institutions of higher learning. First, he noted about rule compliance strategy that can be enforced in the institutions. Under this strategy, code of academic ethics should be upheld with the regulations which the students are expected to comply and disciplinary processes that are applied when the policy is violated. It should be expected that students attending the institution understand and subscribe to the ideals of academic integrity and should bear individual responsibility for any act of academic dishonesty detected on their work.

Communication between Parents and Children

Parents can play an important role to reduce student cheating. One of the most important things parents can do is talk to children's about how they are feeling academically and whether they are feeling stressed. Students often cheat because they see it as the only way to measure up to high expectations. Although it's good to expect the most from your children, make it clear that you expect them to do their best, not be the best. Praising your child every time he comes home with a good grade is standard parenting procedure, but make sure that you're sending the right message. Avoid punishing your child for low grades and rewarding him for high ones. Instead, emphasize the concept of effort by recognizing the hard work he put into his work and encouraging better effort in problem areas. Although pressure to perform is an increasing focus for students, your child shouldn't feel that cheating is the only way to get ahead. Through hard work, good communication, and a desire to learn, your child will become a better learner and a better citizen for life.

Good Faculty Members

Teachers can play an important role to reduce student cheating. One of the most effective ways of preventing academic cheating is to clearly inform students of your expectations and of school policies. A candid conversation with students may help deter any problems and sends a clear

message that academic cheating will result in serious consequences for the student. Careful and specific creation of writing assignments can prevent plagiarism. Assigning topics specific to assigned readings or discussions that have occurred in class reduces instances of plagiarism and makes plagiarized material more readily apparent. Some forms of academic cheating like electronic devices are so sophisticated that it makes detection very difficult. As a result, effective test proctoring is essential. Faculty should be alert for the use of unauthorized notes or other devices. The advent of cell phones has provided students with new mechanisms to commit acts of academic dishonesty. In addition, students are often creative in concealing notes on the reverse side of mirrored sunglasses, underside of baseball caps, body parts etc. On the other side, a good supportive relationship between the faculty and administration could play a major role helping the faculty members to respond to assumed instances of academic dishonesty. A good faculty fit would create a level of trust where the faculty members can positively deal with academic dishonest issues in the classroom and be confident of the administration backing of their judgment.

2. Conclusion

Academic dishonesty is a growing concern in our society, yet it can be challenging to overcome the barriers that impede learning. The best approach to preventing cheating may be to appeal to student's higher morals since values seem to be so important, rather than simply trying to catch cheaters. This requires the involvement of faculty who must insist on the highest levels of ethical behaviour in their classes. Parents, school, peers, and school environment have a strong influence on adolescents. In regards to the school atmosphere, they all play a role in an adolescent's life. Academic dishonesty occurs every day and there are driving forces behind why one chooses academic dishonesty over academic integrity. The promotion of academic integrity and mastery goals appears to serve as a significant factor for prevention of academic dishonesty. Through promoting integrity, mastery goals and individual interventions, a decline in academic cheating would be expected.

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