



RESEARCH PAPER

Use of Unfair Means in Examination: An Investigative Study

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ABSTRACT

The use of unfair means in examinations is a detrimental practice that undermines students' moral values and academic integrity. This study aimed to investigate the unfair means that employed by students during examinations. Adopting a quantitative research design, data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to a randomly selected sample of 700 students from six faculties at the University of the Punjab. The findings indicated the presence of unfair practices during examinations. Furthermore, significant differences were identified across four key factors (i.e. face paucity of space, cheating for fun & show-off, Ineffective time management skills or overload, not knowing the boundaries, different method of cheating) from the perspective of demographic variables (i.e. male & female and self-support & morning program). The study recommends that educational institutions should ensure that students are adequately informed about examination policies, rules, and regulations at the beginning of each academic session to eradicate the unfair means in examination.

Keywords: Academic Integrity, Unfair Means, Examination, Gender, Self-Support

Introduction

Every educational system has an examination system that assesses students' abilities and qualities by assigning them grades and positions (Ahmed, 1993; Muzaffar, 2016). Exams measure the effectiveness of education, hence we must assess students' abilities rather than their knowledge, according to Mathews (1985). This indicates that assessing students' performance is the main goal of the exam; without it, we are unable to determine what students have learned from their schooling. Therefore, the examination serves as the last evaluation of student performance. According to Tahir (2011), in order to raise educational standards and credibility, the use of unfair exam techniques must be strictly prohibited. Pakistan's examination system and its results are no longer credible and trustworthy due to the issue of exam cheating. The fact that some students believe they have the right to do so is much more hazardous.

In order to establish a plan against the issue, the National Accountability Bureau hosted a seminar in 2011 in partnership with BISEs in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to a formal document created by a local BISE, everyone is aware that cheating in the Boards' exams is happening in one form or another and wants to make things right. "Some of the issues in this regard are the parents' concern with their child's future, the private education sector's attempts to guarantee high grades for their candidates, the lack of necessary facilities, the shortage of teachers, books, and materials in schools, the lack of female teachers and invigilators, the lack of criteria and favoritism in teachers' selection for examination duties both at the department and the Boards' levels, and political interference, etc."

According to Tahir (2011), preventing exam cheating necessitates a three-pronged approach: prior to, during, and after the test. Both educators and learners must give their all to the teaching and learning process. Notes should be reviewed by students at home. Schools also require a competitive classroom atmosphere and an effective system for guiding and advising pupils (Muzaffar, et. al., 2017). The exam should not be subject to interference from teachers' unions. The ruling parties will need to take the initiative and disown their political wings in order to allow the Board administrators to make decisions based on merit. Police officers and inspectors who visit the examination center every day can help prevent outside interference. Furthermore, completely enclosed exam rooms can also aid in resolving the issue.

If we focus on practices like question paper leaks or other bad practices like misbehaving in the exam room and favoring the right invigilator or other immoral acts like making a fake award list, those are the things that always lead to more social and personal issues in a particular system and area, according to Wilayat (2009). Uncontrolled malpractices or unfair means in examination are having a detrimental effect on the province's education from the ground up, thus it is now important to eradicate any unfair practices from the start. Any civilization cannot hope to advance properly if there is no merit. To encourage self-sophisticated knowledge and skills in our young and future generations, we must guarantee merit recruiting (Ansar, 2020).

Literature Review

An examination is a type of educational evaluation used to measure a person's aptitude, skill, knowledge, ability, mental state, and balance. exams as a means of assessing performance (Habib, 2020). "Any form of cheating before, during, or after examination" is the definition of unfair practices or malpractices related to exams. No particular consequence or fruitful outcome has been observed. We must understand that everyone parents, teachers, students, politicians, the ministry of education, and the general public's mindset or culture plays a crucial role in identifying such unfair methods or unfair practices in all of Baluchistan's educational institutions.

Therefore, the study presents a comprehensive explanation of these unjust behaviors. As far as the adverse impacts and consequences of the alleged unfair methods used in the exams are concerned, they are irreversible since a person who becomes a teacher, doctor, judge, etc., leaves a lasting damage not only for the entire society or country, but also for future generations who must deal with the consequence. Education department previously had never get it the due value that it deserved, despite, the unfair means and malpractices in the exams have added to and degraded the situation on the ground (Dean, 2007).

Students that participate in academic misconduct do so for a variety of reasons. Some significant contributing factors that encourage students to cheat on tests and exams include weak academic administration, work pressure, students' desire for high scores, the influence of peers, social and cultural background, faculty attitudes, and students' perceptions of the acceptability of misconduct (Passow et al., 2006). Jordan (2001) went into much detail into the hidden motivations for cheating. He came to the conclusion that cheating among American liberal art college students was encouraged by a lack of awareness of the institutions' anti-cheating practices, students' views toward misbehavior, and other extrinsic or intrinsic motivators as well as peer pressure.

According to Arcegovac and Richardson (2004), American students' motivation and involvement in academic cheating were more significantly impacted by recent changes in social relationships, habits, poverty, and the economy (Yaseen, et. al., 2021). Brimble & Stevenson-Clarke (2005) examined five main causes of cheating by students in Australian institutions in their systematic investigation. Of their sampled subjects, 43% justified

cheating by citing reasons such as wanting to help their friends; 37% said they had trouble with the assessment; 36% said they couldn't finish the assistance in time; 33% said they thought they wouldn't be caught while cheating; and 31% said the cheating was unplanned. Passow et al. (2006) identified a number of significant characteristics that were associated with a greater probability of cheating among undergraduate engineering students in the United States, including demographic differences, behavioral responsibilities, involvement in extracurricular activities, and social pressure. Exam cheating was widespread among students in Romania at a number of institutions, reflecting the rising difficulties with the academic honor code (Teodorescu & Andrei, 2009).

Nazir and Aslam (2010) and Choudhry, et. al., (2016) discovered that one of the numerous reasons why students cheated was the institutional administration's practice of either not punishing them at all or punishing them less severely. Although a small percentage of students purposefully cheated on exams to obtain high grades, Ramzan et al. (2012) found that the main causes of academic cheating (plagiarism) among students at some Pakistani universities were students' ignorance of misconduct and the absence of appropriate guidelines provided by the universities to inform students about academic misconducts. In some Iranian universities, academic misconduct during evaluation was shown to be significantly influenced by a lack of knowledge regarding the nature and legality of cheating (Rezanejad & Rezaei, 2013).

Orosz et al. (2013) concluded that students' desire to cheat on academic tests in Hungarian schools was not impacted by outside incentive or competition for high scores, but rather by the perception that cheating was a legitimate activity. Balbuena and Lamela (2015) found various explanations for why students cheat. The respondents said that they were busy and had little time for studying, that they did not know the answers to questions, that they did not study for personal reasons, that they wanted to earn excellent grades, and that they did not want to fail.

Material and Methods

The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors that lead to use of unfair means in examination. The research was explanatory in nature, in which a survey method was used to address the prevailing situation of the population of study.

Population and Sample

The population of the study consists of all masters' students of University of the Punjab Lahore-Pakistan. Two stage sampling techniques were used to select the sample. At first stage six faculties i.e. sciences, social sciences, education, law, management sciences and commerce were selected by using simple random sampling (lottery method i.e. sampling without replacement method. In the second stage, the researchers selected 50 students randomly from sampled faculties. Finally, 700 students (male & female) comprised the sample of the study.

Instrumentation

In this study the data was collected through a questionnaire and was developed after reviewing the literature. The questionnaire consists of 31 items rated on 5 point Likert Scale. The respondents were asked to give their opinion on a five-point Likert Scale, in which these five options were included i.e. 1) never 2) rarely 3) Sometimes 4) Often 5) Always. The items were divided in the subsequent factors (i.e. Face paucity of space, cheating for fun & show-off, Ineffective time management skills or overload, no knowing the boundaries) and different methods of cheating. The total reliability was 0.784.

Table 1
Reliability of Questionnaire Factor wise

Factor	No. Items	Example	Reliability
Face paucity of space	2	I Communicate with other students easily during the examination.	0.615
Cheating for funned show-off	5	I have to pass the exam because it is a matter of my ego.	0.579
Ineffective time management skills or overload	7	I prepare for the test at the last minute.	0.631
Not knowing the boundaries	5	I am aware of the disciplinary rules and regulations of the examination system.	0.830
Different method of cheating	12	I take the pages of a book with me, help from my friends through text messaging in the examination hall.	0.853

Results and Discussion

The collected data analyzed by using the data analysis software through descriptive and inferential statistics.

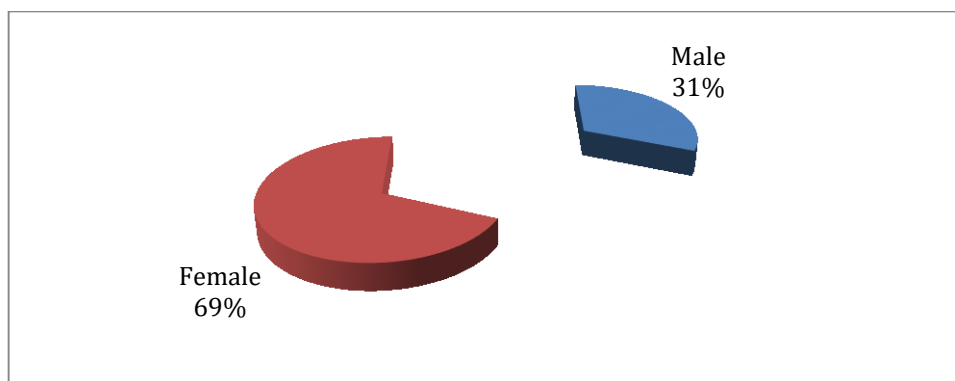


Figure 1: Gender wise sample distribution of respondents

Figure 1 shows the Gender wise frequency distribution of the respondents. Data has been gathered from 700 respondents out of which 220 (31.3%) were male respondents and 480 (68.6%) were female respondents.

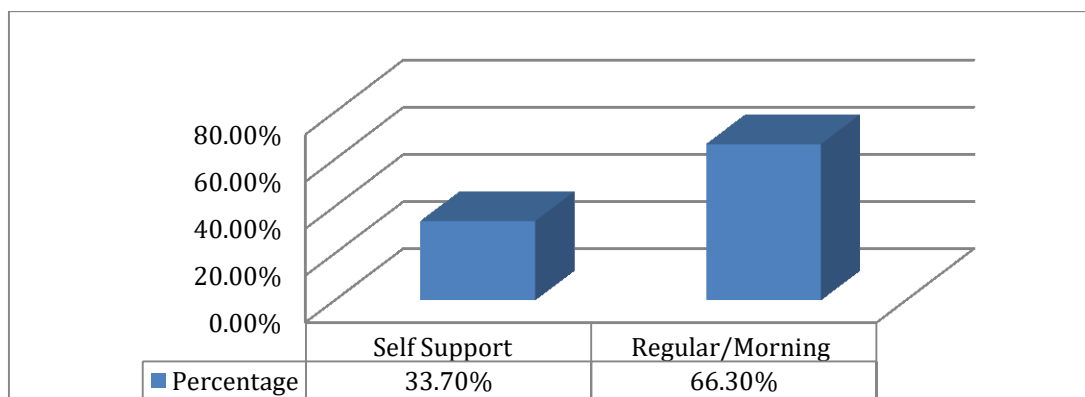


Figure 2: Sample distribution with respect to the type of program

Figure 2 illustrates the sample distribution with respect to type of the program of the students. It is clear that 236 (33.7%) respondents were study in self-support program and 464 (66.3%) respondents were morning program.

Table 2
Mean Comparison of the unfair means factors on the basis of gender

Factors of using unfair means	Male (220)		Female (480)		t-values	Df	P
	M	SD	M	SD			
Face paucity of space	4.5818	2.18497	3.8042	1.89802	4.550	698	0.001
Cheating for fun & show-off	11.5818	4.20346	10.3167	3.95535	3.851	698	0.077
Ineffective time management skill	19.6955	5.26147	18.5688	5.10306	2.685	698	0.670
Not knowing the boundaries	12.7545	4.07282	11.4417	3.41810	4.157	698	0.008
Method of cheating	12.1409	5.95824	10.4146	4.48298	3.829	698	0.000

Table 2 shows the mean comparison of factors that leads to use of unfair means and also the different methods that students use in examinations on the basis of gender. The t-value=4.550 is also significant at $p=.001 < 0.05$ for male and female students for face paucity of space factor. It shows that males are more used to facing paucity of space cheating in examinations as compared to females. The t-value=3.851 is not significant at $p=.077 > 0.05$ for male and female students for cheating for funned show-off factor. The t-value=2.685 is not significant at $p=.670 > 0.05$ for male and female students for ineffective time management skill or overload factor. The t-value=4.157 is also significant at $p=.008 < 0.05$ for male and female students for not knowing the boundaries factor. It shows that males are more used to not knowing the boundaries in examinations as compared to females. The t-value=3.829 is also significant at $p=0.000 < 0.05$ for male and female students for the method of cheating factor. It shows that males are more prone to using different methods of cheating in examinations as compared to females.

Table 3
Mean Comparison of the unfair means factors on the basis of self-support & morning semester

Factors of using unfair means	Self-support program (236)		Morning program (464)		t-values	df	P
	M	SD	M	SD			
Face paucity of space	4.3814	2.16910	3.8793	1.92586	3.004	698	0.012
Cheating for fun & show-off	11.0508	4.14800	10.5431	4.03043	1.560	698	0.433
Ineffective time management skill	19.1017	5.09884	18.8319	5.21811	.652	698	0.664
Not knowing the boundaries	12.0678	3.91773	11.7457	3.55943	1.094	698	0.067
Method of cheating	11.2415	5.27509	10.8125	4.93646	1.062	698	0.482

Table 3 shows the mean comparison of factors that lead to use of unfair means and also the different methods that students use in examinations on the basis of self-support and morning programs. The t-value=3.004 is significant at $p=.012 < 0.05$ for self-support and morning students for face paucity of space factor. It shows that self-support students are more prone to using unfair means due to paucity of space in examinations as compared to morning students. The t-value=1.560 is not significant at $p=.433 > 0.05$ for self-support and morning students for cheating for fun & show-off factor. It shows that self-support and morning students use cheating for fun & show-off unfair means in examinations. The t-value=.652 is not significant at $p=.664 > 0.05$ for self-support and morning students for ineffective time management factor. The t-value=1.094 is not significant at $p=.067 > 0.05$ for self-support and morning students for not knowing the boundaries factor. The t-value=1.062 is not significant at $p=0.482 > 0.05$ for self-support and morning students for the method of cheating factor.

Discussion

The purpose of conducting this study was to investigate the factors that lead to use of unfair means in examination. The findings of this study revealed the significant difference that males are more used to cheating in examinations due to facing paucity of space as compared to females. Male and self-support students were more likely to cheat and copy the answers from other students as compared to female and morning students during

examinations. The findings are aligned with other research and they have described several types of examination cheating. Exam malpractices include a variety of common practices, including bringing in prohibited or unauthorized materials, writing on identity cards and currency notes, cheating on other candidates, exchanging answer sheets, and altering exam scores or grades, according to Fagbmi (2001). The results revealed the insignificant difference for cheating for funned show-off factor and also for ineffective time management skill or overload factor in male and female students.

The study also found a significant difference for male and female students for not knowing the boundaries. It shows that males are more used to not knowing the boundaries in examinations as compared to females. They are not aware of the disciplinary rules and regulations of the examination system. Jordan (2001) went into much detail into the hidden motivations for cheating. He came to the conclusion that cheating among American liberal art college students was encouraged by a lack of awareness of the institutions' rules and regulations, students' views toward misbehavior, and other extrinsic or intrinsic motivators as well as peer pressure.

The study showed the significant difference that males are more prone to using different methods of cheating in examinations as compared to females. The result is significant for self-support and morning students for face paucity of space factor. It shows that self-support students are more prone to using unfair means due to paucity of space in examinations as compared to morning students. The findings revealed the insignificant difference for these factors i.e. cheating for fun & show-off, ineffective time management, not knowing the boundaries and methods of cheating for students of morning and self-support programs. The findings are aligned with (Passow et al., 2006). They explained the number of reasons why students are more likely to cheat on examinations. Among the most frequent reasons why students cheat on tests include a lack of knowledge of the institution's anti-cheating regulations, the influence of their friends, a desire for good results, and attitudes. According to Miller, Murdock, Anderman, and Poindexter, (2007) they found that male students were more likely to engage in academic dishonest behavior, while other studies (e.g., Graham et al., 1994, as cited in (Jurdi, Hage, & Chow, 2011) found that female students were more likely to engage in academic dishonest behavior. But according to several studies (Malone, 2017; Pino & Smith, 2003), there is not a significant difference between male and female students' indulgence rates in academic dishonesty.

Conclusion

This study was based on these factors (face paucity of space, cheating for fun & show-off, Ineffective time management skill, not knowing the boundaries) and different methods of cheating that students use in examinations. The results revealed that due to paucity of space they communicate with other students easily during the examination. Male and self-support students were more likely to cheat and copy the answers from other students as compared to female and morning students during examinations. Students cheat in exams because they enjoy taking risks. They have to pass the exam because it is a matter of their ego. Due to ineffective time management skills, students leave the assignment and test preparation at the last minute. They have no knowledge of how to manage the time and give importance to the work, to handle the multiple large course projects instantaneously. Sometimes they have to face the problems due to the extracurricular activities, family responsibilities and jobs with the university studies. Males are more used to not knowing the boundaries in examinations as compared to females. They are not aware of the disciplinary rules and regulations of the examination system. It shows that males are more prone to use the different methods of cheating i.e. supporting material, hints written on chairs and help from friends etc. in examinations as compared to females. So it is concluded that students use different unfair means in examination and also the differences exist between the gender, self-support and morning programs.

Recommendation

The recommendations based on the findings are as follows:

- Sometimes students have no idea about institutional policy, rules and regulations about use of unfair means in examination, so rules and regulations should be announced clearly before starting the session.
- Proper guidelines should be given to the students about the time management skill during the session.
- System of penalties and implementation, already existing rules regarding use of unfair means should be ensured.
- Extra materials like mobile phone, notes should be restricted in examinations.
- Setting arrangements in the examination hall and invigilation should be improved.

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