

EDUCATIONAL COUNSELING STRATEGIES FOR CURBING ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AMONG STUDENTS IN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS

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Introduction

Academic dishonesty is a prevalent issue in the education system that arouses the interest of well-meaning compatriots. The dilemma has spread like wide-fire in that it is not limited to secondary schools; it is also a matter of concern in higher learning institutions. Although contemporary society is far from being the first to be confronted with the issue of understudy, the level of academic dishonesty in the modern education system has risen drastically compared to past experiences, particularly with the advent of technology. Academic dishonesty is any illegal act to falsify grades or use someone's work without crediting the owner. It could be cheating in the examination or copying someone else's assignment; academic dishonesty is situational.

There have been efforts to curb academic dishonesty over the years but with little result. The common approaches to reducing academic dishonesty suggest multiple examinations, employing additional proctors during examinations, adopting wide and fixed space seating, strict monitoring techniques, ensuring desks are free of scribbled notes, ensuring bags are closed, and many more. Though these approaches have reduced academic dishonesty, much success has not been recorded. More so, these approaches only enforce academic integrity by limiting the opportunity for academic fraud.

In keeping with the law, society has failed in this regard. It has fallen flat regarding parental, religious, educational, and governmental roles. Meanwhile, for any society to thrive, these stakeholders have functional spaces to occupy. As it is, a rebuttal of academic dishonesty appears assailable because it has grown widely beyond the manageable minimum. Sequel to this, this paper examines educational counselling as a tool for curbing academic dishonesty among students in higher institutions of learning. To achieve its purpose, the paper discusses the concept of educational counselling and an overview of academic dishonesty. It explores

educational counselling as a tool for curbing academic dishonesty among students of higher institutions.

Overview of Educational Counselling

Educational Counselling provides assistance and guidance to students in any and every area of academic needs. It addresses family issues, puberty-related questions, concerns regarding grades, life security in the school and career and vocational counselling. Educational counselling plays a significant role in students' life. It helps make informed decisions at every step of the academic and professional journey. It helps discover the area of interest in academic pursuit and aids in career pursuit. Educational counselling provides guidance for higher studies and continuing education. It leverages the right skills and education to help land a dream job for students. It offers mentorship in locating possible career opportunities and career change navigation for graduates. Educational counselling also helps in interview preparation.

Educational counselling, according to Sood (2016,10), addresses all aspects of education, cutting across the curriculum, the methods of instruction, extra-curricular activities, disciplines, and problems with teachers; it also helps students to understand their potential concerning the various fields of education. Educational counselling has to do with matters that relate to students' personal life, which challenges their academic performance. It ensures self-understanding by making students realize their inherent potential and thus put their strengths to work (Ahmad et al.2022,115).

Educational counselling has seen a paradigm shift in its mode with the advent of new technologies. Counselling can occur online, and the conventional face-to-face process could also be employed. All thanks to technological advancement, counselling can be done regardless of geographical location. The benefits of educational counselling include rendering help in passion realization. It develops confidence in students through the employment of SWOT analysis (Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats). Educational counselling helps foresee likely challenges and prepare for eventuality ahead of time. It brings clarity to thought and reduces career-related stress.

Concept of Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty is an age-long practice. It is used interchangeably with many terms, such as academic misconduct, cheating, and plagiarism. With academic dishonesty described with various names like academic cheating and academic misconduct, Sorgo et al. (2015, 69)

identified them to have originated from the exact behaviour of “copying an answer over a shoulder, to falsifying the results or presenting other’s work as one’s own.” The practice is undoubtedly becoming an acceptable norm in society, and this poses a danger to the future of higher education in the country. Terms used to describe academic dishonesty vary in context. Even though no culture condones it, it is viewed from different perspectives. There are no exact definitions for academic dishonesty and no list of behaviours to portray it (Sorgo 2015, 69). The range of academic dishonesty is very vast across cultures. In the word of Kishor (2022, 26), who referred to it as academic cheating, it is “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.” He also considers any dishonesty by a student, a teacher, or a professor as academic dishonesty. The assertion implies that academic dishonesty cuts across the board. It concerns the activities of education stakeholders; it is not limited to students alone.

Academic dishonesty has become a trend, much more of an issue with little attention. The act is promoted at the chance of any small benefit with various factors responsible. Rapid information and communication technology developments have increased academic dishonesty (Sorgo 2015, 69). A report affirmed that the action begins with students aged 10 to 14; it has become a cankerworm eating deep across all levels of education (Kishor 2022, 26). Hence, dishonesty in academics is a matter of concern that not only concerns the students, but as Wideman (2008, 1) observed, unlimited informational resources through technological advancement seem to be contributing to its widespread.

Bachore (2016, 15) submits that academic dishonesty may be categorized based on cheating in examination and plagiarism depending on the acts; it could be in the form of copying from others, making use of notes, formulas, or other information in a programmable calculator or other electronic devices without teacher’s permission. Diego (2017,125) observes an interrelationship between performance goal structure and academic dishonesty. Performance goal structure base students’ performance on grades, which naturally leads to a considerable probability that academic dishonesty will occur, especially in students who see themselves as not being so brilliant. Bachore (2016, 18).

Causes of Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty is linked to several factors. Involvement in academic dishonesty is a conscious practice, and weighing the benefits of cheating reveals that it is far beyond the risks (Eastman et al. 2008, 9). It could be assumed that reported cases of academic dishonesty have

not received due consequences. Anitha et al. (2021, 2) identified factors like parental factors, peer pressure, a quest for high academic achievement, moral issues, poor time management, lack of professionalism, fear of failure, emotional issues, laziness, lack of effort in teaching methods, and curriculum issues. They also include problems in understanding issues and commercialization of schools and universities.

Many parents mount pressure on their children to have good grades in school. Anitha et al. (2021, 10) submit that some parents monitor their children's academic progress, which makes the students engage in any act that promises satisfaction to meet their parent's expectations. It is not wrong for parents to be interested in their children's academic success; however, children must be appropriately guided to achieve this success legally. Students are also pressured to enrol for courses based on their parents' interests regardless of the student's interests and abilities (Anitha et al. 2021, 10).

Another significant factor responsible for academic dishonesty among students of higher institutions, according to Bachore (2016, 18), is the quest for high grades. This quest is sometimes based on personal motivation without considering individual academic ability. Some students have unrealistic expectations, emphasizing success without plans and preparations (Anitha et al. 2021, 10). Another report revealed causative factors of academic dishonesty as tests being too hard, students' involvement in many school activities, not having time to read, teachers not having different tests for each class and year, fear of failure without cheating, irrelevant course material, need for extra points to boost grade average, among others (Bachore 2016, 18). The highlighted causes indicate poor reading culture in students.

Peer influence was reported by Anitha et al. (2021,10) as another causative factor of academic dishonesty. Students join colleagues in perpetuating academic dishonesty to have a sense of belonging and avoid sarcasm and alienation. The teachers' responses to academic dishonesty indicate whether the act is tolerated. Some students' involvement in academic dishonesty may be due to the unawareness of the teachers or the carefree attitude of such students (Oriji et al.2020, 92). Both teachers and students, in most cases, seem to hide from reporting many academic dishonesty cases due to the fear of soiling the school's reputation.

Factors responsible for academic dishonesty are not only traceable to students alone. Another named factor involves the college and community. Traditional teaching methods and unrevised or irrelevant syllabi make students lose interest in course learning, and because of the desire for good grades, they are involved in academic dishonesty (Anitha et al. 2021, 11).

School policy and other issues needing clarification should be given attention as Bachore (2016, 18) reported that students complain that teachers fail to clarify the procedure. Involvement in academic dishonesty also results from ignorance of what to do (Oriji et al. 2020, 92); hence, it is essential to create awareness of the prevalence of academic dishonesty and the supposed attending punishment.

Similarly, a lack of recreational activities or too much of it could prompt students to engage in academic dishonesty. Some students engage in academic dishonesty because they have little time to prepare for an examination (Bachore 2020, 18). It is viewed that the availability of recreational activities such as sports increases the sportive spirit, which boosts the morale capabilities of some students and increases their chances to learn (Anitha et al. 2021, 11); hence, there is a need to strike a balance between creating recreational activities and allowing time for adequate study time, especially in preparation for test or examination. Students learn under different conditions, so each student needs to understand how best to study.

Consequences of Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty has enormous consequences on individuals. These consequences affect the individual who engages in it and has a consequential effect on the economy, education, religion, and society. It is baffling to know that those involved in academic dishonesty would lead in one capacity or another with such an unethical lifestyle. Eastman et al. (2008, 9) are concerned that the chance that dishonest students could become unethical leaders is vast in that there is evidence that the number of students who practice academic dishonesty is relatively more extensive than those who do not. It is most challenging to note that to-be leaders of tomorrow are the primary figures in this moral dilemma.

According to Diego (2017, 130), it is observed that constant indulgence can play cognitive tendencies in learners by making them adopt academic dishonesty as a lifestyle. Academic dishonesty is a form of cheating that Ahmadi (2020, n.p.) avowed that is against ethical and moral standards and manifest in human life in various places like education, business, relationship, sports, daily life, politics, practices of law, and several ways. This indicates that academic dishonesty is a moral issue and, if not curbed, can affect other spheres of human life. Most significantly, the failure is laden with the fear of passing it to the next generations, as Miller et al. (2015), in the words of Ahmadi (2020, n.p.), posit that it affects

students' behaviour in their future endeavours. Academic dishonesty in society is radical; it is an indirect way of breeding a society with zero value for moral sanctity.

Education Counselling Strategies for Combating Academic Dishonesty

Dishonesty is an unjust act frowned upon in society. It is a moral issue not limited to academics but involves other societal spheres. Anitha et al. (2021, 3) affirmed that anyone engaged in deviant behaviour would find it challenging to eradicate academic dishonesty. Education aims to bring desirable changes in the learners; change of skills, attitude, knowledge, idea, or appreciation (Ahmad et al. 2022, 120); while counselling as help combined to inform how academic dishonesty can be curbed. Stressing punishment over academic dishonesty may do too little, but guiding students to understand the ethical implications of their actions could do better (Eastman et al. 2008,10).

Research Method, Study's Findings and Discussion

The study employed an ex-post-facto descriptive research design. The data for the study was gathered through interviews of 100 (one hundred) interviewees, including 75 students and 25 lecturers drawn from three universities, two polytechnics, two colleges of education and three theological schools, all situated in Nigeria.

Findings from the study revealed the prevalence of academic dishonesty in higher institutions of learning. The common types of academic dishonesty prevalent in the sampled schools include plagiarism, cheating in examinations, impersonation during examinations, misrepresenting one's work, and taking credit for other people's work. Causative factors of academic dishonesty include parental and peer pressure, laziness, the quest for high grades and fear of failure. The impact of academic dishonesty on higher education development includes embracing dishonesty as a lifestyle, production of half-baked graduates, unethical leaders, a society with zero value for moral sanctity and a poor economy.

Discussions

There is a need to understand several issues and to put specific measures in place to curb academic dishonesty among students of higher institutions. One of the issues to understand is that academic dishonesty is situational, and these behaviours appear more ethical than others; some may be considered unharmed. Educational counselling has relevant strategies for addressing academic dishonesty if adequately employed. Educational counselling strategies that could be employed to address academic dishonesty are Cognitive Behavioural

Therapy CBT, Group Counselling, Client-cantered therapy and Leadership Training Counselling to curb academic dishonesty.

Cognitive behavioural therapy is a talking therapy that helps manage problems by changing thoughts and behaviour. This therapy can instil in students' confidence and courage against the fear of failure, making many of them indulge in examination malpractice (Fadipe et al. 2021, 7). The fear of failure has been considered a significant factor in why students engage in dishonest behaviour, with no exception to academics. According to Sorbari et al. (2018, 7), students with low self-esteem and negative self-image perform poorly academically; this explains the cruciality of positive thinking in achieving academic excellence.

Students could be educated to confront their dysfunctional behaviour to reduce the symptoms of emotional distress. CBT identifies cognition, emotions or effects, and physiological behaviour that interacts mutually; they interact with the environment, mainly in social conditions (Emdorizal et al. 2019, 18). CBT within classroom guidance and small group meetings are logical and educationally applicable interventions to achieve academic honesty (Zyromski et al. n.d., 4). Academic dishonesty can be discouraged if counsellors engage students in CBT and other services in guidance and counselling. CBT has been found to effectively improve students' understanding of academic dishonesty (Emdorizal et al. 2019, 18).

Cognitive behavioural therapy concentrates on specific treatments for a limited number of patient's problems. The therapy focuses on specific issues. According to Jeffrey et al. (2008, 6), the sessions are limited, and patients must use extra reading materials diligently and homework to aid their growth. Homework is believed to be a study tool for scheduled examinations and tests; it is directly linked to improved academic performance, high retention rates and enhanced self-regulatory behaviours such as motivation to study, self-efficacy, goal setting, and effective time management (Planchard 2015, 12). The strategy does not only keep students focused on their academics; according to Fluke et al. (2014, 5), consistency is a feedback loop to ensure a positive study attitude to achieve the desired change when reinforced in school and at home.

Group counselling is a counselling relationship in which an educational counsellor provides help to several counselees with similar challenges simultaneously (Oguzie et al. 2019, 1006). Fadipe et al. (2021, 7) bolstered the role of group counselling in improving students' behaviour. With proper guidance informed by teachers' exemplary lifestyles, a tremendous

outcome can be achieved in undoing dishonest academic practices. Egbo (2015, 95) emphasized the need for students to exhibit positive behaviour after examination through teachers' motivation and reinforcement of positive classroom behaviours. Group counselling is tailored towards problem-solving and is helpful with the primary goal of enabling members to gain proper insight into their thoughts and behaviours, thereby providing solutions and support to other members (Oguzie et al. 2019, 1006).

Group counselling helps provide guidance on educational activities for students and is necessary for curbing academic dishonesty in preparing them to explore and confront academic-related challenges. Many have been reported to claim ignorance about academic dishonesty with justifications that their peers engage in it, and some teachers considered it self-help. Assigning mentors to every student will help to monitor their educational activities. Ocholi et al. (2017, 1387) observed that proper group counselling helps guide students' career choices. It implies that as crucial as it is to guide students' career choices, it is equally important to have experienced figures through whom students can navigate academic challenges. With appropriate group counselling guidance services, students could be prepared to cope with the realities and challenges that come their way (Salgong et al. 2016, 145).

Client-centred therapy is an educational counselling strategy centred on the client's needs. Instead of focusing mainly on enforcing academic honesty to curb dishonesty, such as conducting multiple versions of examinations, employing additional proctors during examinations, adopting wide and fixed space seating, and others, it is of a better advantage to train students in their varying abilities. Olayinka (2013,14) alluded that counselling services should be geared towards making academic content and subjects based on students' varying abilities, capacities, interests, and potentials, preparing them to become influential functioning members of their changing society. Other than overstressing certificates above relevance, schools should endeavour to nurture students who can add value to society.

Leadership Training Counselling focuses on helping leaders know what to do and how to do the needful for the group to achieve the desired goals (Fassinger et al. 2017, 937). Leadership training is essential and focused on leaders with the intention that their group objectives would be easily helped as it ensures leaders harness particular realities and direct their skills for managing human energy (Barreto 2012, 231). The level of teachers' competence in delivering their job significantly impacts educational achievement and students' disposition toward academic honesty. Hence, obtaining leadership training helps to train and develop responsible

professionals to facilitate students' well-being in academic honesty. Counselling service is an indispensable aspect of the teaching profession of which every teacher should have a basic understanding.

Leader-follower relationship is of utmost importance for followers to be communicated on the direction to go (Fassinger 2017, 937). Woody (1968, 253) referred to verbal communication as the main instrument of counselling; hence, it behoves school counsellors to employ the necessary communication tools to educate students; access and evaluate available factors to promote academic honesty. The school can discourage academic dishonesty through several school activities by introducing better learning and studying methods while encouraging good reading culture (Sorbari et al. 2018, 6). School counselling is a process whereby students are helped to understand themselves better (Ocholi et al. 2017, 1387). The implication is that meaning could be achieved through regular communication and emphasis on academic honesty.

Conclusion

There are myriad moral issues in modern society that threaten human existence. One of the issues is academic dishonesty among students in higher institutions. To curb academic dishonesty, this paper has examined the concept of educational counselling, the connection between education and counselling, and an overview of academic dishonesty. More so, it considered educational counselling a tool for curbing academic dishonesty among students of higher institutions. Educational counselling suggests strategies for reducing academic dishonesty without enforcing integrity on the students. The suggested educational counselling strategies could help discourage students from engaging in academic dishonesty by abiding by the moral codes of the parents and society at large.

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