

Other Side of Academic Dishonesty: A Teachers' Perspective

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The current study was aimed at exploring the teachers' perspective of Academic Dishonesty (AD) in higher education institutes of Karachi, Pakistan by employing qualitative research method. Data was collected through in-depth qualitative interviews with university teachers ($N=4$) working in public ($n=2$) and private ($n=2$) sector universities of Karachi, belonging to faculty of social sciences who were approached through convenient sampling technique. The data was analysed through critical reflective thematic analysis. Three major themes have been generated i.e. acts, reasons of AD, and characteristics of individuals (teachers, students & administration) who are engaged in it. The findings showed that AD was defined as a lack or absence of certain tangible and intangible practices and actions. As far as the reasons of AD are concerned, different reasons have been identified for teachers, students and administration. Teachers are engaged in AD as they want to maintain their self-image or are incompetent. The students indulge in these acts because of their personal and social reasons. Lastly, administrative staff is involved in AD because they either want money or they are ineligible for the job and its requirements. To control AD, strict measures need to be taken with the help of administration, teachers and parents of students. Finally, if the intangible acts can be controlled then separate measures should be taken for teachers, students and administration. The findings of the current study are important for the policymaking and its implementation to control AD.

Keywords: Academic dishonesty, acts of academic dishonesty, characteristics of individuals, reasons of academic dishonesty, teachers, students, administration

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The worst scandals of the world's top companies have turned the attention of researchers towards the function of academic institutions in ethical training of future business leaders because the issue of dishonest behavior of students becomes very severe when they exercise the same practice at their place of work (Nazir & Aslam, 2010). Therefore, the understanding of the factors that affect students' decisions to engage in academic dishonesty is important for academic institutions, in order to reduce its occurrence (Elahi, Mushtaq & Khan, 2013).

According to Gillespie (2003), academic dishonesty leading to workplace dishonesty has the ability to do harm to members of the society who count on its workers to be productive and honest. Rujoiu and Rujoiu (2014) insisted on the relationship between academic dishonesty and workplace dishonesty because there is a very high probability that those who adopt dishonest behavior in college will also demonstrate it later at their workplace.

Academic dishonesty, in all its forms, is a major problem. It is prominent in many educational systems in the world and is increasing at a rapid rate with each passing day. In many countries, it is very rampant and is considered like a virus, which is eating away the educational system of the country (Udoh & Okoro, 2014). Academic Dishonesty is not only a national issue but has also become a global issue. Plenty of past researches have focused on the prevalence of academic dishonesty among different academic disciplines across the globe. Many studies (Allen, Fuller & Lockett, 1998; Kidwell, Wozniak & Laurel, 2003; McCabe & Trevino, 1996; Wilfried, 2002) have reported that students are engaged in academic dishonesty at ever-increasing levels.

Akbulut et al., (2008) explained eight types of academic dishonesty namely: *fabrication* (inventing and reporting data or information which is not produced through scientific endeavours), *falsification* (manipulating the instruments, treatments, procedures and analyses in a way that would lead to incorrect and favoured results), *finagling* (purposeful avoidance to report findings which are incompatible with the hypotheses of a specific study), *plagiarism* (unauthorized use of ideas, methods, data, language and

figures of another author without acknowledging the source), *duplication* (reporting the same research findings in different academic resources), *least publishable units* (slicing the results of a study to publish in several places in a way that deteriorates the integrity of the study), *neglecting support* (not acknowledging the source of funding while publishing the study conducted through its support) and *misusing credit* (discarding the name of an author or changing the order of authors' names without an ethical and written consensus). Among all these, plagiarism and dual submission are the most common forms of academic dishonesty at all levels of higher education.

Interestingly, research has uncovered that there is a difference in how Asian and Western students view the issue of academic dishonesty such as copying from someone else's work without their consent, collusion, unattributed paraphrasing, and plagiarism (Ehrich, Howard, Mu, & Bokosmaty, 2016; Henning, et al., 2014; Lei & Hu, 2014). Therefore, it cannot be assumed that academic dishonesty is manifested or interpreted in a similar way in different cultural contexts, hence, mean differently for students from different cultural backgrounds. Because of this obvious discrepancy, the findings of this study indicate that further investigation of academic dishonesty based on cultural context may be beneficial to the growing literature of academic dishonesty. Therefore, cultural context is crucial in the description of academic dishonesty.

Dishonest academic behaviors remain a problem despite the differences in the Eastern and Western contexts. Furthermore, problems with behaviors that are considered dishonest in an academic setting vary by factors such as major subjects, gender, and even the level of study. Yet, in Eastern countries, there is little data on the ethical standards that compromise academically dishonest behaviors despite an epidemic of recently questionable actions at several institutions with large-scale incidents of both cheating and attempts to prevent it as well (Mala, 2016; Neuman, 2013).

Recent years have shown that not only students but senior faculty members belonging to different academic disciplines had

been involved in different types of unethical practices, consequently committing academic dishonesty. For instance, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Plagiarism Standing Committee has recently decided to withdraw HEC benefits i.e. travel grant, research grant, HEC approved Supervisor, best teacher award etc. from nine senior faculty members of various academic disciplines of both private and public universities along with being deemed ineligible to gain membership at any HEC constituted committee as well as any Statutory Committee/body of the University (Blacklisted Researchers / Faculty Members, n.d.). The HEC has published the names of research papers, teachers and sources from which the content was copied on its website, which have now scaled up to 34. Most of the cases were either ousted by people within the universities or by the authors of the original papers, as HEC has no policy to review every research paper or thesis of students belonging to country's 160-plus universities. In its updated list, HEC has named the teachers across the country in both public and private sector universities. The teachers were blacklisted for plagiarizing content in their research papers and theses from other sources without credit and proper sourcing (Blacklisted Researchers / Faculty Members, n.d.). This is not the only incident that has been witnessed by the academic history of Pakistan there are several other cases of the same kind. Even though HEC has taken strict measures against these practices, the problem prevails (Wazir, Usman & Salleh, 2019).

Academic dishonesty has only not been reported in the newspapers. Several empirical research studies have also reflected upon the knowledge and attitudes of students or faculty members towards plagiarism or academic dishonesty. Shirazi, Jafarey and Moazam (2015) concluded that there is a general lack of information regarding plagiarism among medical students and faculty members as only 19% of medical students and 22% medical faculty members displayed correct knowledge about referencing material from the internet or other sources. Both students and faculty members showed a general lack of understanding regarding copyright rules, and only 18% of students and 27% of faculty members claimed to have never partaken in this practice.

Today, the educated society tends to take a very negative view of academic dishonesty. It has been reported that academic dishonesty is a prevalent problem that crosses all disciplines at university level. As academic dishonesty is a multidimensional construct, the results of this study will be beneficial to explore a factor more serious than other, i.e. cheating is more serious than plagiarism (Munir, Ahmad & Shahzadi, 2011).

Thomas (2017) recommended that a detailed study is needed in which students' perceptions of various forms of assessment such as tests, papers, and projects, and their role in academic dishonesty may help determine if a certain type of assessment affects dishonesty. One of the main objectives of this study is to find out the risk and protective factors of academic dishonesty while aiming to fill this literature gap. Hu and Lei (2012) suggest that with increased awareness of academically dishonest practices there should be a decrease in academically dishonest actions. Hence, the findings of the current study would increase awareness regarding academic dishonesty.

Elahi, Mushtaq and Khan (2013) stated in their study that faculty roles were not properly examined which is more likely to create positive impact for changing the negative behaviour of students. Faculty at all levels must take the responsibility for changing the mindset of students and show them the right direction. Moreover, the findings of this study are consistent with the previous findings and new avenues are revealed for researchers. They should focus on these dimensions to further explore the causes of these dilemmas in academia.

It can be concluded from the above discussion that limited work has been done on this globally predominant issue, though a lot of quantitative researches have been done on the prevalence and predictors of academic dishonesty in foreign context. As recommended by Shahbaz (2019), to avoid and prevent academic dishonesty, it is important that students and faculty members share perceptions about these malpractices and work together for a better

solution. Moreover, there are large differences in the perceptions of students and teachers about academic dishonesty. Another, literature gap that is evident is that more work is being done on students, in contrast to the faculty members. Hence, the current research intends to explore academic dishonesty in indigenous perspective through ethnographic approach.

Method

Research Design

The current study is based on qualitative research design where in-depth interviews have been used to collect the data. Informal observation was also done from the universities where data was collected.

Participants

For the current study, faculty members ($N=4$) belonging to public ($n=2$) and private ($n=2$) sector universities were approached through purposive convenient sampling technique. The data was collected from two public and two private sector universities of Karachi. All the faculty members were female; and belonged to the faculty of social sciences and middle-class socio-economic status. The data was collected in form of pairs i.e. a public and a private sector university faculty member. It was ensured that the pairs were made based on their teaching departments and sector of university. All participants were neither diagnosed with any psychological disorder nor convicted of any past criminal activity. Their age ranged from 30-37 years ($M=33$; $SD=2.94$); their teaching experience ranged from 3-10 years ($M=5$; $SD=2.94$); their overall job experience ranged from 3-10 years ($M=8.25$; $SD=1.74$) and they were teaching 4-5 courses ($M=4.75$; $SD=0.95$) that semester.

Measures

A literature-based in-depth interview guide and demographic information sheet was developed in the light of the current research objectives. The demographic information sheet comprised of the details of the participants regarding their age,

gender, socio-economic status, teaching experience, overall job experience and course load that semester.

The in-depth interview guide comprised of questions regarding the perception of academic dishonesty, reasons behind it, who is more responsible for it and how it can be controlled. They were instructed to answer these questions in their respective position as a faculty member. The interview guide was reviewed by three PhD subject matter experts, who were instructed to review the interview guide in the light of the objectives of the current study. The interviews were conducted after the review.

Informal observation was also done with the help of memo writing. The researcher keenly made the observation of the infrastructure of the university and its facilities.

Procedure

First of all, the research project was approved by the respective university. The interview guide was developed, and then it was reviewed by the PhD subject matter expert. Permission was obtained for the data collection. First, a telephonic consent was attained from the faculty members, and time and venue of the interview was finalized. The interviews were taken in their faculty cubicles, ensuring no disturbances around as the interview was audio recorded. The nature of the study was explained to the participants, and their consent was obtained to participate in the study. They were assured of their rights to privacy and confidentiality. They were instructed to answer the questions in whichever language they were comfortable with. The answers of the interviewee were bilingual (English & Urdu). After each interview, the data was transcribed in detail with the facial expressions of the participants. Then the data was analyzed with the help of thematic analysis.

Data Analysis

The critical reflective thematic analysis approach was used to analyse the data as it is suitable for addressing the research questions related to people's experiences, or people's views and perceptions. As the research questions are broad for the current study, inductive and constructivist approach for thematic analysis was used in which latent themes were described through a rich description of the data set, and a detailed account of one particular aspect. The data was analyzed by the following six steps i.e. familiarization with the data, coding, generating initial themes, reviewing themes, defining, and naming themes and then finally, inscription. Two rounds of coding were conducted to increase the validity of the analysis (Braun, & Clarke, 2006; Terry, Hayfield, Clarke, & Braun, 2017).

Results and Discussion

After the data analysis (two rounds of coding), four major themes were generated i.e. acts, reasons of academic dishonesty, characteristics of involved individuals (among teachers, students, & administrative staff) and how it can be controlled. The faculty members did not have a clear or concise definition of Academic dishonesty, and it was defined as lack or absence of certain practices or actions. It shows that faculty members did not have accurate awareness about academic dishonesty. This indicates the severity of the issue; if the teachers have no idea about academic dishonesty then how can it be controlled? The lack of awareness of academic dishonesty among the teachers can be attributed to the fact that there are no clear rules, regulations, or policies regarding this issue. Previously, participants also vocalized in a study that the university should provide a clear policy and implement it strictly (Shahbaz, 2019).

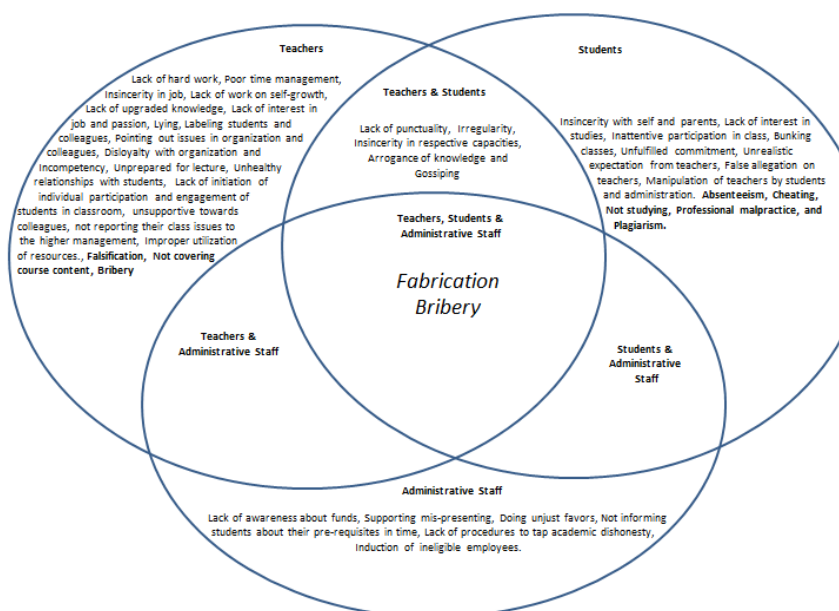
Acts of AD among teachers, students, and administration

As mentioned above, academic dishonesty has been defined as the absence and presence of certain acts that are both manifest and latent. For each category, both manifest (which can be measured

precisely) and latent (which can be observed but cannot be measured) acts have been identified, and if the latent acts can be controlled then the manifest acts can be controlled. Separate thematic maps were made to describe the findings. These acts for each category i.e. teachers, students and administrative staff are mentioned below.

Figure 1

Acts of Academic Dishonesty among Teachers, Students & Administrative Staff



There are several sub-themes that are identified as the acts of AD for teachers, students and administrative staff. The most common acts found in all three included fabrication and bribery. While the latent acts like lack of punctuality and regularity, insincerity in respective capacities, arrogance of knowing a lot and gossiping were found in teachers and students both. There are no acts that administrative staff shares with students and teachers separately.

The acts that are unique to teachers can be divided into two categories i.e. latent (related to self, classroom & university) and semantic acts. The latent acts related to their self, included lack of hard work, poor time management, insincerity in job, lack of work on self-growth, lack of upgraded knowledge, diminished interest in job and passion, and lying. Moreover, they also comprise of labelling students and colleagues, pointing out issues in organization and colleagues, disloyalty with organization and incompetency. The acts relevant to the classroom included lack of preparation of lecture, unhealthy relationship with students, and individual participation of students and engagement of students in classroom. Furthermore, old methodology of teaching, and teaching of immoral practices were also identified. Lastly, the latent acts relevant to the university are lack of a helpful channel for colleagues for reporting their class issues to the higher management and inadequate utilization of resources. While the acts that have been found to be semantic for teachers are falsification, incomplete course content and bribery. It has also been identified that teachers expect other teachers to be honest all the while remaining dishonest themselves. It was also observed that teachers have identified acts more for themselves than for others i.e. students and administrative staff members.

Falsifying is also evident in prior literature as well (University of Alberta, 2001). It is basically falsification of any information or data, unauthorized access, misuse of availability of computer system or alteration of computerized records. In indigenous perspective, falsification and bribery go hand in hand. As falsification is usually paired with any social and financial transaction, as the verbatim states “*The administration is giving them way out, by providing them that you know, ok your teachers are not giving your marks; give us money we will change your marks*”. Moreover, it is not only evident among the administrative staff but also among the teachers as the verbatim supports “*I know that there are teachers who take bribes. They (students) come to me begging that we want this, we want that, kindly pass us. I don’t agree to it, but I also know many teachers who fall, I don’t want to say*

trap but who take this transaction because for them, the teachers it is also beneficial for them, if they are taking money for something.”

The unique latent acts of students include insincerity with themselves and their parents, lack of interest in studies, arrogance about their knowledge, inattentive participation in classes, bunking classes, unfulfilled commitment, expectation from teachers to give those favors, false allegation on teachers and manipulation of teachers by students and administration. The tangible acts included absenteeism, cheating, not studying, professional malpractice, and plagiarism. It was also supported in literature as Nazir and Aslam (2010) found undergraduate and graduate students in different universities, and found that more than half of students that studied were involved in dishonest acts such as helping other students copy home assignments, exam papers, or graded project reports. The intangible acts can be attributed to the cultural differences as these acts are considered serious offense in indigenous culture, as individualism-collectivism dimension has been used to describe, explain, and predict differences in attitudes, values, behaviors, cognition, communication, attribution, socialization, and self-concepts (Oyserman, Kimmelmeier, & Coon, 2002) delving into the narrative that religion and cultural values define the standards of attributing acts as moral or immoral. Moreover, in the current context the acts that are associated with students are considered as disrespectful towards teachers. Moreover, insincerity towards studying is also considered as disloyalty towards parents.

The unique intangible acts for administration and administrative staff included lack of awareness about funds, doing unjust favors, not informing students about their pre-requisites in time, lack of procedures to tap academic dishonesty and induction of ineligible employees.

The unique finding of the current study in the indigenous context is the latent acts of administration and administrative staff. There is limited support for the role of administrative staff in academic dishonesty, but the current findings highlight their role as

mentioned above-their acts are not only facilitating students but also compelling teachers to do academic dishonesty as this verbatim of the teachers supports the argument “*ek task hy hamen 6 mahine mein pura karna hai aur woh task hamen kisi authority ki vajah se a bataya hi gaya hai yah last moment pay aur wo task humse expect kiya jata hai k woh ham ek mahine main ya do mein karke den to possible nahin hota jiski vajah se a na chahte hue bhi hamen dishonest hona padta hai*”.

The acts related to time management and job description of teachers are also supported by prior literature in which academic dishonesty can be associated with poor time management and organizational skills, strong home culture, pressure for scholarship and jobs, and misunderstanding of course rules and regulations leading individuals to resort to plagiarism (University of Alberta, 2001). In current perspective, the lack of time management may lead to falsification as well, as stated by the participant “*ham un policies ko break kar rahy hoty hain jinko shayad agar time accordingly manage kiya jaaye to tu to hamen na jhooth bolane ki jarurat hai... kisi tarah se ham yahi hi kar rahe hain k task ko last moment per kar rahe hain jiski vajah se galat bayani kar rahe hain, chijon ki date change kar rahe hain*”. It can be deduced that the lack of administrative competency leads to other acts.

By summing up, *acts* that define academic dishonesty (by the participants) can be classified into two major categories i.e. latent and semantic acts. The semantic acts can be measured while latent acts can be observed but are very difficult to measure. These latent acts are found to be vital as per the participants if these latent acts can be controlled then semantic and severe acts can be controlled. The participants gave importance to the control of these acts because all of them identified as Muslims, and practiced Islam. Islam not only provides a code of conduct but also provides a lifestyle in which a lot of focus is on these minor acts. As mentioned, 360 times in different surahs, work (‘*amal*’) has a tremendous value in Islam. It is based on an ideal of *practice*— thus it is a religion of action. As the Prophet (S.A.W) said, “*Verily, Allah loves that when anyone of you does something, he does it perfectly*” (Al

Bukhari). Moreover, small acts like gossiping are also mentioned in (Qur'an 17:36) *“Do not concern yourself with things about which you have no knowledge. Verily, your hearing, sight, and heart — all of them will be called to account”*.

Reason of academic dishonesty

It has been found that participants did not have clarity on the reasons behind acts of academic dishonesty. The teachers are involved in AD because they want to secure themselves, maintain their image and reputation, make money, while having lack of lucidity regarding rules, regulations, and teachers' training. As Brief and Motowidlo (1986) explained that individuals' actual dishonest behavior is attributed to their desire to maintain a positive moral self-image. It was also found out that the concept of accountability is different among teachers, as they believe that they are only accountable when they will be provided facilities therefore this mindset may lead to AD. Moreover, their arrogance hinders them to work on their self-growth and learning; that is why they indulge in above mentioned acts. It is being observed that a lack of organizational structure gives birth to several reasons of AD.

It has also been explored that AD in students has been majorly attributed to neglectful parenting, along with their societal and moral value system. As the premise of the current study was limited to Karachi, Pakistan only, which thrives on a collectivistic culture, not only adolescents, but adults also live under the supervision of their parents. Hence, their parents are responsible for their actions. That is why in teachers' perspectives, the major reason of AD among students is their parenting and value system. They are found to be committing these acts because of the environment in which they are which includes peer pressure, social trends and lack of grooming of teachers as the teachers use outdated content, methods and mediums of teaching. Students also procrastinate, they lack discipline, make lame excuses and false allegations, use social media, but are still conscious about their CGPA. They are also not aware about personal insincerity, weaknesses, and future

implications. Moreover, they indulge in these activities more when they find contradictions in their personal and social values. Lastly it was also found that the students do not want to work hard, but they want the rewards that they would have gained had they worked hard. The increase in the trend of AD is also ascribed to the fact that there are only a few students who want to work hard and an even higher number of students who want shortcuts.

Lastly, the administrative staff engages in AD because they want unjust favours leading to unethical financial and social transitions. The findings of the informal observations also supported the above mentioned reasons of AD as a vague organizational structure in the university results in a lack of implementation of SOPs, ultimately leading to AD more, as found in both public and private sector universities.

McCabe, Trevino, and Butterfield (2001) suggest contextual factors such as peer's behavior, as the most powerful influence in educational cheating. But in indigenous context, not only peer pressure but social trends also play a vital role. Teachers are also responsible for students' AD as they lack grooming, and use outdated content, methods, and mediums of teaching. Other than that, students also procrastinate, and previous literature suggests that procrastination from watching too much television may increase the likelihood of academic dishonesty to make up for lost time (Pino & Smith, 2003). Those students who have higher GPA have a higher level of seriousness regarding their studies that is why they do not indulge in any other activity for the sake of their grades (Soroya, Hashmi & Soroya, 2016). Lack of discipline and parental monitoring increases the probability of AD among students. As per faculty members, students are in their learning phase, but their environment and parents play a vital role in their unethical behaviours. As per faculty members, students are not aware about personal insincerity, weaknesses and future implications of their current behaviours which lead to AD. Academic offences often result from a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of course policies or definitions of misbehavior such as plagiarism rather than a deliberate intention to cheat (Bamford & Sergiou, 2005; Evans &

Youmans, 2000). Moreover, they indulge in these activities more when they find contradictions in their personal and social values. Lastly it was also found that the students do not want to work hard but they want the rewards that they would have gained had they worked hard. As mentioned above in the verbatim that administrative staff indulges in AD because of social transitions. If they are kept under observation, then the probability of these acts can be reduced.

Characteristics of individuals who are indulged in AD

It was also found that teachers who do not want to take responsibility, who do not want to work hard but want recognitions and rewards like others were likely to be indulged in AD. While those who are emotionally disturbed, or have any interpersonal issues, are inattentive, ill-mannered, manipulative, dishonest, have financial and interpersonal issues tend to commit AD more. Lastly those administrative staff members who are not eligible for their jobs or are in dire need of money are more indulged in these activities. Again, the structure and clear and concise rules and regulations play a vital role in this regard.

There are several researches that highlight the role of demographic variables in the inclination towards AD (Allen, Fuller & Lockett, 1998; Kidwell, Wozniak & Laurel, 2003; McCabe & Trevino, 1996; Wilfried, 2002). The findings of the current study lay emphasis on the personal characteristics of individuals who partake in AD in their respective capacities. It has been found that teachers who want recognition and rewards without working hard tend to pursue AD. While those who are emotionally disturbed, inattentive, ill-mannered, manipulative, and dishonest and those who have financial and interpersonal issues commit AD more. Lastly those administrative staff members who are ineligible for their jobs and need money are more indulged in these activities. These characteristics should be kept in account in the policy making process, so that special attention may be given to individuals having these characteristics. Researches have also revealed that even people

who value morality sometimes do dishonest things (Moore & Gino, 2013).

Control of AD

AD can be controlled if strict measures are taken with respect to teachers, students, and administration. Teachers' continuous training with updated content is necessary. It should also be mandatory for teachers to upgrade their knowledge and modes of teaching with specialized courses. Teachers' training should enforce motivation for teaching, encouraging honesty as a habit, self-grooming, self-evaluation and preparation of lectures; but these trainings should be conducted in a manner that they do not become a burden on the teachers. Likewise, students should be trained to be disciplined and morally developed. Collaborative efforts should be made with parents, and their role should be clarified to them in the orientation session. Teachers should include a lecture on self-grooming of students once in a while, and they should prepare lectures while keeping the interest of students in mind. Lastly, teachers should encourage individual assignments and use similarity index for the eradication of AD, particularly plagiarism, fabrication and miss-presentation. Lastly, the university administration should update their means of controlling AD. Moreover, the administration should work on the prevention of AD among students, teachers and administrative staff and parents should be involved in evaluation of teaching and administration.

In line with the prior literature (Elahi, Mushtaq & Khan, 2013; Hu & Lei, 2012; Shahbaz, 2019; Thomas, 2017), the current findings also emphasize on the need of strict measures to control AD with respect to teachers, students and administration. The unique findings for the indigenous culture is the need of continuous teachers' training with updated content; while it should also be mandatory for teachers to upgrade their knowledge and modes of teaching with specialized courses. The training should focus on motivation for teaching, honesty as habit formation, self-grooming, self-evaluation and preparation of lectures. Likewise, students should be trained to be disciplined and morally developed. Different

roles for teachers, parents and administrative staff have been identified. The current study highlights the need of collaborative efforts which is vital for indigenous collectivistic culture, where a lot of value is given to the people around. In order to enforce strict controls, only collaborative work can be beneficial.

Conclusion

From the above mentioned study it can be concluded that latent and semantic acts both are equally severe, and need to be observed and controlled through indigenously appropriate means in which a collaborative effort is required by faculty members, administrative staff, students and their parents. Teachers, students and administrative staff have their unique acts and reasons for AD. The prevalence of AD is dependent on reasons and characteristics of the individuals which are found to be unique and different for student, teachers and administrative staff respectively. Hence, their specific personal and social reasons for AD need to be kept under consideration and separate intervention plans should be developed for students, teachers and administration. Detailed studies are required for different perspectives i.e. students and administrative staff. A holistic cultural specific understanding is also recommended for future researches.

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