

Original Article

Qualitative Study of the Phenomenon of Academic Dishonesty among Students

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Introduction

Nowadays, academic dishonesty is one of the issues that have plagued the educational system. The scope of this phenomenon ranged from purchasing an essay, plagiarizing content, fudging laboratory results, falsification, duplication, misusing credit, finagling, least publishable unit, asking for a deadline extension by citing a bogus excuse, to cheating on the exam session and impersonating another to take a test. It is evident that continuing this process will challenge the credit of the academic system's performance and its long-term effects will affect not only the individual, but all over the community.

Method

The purpose of this research was to study causes and dimensions phenomenon of academic dishonesty in students. A qualitative approach and grounded theory method was adopted in the study, considering the nature of the subject. Also the sampling method was purposive and theoretical with maximum variation. The target populations of the research were all students of Yazd University in the academic year of 2018-2019. Data were collected from 16 students through in-depth semi-structured interview and interviews continued until theoretical saturation. The obtained results were analyzed using Strauss and Corbin's open, axial and selective coding methods.

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Results

The results of the investigations that fall in to six dimensions of the model include: main phenomenon (performance goal orientation), causes (7 categories), environmental conditions (3 categories), contextual features (4 categories), strategy (3 categories) and outcome (1 categories). Performance goal orientation was recognized as the main phenomenon with three subcategories including “competition”, “score and degree dependency” and “science learning and service delivery”. The research results showed that the applicability of lessons, individual characteristics, educational background, time limit and thickness of books, student admission policies, professors' professionalism, and family pressure, has caused the formation of the central category of “performance goal orientation”. Also, contextual features (such as physical conditions, classroom and university atmosphere, technology, and monitoring and dealing) and environmental conditions (cultural-social environment, political environment, and the policy environment), have provided the context of rise students` unethical reactions such as cheating in exam, dishonesty to do homework, scientific theft and dishonesty in research, which have resulted disruption in individual, social and academic development.

Discussion

In conclusion, it can be acknowledged that the phenomenon of academic dishonesty is rooted in the goal orientation of the individual and several environmental and individual factors can change it. So a comprehensive effort of the higher education policy makers, professors and university Counseling Centers seems necessary in order to amend it.

Keywords: Academic dishonesty, Cheat, Students, Grounded theory, Scientific Ethics.

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