Academic Dishonesty among Higher Education Students in Ethiopia: An Article Review

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Abstract: This study examined academic dishonesty in Ethiopian higher learning institutions (HEIs) using narrative systematic review approach. Academic dishonesty is currently a big challenge and a growing concern of higher learning institutions around the globe including Ethiopia. This practice has become very serious with a far reaching implication particularly when university students are involved in such misconduct. The study thus tried to identify the root causes of academic dishonesty, the most common forms of academic dishonesty, together with proposed strategies to overcome the challenges by using proactive and reactive strategic approaches. Locally available literatures were reviewed and thoroughly synthesized to achieve the study objective. The findings showed that high rate and range of academic dishonesty is being practiced in Ethiopian HEIs particularly in terms of academic cheating and plagiarism. From the findings, it is concluded that there is an urgent need for instituting academic integrity in institutions of higher learning. This calls for a collaborative and integrative approach among all the stakeholders involved in rendering a doable solution (both proactive and reactive) to curb the situation.

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Introduction

Nowadays, academic dishonesty has become a serious concern that the education system needs to address. Various studies indicate that academic dishonesty is more prevalent than ever and actions need to be taken by universities to educate students as well as faculty members about academic integrity and ethical professionalism (Diego, 2017; Feday, 2017; Gillespie, 2003; Hellen *et al.*, 2017; Mebratu, 2014; Nelson *et al.*, 2012). Academic dishonesty can broadly be defined to include activities such as cheating, plagiarism, falsification/fabrication of data or citations in any formal academic exercise, working in groups on home take assignments without permission of a teacher or a professor, accessing test banks and buying research papers written by someone else.

Research investigations on academic dishonesty over the past several decades have reported that the problem may be growing among university students all over the world (Mebratu, 2014; Nelson *et al.*, 2012; Parnther, 2020). In Ethiopia, academic dishonesty is becoming the concern of most of the academic institutions very recently. This may be due to the dynamic situation of academic dishonest behaviors with the advancement of technology. As a result, it has become one of the major bottlenecks in Ethiopian school systems in general and in higher education institutions in particular. Academic dishonesty also appears to be a precursor to workplace misconduct and unethical behavior because it has a potential to transfer into work place. For example, according to Nazir & Aslam (2010), the cheating students have strong tendency to practice same unethical and dishonest behaviors at the workplace that they had exhibited during their study. Consequently, the act of academic dishonesty, which is propagated in academic environment, may lead to corruption and unethical acts in the work place (Feday, 2017). It can thus be inferred that academic dishonesty has negative impact on workplace ethics, which in turn affects the nations at large.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to critically revisit the existing literature to examine the extent of academic dishonesty amongst students in Ethiopian HEIs, if any.

Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this study were to:

1. identify root causes of academic dishonesty in Ethiopian HEIs.
2. assess the forms of academic dishonesty in HEIs
3. recommend possible policy strategy directions to curb dishonest behavior and ensure academic integrity in the universities

Definition of Terms

Academic dishonesty refers to the act of giving or receiving an unauthorized support in academic work at college or university.

In the present study, academic dishonesty is defined as deliberate or attempted use of materials (cheating), fabrication of information (citation), supporting others in engaging in academically dishonest behavior (facilitation), and taking somebody's words, ideas, or reports as one's own (plagiarism).

Academic integrity refers to acting with the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility in learning, teaching and research. The term 'academic integrity' is also widely used as a proxy for the conduct of students, particularly in relation to cheating and plagiarism (Macfarlane, *et al.*, 2014).

Plagiarism refers to the presentation of somebody else's work as though it were one's own work without properly acknowledging the source. (AAU Anti-Plagiarism Framework, 2019, Version 1)

Significance of the Study

The study tried to respond to the need for contextually relevant researches into the academic integrity of HEIs in Ethiopia by investigating causes of academic dishonesty. Prevalence of academic misconduct amongst students at higher learning institutions has been demonstrated by local literature. As such, the study tried to enhance awareness around the problem and highlighted the need for higher education institutions to accept the challenge of establishing a learning environment where academic integrity is highly valued and enthusiastically protected. This should be done so that, eventually, ethical prospective graduates are produced for the future. The study also recommended nationally and institutionally relevant interventions to address academic dishonesty with the goal of enhancing academic integrity.

Statement of the Problem

Literature review guided this study; there is a perception that academic dishonesty is a wide-ranging practice globally and locally. It has also been prevalent in Ethiopian school systems probably since the introduction of modern education in the country. However, it is argued that emphasis has not been given yet to the concerns of academic misconduct. Studies indicate that there are persistent encounters with students' academic misbehavior such as cheating, plagiarism, smuggling or holding prohibited materials in an examination room, fabrication of data or inadequate or partial citations, working in groups on home take assignments or project works that are not permitted by professors, and purchasing research papers prepared by ghostwriters. The situation has become reasonable inference or generalization that the practice of academic dishonesty could prevail among university students. This rampant situation might happen due to lack of academic integrity, failure to abide by ethical professionalism and principles, lack of comprehensive policies and strategies to manage academia (both student and faculty behavior), and lack of well-established culture of

academic norms and values among and across disciplines. Thus, such conjecture as well as the association between academic dishonesty and unethical professionalism motivated this study to conduct a narrative systematic review using locally available literature. It is thus hoped that the review of locally pertinent literature would result in greater insight into the problem, and that it would suggest possible interventions to address academic misbehavior and promote academic integrity.

Research Design and Methodology

Since the situation of academic dishonesty was reviewed in the Ethiopian context, locally pertinent works were systematically revisited. The systematic review aimed to answer specific review questions from published research reports by identifying relevant studies, characterising such studies to form a systematic map of research in the area, extracting relevant data to establish the value of the findings, and synthesising and reporting the outcomes (Bennett *et al.*, 2003). Even though systematic reviews have received comparatively little attention in science education, they have, in educational research, been the focus of considerable debate in a number of educational research journals (Macfarlanea *et al.*, 2014).

According to Snilstveit *et al.* (2012), applying narrative systematic review methodology to a broader range of evidence has implications for every step of the review process, from defining the review question to developing inclusion criteria, searching for studies, critically reviewing studies, and synthesizing and presenting findings. Such systematic review adopts a narrative, as opposed to statistical, approach to research synthesis and seeks to generate insights and recommendations by going beyond the summary of findings from different empirical studies as in traditional narrative reviews. Therefore, this article argues that systematic review methods can be applied to answer a range of different questions on academic dishonesty and pays particular attention to methods for synthesizing qualitative evidences

that apply the key principles of systematic reviewing of being comprehensive, systematic and transparent.

Considering the currency and urgency of issues of academic dishonesty in Ethiopian higher education institutions, 'recently' published journal articles were reviewed by focusing on the dynamic situations of academically dishonest behaviors. With regard to timeframe, even though the history of academic dishonesty goes back to ancient times, it is argued that academic misconduct has received noticeable attention in higher education with the expansion of higher education and information technology since millennium. Therefore, this review covers articles of empirical studies from 2009 to present. Full-text empirical articles were selected for the review process. Other relevant works before the initial timeframe were also incorporated to substantiate the data. Unfortunately, there is dearth of researches conducted on academic dishonesty in Ethiopian education in general and in higher learning institutions in particular in the specified time and before.

The review of the existing few literatures was systematically searched using key word searches in Google scholar, open access journal's web and online Library catalogues. The focal phrases were 'academic dishonesty' and 'higher education' and 'academic integrity'. Hence, the searching of online catalogues incorporated words and phrases such as 'academic dishonesty', 'higher education', 'academic integrity', 'plagiarism' and 'cheating' (cheating and plagiarism are commonly known forms of academic dishonesty). These terms and phrases were used to narrow the scope of the search and they were used with Boolean operators such as 'AND' and 'OR' to conduct the search.

The online databases produced multiple results; however, only a small proportion that fully met the requirements in terms of relevance to the study context were screened. Therefore, originally, a total of more than 50 online journal articles were searched; after having detected and removed redundancies among documents, a first selection by title, abstract and major findings was performed and the size reduced to

slightly more than 30 documents. A second screening was done by assessing full-text empirical articles. By applying some refining criteria, 22 articles were considered as relevant to the current study and also as those that can be used as supplementary references and were thus included in the final review. The review focused only on the studies that were conducted in Ethiopia, mainly Ethiopian higher learning institutions. Among these, six (Feday, 2017; Hailu, 2015; Mebratu, 2014, 2016; Tefera & Kinde, 2009, 2010;) were directly related to the topic (Ethiopian higher education students) and two of the articles (conducted by Asmera, 2018 and Wondifraw, 2021) were empirical works conducted in Ethiopian secondary schools. There were also some published and unpublished documents such as proceedings and local policy documents (e.g. Addis Ababa University plagiarism policy document). Finally, the remaining literatures were used for reference purposes.

All the articles included in the review were cross-checked in the list of reputable journals and online open access journals. They were published in peer-reviewed journals. It was also important to exclude documents that were not related to the distinguishing features of academic dishonesty in the context of the current study because the inclusion and exclusion criteria are designed to ensure that only relevant works are included in the systematic review. For instance, working papers and reports produced outside conventional publication channels were excluded. Articles or documents that did not have date of publications were also excluded.

Review of Relevant Literature

Introduction

Literature has showed that academic dishonesty, which is a precursor of unprofessional behavior in the world of work, has become a deep-rooted problem in Ethiopian education system. It is currently a big challenge particularly in higher learning institutions, and has become a growing concern among different stakeholders. Hence, unless and otherwise the

situation is properly managed and controlled, it reasonably damages the quality of education which may in turn impact the culture of academic integrity and ethical behavior of the nation. For instance, Hellen *et al.* (2017) indicate that while institutions of higher learning aspire for academic integrity, the practice of academic dishonesty negatively impacts on the quality of education and erodes the originality and authenticity of academic achievements of others.

Following the harmonized academic policy of public higher education institutions in 2013, majority of Ethiopian HEIs may have developed their own guidelines and codes of honor to manage academic dishonesty, particularly on exam cheating behavior. Accordingly, Article 59 of the harmonized academic policy states about violating exam regulations. In Article 59, Sub-article 1 through Sub-article 11, issues pertaining to violation of exam regulations and measures to be taken by concerning bodies particularly on those who cheat in exams have been repeatedly indicated (Firew *et al.*, 2013). However, other concerns such as plagiarism and similar academic breaches have not been thoroughly mentioned in the document. This might indicate that the problems of academic integrity have not yet become a serious concern of academic institutions or that the institutions, for some reason, have become negligent of dealing with such problems. On the other hand, documents from the federal national examination agency, HERQA or MoE/MoSHE indicate that academic dishonesty is becoming one of the major bottlenecks of quality education in the country. Educational institutions are failing to sustain academic integrity so as to enhance education quality.

Thus, the study explored the root causes of academic dishonesty, forms of academic dishonesty, factors that contribute to and are associated with academic dishonesty, and possible strategies used to curb academic misbehaviors based on the very few empirical studies conducted in Ethiopian higher education institutions.

What are the roots causes of academic dishonesty?

The identification of factors that motivate students to get involved in unethical academic behaviors provides a means to develop effective prevention strategies/policies. Studies suggest that most students and faculty realize academic misconduct is ethically wrong, but various internal and external factors may serve as motivators, allowing individuals to overwhelm their feelings of guiltiness and justify their dishonest behaviors to themselves (Feday, 2017; Mebratu, 2014; Tefera & Kinde, 2009). Researchers in the field also agree that there is no single reason for the occurrence of academic dishonesty in school, college or university (Feday, 2017; Mebratu, 2016; Tefera & Kinde, 2009; Wondifraw, 2021).

There are many reasons for committing academically dishonest behavior. In some cases, academic misbehaviors may arise not only from intentional disregard for the rules of academic integrity and professional ethics, but also from ignorance of what those rules are. A number of studies have identified some of the reasons why students choose to engage in academic dishonesty. These include academic pressure to get better grades or other rewards (Feday, 2017; Tefera & Kinde, 2009; Mebratu, 2016), problem of procrastination or poor time management (Feday, 2017; Mebratu, 2016), lack of commitment for mastery learning and lack of confidence in academia (Tefera & Kinde, 2009), lack of clarity and relevance in course material and exam or test difficulty level (Mebratu, 2014 & 2016) and finally, lack of clarity of the policy. Still others feel that engaging in academically dishonest behaviors is not a serious offense, and others do not even realize that they have broken any rules. Thus, some common root causes of students' and faculty engagement in academic dishonesty are discussed below.

The strive for performance and good grade

Studies show that low performing students appear to get involved in academically dishonest behavior more often than high performing students because of the need to perform better (Feday, 2017; Gillespie, 2003; Tefera & Kinde, 2009). It was suggested an academically dishonest behavior gives students who did not want to learn the opportunity to perform high without participating in learning and eventually discouraging those committed to an authentic process of learning. On the other hand, good performing students are also more likely to give in to the pressure of cheating in an attempt to earn higher grades to please their family/guardians, and such students struggle academically and feel that dishonesty is their only path to any kind of success. Tefera & Kinde (2009) argued that competitiveness could negatively affect student honesty. They stated that students could engage in academically dishonest behavior due to grade motives. Students seem to be willing to do anything to get the grades they want to pass to the next stage. For example, Moeck (2002, cited in Gillespie, 2003) states, "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" (p. 484). According to Shropshire (1997), 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 next educational hierarchy or get the right job opportunity, they will often do it. Therefore, pressures to achieve good grades can be a good cause for academic dishonesty even among high performing students. As a result, competing for high performance and grade issues remain important variables affecting academic integrity in the university.

Academic pressures

In order to receive merit-based financial aid, reward, or even to continue receiving financial support from his/her family/guardians, a student has

to maintain a certain GPA. Even high-achieving students may turn to[1] academic dishonesty as a way to achieve their target GPA. According to Mebratu (2014), students cheat/misbehave because of pressure from teachers, parents, and peers. Pressure from peers, parents/guardians and teachers has positive and negative influences on why students choose to be academically honest or dishonest. From a positive perspective, students struggle to excel in their performance due to pressure from parents or guardians to get promised awards. Bayaa Martin Saana *et al.* (2016) also found that external influences from families and guardians might motivate students to engage in unethical behaviors as a means to achieve good academic records. Mebratu (2014) found out that a significant number (78.3 %) of respondents reported pressure to gate [get] good grades was one of the reasons for academic dishonesty.

Feday (2017) also indicated that students feel pressure to get better grades and strive for success hoping that they excel if they score good CGPA because recruiters (companies and organizations) use candidate's marks and grades for selection purposes, which implies that students have to struggle to score good grades in exams or tests. This is one of the causes that pushes students to involve in academic misconduct. High achieving students are also abused by their low-achieving counterparts to participate in academic dishonesty in that they are forced to share answers in examinations and tests with the low-achievers. From anecdotal evidences and practical experience, in Ethiopia, it is common to hear that high achieving students are abused, marginalized, harassed or even killed in some instances for refusing to give answers to their low achieving classmates during examinations or tests. On the contrary, some high performing students think they are helping a friend and do not even feel that it is wrong. This is perceived as a legitimate way of supporting peers, a means of learning from each other and developing knowledge and skills. Few studies conducted in Ethiopia disclosed that though the reasons for cheating/misbehavior are not very well known, students are reported to involve in academic

dishonesty due to various influencing factors (Mebratu, 2014, 2016; Tefera & Kinde, 2009, 2010; Wondifraw, 2021).

Lack of commitment to and confidence in the academy

Lack of commitment to and confidence in learning are among the reasons for students' academic misbehavior. Students who are not dedicated to working satisfactorily in their studies or studying during course work are highly motivated to engage in academic cheating because they do not have the confidence to deal with academic assignments and examinations with full potential. For instance, citing Tefera & Kinde, 2010 & FEACC, 2013, Feday (2017:16) revealed that the reasons for academic dishonest behavior in the Ethiopian HEIs are attributable to various reasons (as reported by students) such as "lack of commitment for [to] mastery learning, grade motives, and lack of confidence in academia …" Mebratu (2016) also indicated that one of the major reasons for academic dishonesty is students' lack of confidence on 'their own work'(p. 19). Similarly, Tefera and Kinde's (2010, p. 89) in their qualitative analysis report showed that "lack of commitment for mastery learning, grade motives, and lack of confidence in academia" are some of the factors negatively affecting students' integrity in the universities. This might imply that students' lack of commitment in their learning and study can be a precursor for low confidence that leads to misbehavior because academic and professional commitment is often linked with issues of integrity or honesty.

Poor time management or procrastination

Many university students have difficulties with managing their time properly and successfully, particularly in their early years of college or university. Since majority of them come from the rural areas of the country, they face lots of challenges to adapt to the new environment which is aggravated by poor time management tradition in the earlier grade levels. Faced with problems related to making friends, creating

fraternities and alliances, reacting to new demands, etc., they may put off studying or working on assignments until it is too late for them to do a satisfactory job. Others are hooked to social media such as Facebook at the expense of doing their best on their studies when they have an ample amount of time. It seems a common practice that majority of university students put off their academic work and delay in preparing and submitting their assignments and presentations, completing projects, and even preparing for the tests or examinations. Then, misbehavior comes as an option to avoid failure and they start engaging in academically dishonest behaviors. In a number of studies conducted in Ethiopia, majority of university students claim they commit academic dishonesty because of time scarcity to read prior to examination. For example, Feday (2017), citing Jones (2001 & 2011) concluded that students' reasons for academic dishonesty was procrastination (80%). Mebratu (2016) also indicated that time scarcity accounts for 85% of the reasons for students' involvement in academic cheating. From this, one can deduce that there is a strong relationship between poor time management and academic dishonesty.

Problems of syllabus and course materials

Lack of need-driven curriculum, irrelevant course materials and repetitive syllabus seem to highly contribute to students' academic misbehaviors. Unless students' needs are properly addressed prior to or during curriculum design, it may be too difficult to manage learners' conduct with the knowledge expected to regulate such behavior. In his study, Wondifraw (2021) found that repetitive curricular content was one among the educational factors that led to the occurrence of academic dishonesty. Mebratu (2016), on the other hand, reported the irrelevance of course materials as one of the reasons that increased academic dishonesty among university students. His findings indicated that a significant number of respondents (78.3%) reported they were not comfortable with the course materials. By implication, this is to mean that courses should be designed with focus on students' needs and concerns so as to regulate their behavior and bring the required changes.

In terms of course management, the sooner the students are informed about the standards of behavior they are expected to adhere to, the greater the likelihood that they will internalize those standards (Perry 2010, in Keith, 2018). This may be one the of reasons why it is worth doing for teachers to dedicate a small portion of their syllabus to setting standards for codes of honor so as to maintain and sustain academic integrity. According to Keith (2018), setting the tone or standard for the course is important; this may include offering a clear definition of what constitutes academic integrity, the procedure one will pursue if he/she suspects that dishonest behavior has occurred, and the consequences/penalties that the wrongdoer may encounter.

In general, making one's expectations clear at the onset of the course helps build a strong relationship between the faculty and the students. The students will feel more comfortable coming to the faculty for help, and they will also understand the risks they would be running if they behaved dishonestly in the course, which can be a powerful preventive of academic misconduct. Similarly, studies suggest that the causes of academic dishonesty in the Ethiopian higher education institutions can be the lack of close academic contact and positive relationship between faculty and students (e.g., Feday, 2017).

Lack of adequate and clear policies in HEIs to prevent academic dishonesty

Inadequate policies and honor codes as well as students' lack of awareness of institutional regulations on academic misconduct may contribute to the prevalence of the problem in Ethiopian higher learning institutions. Here, the argument is that the root causes of academic dishonesty are grounded in the education system in which emphasis has not been given to establishing comprehensive honor codes by the concerned stakeholders (Tefera & Kinde, 2010). The authors suggested that it is important to establish academic integrity among university students and faculty members using different strategies such as having clear policy on academic dishonesty, making sure the policy is

discussed, and enforcing provisions of honor codes (Ibid,[5] 2010).Tefera and Kinde (2009) further indicated that instructors' behavior and institutional policy as well as its implementation are important factors that determine students' academically dishonest behavior. According to Bayaa Martin Saana *et al.* (2016), the dearth of research on academic misbehavior, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, makes it difficult for HE institutions, policymakers and teaching staff to determine the effectiveness of available measures, and what might be needed to improve the existing situations. For example, in Ethiopia, no published work has explored the possible link between students' awareness and understanding of institutional policies and the likelihood to engage in academic misconduct at a national level, but some HE institutions may have their own honor codes to manage academically dishonest misbehaviors.

Studies also indicated that less probability of being caught and the absence of serious punishment were the major reasons for engagement in academic cheating (e.g., Wondifraw, 2021). Students have thus developed negligence towards academic dishonesty. Therefore, it was suggested that school personnel look at the strength and application of their codes of conduct (Ibid).

Forms of academic dishonesty

When considering the causes of academic dishonesty, it is useful to examine how it is reflected or how it can be prevented. Studies suggest various forms of academic dishonesty which differ from place to place, institution to institution or country to country based on technological advancements. However, the most common forms of academic dishonesty are cheating and plagiarism with their achieving technological instruments. Similarly, in Ethiopia, academic misbehavior is manifested in the form of cheating in exams and plagiarism (assignments, term papers, senior essays, thesis, dissertations, online sources) in most cases (Feday, 2017; Mebratu, 2014).

Cheating

Educators often argue that cheating, one form of academic dishonesty, is not a new phenomenon. It is a malpractice or deception that has been prevalent in academic institutions since long time (2,000 years ago). It is a purposeful wrong doing for unfair advantage in assignments, exams and assessments. Cheating is manifested in many forms; this could include behaviors such as snatching another student's test during an exam, looking on the shoulder to copy answers from nearby student (s), giving or receiving answer keys through cellphone, attaching answer key to invigilators' cloth/gown or jacket so that he /she circulates it to the entire class or candidates, using hand/palm for short answers or formulas during exams or tests, using arms/legs or thigh (particularly for girls), using face masks as a means to import answers; damaging equipment so other students would not be able to use it (such as tearing parts of the book, writing on it hiding, stealing (Feday, 2017); smuggling an unauthorized material (piece of paper or *'aterera'* in some places) and copying from it; using online access with smart phone, using scientific calculators that can store formulae, fractions and texts, providing preloaded periodic table (highly advantageous for students taking science exams) (Mebratu, 2014) etc.

Although most of the studies on cheating were undertaken in western countries focusing on the prevalence, determinants, and a different definition of cheating, McCabe *et al.* (2001 in Wondifraw, 2021) concluded that academic cheating rate has been increasing over the past 30 years all over the globe. In Ethiopia, too, the rate of cheating has been increasing from time to time (Tefera & Kinde, 2009) albeit no or little data have been documented in the area. Mebratu (2016) conducted a study to assess the view of teachers and learners on the extent of the practice, features and causes of academic dishonesties in Hawassa University; he found that cheating was a severe challenge which exhibited the highest proportion rate among forms of academic dishonesty indicated in the study. Other locally conducted few studies, by one way or another, confirmed that academic cheating has become

a serious epidemic in the Ethiopian education system at all levels and is on the rise (Feday, 2017; Hailu, 2015; Mebratu, 2014; Tefera & Kinde, 2010; Wondifraw, 2021). In addition, the *Ethiopian Education Development Roadmap (2018-30) indicates* there is a prevalent cheating among students during exams and instructors fear aggressive evaluation from students, to properly assess students' performance, which is resulting in inflated grades (MoE, 2018).

On a simple survey of several universities in Ethiopia, Nelson *et al.* (2012, p. 71-2) also showed that students engage in examination malpractices and cheating of some kind in all institutions. They employ various tactics such as cheating in the examinations through importing pre-designed notes in a form of 'cassettes', notes written on the body and on the clothes into the examination rooms; copying from one another between students who, earlier to the exam, arrange to sit next to each other; sending/receiving SMS/telegram messages from cellphones and pre-programmed scientific calculators; visiting toilets to copy works already hidden, or jotting down notes or information on the desk or table that one regularly uses. For example, one of the students from Third Generation Universities was once asked by his invigilator to leave his original exam hall and move to the next hall because of the misconduct he has repeatedly shown; the student was not willing to accept the invigilator's order. However, finally, he reluctantly left the original hall with his arm-chair because he had written the necessary information on the chair before the exam commenced. Examination misconducts such as handling of missing marks, wrongly recorded marks, lost marks and non-existent marks; especially hiring someone else to do examination (re-take examinations) are becoming common. External assistance given to candidates by invigilators; obtaining examination questions before the exam date (through leakage); corrupt substitution of a new exam paper/booklet at a later time by internal examiners (by charging fees or gaining other benefits); bargaining for better marks with teachers by paying fee is becoming public secret in recent years. For example, the anecdotal evidence I had with my colleague in one of Third Generation Universities revealed that some M.A. or M.Sc. part time

students tried to manipulate instructors/examiners with incentives during their thesis defense. Such dishonest students request for examiners' bank account and try to negotiate for grades. Such attempts are unethical, manipulative and underhanded but many times they do work.

These research results indicate that the rate and the range of academic cheating in schools and colleges or universities have been increasing at an alarming rate than ever. The results presented above point out that cheating as an epidemic could not be cured but kept on spreading widely to the young generation in the educational institutions. Hence, institutions should play a pivotal role in creating awareness among students and faculty about existing academic rules and regulations and the importance of comprehending and abiding by the honor codes.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism, a widely researched area of academic dishonesty, emerged as a worldwide concept with the emergence of authorship, leading to ideas of copyright and intellectual property (Parnther, 2020). Plagiarism is an academic malpractice or deception that occurs when a person presents someone else's work or idea as one's own without duly acknowledging the work or idea. It is an academic theft the consequence of which can range from simple to serious punitive measures among the scientific community or via due process of legal system in academia or outside of it. For instance, citing Higbee & Thomas (2002), Meberatu (2014) defined plagiarism as an act that arises when a person uses someone else's ideas, words, phrases, sentences, or any kind of data as one's own work without the knowledge of the original author. He also stressed that:

> *"When submitting work that includes someone else's words, ideas, syntax, data or organizational patterns, the source of that information must be acknowledged through complete, accurate and specific references. All word for word statements must be acknowledged through quotation marks, unless,*

academic dishonesty comes as a practice in the academic
environment." (Ibid, p. 1060)

Plagiarism as one form of academic dishonesty, is also reflected in various ways. For instance, Feday (2017) indicated that academic misconduct of web-plagiarism is one of the most common forms that has become a concern of higher education institutions more than ever before. Some still claim that the Internet has made plagiarism easier because today it takes just a few keystrokes to copy and paste a few pages or a complete dissertation that Jones (2001 & 2011 in Ibid, p.16) calls "term papers mill".

Malpractices such as giving or receiving inappropriate assistance on any kind of assignment including those turned in for credit, submitting any materials without one's own research and writing (Mebratu, 2014), using the services of a commercial term paper company, using the services of another student and copying part or all of her/his document without the consent or proper recognition of the author and submitting it as your own for any sort of assignment or term paper (Mebratu,2014) all make plagiarism. Furthermore, inappropriate summarizing, paraphrasing, cutting and pasting; acting as a possessor of paper(s) for a student or students; resubmission of significant portions of the same academic work for credit for different courses without consulting (self-plagiarism); failing to properly acknowledge paraphrased materials via textual attribution; using footnotes, endnotes and bibliography and citing non-existent sources (articles, books, etc.) (Ibid); using one's own previous work or idea in new work without acknowledging oneself properly are all forms of plagiarism or academic misconduct. To touch upon a few findings of studies conducted in the Ethiopian context, Feday (2017) & Mebratu (2016) revealed that academic dishonest behaviors such as cheating on examinations and tests and written work plagiarism are the most prevalent ones. Even though experiences showed that cheating is rampant at all academic levels, plagiarism is quite common in higher education institutions.

Finally, the prevalence of unauthorized collaboration has been an issue in the university setting for many years. Unauthorized collaboration is a form of academic dishonesty in which students work together on an assignment without permission from their professor or instructor. This occurs when two or more students engage in a form of academic misconduct. Most universities have policies in place to discourage and punish students for engaging in unauthorized collaborations. However, in recent years, there has been an increase in the number of cases due to the availability of information technology and easy access to online resources. Empirical studies have examined potential consequences associated with engaging in unauthorized collaboration among university students. For example, one study found significantly lower grade point averages (GPAs) for students who engaged in forms of academic misconduct through unauthorized collaborations compared to those who maintained self-protection mechanisms such as choice strategies or reporting dishonesty when detected (Cardina et al., 2022). Another study suggests that student motivations for participating in unauthorized collaborations may be associated with increased stressors such as meeting expectations for high grades (Erguvan, 2022). At the same time, these unofficial collaborations can compromise learning opportunities- that is there may be decreased motivation to actually learn material designed for students.

Possible Strategies to Promote Academic Integrity in Ethiopian HEIs.

The problem of academic dishonesty is a complex phenomenon because its indicators might be triggered due to the influence of various factors. According to Tefera and Kinde (2009), promoting academic integrity requires comprehending the factors influencing academically dishonest behaviors. Hence, to cope with academic dishonesty, possible solutions should encompass wider perspectives and collaboration of various stakeholders within the institution and at national level. As educational institutions try to improve their services, it is important to know the attitudes, satisfactions, and outcomes of their students and

faculty (Neuhauser, 2004 in Demira & Kocabaús, 2010). Furthermore, [1] to build high academic integrity in HEIs, it is necessary to integrate different knowledge areas in a strategic way. Integrating such knowledge areas into achievable framework also requires the commitments and efforts of various bodies. Since one cannot attain academic integrity overnight to satisfy certain stakeholders, strategically designed continuous improvement and a thorough comprehension of an institution's current position and where it aims to be in the future is pivotal. For the matter of this review, two high level strategies are proposed tentatively based on the empirical findings of previous studies.

Proactive strategy

This refers to working and investing on promoting academic integrity in academic institutions through planned strategies and policies. Academic institutions, particularly universities, have to develop strong ties among one another to educate their young generation and faculty about the impact of academic integrity and the consequences it bears if breached. The consequences may not be a single 'break and fix', but may have individual, institutional and societal impacts. The responsibility to develop/promote a culture of academic integrity is not a duty given only to a single party, a team or an institution i.e., an individual, the faculty administrators or classroom teachers (Tefera &Kinde, 2009) or MoE, etc., but to all who directly or indirectly have a stake in the issue of academic integrity.

In addition, a strong awareness of the need for academic integrity and effective pedagogical practices in the classroom has a paramount importance across institutions so as to enhance academic integrity (particularly how to make use of academic resources both among students and faculty). Universities also need to strive to share their success factor/s (e.g., academic integrity maturity level) with other institutions and learn from one another through training, workshop programs, etc. on academic honesty policies and honor codes. In addition, universities need to regularly communicate and discuss with

students and faculty academic rules and regulations. They should encourage and involve students in decision making processes of their own learning such as curriculum design and policy formulation in a fair and transparent way.

Most importantly, professionally designed and institutionally organized trainings need to be provided for students on academic writing, the use of resources and ethical practices. Since majority of our students face a lot of challenges in using English language, which is the medium of instruction in the universities, attention should be given to the area. Universities should establish their own **Writing Centers** and train their students and faculty on academic writing to enhance academic integrity. Follow up and frequent supervision of individuals, groups and research works are also highly crucial (Tefera & Kinde, 2009), especially to avoid unintentional academic misconduct. Since proactive strategy may not be a panacea for academic misconduct on its own, a curative measure should be designed to control misbehavior.

Reactive strategy

'Morality cannot be legalized, but behavior can be regulated. Judicial decrees may not change the heart, but they can restrain the heartless.' Martin Luther King Jr.

Proactive strategy is used to anticipate constraints, threats and opportunities in the organization/institution so as to plan mitigation strategies whereas reactive strategy is used to deal with an unforeseen circumstance after it has occurred. Proactive strategy is then considered as the fine art to anticipating certain aspects and having contingency plan in place. However, it is always important to have reactive strategy if morality fails to control the 'heartless' as the above quotation by Martin Luther indicates. Hence, reactive/curative strategy is employed where academic codes of honor and ethical principles are intentionally ruptured, and when an individual fails to cope in moral and ethical ways.

Therefore, detecting and monitoring dishonest behavior, reporting[3] incidents of academic dishonesty to the concerned body, taking various measures at different hierarchical levels according to the established honor codes in case any breach of academic integrity occurs; transparently notifying and informing individuals who are found guilty of academic misconduct are some of the appropriate measures to control the problems (Tefera & Kinde, 2009).

Generally, both proactive and reactive strategies should be employed to sustain and maintain academic integrity in educational institutions. As a result, beginning from national strategy and policy formulation to the enforcement of institution-based academic honor codes, rules and regulations, all concerned parties should collaboratively play their roles. The implication is that the responsibility to develop a culture of academic integrity in education institution is not a task given to a single body but it is a shared responsibility of all who have a stake. Therefore, there have to be strong and coordinated efforts of all stakeholders in taking both preventive and reactive measures and promote academic integrity(Tefera & Kinde, 2009, 2010; Wondifraw, 2021).

Summary of Findings and Discussion

Summary of findings

This study aims to provide some insights into the practices of academic dishonesty among higher education students in Ethiopia. Hence, as indicated in the reviewed literature, academic dishonesty has become a threatening factor in Ethiopian higher education institutions from time to time. A total of 22 articles and working papers were reviewed out of which only six articles that focused on academic dishonesty among university students were critically synthesized. On review of the selected articles, high levels of academic dishonest behaviors such as cheating and plagiarism among university students were revealed. This means, of all the researches reviewed, at least each one had an aspect of either cheating or other forms of dishonest behaviors. The pertinent literature

reviewed revealed cheating methods to include traditional methods such as looking at someone else's work in exam or test, talking to another student sitting next to another student, preparing cheat sheets, and writing notes on the desk, on the arm, etc. in advance. In addition, technological techniques of academic misconduct were noted from the empirical evidences. Furthermore, literature revealed the major forms of cheating to be copying from pilfer notes as well as from other students. The leading factors influencing academic dishonesty include the strive for higher grade, inadequate syllabus design and course management, procrastination, lack of commitment for learning, peer pressure as well as pressure from parents and or guardians to perform well and lack of clear policies in HEIs to prevent academic cheating.

Moreover, academic dishonesty has become an alarming issue to all nations locally as well as globally. This may create an opportunity for countries and higher education institutions to design the way out from the problem strategically. Therefore, taking proactive and curative strategies by the concerned stakeholders so as to enhance academic integrity in educational institutions is inevitably crucial. This would help curb problems related to academic dishonest behaviors in educational institutions. The findings thus indicated that developing strategic collaboration among universities is of paramount importance to share academic integrity maturity levels or frameworks.

Summary discussion

To center discussion on academic dishonesty, the literature review conceptualized academic misconduct and dishonest behaviors within the Ethiopian context. The review study revealed high levels of dishonest academic behaviors among university students with varied causes. For instance, Mebratu (2014, 2016) found out common reasons to be engaged in academic misconduct. Among the reasons that enforced students to be engaged in such misbehaviors were the level of difficulty of test exam, course material irrelevance, pressure to get good grades, and lack of clarity on the policy. This compares to what other researchers

found globally at various times of their researches. While undertaking[5] their assessment and evaluation of higher education, Bennett and Team found a practice of highly increasing cheating and dishonesty (Bennett, 2005; Desalegn & Berhan, 2014; Rabi *et al.*, 2006). Correspondingly, a self-reported study on dishonest academic behaviors in Australian universities showed misbehaviors with a greater number of students as the students confirmed to have ever cheated academically in their course of university life (Marsden *et al.*, 2005). However, there was a contrast on the forms of academic dishonest behaviors revealed by this review (Mebratu, 2014).

This paper also presented a review of literature that included forms of academic dishonesty in higher education. Students are engaged in different forms of academic misbehaviors such as cheating and plagiarism (Feday, 2017). According to Feday (2017) and Mebratu (2014), academic cheating is manifested through traditional and sophisticated forms such as copying test responses from a classmate; taking exams for other people; taking exam home and purchasing research papers and presenting them as one's own work. On the other hand, students are now using cellphones to get the exam information, communicating with others outside the exam room to obtain answers, and searching for answers on the web during an exam. Such techniques are posing a new challenge to today's educators (Desalegn & Berhan, 2014; Wondifraw, 2021). Similarly, Waithaka & Gitim (n.d.) noted forms of academic dishonesty such as breaking the office or teachers file to access the test or answer key; sabotaging peer's ongoing work or gaining illegal access to school computer to change official grades are all forms of academic cheating. There are also many reasons that students give to justify cheating (Mebratu, 2016). Plagiarism is another form of academic dishonesty. Feday (2017) & Mebratu (2016) showed that academic dishonest behaviors such as cheating on examinations and tests and written work plagiarism are the most prevalent ones. Even though experiences showed that cheating is rampant at all academic levels, plagiarism is quite common in higher education institutions.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Academic dishonesty in higher education is an increasingly visible problem throughout the world in general and in Ethiopia in particular. The following conclusions are drawn based on the evidences gathered for the review. The findings revealed that academic dishonesty has become a widespread phenomenon in Ethiopian education system from lower levels up to higher education institutions. Some of the factors that contributed to the occurrence of academic dishonesty include lack of adequate and clear policies in HEIs, strive for better grade or performance, poor time management/procrastination, lack of well-articulated syllabus and curriculum that entertains academic integrity from the inception of the course, lack of knowledge of the institutions' academic rules and regulations both by the students and faculty, ignorance that academic cheating is an academic crime or its perception as an acceptable norm, lack of awareness of suspected incidences of academic dishonesty, and failure in discussing course polices for different purposes. The two most common forms of academic dishonesty, academic cheating and plagiarism, have been discussed in the review. Whereas cheating is prevalent at all levels of academic institutions, plagiarism is dominantly manifested in higher education institutions even globally. Both forms of dishonest behaviors are manifested in different ways depending on the context and technological advancement.

Then, mixed blessing coping strategies are proposed to sustain and maintain academic integrity in educational institutions. In proactive strategy, institutions gain much more from managing academic integrity proactively. Under this strategy, techniques and tactics are established in the way that institutions can build their academic integrity in a sustainable manner to achieve their mission and objectives. This requires the effort of different stakeholders to play their part in executing the strategy. On the other hand, institutions can set up regulatory

mechanisms that neutralize academically dishonest behavior. The[7] mechanism is called reactive strategy. If behaviors come out of agreed moral and ethical principles, it is mandatory for an institution to establish codes of conduct and react in that way. Even though this seems a loss to an individual as well as an institution, it is inevitable to deal with and fix the rules and ethics breached for existence of the organization.

Recommendations

The federal government, Ministry of Education, ESC, ENEAA, Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agencies should proactively provide oversight for and guidance in strengthening strategies, policies and procedures for academic integrity in HEIs. Research into and development of policies and systems for academic integrity should be established and encouraged through the provision of appropriate funds.

Based on evidences from this review particularly as related to the prevalence of academic cheating and plagiarism (particularly in HEIs), it is recommended that the Federal Ministry of Education should consider introducing legislation to make academic cheating illegal and a chronic cancer to quality education.

The federal government should consider engaging with (text matching/similarity checking) software companies to negotiate an affordable nationwide license for use across the higher education (HEIs) sectors, particularly to control plagiarism.

The Federal Education Ministry should facilitate communication between and among universities in the country so they learn from positive experiences and share mature academic integrity models that may effectively contribute to combating academic malpractice and corrupt behaviors.

In order to address the discrepancy in strategies and practices across different HEIs, the MoE should initiate the development and implementation of common institutional policies and systems, and guidelines for encouraging and upholding academic integrity. The responsible federal institutions should also facilitate and organize strong

communications among universities in a similar geographical area or cluster.

Sustainable training platform should be established for faculties, thesis or dissertation supervisors and invigilators so as to enhance academic integrity as well as professional skills. Invigilation processes must be delivered by academic staff (because in many HEIs, it is common to assign non-academic staff to invigilate) for no obvious reasons.

Regarding syllabus and course management or pedagogical practices, the institutions should encourage active learning by providing up-to-date learning experiences at all levels of study where critical thinking is valued. Then, teaching, learning and assessment become rewarding and inspirational. The curriculum should also be designed based on students dynamic learning needs and requirements but should not be imposed from the top. Further, institutions should encourage teachers to dedicate a small part of their syllabus to the provision of academic honesty.

HEIs should mobilize representatives of the student community as valued partners in the challenge to reduce all forms of academic dishonesty including cheating and plagiarism. Where software tools are acquired for supporting the detection of plagiarism, the institutions need to develop clear policies on how the tools should be deployed and provide guidelines for the interpretation and use of the outputs. The institutions should also consider establishing procedures to allow the reporting of cases of academic misconduct to enhance transparency when taking corrective measures.

Lastly, there should be an institution (preferably at higher level with clear mission and vision) that can carry out responsibility and accountability; hence, students and academics at all levels are guided and educated on matters of ethics, integrity, scientific and academic writing conventions, time management and appropriate use of academic sources.

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