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ASSESSMENT OF FACTORS AND IMPROVING CHEATING BEHAVIORS AMONG 2ND YEAR MEDICAL LABORATORY STUDENTS IN ADIGRAT UNIVERSITY TIGRAY, NORTHERN ETHIOPIA 2018

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ABSTRACT

Cheating during examination is now day serious problem make especially in Ethiopia where many students sit in one class to exam. When cheating occurs in medical schools, it has serious consequences for human life, social values, and the economy. Even though, cheating on exams has existed in any department, with unknown reason, prevalence of cheater among 2nd year laboratory students were high. So that assessing factors and improving cheating behavior of the students are mandatory to create competitive graduated students. To identify factors and to improve cheating behavior action research study design was conducted among 2nd year medical laboratory student. Criterion sampling technique was used to selects sixteen cheater students among 2nd year laboratory students. To gather necessary data, we used focus group discussions, individual interview, open-ended questionnaire and observation and collected information by using hand writing notes. During exam different cheating methods used by students like using a system of signals, writing on hands, desks and copy the other students answer. While the compelling reasons for cheating were like hard courses, hard exams, time pressure and fear of failure. To improve cheating behavior of the student's different action strategies were taken like prepared exam by using code, arrangement sitting style during exam and sit with brainy students during class, reading and discussion. Most students were trying to done exam by themselves but their results are not good as previously. So that, we need more future action plan to avoid cheating behavior of the students. During, the next action plan we will be taken the remaining main action strategies and action evaluation we will be expected 50% of participants will be avoided their cheater behavior and done exam independently without forced by the environment.

KEYWORDS: cheating behavior, cheating during exam,adigrat, Ethiopia, Tigray,2nd medical laboratory.

BACKGROUND

Cheating is defined as the students' use of illegal activities, techniques and forms of fraud during their examination or evaluation processes, usually for the purpose of achieving better grades (1). Cheating may occur in any course-work (e.g., home-work, research-assignments, projects, laboratory-reports), cheating in exams is a more-significant-problem, since it is the universal- benchmark-method of assessment in all the global-higher-educational-systems (2).

Cheating on examinations in academic institutions is a worldwide issue (3) because of compromises the quality of education (4). According to Donald McCabe and the International Center for Academic Integrity: 39% of undergraduate students admit cheating on a test, 62% of undergraduate students admit cheating on a written assignment, 68% of undergraduate students admit to cheating on either a test or written assignment.

Cheating during examination is now day serious problem especially in Ethiopia where many students sit in one class to exam. When cheating occurs in medical schools, it has serious consequences for human life, social values, and the economy (5).

Even though, cheating on exams has existed in any department, with unknown reason, prevalence of cheater among 2nd year laboratory students were high. This problem clearly observed during 1st semester of 2009 academic year final examination (6). Until know, Teachers assign to examine use different methods to minimize number of cheater but the cheater also use different tactic to cheating on examination. Medical laboratory science department teacher's discuss and exist mechanism to control cheater during, 2nd semester of 2009 academic year examination. This mechanism was classified the students into two groups depending on their grade that have in 1st semester 2009 academic year. But by this mechanism many students have complained and also resist entering the class during examination (5). In addition, students cheating by using unusual material like watches. This indicates, by this mechanism difficult to minimize the problem and needs other appropriate mechanism. To design appropriate mechanism and to minimize the problem or to reducing cheater first identify factors associated with cheating. So that the current study deal with asses' factors and improving cheating behaviors among 2nd year medical laboratory students in Adigrat University.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What factors force 2nd year medical laboratory students towards cheating?
2. What are the techniques used by 2nd year medical laboratory students during cheating in class room examination?
3. What intervention measures have been used to improve cheating behaviors among medical laboratory 2nd year students in Adigrat University College of Medicine and Health science?

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Action research study design was conducted from January to June 2018 2nd year medical laboratory sciences cheater students. Criterion sampling technique was used to select cheater students among 2nd year laboratory students. We were familiar with them so we could separate who is cheater and who is not cheater, most of the cheater students given the warning by different teachers. So the cheater students voluntarily participate in this study.

To gather the necessary data, we used focus group discussions (FGD), open-ended questionnaires, individual interview and observation. Focus group discussions help to develop discussion among group members, thus yielding a wide range of responses. The interviewers also collected information and writing notes.

Major Finding

total of sixteen respondents 11 males and 5 females' students participated in this action research.

The findings of the study can be put into three categories in relation to our three specific research questions that we found from the interview, observation and FGD. These data collection tools were used to answer the three specific research questions as much as possible.

At the initial stage of data analysis, first we transcribed data gathered interviews from Amharic into English; the transcribed data will be written under quotation and interpreted with thematic analysis.

Factors that force students towards cheating

- During FGD and interview students said that “there were many factors that force us to towards cheating”. Most of the participants said that “most of the time our reading style and the exam is not equivalent” in addition that “most of our exam is very difficult so we cheat to survive”. Moreover two female participants responded that “we couldn’t read all portion of the course due to shortage of time and leads to lack of confidence during exam”. On the other hand most of students said that “We couldn’t well understand during learning in the class” particularly, all female students’ participants said that “we couldn’t well understand molecular biology so forced to cheat”. Beside, few students said that “We develop cheating behavior before join in the university and just we accept as a normal behavior”. Moreover, most of students said that “our sitting styles during exam also enhance to cheat”. In addition most of the participants said that “most of our examination types are multiple choices and true false moreover, by different means if we not well prepared leads to cheating”. On the other hand one male student said that “If the examiner is careless I copy to get higher grade”. In addition most of students said that “If the examiners are not familiar with us it is also favorable condition to cheat”.

The techniques used during cheating in class room exam;

Large number of students during interview time said that “when one student asked the examiner and the attention of the examiner not with us so during this time we directly copy from other students answer”. Beside, most of female students responded that “We sit the back or in front of the class room and used short note with soft or with a piece of paper”. In addition one male student said that most of the time I sit in front of the class and used memory hold watch”. Most also said that most the time we use mobile message”. In addition few students respond that “By showing finger signs for example one finger represents A if 2 B and soon”. Generally all students used different techniques even in a single exam.

Action strategies to improve cheating behavior of students.

During FGD the participants said that “there are different action strategies to improve cheating behavior of the students”. Mainly teachers and students are responsible to apply action strategies.

Teacher’s responsibilities; most of the students said that “the instructor should check whether all students understand day to day session objective or not”. In addition, also most of the students said that “the exam should be prepared depending on the objective of the course”. Moreover, few students said that “Most of medical laboratory course are better if practical and theory part go ahead parallel”. Beside most of the students said that “The exam should be hold all types of exam type”. In addition, most of the students also said that “the examiner should be strictly follow up during exam and arrange sitting style like those students who haven’t cheating behavior should be sitting at the back and who have cheating behavior should be sitting in front of the classroom during exam”.

Student’s responsibilities; most of the students said that “we must accept cheating is guilty” in addition most of the students said that “we try to change reading style and create self-confidence when we do exam”. Moreover most of the students also said that “we cover all portion of the course and did exam independently”. Beside most of the students said that “we should discuss the difficult portion course with cleaver students” of students also said that “by writing short note on the disk and hands”. Also Most of students

CONCLUSION

The researchers depending on the finding concluded that most of the students using system signals, writing on hands and piece of paper, desks, soft and using memory hold watch, using a cell phone to text and also directly copy from other students answer were frequently cheating methods. While the most of complaining reasons for cheating were hard course, hard exam, fear of failure, for better grade, carelessness of the examiner, sitting style and exam type. These study findings were correlated with the most of similar studies done in different countries (11-14).

Actions Taken/Intervention

Half of students have cheating behavior in the class. Therefore there is a need to take an action to improve students’ cheating behavior in class room exam; even if, there are many action strategies, because of different reason we could only apply the following action strategies

- Students who haven’t cheating behavior were sitting at the back during exam and students who cheat from other students were sitting in front of the class during exam.
- Mix different department means 2nd year Medical laboratory students with 1st year midwifery during examination.
- We established examiner committee and these committees observed the exam and gave feed back to the instructor depending on standards. Like avoid ambiguous words, including different method of tests and so on.²⁷

- We used four types of code exam. This is because we prepared two types of code exam previously but not that much improve cheating behavior so that now we used four types of code exam.
- All students switched mobile and avoided any paper, soft around them and strictly observed if use any material like watch.
- Those students, who said we didn't understand some course, help them to sit with brainy students during class, reading and discussion.

Action evaluation

By applying the above actions during exam and results obtained by observation;

During the first mid exam: one student was shown aggressive behavior when he sit in front of the classroom. On the other hand most of students asked unnecessary question for the examiner.

During the second mid exam: only one student was avoided cheating behaviors and he done independently and got good results compare to pervious results. One student was leave from the university without any reason; this might be due to inability to survive independently. On the other hand, the other students were trying to done exam by themselves but their results are not good as previously.

Generally, by applying the above action strategies, our students cheating behavior were improved. But there is a need of more research and action to be undertaken to avoid cheating behavior of the students.

Abbreviations

FGD; Focus Group Discussions

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

The study was ethically approved by the Research and Ethical Review Board of Adigrat University institution and formal letter of permission was obtained from Adigrat University health Science College. Percipients were fully voluntary, and consent was obtained from each participants.

Consent to publish

Consent to publish is not applicable for this manuscript

-Availability of data and materials

The finding of this study is generated from the data collected and analyzed based on the stated methods and materials. All data are already found in the manuscript and there is no supplementary file. The original data supporting this finding will be available at any time upon request

- Competing interests

We declare that we have no competing interests

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Authors' contributions

ST and AD conceived and designed the study, wrote manuscript, GK, KT and TG critically revised the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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