
CAUSES OF CHEATING BEHAVIOR IN EXAMINATION AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Sabika Alisher Zaidi

Cooperative Lecturer,
Department of Education, Jinnah University for Women Karachi,
Sindh, Pakistan
Email: alisher2068@gmail.com

Hadiqa Khawaja

Research Scholar,
Department of Education, Jinnah University for Women Karachi,
Sindh, Pakistan
Email: hadiqakhawaja@gmail.com

Farheen

Research Scholar,
Department of Education, Jinnah University for Women Karachi,
Sindh, Pakistan
Email: farheen881@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Cheating in exams has now become a common practice in schools, especially among secondary school students. Students use unfair means to gain high scores in exams and to achieve more than they actually deserve. Students now-a-days will contribute more time in preparing cheating materials rather than to practice for exams. Teachers are the ones who are with the students throughout the academic year, thus having the more insight of as to what could be the possible reasons behind the unethical cheating behavior of secondary grade students. The present study is based on the quantitative research method with survey questionnaires to determine the teachers' perception of the major causes of cheating among the students of the secondary schools in Karachi. The result of the research study unfolds the fear of failing in exams to be the major reason of academic dishonesty among secondary school students. The research study also compares the three major factors (students, institution/teacher and peer/parent) to be involved in student's cheating behavior in some ways and marks the students' characteristics factor to be the main factor of students' exam malpractice. The implications of this research study can be used to develop suitable methods to minimize the cheating practice in secondary school student.

KEYWORDS

Cheating Behavior, Mal practices, Secondary school

INTRODUCTION

Cheating Behavior is one of the student's actions it is a serious problem of education system because this action makes students dishonest and students are being unable to do something better in future. Due to lack of learning and understanding of materials at lower level and depend on cheating habits students are not able to show good performance in higher studies and have faced difficulties in understanding of course materials . Some of the students that they are observed by teachers in class these students are weak in solving mathematical problems, vocabularies, grammatical mistakes, spellings mistakes, Theorems, numerical and sentence making in grade IX and X and also they are not good at experimental work due to cheating behavior and are not confident on themselves. They try to find the ways to solve problem. Some of the causes which are observed in cheating behavior are motivated by peer influence, educational anxiety, teacher's loose attitude, sitting arrangement and parents influence. "Studies have shown that students' perceptions of student-instructor relationships have an impact on admitted rates of cheating in the classroom (Stearns, 2001)." "It was found that a considerably small number of students reported their engagement in academic dishonest behavior, such as passing answers to others, cheating in preparing assignments (Imran Arshad, Hasan Zahid, Shumaila Umer, Sheeraz Yar Khan, Irshad Hussain Sarki, Muhammad Nauman Yaseen (2021) Academic Dishonesty among Higher Education Students in Pakistan". Working for the similar task in a group lead them towards dishonest behavior. Close friendships also encourage students to cheat from the answer script of neighboring friend.

Students have many anxieties with regards to exams like pressure by parents, teachers and schools to get position in class. They are running in the race of grades. Everybody want to achieve the highest grades by any means to please their parents. Most of the students know cheating practice is not a good habit for their educational and job career but they think it is very important thing for achieving good score in final result. They find it an easy route towards success. "Examination cheating has been treated as a more serious type of fraud compared with coursework cheating (Ashworth et al. 1997)." There are more chances of being caught during examination as vigilance is at peak during examination. Invigilators have full attention towards students attempting papers. There are punishments after being caught but still this is one of the most frequent source of cheating.

The study of cheating behavior among students is very important because it has a positive relationship between dishonest behaviors at workplace. Cheating behaviors are showing because of the need of secure good grades and secure themselves from

punishment and regression. Another factor is that they do not like or do not understand the class or topic or they think they can pass the examination when it comes by using traditional methods of cheating. One of the factors is they feel teachers did not give enough attention and time to complete the course and the course material is not clear in their minds. Cheating is not taken very seriously as a social problem because its consequences are not observed in near future but the impact in long run cannot be over looked as it leads to immoral behavior which becomes the basis for social corruption. The overall educational environment is directly effects with this immoral activity (McCabe, & Derinan, 1999).

Studies have shown that school leadership is of great importance for student outcomes (Låftman et al. 2017; Ramberg et al. 2018a, b), but that the effects should be understood as indirect since they are often mediated through, for example, the teachers' collegial work and the culture of the school as a whole (Muijs 2011). Teacher cooperation involves conditions for meeting and creating opportunities for communication, exchange of ideas, joint planning and collegial support, which is also a prerequisite for consensus on important educational and organizational issues (Ramberg et al. 2018b; Vangrieken et al. 2015; Van Waes et al. 2016). This is a very serious problem because when students observe their fellow students receiving high grades and achievements in work place they get demotivated. Demotivation leads them to dissatisfaction this paves the way for injustice and social discomfort. Teachers are best observer and know about their student's abilities and weakness very well they can be good respondents so study was conducted from secondary teachers of different secondary schools. This study based on secondary teachers experiences.

Theoretical framework

There are researches which takes the gender as a variable in studying the behavior of cheating. According to Whitley, 2001 both the genders male and female are involved in cheating. Female are less likely to involve in cheating than man. Different variables such as self-management, anxiety, accountability to the God, and being punished by authorities, have different impact on men and women to choose between cheating or no cheating. (Tibbetts 1999). Demographic factors have direct impact on cheating behavior. (Smith, 2002). There is a high probability of being caught in women than man. Probity and honesty are the factors that stop women take part in cheating behavior. (A. Hendershott, P. F. Drinan, and Cross, 1999). Gender effect positively the cheating behavior. (Jr. B. E. Whitley, A. B. Nelson, and Jones, 1999). D. L. McCabe and L. K. Trevino (1997) explores from 1793 students of 9 different universities that not only the collective factors but also the individual factors like GPA, gender, and age effect the cheating behavior. Ball, Bowen, Kristi Brown, and Dumbell, (1997) explore how does the student justify their cheating behavior through a questionnaire. The study reveals that in the perception of only 5 per cent students cheating is an unwelcomed

action in every circumstances whereas 50 per cent students answered that they willingly cheat in order to get good marks and maintain their results. S. Tang, and J. Zuo (1997) studied the features of students likely to cheat in exams He used a questionnaire to inquire from 282 students of different classes to respond their questionnaire. The results showed that 39 per cent of students caught cheating. 69 percent of the caught children used cheating more than once. Male students were high in number involved in cheating. Those already enjoying high GPA were less likely to participate in cheating.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cheating is a serious societal and institutional issue. Academic dishonesty is strongly prohibited in educational community because it is effected students overall behavior and their abilities. They have not enough knowledge and understanding to achieve life goals such as higher studies and getting job due to poor understanding and weak concept they are not able to give satisfactory performance in practical life and then they will face disappointment. These behaviors not only affect student's personal goals and life it also affect nation development. All the educational stakeholders of Pakistan are agreed that cheating is a challenging issue of our educational system. "Cheating is considered a deplorable act, and there are even "fatwas" or religious decrees about it. For example, one religious figure considers it "haram" or a sin. Some religious figures even consider the degree offered to the person to be "haram" and maintain that the certificate obtained as a result of cheating should be rescinded. According to Ayatollah FazelLankarani, "It is legally forbidden" ("Legal Sentence for Cheating in Exams," 2020 Mohammad Salehi I and SamanehGholampour).

Peers or class fellow influence is the common factor of cheating practice of any students. If friends in their friends group are choosing exams cheating, then morally weak students do the same practice. It is observed that students learn different habits from their parents and home environment not only about their studies but also in terms of life skills like honesty in their work. Cheating habit is more likely to happen due to parental pressure to secure high grades. "I don't think there's any question that students have become more competitive, under more pressure, and, as a result, tend to excuse more from themselves and other students, and that's abetted by the adults around them," said Donald L. McCabe, a professor at the Rutgers University Business School, and a leading researcher on cheating." Donald L. McCabe (2012) THE NEW YORK TIMES".

Cheating behavior is compromises student's social, professional and financial career is a serious problem that concern most of the academic organizations of Pakistan. One of the factors is poor teachers and teaching environments, secondly the lacks of educational infrastructure like unavailability of lab, library, and small class rooms.

“While individual characteristics and influences from the family can increase a student’s incentives to cheat, the contextual conditions offered by the school can also be more or less favorable for acting upon such incentives” (Nilsson et al. 2004). “It is a matter of fact that students are more likely to cheat when they perceive the risk of being detected as slight, and when the consequences of potential detection are regarded as low (Bisping et al. 2008; Cizek 1999; Gire and Williams 2007; McCabe and Trevino 1993; Whitley and Keith-Spiegel 2002).” “For instance, schools with clearly formulated rules against cheating tend to have lower rates of such behaviour (McCabe and Trevino 1993; McCabe et al. 2001). The school’s ability to detect and impose penalties for students who cheat is of course also important (McCabe et al. 2012).” “One of the most influential contextual factors for cheating is the extent to which students perceive that their peers cheat (McCabe et al. 2012), that is how normalized such behaviour has become at the school. Normalization of cheating is when a permissive culture is developed through a shift in the collective attitudes of the students, whereby cheating is increasingly viewed as less blameable and morally wrong the more often individual students perceive that their peers cheat (McCabe et al. 2012; O’Rourke et al. 2010).” “Previous research has shown that schools with a strong focus on competition and achievement tend to invoke an increased amount of cheating among its students (Anderman and Koenka 2017; Anderman and Midgley 2004), whereas schools that emphasize the value of learning itself tend to display a lower amount of cheating (Miller et al. 2007). Taken together, the school’s culture, or ethos, appears to have a crucial impact on students’ inclination to cheat.” “Negative evaluations of the instructor were significantly linked with committing academic dishonesty while students who did not admit to committing academic dishonesty were associated with more positive instructor evaluations (2001).”

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. What is the main reason behind the practice of cheating in examination among secondary school students, according to teachers?
2. Which factor is strongly involved in cheating behavior of students and which factor students’ characteristic, institution/teacher factor, peer / parental factor) has more influence than others?
3. Which factor is not strongly involved in cheating behavior of students and has less influence than other factors?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study for finding the major cause of academic dishonesty was conducted by quantitative research method. The research study was conducted on sample size of 50 secondary school teachers in selective private schools of Karachi. Among the 50 participants of this research study, the qualification of 29 secondary teachers was graduation. 16 of the participants had Master’s degree while 6 of the teachers had an

M.Phil. Degree. In the present study, 18 participants were in the age range of 20-30, 13 participants were aged between 31-40, 10 participants were in the age range of 41-50 and the ages of the remaining 9 participants was above 50 years. The survey questionnaire consisted of two sections as A and B. Section A consisted of demographic details with the school's name, qualification, age, class and subject. Section B consisted of 30 possible reasons of academic dishonesty by students under three main constructs. These three main constructs, as mentioned in the introduction section were: 1) Student factor 2) Institution/teacher factor and 3) Peer/parental factor. Each factor consisted of 10 items as the possible factor of cheating in exams. The respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement against each item being the cause of cheating in exams.

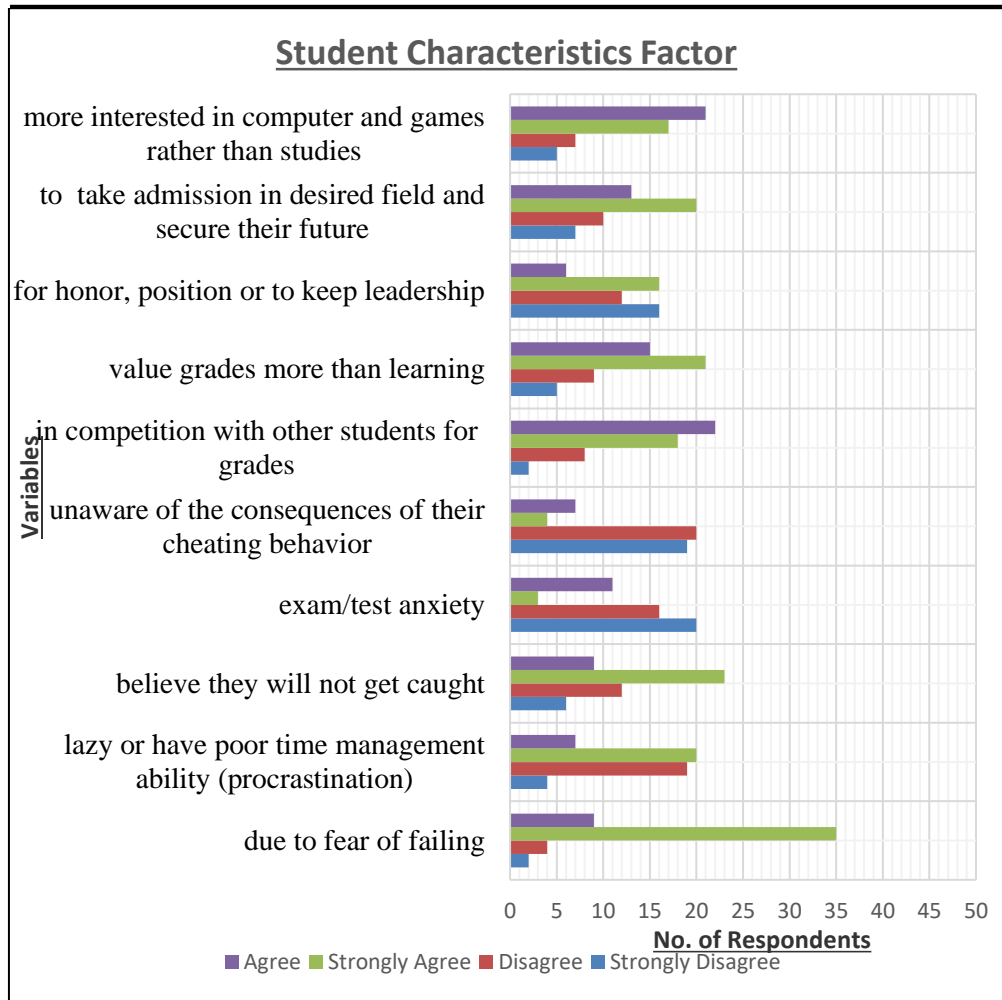
DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Table 1: *Constructs of causes of cheating behavior of secondary school students*

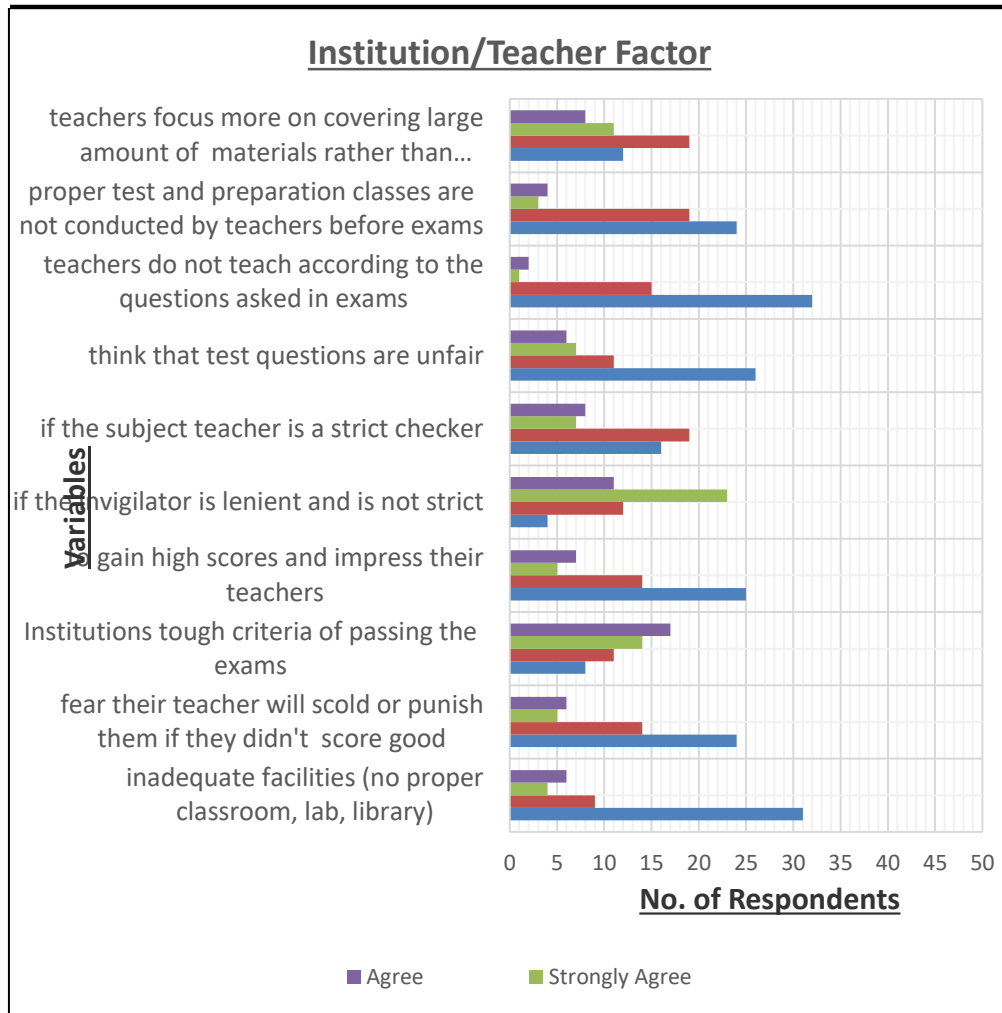
Constructs	Items
Student Characteristics Factor	10
Institution/teacher factor	10
Peer/parental factor	10
Total	30

The data obtained in the research study revealed the student factor to be the major reason of cheating among secondary school students in exams, thus answering the research question, "what teachers think is the main cause of secondary school students' cheating behavior in exam? The student' factor leads all the rest factors stated in the study by obtaining the highest frequency of agreement by the teachers (Average=148.5). Among the items of student's factor, the variable "Students cheat due to fear of failing" was found to be the major reason of cheating practice of secondary school students (Strongly agreed=35).

According to teachers, the second main reason of cheating among student factor was "Students cheat because they believe they will not get caught" as it was strongly agreed by 23 teachers. Another variable "Students are likely to cheat when they have to take admission in desired field and secure their future" was strongly agreed by 20 numbers of teachers, whereas the variable "Student cheat when they are in competition with other students for grades" was agreed by 20 numbers of teachers. The average of strongly agree and agree in students' factor was calculated to be 148.5 while the calculation of an average of strongly disagree and disagree in students' factor was 101.5.

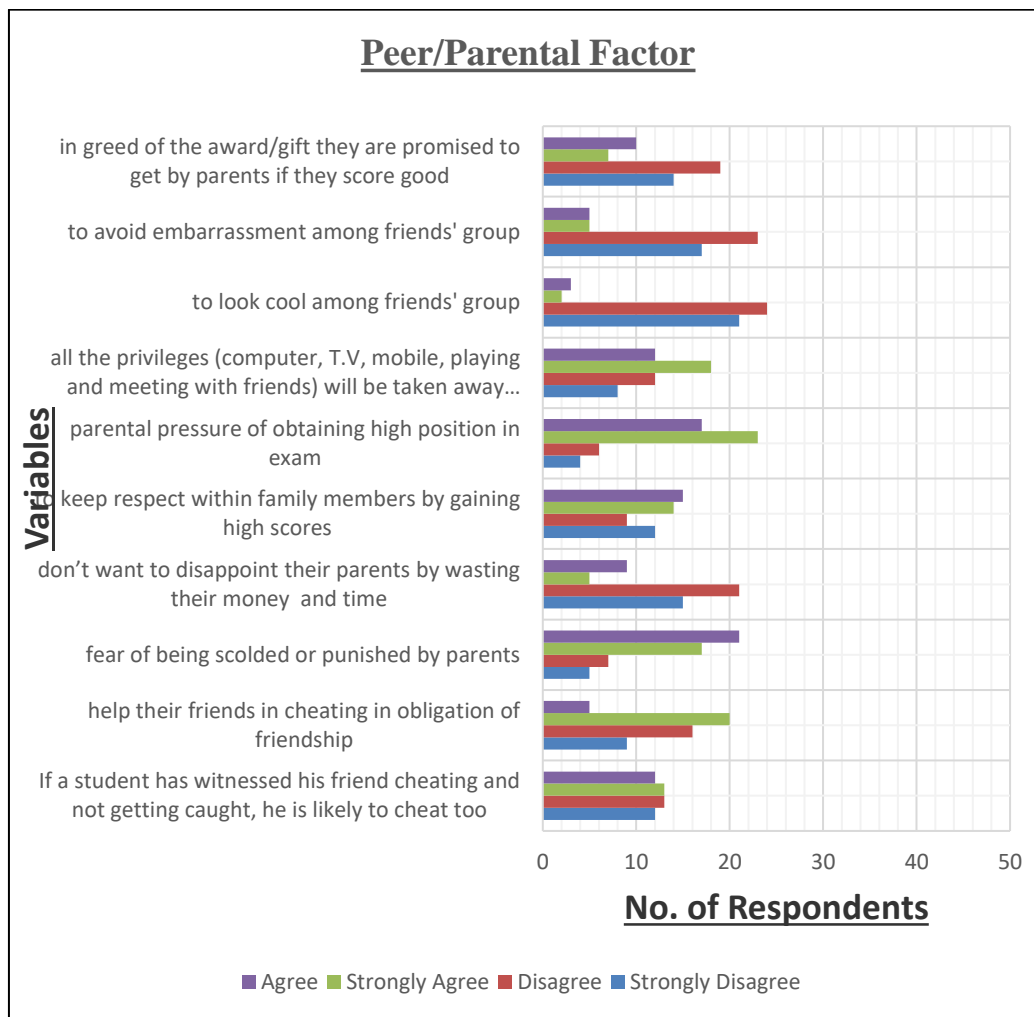


Among the institution/teachers’ factor, the most strongly agreed variable was “Students are more likely to cheat if the invigilator is lenient and is not strict” (Strongly agreed=23). The variable “Institutions tough criteria of passing the exams influence the students to cheat” was found to be second most strongly agreed item by teachers among the institution/teacher’s factor (Strongly agreed=14). The average of the strongly agree and agree in institution/teacher’s factor was calculated to be 77.5 while the average of strongly disagree and disagree in institution/teacher’s factor was calculated to be 172.5.



Analysis of the variables of peer/parental factor showed the statement "Students cheat because of parental pressure of obtaining high position in exam" is considered as the main reason of cheating among secondary school students by the respondent teachers (Strongly agreed=23). The second most strongly agreed variable by teachers in peer/parental factor was "Students help their friends in cheating in obligation of friendship", strongly agreed by 20 number of secondary teachers. It was found that the variable "Students cheat due to fear of being scolded or punished by parents" was also considered as an important reason by teachers for students' malpractice in exams as it was agreed by The average of strongly agree and agree in the peer/parental factor was calculated to be 116.5 while the average of strongly disagree and disagree in the

peer/parental factor was calculated to be 133.5.



DISCUSSION

The research on determining the main causes of cheating behavior in exams in secondary school students collects the views of the secondary school teachers and analyzed which variable was highly rated the secondary school teachers, thus leading to the following major findings and thus answering the research questions. Detailed discussion can provide a better understanding as to why the variable highly agreed by teachers is an important cause of secondary school students' cheating in exams. Through the results of the research data, it has been observed that the major reason

leading to the academic dishonesty among the secondary school students is the fact that they have a deeply developed fear of failure in exams, due to which by any cause, i.e. cheating, they try to clear their examinations. Researchers have shown that the fear of failing in exams is developed by the pressure put by parents, family, teachers and society on students that declares student to be unacceptable if failed that ultimately develops a thought of not affording failure in exams making students to commit fraudulent ways of passing their examination. The pressure exerted by parents, teachers and family is proved to be a strong cause of academic malpractice among secondary school students in the current study too as in the present study the secondary school teachers highly agree with the fact that the “Students cheat because of parental pressure of obtaining high position in exams” and “Students cheat due to fear of being scolded or punished by parents” as both the variables indicate the importance of parental obligation of scoring high ranks in exams.

The answer to the first question of the research study “What is the major reason of secondary school students’ cheating behavior in exams?” is the fear of failure in examination in students. The answer to the second question of the research study, “Which factor is the major cause of secondary school students’ cheating behavior in exams?” is that the students’ personal characters is the major factor of secondary school students’ cheating behavior in exams. This proves that the students’ personal characters shapes his behavior and has a huge impact on his decision of cheating in exams. It is also observed that the pressure of scoring high marks by parents and teachers can make the student to develop deceitful habits in studies and this could lead to student believing that grades are more important than the purposeful learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To overcome the cheating culture among students it is essential need that they should be properly counseled and the guidelines regarding examination should be given by the teachers to enable them to learn without the fear of failure in exams.

Parents should be given an opportunity by the administration to be aware of academic potential of students by conducting meetings so there will be no pressure from parents on the students to be high achiever in the exam because this may also make students to opt for unfair means

Strict vigilance from teachers is required. For this purpose teachers should be properly trained and supported by the school administration.

Use of different tools of assessment and evaluation for examining the student’s performance are recommended to make sure that every student will get chance to show their potential.

Students should be properly aware that how they are going to be prepare themselves for exams throughout the year i.e. required timings regarding exam preparation, academic progress, personal and social activities and before and during papers all the

unnecessary activities should be cut down by the students so they can focus more on studies and there will be less chances of cheating during exams.

Papers, Mocs, Tests should be aligned with the standard pattern and concern board so the students become aware how to appear in the exam and get good marks.

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