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	<p>RESEARCH ARTICLE </p>
	<h2 style="text-align: center;">Cheating in University Examinations: A Comprehensive Analytical Study of Causes, Forms, Consequences, and Preventive Strategies in Higher Education Institutions</h2>
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<p>Keywords</p>	<p>Academic integrity; University examinations; Cheating behavior; Electronic cheating; Higher education ethics; Assessment practices.</p>
<p>Abstract</p>	<p>Cheating in university examinations has become a critical challenge facing higher education systems worldwide, as it directly undermines academic integrity, devalues educational outcomes, and weakens societal trust in academic institutions. The rapid expansion of higher education, coupled with technological advancements, has contributed to the emergence of new and complex forms of cheating that extend beyond traditional methods to include sophisticated electronic practices. This study aims to explore the phenomenon of cheating in university examinations through a comprehensive analytical approach. The research is structured into three main sections. The first section presents the methodological framework, outlining the objectives, importance, and scope of the study. The second section develops the theoretical framework by reviewing conceptual definitions of cheating, examining its causes, types, stages, and consequences at the individual, institutional, and societal levels, and analyzing relevant previous studies. The third section focuses on preventive and corrective strategies, proposing a set of practical measures aimed at limiting the spread of cheating and reinforcing a culture of academic integrity within universities. The findings highlight that cheating is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by academic pressure, insufficient student preparedness, weaknesses in curricula and teaching methods, institutional practices, peer influence, and the misuse of modern technology. The study concludes that addressing cheating in university examinations requires an integrated approach combining pedagogical reform, institutional regulation, ethical awareness, and technological control mechanisms to promote fairness, credibility, and quality in higher education.</p>
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Introduction:

The phenomenon of cheating in the university environment is one of the most prominent challenges facing the educational system worldwide. It represents a negative behavior that threatens the values of academic integrity and weakens the quality of educational outcomes. With the advancement of technological means and the expansion of higher education, this phenomenon has taken various forms, ranging from traditional methods such as cheat sheets and writing on desks to electronic cheating via smartphones and the internet.

These practices have become a reflection of a set of intertwined factors ; some are related to the student himself, such as poor academic achievement and the desire for quick success, while others are related to the university environment, including curricula, teaching methods, and administration. Additionally, the influence of peer groups and pedagogical conditions that may encourage cheating also play a role. The impact of this phenomenon is not limited to academic results alone but extends to affect moral values, society's trust in its educational institutions, and the university's ability to prepare genuine competencies capable of facing labor market challenges.

Hence, the importance of studying university cheating emerges as an educational and social issue that requires research and analysis, not only to understand its causes and forms but also to develop practical strategies, to reduce it and build an academic culture based on integrity, seriousness, and commitment.

Based on the above, this research paper aims to answer several fundamental questions about the nature, causes, and forms of cheating, as well as its impact on the quality of higher education. Is the spread of cheating due to students' lack of preparedness and psychological pressures ? Or is it due to shortcomings in curricula and teaching methods ? Or is it the result of the absence of a strong institutional culture of academic integrity ? And how has modern technology contributed to reshaping this phenomenon through electronic cheating ?

First: The Methodological Framework of the Research:

1 - Importance of the Research:

The importance of this research is evident through the following:

- Alerting students to the dangers of cheating, emphasizing that it is ineffective, socially unacceptable, religiously forbidden, and ethically wrong.
- Cheating has become an escalating and alarming phenomenon, necessitating its study in terms of defining it, presenting its negative effects on both students and society, and proposing some preventive measures.
- Confronting the phenomenon of cheating in exams, especially in the university environment, which is supposed to be a high-level setting where students rely on self-development rather than illegitimate methods to obtain grades and advance from one level to another with almost nonexistent knowledge acquisition.

2 - Objectives of the Research:

This research aims to:

- Understand the phenomenon of cheating from various perspectives presented in theoretical and research literature.
- Identify the causes leading to cheating in university exams.
- Recognize the types of cheating in university exams through the means used (traditional, electronic).
- Identify preventive measures against the phenomenon of cheating in university exams.

Second: The Theoretical Framework of the Research:

1 - Definition of cheating:

- **Haidar (2002)** defines it as the act committed by a student to transfer information through cheating aids during an exam in order to obtain a passing grade or higher grades without legitimate right. Cheating includes several concepts such as forgery, deception, misleading, and fraud to obtain material or moral gain without legitimate right (Ahmed Saif Haidar, 2002, p. 288).

- **Al-Amayreh (2007)** defines it as the student's practice of one or more types of behavior during the exam that indicate undesirable conduct according to the social standards in which the individual lives (Mohammed Mohsen Al-Amayreh, 2007, p. 166).

- **Fattalawi (2006)** defines academic cheating in tests and homework as the learner obtaining ready answers from a peer or another source for the purpose of passing assigned tasks or requirements without effort or diligence, which leads to weak academic achievement (Suhaila Mohsen Kazem Fattalawi, 2005, p. 506).

- **Al-Maaytah (2005)** defines it as an unethical behavior performed by an untrustworthy or unsound psyche, making the person unfit to undertake any societal task regardless of its type: political, administrative, social, or educational (Abdul Aziz Al-Maaytah, 2005, p. 63).

- **Cheating from a psychological perspective:** According to this perspective, cheating is defined as unethical and non-educational behavior, reflecting an unsound or immature personality characterized by fear, anxiety, helplessness, passivity, dependence, weak willpower, and low self-confidence. In this sense, "Bakish" defined cheating as behavior aimed at falsifying reality to achieve illegitimate material or moral gain or to satisfy a psychological need.

- **Cheating from a sociological perspective:** According to this perspective, cheating is considered a deviant social phenomenon because it deviates from the social norms and values established by society, and due to the negative effects it clearly reflects on the social aspects of life in society and its systems and institutions. (Nawal Bouta, 2018, p. 460)

- **From the perspective of Islamic law:** Allah Almighty has condemned cheating and those who engage in it in the Quran, threatening them with woe and destruction, because it contributes to the corruption of society and the loss of the foundations and elements of civilizational and scientific development. This is understood from His saying: "Woe to those who give less [than due], who when they take a measure from people, take in full, but when they measure or weigh for them, they cause loss." (Al-Mutaffifin: 1-3)

- **From the perspective of education and teaching:** Cheating is when a student shows a correct answer in writing, speech, or action that he obtained during the exam by an illegitimate method. (Mohamed Ibrahim Hassan Ahmed, 2021, p. 110)

From the previous definitions, we can say that academic cheating is an illegitimate behavior in which a student obtains information or answers during exams or while performing assignments by illegal or unethical means, such as copying from peers or using hidden aids, with the aim of achieving success or obtaining... Higher grades without exerting the required effort. This behavior is viewed from multiple perspectives; in educational research, cheating is considered a weakening of the essence of the educational process and academic achievement, while psychology sees it as a reflection of an immature personality characterized by anxiety, weak willpower, and low self-confidence. Sociology regards it as a deviant social phenomenon that violates values and norms and leaves negative impacts on society and its institutions. In Islamic law, it is forbidden and condemned due to its severe consequences in corrupting society and undermining the foundations of its development. Thus, academic cheating represents an unethical behavior that threatens both the individual and society, destroying and hindering the goals of education based on honesty, perseverance, and seriousness.

2 – Cheating in exams from the perspective of some previous studies:

- **Ahmed Falouh's study (2018):** This study aimed to identify students' opinions towards the phenomenon of cheating in the university environment and to examine the impact of variables such as gender, level, specialization, and university institution on the sample individuals' views on cheating. To achieve the study's objectives, we followed the descriptive method and used a questionnaire as a data collection tool applied to a sample of university students. The study yielded the following results: There is a high degree of cheating in the university environment according to the students' point of view. There were no statistically significant differences between students' responses based on the variables of gender and specialization. Statistically significant differences were found between students' responses based on the variables of specialization and university institution.

- **Study by Hajar Nesrine Marzouki and Zahia Jaballah (2021):** This paper aims to understand the reality of electronic cheating in exams among students by identifying the methods used for this purpose, the nature of the subjects in which they cheat, and the effects of this practice on the results obtained and on the student's feelings after cheating, in addition to revealing the contribution of pedagogical factors and peer groups in encouraging this practice. Our research relied on the descriptive-analytical method, which allows for describing the phenomenon of cheating in exams and interpreting this phenomenon by revealing its relationship with other variables. We also relied on a sample consisting of 105 students from the University of Algiers from various disciplines who had previously engaged in cheating. We found that the most commonly used tool is the smartphone, by recording photos, texts, and videos related to the subject matter being tested, alongside relying on internet services. This contributed to expanding the group of those practicing cheating in exams through modern methods across various university disciplines, especially when pedagogical conditions and supportive peer groups are present.

- **Study by Kamelia Qarnan (2022):** This study aims to shed light on the reality of education quality amid the spread of the phenomenon of cheating, which negatively affects the effectiveness and efficiency of students. Cheating is a widespread social phenomenon. It takes various forms, and cheating in university exams has become a normal and accepted matter, turning into a common habit among the vast majority of students. However, it remains an educational disease that corrodes the academic body. The results of this study show that the factors behind the spread of cheating within the university environment vary from one student to another for several reasons, including "academic factors, social factors, and personal subjective factors."

- **Study by Naeem Bouamoucha (2022):** This study aimed to identify the causes and forms of the phenomenon of cheating in exams from the students' perspective, through a study on a sample of students from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Jijel University. The researcher used the descriptive method and a questionnaire tool to collect data from 220 students. The study reached a set of results, the most important ones are: the reasons for cheating in exams related to the student ranked first, followed by reasons related to curricula and university administration in second place, and then reasons related to the professor in third place. As for the forms of cheating in exams from the students' point of view, they mainly include writing on the desk, using small pieces of paper, writing on the palm of the hand, using communication devices such as phones, earphones, writing on the wall, looking at a colleague's answer sheet, writing on school supplies (calculator, ruler, ...etc.), opening notebooks or using printed lesson materials, talking with colleagues, and using hand signals.

Commentary on Previous Studies:

Based on what these studies have presented, we can say that cheating in the university environment is a widespread and complex phenomenon, whether traditional or electronic. It is not an individual behavior but the result of the interaction and influence of many factors including the student, the institution, the professor, technology, and modern tools (smartphones and the internet), which have contributed to expanding the scope of cheating. What is noticeable in previous studies is that they provided a chronological development revealing the shift of cheating from traditional means (notes, writing on the hand) to electronic means (phones, internet), reflecting the negative impact of the digital age on education.

In this way, it can be said that these studies complement each other: the first reveals the spread of the phenomenon, the second clarifies its electronic development, and the third and fourth explain its causes, forms, and factors. The final conclusion is that cheating at university is not merely a behavioral problem but an educational and social issue that requires comprehensive solutions.

3 - Causes of Cheating:

Cheating has many causes, including the following:

- University exams rely solely on memorization and recall of lessons, especially in literary disciplines.
- Weak personality and laziness, where the cheater lacks confidence in their ability to pass exams through their own effort.
- The student's failure to study and familiarize himself with the material that will be tested.
- Weak social upbringing (family, school, culture).
- Some professors, during the grading process, rely on the principle of "my goods are returned to me."
- The large number of lessons makes university students feel overwhelmed and find it difficult to review and understand them within such a short period.
- The strong attachment to grades and their social role through boasting and pride among families and learners has led many parents to threaten their children with punishment and revenge if they do not achieve the highest grades and best results.
- The leniency of some professors and teachers towards cheating attempts and the collusion of others with them during exam supervision.
- The strictness of some professors in grading excessively and unrelated to objective evaluation, such as setting a minimum grade threshold. (Kamilia Qarnan, 2022, p. 5).

4 - Stages of cheating development leading to electronic cheating:

Hajar Ali Abdul Aziz Mohamed Ahmed, and others (2021: 202) divided cheating into four stages according to age groups:

4 - 1 - The stage of innocent or random cheating from ages 1 to 7:

This can be identified in the preschool or kindergarten stage, where the child has little experience and not many trials. Therefore, the student at this stage does not know the complex methods of cheating, nor understands the meaning of cheating itself, and if he performs any such act, it is done innocently and unintentionally, by spontaneously imitating another classmate.

4 - 2 - The Stage of Innocent Cheating (Ages 8-12):

This stage can be identified in primary education, where the student does not have a real understanding of electronic cheating, its techniques, and modern technological means. However, cheating at this stage may appear as the student copying homework from a classmate without realizing that what he is doing is wrong and has negative consequences. This innocent form of cheating does not last long; it will develop and take other forms. By the end of primary education, the student cheats in simple ways, which may be verbal, physical, or written.

4 - 3 - The Stage of Personal Cheating (Ages 13-18):

This stage can be identified in preparatory education, characterized by instability as the student's personality is being formed. The student resists and rebels against anything he dislikes. This stage is also known as adolescence, where the student cheats to prove he is the smartest among his friends or due to family circumstances that prevent him from studying and continuing education. At this stage, the student desires to experiment and see the results of this behavior. If the behavior fulfills his desires, he continues it, and it becomes part of his personality, which he follows and resorts to later.

4 - 4 - The Stage of Organized Cheating (Ages 19 and above):

This stage can be identified in secondary and university education, where the student cheats in an organized manner to achieve a specific goal without fear of rules or regulations and without shame or embarrassment. After previously copying from a classmate, the student now practices electronic cheating, mastering the latest cheating methods by exploiting the modern technological devices he has.

While Abdul Aziz Al-Maaytah (2005: 37) provided another classification of the stages of forming the habit of cheating, which are as follows:

4 - 5 - The Stage of Aimless Cheating:

Also called the stage of childish cheating, in this stage there is no clear goal behind the act of cheating, and the process is neither organized nor premeditated.

4 - 6 - The Stage of Occasional Cheating:

At this stage, the student resorts to cheating in some situations or exams but not others. This behavior is related to difficult family environmental circumstances that push the individual to think about cheating or resort to it temporarily to fulfill certain needs. At this stage, the habit of cheating spreads in most areas of the individual's life outside school or university.

4 - 7 - The Stage of Experimental Cheating and Forming the Habit of Cheating:

This stage usually appears among high school and university students, where the student has reached an advanced stage of study that is more difficult and complex, as well as a stage of experience, maturity, and awareness that makes him better understand the meaning of cheating. The student uses cheating as a means to succeed in most subjects they study.

5 - Types of Cheating according to the Means Used:

5 - 1 - Traditional Cheating:

This relies on old methods of cheating such as paper notes, writing on the desk, ...etc. (Hajar Ali Abdul Aziz Mijammad Ahmed, Ahmed Hussein Abdul Maati, and Ahmed Mohamed Al-Sanman Ismail, 2021, p. 204)

5 - 2 - Electronic Cheating:

With the advancement of modern technology and various communication methods, electronic cheating methods have evolved and diversified. Among these methods are:

5 - 2 - 1 - Smartphones, also known as mobile phones, cell phones, or portable phones, which resemble small computers. Their features include the ability to connect with others, talk to them, even see them, send messages, browse networks, dual photography, and swipe pages by touch. Smartphones are considered one of the most prominent electronic cheating tools used by students in university exams.

5 - 2 - 2 - Electronic Watches: Electronic watches function as internet-connected computers and are among the electronic devices used for cheating in university exams. They are characterized by many practical functions and can be used quickly and smoothly with Bluetooth-enabled earphones.

5 - 2 - 3 - Bluetooth Earphones: These are earphones usually hidden under clothing, with females being the most frequent users of these earphones.

5 - 2 - 4 - Wireless Earphones: These are tiny electronic devices used for cheating during exams. Typically, a university student places a small, skin-colored earphone in the ear. Upon entering the exam, the student receives answers from a colleague or someone outside the exam hall who is familiar with the exam questions.

5 - 2 - 5 - Medical Glasses: These are glasses equipped with an ultra-small wireless earpiece matching skin color, with a video camera in the middle that is very difficult to see. When a university student enters the exam, the video camera transmits what is read on the question paper to another person outside the exam via a smartphone, who then searches for the answers and feeds them back through the wireless earpiece.

5 - 2 - 6 - Laser Pens: These are pens that write with invisible ink on papers, clothes, and even the body, where the writing only appears when illuminated by laser light. (Nawal Bouta, 2018, pp. 461-462)

6 - Results and Dangers of Cheating in Exams:

The phenomenon of cheating represents a social and educational problem, whose dangers manifest in several aspects, including the following:

- Cheating is an unhealthy social phenomenon that may affect the student's behavior, extending to various aspects of their future life and influencing his relationships and effectiveness as a citizen.
- Cheating instills in students a tendency not to rely on himself and to resort to deviant means to compensate for the lack of self-effort required to achieve the desired academic level.
- The cheater deceives others by obtaining high grades that are not rightfully his, meaning he relied on an illegitimate method to acquire knowledge, thereby undermining the meaning of the grading system and leading to misleading results.
- The spread of cheating in exams provides us with unrealistic returns and a false image of educational outcomes, resulting in the graduation of inadequately prepared individuals, which negatively impacts their performance in various work fields throughout society.
- The phenomenon of cheating, as a form of betrayal, contradicts the value of honesty, which is one of the human virtues that educational philosophy seeks to instill in students.
- Cheating may lead to feelings of guilt, self-deprecation, and lack of self-confidence. (Milyani Abdul Karim, 2021, p.75) .

Third: Preventive Measures for the Phenomenon of Cheating

- Assisting students by introducing them to review methodologies and strategies through creating a review schedule to boost their self-confidence and ensure their readiness for exams.
- Avoiding traditional questions that rely on rote memorization of lessons, instead focusing on questions that assess other cognitive levels such as understanding, synthesis, and analysis.
- Reviving moral conscience and developing an inner sense of accountability by reminding that God is watching over His servants and will hold them accountable for their actions.
- Reducing the number of students in each class or exam setting to a maximum of 20 students, conducting exams in classrooms while avoiding large halls and lecture theaters to better control the monitoring process.
- Zero tolerance for those who are lenient towards cheating, with strict penalties for those who cheat or allow cheating. (Al-Zarkoushi Nabil Ibrahim, 2013, p.42)
- Activating the role of the psychological counselor by raising students' awareness and guiding them about the dangers of this phenomenon and organizing awareness programs that prevent students from relying on cheating.
- Reducing unproductive and tedious homework that indirectly pushes students to cheat by completing or attempting to complete it.
- Developing regulations related to the organization of final exams in universities, including imposing penalties on those who cheat or allow cheating. (Iman Jomaa Sassi, PhD, n.d., p.90)

1 - A proposed framework to combat the phenomenon of cheating in the university environment based on theoretical heritage and the results of previous studies presented above:

Table No. (01): Represents a Proposed Framework to Combat the Phenomenon of Cheating in the University Environment.

Topics	Procedures
The student	Ethical awareness includes incorporating educational programs about academic integrity and the importance of scientific honesty in building a professional future.
	Developing study skills: organizing training workshops on time management, review techniques, and coping with exam anxiety.
	Psychological and social support: Providing university counseling services to assist students experiencing psychological stress or poor academic performance, in order to reduce the motives for cheating.
	Enhancing individual responsibility by encouraging students to sign the "Academic Integrity Charter" before exams as a personal commitment.
Professor	Diversifying assessment methods: adopting projects, oral presentations, and practical work alongside traditional exams.
	Design questions that measure understanding, not memorization: focus on analytical and applied questions that reduce opportunities for copying or cheating.
	Training teachers on effective supervision: developing monitoring skills that combine firmness and respect for the student.
	Communicating with students: Building a positive relationship with students to reduce feelings of hostility or the desire to cheat.
The institution	Developing technological infrastructure: using software to detect electronic cheating, such as monitoring phones or internet access blocking programs during exams.
	Revising the curricula: making them more practical and connected to the job market to reduce students' feeling that success is merely "passing an exam."
	Institutional culture of integrity: organizing awareness campaigns, posters, and seminars on the ethics of learning and scientific research.
	Strict and fair measures: Establish clear regulations for penalties while ensuring their application with fairness and transparency, so that students do not feel discrimination or injustice.

Conclusion:

The phenomenon of cheating in the university environment is not merely an isolated individual behavior; rather, it is a complex educational and social issue involving multiple factors. These range from the student himself, his psychological pressures, and desire for quick success, to curricula, teaching methods, and university administration, as well as the influence of peer groups and pedagogical conditions. Studies on the subject have shown that cheating takes various forms, both traditional and electronic, and that modern technology has contributed to expanding its scope and developing its methods, making it more difficult and complex to confront.

The seriousness of this phenomenon is evident in its negative impact on the quality of higher education and on the ethical values that are supposed to form the foundation of the educational process, in addition to its effect on society's trust in academic institutions. Therefore, combating cheating cannot be limited to penalties or disciplinary measures; it must be part of a comprehensive strategy based on three main pillars: the student, by enhancing his awareness and responsibility; the professor, through developing teaching and assessment methods; and the university institution, by building an institutional culture of integrity and providing a fair and modern educational environment.

Thus, it can be said that addressing university cheating requires an integrated vision combining education, ethics, technology, and organization, ensuring the formation of competent students capable of facing future challenges and restoring the university's true role as a space for science, knowledge, and innovation.

Ethical Considerations

This study is theoretical and analytical in nature and is based on the review and interpretation of existing academic literature and documented research. It does not involve human participants, personal data collection, interviews, surveys, or experimental interventions. Therefore, ethical approval was not required. The research adheres to recognized academic ethical standards, including honesty, objectivity, proper citation, and respect for intellectual property.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The research was conducted independently, and the views expressed are solely those of the authors.

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