

## **Addressing Contract Cheating in Pakistani Higher Education: Strategies for Upholding Academic Integrity**

Dr. Anjum Zia<sup>15</sup>, Marium Masud Khan<sup>16</sup>

### **Abstract**

Contract cheating threatens higher education worldwide, including Pakistan. Compared to Canada, the UK, and the US, Pakistan needs comprehensive study on this subject, eroding academic integrity in higher education. This research examines how Quality Assurance Cells at the University of Management and Technology, Punjab University, Lahore College for Women University, and Minhaaj University combat contract cheating. Addressing the complexities of academic integrity and promoting ethical behaviour, recommendations are made. Using Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, the study examines observational learning, personal agency, and self-regulation, impacted by individual and environmental circumstances. This article explains contract cheating, its causes, and mitigating methods. Qualitatively, the study analyses in-depth interviews with Directors of Quality Assurance from the universities to determine why students cheat on contracts and how institutions may prevent it. The study says institutions should establish a comprehensive framework that fits Pakistan's cultural and academic background. Policy recommendations include preventing, identifying, and intervening in contract cheating and revising existing regulations and standards. Policies should emphasise repercussions and strengthen academic integrity and institutional commitment. Understanding student motives promotes open talks and support services to handle academic demands and promote ethics. Presentations and group work should be used to assess understanding and critical thinking to deter contract cheating. Teachers are crucial, and professional development is suggested to help them spot and prevent contract cheating and promote academic integrity. The Higher Education Commission's draft policy's adoption and implementation are critical to Pakistani higher education institutions' collaboration to promote academic integrity. Multidimensional tactics are needed to combat contract cheating and train ethical scholars and professionals. Collaborative efforts from Pakistani higher education institutions to inculcate a culture of academic integrity. Moreover, approval and implementation of HEC's draft policy concerning the prevailing issues are proved to be a turning point in Higher Education. By concentrating on multidimensional strategies, institutions can not only address contract cheating concerns but also nurture ethical scholars and professionals.

**Keywords:** Contract cheating, Academic Integrity, Higher Education, Pakistan

---

<sup>15</sup> Prof Dr. Anjum Zia is the Dean - School of Media and Communication Studies, University of Management and Technology.

<sup>16</sup> Marium Masud Khan is a PhD scholar at School of Media and Communication Studies, University of Management and Technology. Email [mariummusud1204.khan@gmail.com](mailto:mariummusud1204.khan@gmail.com)

## **Introduction**

Contract cheating' has recently emerged as a form of academic dishonesty. It involves students contracting out their coursework to writers to submit the purchased assignments as their own work, usually via the internet (Walker and Townley, 2012). The implications of contract cheating extend beyond geographical boundaries and affect the global academic community (Boud and Associates, 2010). Contract cheating, an insidious form of academic dishonesty, has become a contemporary challenge within the realm of higher education (Walker and Townley, 2012). Students, operating discreetly, outsource their coursework to writers and subsequently present these acquired assignments as their original work, predominantly through online channels (Rigby et al., 2015).

The growing prevalence of this phenomenon has raised significant concerns due to its clandestine nature and its potential for greater deception compared to conventional plagiarism, in addition to its intricate relationship with systemic issues within contemporary higher education (Vasilopoulos, 2021). In addition, plagiarism and ghostwriting are practices that undermine the fundamental integrity of academic degrees, they have escalated to unprecedented levels. According to Singh and Remenyi (2016), while academia has a historical record of grappling with fraudulent practices, past transgressions were epitomized by activities such as covert notetaking, colloquially termed 'crib sheets,' during examinations or securing advanced access to examination papers. However, in the 21st century, academic misconduct has evolved significantly, necessitating a heightened commitment from universities to safeguard the integrity of examination processes and the legitimacy of awarded degrees (Rowland et al, 2018).

In continuation of the above, this scholarly inquiry primarily focuses on scrutinizing the intricacies of contract cheating (Vel and Khan, 2021) with particular emphasis on the pervasive issues of plagiarism and ghostwriting. We acknowledge that addressing cheating goes beyond merely identifying wrongdoers. Therefore, it is an inherent issue within the very structure of the contemporary higher education system (Bretag and Harper, 2017), demanding a comprehensive approach encompassing not only prevention and detection but also a nuanced consideration of how individuals found engaging in academic misconduct should be handled.

Over the past decade, the higher education sector has witnessed dedicated efforts to enhance assessment practices (Ferrell, 2013). These endeavors have been guided by evidence-informed frameworks and methodologies, with both national and institutional initiatives aimed at revitalizing assessment policies and practices (HEA, 2012). To add to the debate, in the context of mounting concerns regarding academic integrity, especially the increasing outsourcing of assessment tasks, it is crucial for institutions to emphasize that students comprehend assignment requirements. Equally vital is the provision of ample feedback to facilitate students' learning from their work, as emphasized by Bretag et al. (2018). This approach not only upholds academic

integrity but also fosters a culture of authentic and meaningful learning within the academic community.

Now it is essential to shed light on the establishment of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in 2005 by the Government of Pakistan, under the auspices of the Higher Education Commission (HEC), which serves as a testament to the nation's unwavering commitment to foster and safeguard academic integrity in its Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). This resolute initiative has a vision to promote, enhance and assure the quality of higher education.

At its core, QAA emerges as a formidable policymaking and monitoring body, singularly devoted to elevating the standards of higher education, thus laying a strong foundation for maintaining academic integrity. The overarching mission is to instill international compatibility and bolster competitiveness, both on the institutional and programmatic fronts. This pursuit aligns seamlessly with the broader goal of upholding academic standards and ethical practices.

The QAA is involved in policy formulation, to improvise and maintain the quality of higher degree programs. Equally fervent are its functions of providing guidelines for the establishment, continuation and the oversight of Quality Enhancement Cells (QECs). These cells, ingrained in the fabric of Pakistan's higher education landscape, serve as crucibles of quality assurance, which is inextricably tied to the maintenance of academic integrity.

Notably, the overarching mission extends beyond mere policy and quality assurance guidelines; it encompasses an ardent commitment to capacity building in the realm of quality assurance. By elevating these standards on a national scale, QAA strives to establish a robust academic ecosystem that inherently embraces and fosters academic integrity.

In its role as a vigilant regulator, QAA endeavors to ensure that policies designed to uplift the standards of higher education in Pakistan are not relegated to the annals of rhetoric but meticulously translated into tangible implementation. This dedication underscores the importance of aligning actions with words and thereby upholding the ideals of academic integrity.

Dwelling on the above and from a holistic point of view, given the formidable complexities associated with detecting instances of contract cheating, this scholarly deliberation centers on the exploration of multifaceted pedagogical responses (Ellis et al., 2018). These responses encompass an extensive examination of various approaches, notably anti-contract cheating software, a heightened emphasis on in-class assessments, and a rekindling of the more personalized, face-to-face classroom instructional methodology (Kaktins, 2018).

Thus, the confluence of the strategies (stated above) is pertinent to fortify the academic integrity landscape and preserve the sanctity of the educational process. This comprehensive approach, melding technological advancements with the traditions of

in-person instruction in classrooms, serves as a pivotal step forward in the ongoing quest to curtail the insidious practice of contract cheating in higher education.

### **Research Objectives**

Keeping the above debate in view the study has framed following specific objectives:

- To determine the conceptual understanding of ‘Contract Cheating’;
- To investigate the role of Quality Assurance Cell of the Universities concerning Academic Integrity (strategies for detecting & preventing contract cheating and challenges/ obstacles in maintaining academic integrity);
- To formulate actionable recommendations aimed at strengthening academic integrity and to control contract cheating in higher education in Pakistani.

### **Research Question**

- What is the conceptual understanding of contract cheating?
- What is the role of Quality Assurance Cells of the Universities concerning prevention of academic integrity?
- What actionable recommendations can be formulated to strengthen the academic integrity of Pakistan’s Higher Education.

### **Problem Statement**

Contract cheating has become a global menace, especially after covid-19 and it has had an unruly impact on the integrity of academia as per Hill et al., (2021). Similarly, in Pakistan’s Higher Education it is also a point of concern as it is disrupting the academic rectitude and credibility of the degrees being awarded to the students. Hence it is imperative to address this academic malpractice. Even though the severity of the situation is known to all, there exists a paucity of research to inscribe this academic evil. Documenting and thoroughly understanding the prevalence of this issue will result in efforts to nip it in the bud. The current study aims to create awareness regarding the matter and to ring a bell that there is a dire need to implement comprehensive policies. Policies tailored for the environment of Pakistan’s higher education will ensure effective mitigation of contract cheating. In addition, the higher education institutions will be able to focus on relevant interventions within the classrooms, the reputation of our academia will be enhanced on the international level. Contract cheating brings with it other challenges too so to ebb this imminent threat adequate preventive measures are required. Since it is a global issue, this study may evoke researchers all around the world. Consequently, urgent and targeted measures are the need of the time to bridge this knowledge gap, institute effective policies and ascertain a culture of academic honesty in Pakistan. Therefore, it is necessary to curtail this unethical practice and to safeguard the authenticity of higher education in Pakistan.

## **Rationale**

Contract cheating is a growing concern in global academia. Pakistan is also facing this unethical practice. Despite its prevalence, in Pakistan the research landscape in this area remains conspicuously absent, making it even more significant to address the problem of contract cheating within the higher education context. By addressing this issue, Pakistan can enhance the quality of its higher education and ensure that degrees awarded are based on authentic academic achievements. The establishment of anti-contract cheating policies and practices can serve as a model for the region. Furthermore, addressing contract cheating in Pakistan is essential to maintain the reputation and credibility of its higher education institutions in an increasingly interconnected world. It is crucial to demonstrate a commitment to academic integrity to attract foreign students and retain a diverse student body. This approach will not only preserve the academic reputation of institutions but also contribute to the overall development of the nation (Jessop & Tomas, 2017).

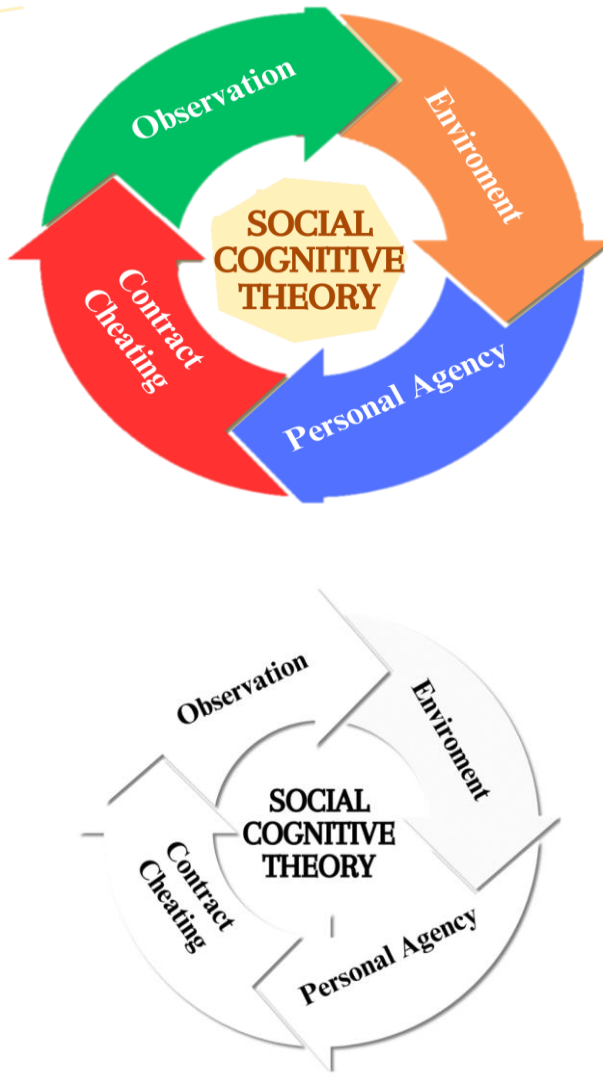
This paper explores the issue and strategies Pakistani academic institutions are using to combat it and promote academic integrity. To effectively address contract cheating, institutions must prioritize academic integrity by creating comprehensive policies tailored to Pakistan's unique cultural and academic context. These policies should explicitly address contract cheating, emphasize consequences, and reinforce institutional commitment to academic integrity. Understanding why students engage in contract cheating is essential. Institutions should encourage open discussions and provide support services to address academic pressures, fostering ethical behavior. In the global and Pakistani higher education landscape, there is an imperative to combat the elevated levels of contract cheating in presentations and projects. This necessitates a shift in assessment methods towards effectively discouraging the practice of contract cheating. Researchers emphasize the importance of addressing this overlooked area, as educators have a vital role in upholding academic integrity. Providing professional development opportunities serves as a wake-up call, enabling educators to effectively detect and prevent contract cheating, ultimately nurturing a culture of academic integrity. Addressing contract cheating necessitates collaborative efforts from Pakistani higher education institutions to instill a culture of academic integrity, safeguard their academic reputation, and contribute to the nation's development.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory dwells on three key areas, that is, observational learning, personal agency and environmental factors. In this conference paper, the authors have applied it to the context of contract cheating in Pakistan's Higher Education. It is important to elucidate that the global acts of academic dishonesty have led to students observing it and then applying it on a local level. In addition, students make a conscious choice to out-source their work because of the academic pressures, this offers an explanation to the concept of personal agency. Furthermore, environmental factors such as institutional policies and norms of peers significantly add to the prevalence of contract cheating. The theoretical mode (see

Figure 1) illustrates the interconnected nature of observational learning, environmental factors and personal agency in the context of contract cheating. Therefore, to cater to this issue, Pakistan’s higher education institutions must devise a multi-dimensional framework to address observational learning by promoting ethical academic behavior, they must also reinforce personal agency to resist academic pressures as well as formulate interventions to ensure an environment which would discourage contract cheating. This comprehensive approach aligns with Bandura’s theory, providing a nuanced understanding tailored to the unique context of Pakistani higher education.

**Figure 1 Model for the Theoretical Framework**



## **Methodology**

The current research employs a qualitative approach to investigate and address the issue of contract cheating in Pakistan's higher education and to propose strategies for upholding academic honesty. Qualitative research was chosen as the most appropriate methodology for this study due to its capacity to delve deeply into the perceptions, experiences, and insights of the individuals involved. The qualitative approach allows for a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted problem of contract cheating and the strategies required to combat it effectively.

To gather the necessary data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with directors/managers Quality Assurance Cell (QAC) of four prominent private and public Pakistani educational institutions including: Lahore College for Women University, Minhaj University, University of the Punjab and the University of Management and Technology, Lahore. These institutions were selected to provide a diverse perspective on the issue, considering differences in size, location, and academic focus. The interviewees, who play a vital role in maintaining academic standards and integrity within their institutions, were chosen as key informants due to their direct involvement in addressing academic misconduct.

The research design prioritizes the qualitative approach because it allows for an in-depth exploration of the motivations and challenges related to contract cheating, the strategies employed by educational institutions to combat it, and the outcomes of these efforts. The qualitative data collected from the interviews will be thematically analyzed to identify common themes and insights, providing a rich and contextually relevant understanding of the issue. The chosen methodology aligns with the study's aim to develop a comprehensive understanding of contract cheating in the Pakistani higher education context, applying Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory to propose effective strategies for addressing this challenge.

In view of the above, the qualitative research design was deemed the most appropriate methodology for this study due to its capacity to uncover the complexities of contract cheating, draw upon the experiences and insights of key stakeholders, and offer a context-specific framework for addressing the issue. Through interviews with Quality Assurance Cell directors /managers from different institutions, this research aims to contribute valuable insights and strategies for upholding academic integrity within the unique cultural and academic landscape of Pakistan.

## **Findings**

The phenomenon of contract cheating has gained momentum in the global academic landscape and, more recently, in Pakistan. While academic dishonesty has existed for some time, the advent of online platforms and the discreet nature of contract cheating have brought new challenges to higher education institutions (Higher education institutions). This section delves into the findings from in-depth interviews with Quality Assurance (QA) Cells' directors and managers from prominent Pakistani educational institutions. It examines their responses considering Albert Bandura's

Social Cognitive Theory, seeking a holistic understanding of the problem and the strategies to combat it effectively. The findings discussed, touching upon the understanding of contract cheating, the role of Quality Assurance cells, assessment of academic integrity, strategies for avoiding and detecting contract cheating, awareness programs, challenges, technological alignment, and recommendations.

### **Conceptual Understanding of Contract Cheating**

Respondents demonstrated a collective understanding of contract cheating as a form of academic dishonesty, akin to plagiarism and other malpractices. They were of the point of view that it is ‘contracting someone else to do the work you should be doing, often in exchange for money or favors. It's like hiring a person to act as you at education institution. Their response aligns with the literature, where contract cheating involves students outsourcing their academic work to others, such as online ghostwriters or essay mills (Walker & Townley, 2012).

### ***Role of Quality Assurance Cell Concerning Academic Integrity***

All the respondents mentioned that the Quality Assurance cells in Pakistani educational institutions play a crucial role in maintaining academic integrity by developing and implementing anti-contract cheating policies, promoting awareness, helping teachers make tests and assignments that are harder to cheat on and using plagiarism detection methods. They told that for the purpose of institutional performance ‘Higher Education Commission, Pakistan’ has developed ‘Institutional Performance Evaluation manual’ which includes guidelines in which academic integrity is involved at institutional level and institutions are following these guidelines.

All the respondents said that Higher Education Institutions in Pakistan have taken significant steps to assess academic integrity. Plagiarism and disciplinary committees have been established at the universities, ensuring that academic integrity remains a priority. The ‘Terms of Reference’ of the committee is clearly stated in the policy and well-documented in the students / faculty handbook as well as on the website. These committees are empowered to investigate cheating/plagiarism cases particularly in the faculty & student’s research papers and make recommendations in accordance with the degree of the offense, indicating a commitment to maintaining integrity (Vasilopoulos, 2021). They also said that the Quality Assurance Cells actively participate in this process. This implies a commitment to upholding academic standards and ethics as mentioned by Bretag & Harper (2017).

While comprehensive policies exist for reviewing plagiarism cases, addressing contract cheating is relatively new. Regulators and Higher education institutions in Pakistan recognizes the need to formulate specific policies to tackle this evolving challenge. HEC, Pakistan has prepared a Draft Policy-01 which is under review. Bretag & Harper (2017) also pointed out the same need which strengthen the results of the present study.



## **Strategies for Detecting and Preventing Contract Cheating**

All the respondents replied that they have employed a multi-faceted approach to combat cheating and contract cheating including:

The universities are following strong academic policies, timed online assessments, presentations, randomized questions, and plagiarism detection tools.

The contract cheating terminology is relatively novel in the Pakistani context, and there is limited awareness among academics and students. This lack of awareness is a significant challenge, and the absence of a specific policy for contract cheating necessitates improvised measures. However, cases related to plagiarism are managed using existing policies (Rowland et al., 2018).

Universities are conducting regular training sessions and online resources such as Campus Management System (CMS) for students and faculty to create awareness about the academic integrity and consequences & penalties associated with these unethical practices. This is in line with Bandura's theory of personal agency, where students make conscious choices influenced by their values and beliefs (Singh & Remenyi, 2016). The universities also organize orientation sessions, workshops, and seminars for students, creating a culture of ethical behavior within higher education institutions (Jessop & Tomas, 2017).

Using plagiarism detection tools such as Turnitin is an important part of the strategy to detect and prevent contract cheating.

To recognize prevalent trends, common forms of cheating, and specific areas that require focused attention the University 'Quality Assurance cells' collect and analyze the data on cheating incidents using plagiarism detection tools, and surveys.

The respondents claimed that besides challenges e.g., constant evolution of cheating methods, privacy concerns when using detection tools their successful outcomes include; a significant reduction in contract cheating incidents, and improved academic integrity.

The future of academic integrity in Pakistani higher education necessitates increased awareness among students and faculty. Efforts should focus on education, ethical culture on campuses, and the consistent implementation of academic integrity standards. Plagiarism detection and prevention will continue to be crucial, particularly in online learning environments (Boud & Associates, 2010).

### ***Challenges and Obstacles***

Challenges identified by respondents include resolving issues amicably, primarily arising from a lack of awareness. To overcome these challenges, there is a need for more extensive awareness campaigns and education about contract cheating. Effective strategies should involve both students and faculty members (Bretag et al., 2018).

While talking about the challenges majority respondents said that presently, there are no collaborations or partnerships with other institutions or external organizations to address contract cheating. Nevertheless, the need for collaborative efforts in this regard is recognized, and future partnerships may prove effective (Kaktins, 2018). Respondent of public university (Lahore College for Women University) replied that in this regard ORIC department look after the MOUs part and collaborations with different external organizations. All these types of partnerships and signed MOUs are also placed at University Website for information.

Another big challenge mentioned by the respondents is that although guidelines are available and universities are trying to follow them but an appropriate policy is still pending. Recently HEC, Pakistan has drafted a policy which is under discussion. Further, its right proper and precise implement will also be another challenge.

Most of the participants admitted that technology, particularly online learning platforms, plays a significant role in detecting and preventing contract cheating. Plagiarism detection tools and anti-contract cheating software are valuable assets. However, the transition to online education during the pandemic has raised concerns about the potential for a surge in contract cheating cases. This challenge is also highlighted by HEA, (2012).

## **Discussion**

In view of the grimness of the situation, it is evident that immediate but systematic approach needs to be adopted to truncate ghost writing or contract cheating in Pakistan. The respondents were of the view that in addition to plagiarism checking and the pattern of assignments must be altered. Assignments should be designed in a way that they require the utility of classroom discussion or one's own creativity, this was also highlighted by Hill et al (2017).

Furthermore, the authors highlighted that contract cheating has been damaging the integrity of higher education of Pakistan on the global stage. As a matter of fact, the respondents from Minhaaj university, Punjab University, UMT as well as LCWU pointed out the dire need of effective and comprehensive policies to counter contract cheating in Pakistan.

The directors of Quality Assurance cells affirmed that open discussions must be held about the causes and consequences of the rise in ghost-writing culture in the country. They iterated that to reinforce ethical behavior among students in higher education, support services must be provided to highlight and eliminate any academic pressures. All the respondents suggested that there is a need for a comprehensive review of current assessment practices in Pakistani higher education institutions to ensure they effectively deter contract cheating. These arguments were also presented by Ferrell (2013).

Based on the responses of the directors and having analyzed the plight contract cheating in higher education of Pakistan, the authors propose a shift in methods

employed to perform assessments. This will discourage contract cheating, especially in projects and presentations. Additionally, the commitment of institutions must be elevated too. All these factors, as per the respondents and according to Jessop & Tomas (2017), will improvise the academic practices, enhance the credibility of Pakistani degrees on the global level. Eventually an academic culture of honesty will be promoted.

The respondents also outlined that the educators have a key role to play in this scenario, that is, they should be trained to promote a culture of academic honesty by abating the pressure on students and dwelling on the need to foster a culture of integrity. This may include seminars or workshops where educators will be schooled to redesign the curriculum based on an inventive bar. The authors aligned this with the Social Cognitive Theory of Albert Bandura.

The theoretical framework emphasizes observational learning and personal agency, suggesting that educators play a key role in influencing student behavior and eliminating contract cheating. This theory as well as the respondents of the study recommended that environmental factors and observing the global trajectory of contract cheating leads the students to step into the practices of academic dishonesty.

This is a vicious cycle in which the higher education students of Pakistan are trapped. As per the respondents of the study, there is a need for collaborative efforts of the Quality Assurance Cells, HEC and the educators. This collaboration is viewed as essential not only for the institutions themselves but also for contributing to the development of the nation. The global and national impact of contract cheating is recognized by the directors of Quality Assurance Cells. They emphasized that addressing contract cheating is not only a matter of institutional concern but also a responsibility that extends to the entire educational landscape of the county.

In continuation of the above, the respondents were also of the view that the Universities have documented policies for reviewing plagiarism cases however, contract cheating is a relatively new malpractice, so regulators and Universities need to formulate specific and all-encompassing policies under unethical academic practices.

In 2005, the Government of Pakistan established the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) under the patronage of the Higher Education Commission (HEC). It has been making efforts to increase the competitiveness of Pakistani Higher Educational Institutions on the global stage. The main agenda of QAA is to ascertain that academic integrity remains intact. HEC provides a sustained and generous pool of funding and support to QAA. This mirrors the commitment of key stakeholders in corroborating the integrity of the country's academia. The QAA establishes and maintains the QECs in universities. The QECs regularly monitor academic activities to fortify ethical academic practices. HEC has formulated several policies to counter the menace of contract cheating but it lags in its implementation.

On the contrary, all key stakeholders are putting in great efforts to restore ethical practices in higher education in Pakistan. However, this should be coupled with methodical seminars and workshops for educators as well as students. This will equip the educators to design academic assignments and projects in a manner that would curtail the involvement of third parties. It will also make the students aware that contract cheating would result in the degradation of their skills and value of their degrees.

## **Conclusion**

The current study aims to understand the multifaceted nature of contract cheating in Pakistan's higher educational institutions and investigates measures to ensure the academic integrity. Another goal of the research is to propose recommendations to eliminate the issue of contract cheating in accordance with the social cognitive theory of Albert Bandura. In Pakistan, as of now HEC and QAA (Quality Assurance Agency) play a pivotal role in addressing contract cheating in academia, but there is still a dire need to map out an extensive scheme to reinstate the culture of academic honesty.

To explicate the issue of contract cheating in the arena of higher education in Pakistan, in-depth interviews were conducted at two public and two private universities in Lahore. The directors of Quality Assurance Cells/departments provided insightful answers to the researchers. The majority stated that while educational institutions in Pakistan are making commendable efforts to focus on academic integrity and improve the credibility of education, but more rigorous initiatives required to ensure it.

They acknowledged the fact that institutions are engaged in drafting and implementing frameworks to combat the menace of contract cheating in Pakistan's higher educational institutions. All the respondents viewed contract cheating as a form of a grave issue in academia not just in Pakistan but also all around the globe.

In addition to the above, the HEC has already drafted a policy paper to extricate the prevailing matter of contract cheating in higher education. However, it has not been approved yet. The approval of this comprehensive policy and its subsequent implementation will formulate a coherent and a sound educational environment in Pakistan's Higher Education. To make certain the debarment of contract cheating, Quality Assurance Framework, PSG-2023, offers a forward-looking approach to tackle contract cheating which is a stumbling block higher education in Pakistan.

Despite the efforts of the concerned departments and institutions in Pakistan, there is still a plethora of issues at hand which need to be addressed to obliterate contract cheating. The responses of the directors of Quality Assurance Cells paint an explicit picture that there is a need to incorporate advanced strategies, technology as well as streamlining academic practices. Hence, a multidimensional approach is the need of the hour to maintain academic integrity in higher education in Pakistan. The study suggests that while policies for addressing plagiarism are well-established, implementation of a comprehensive framework or subsequent policies is in the infancy stage. This loophole can be mended through a collaborative, procedural and

systematic plan of action. The stakeholders can use the findings of this study to discard contract cheating from the higher education in Pakistan.

## References

- Boud, D., & Dochy, F. (2010). Assessment 2020. Seven propositions for assessment reform in higher education. Retrieved from <https://lirias.kuleuven.be/1938869?limo=0>
- Bretag, T. and Harper, R. (2017) Addressing contract cheating: local and global responses. Project on contract cheating and assessment design: exploring the connection PowerPoint presentation. Retrieved from <https://cheatingandassessment.edu.au/publications-presentations>
- Bretag T, Harper R, Burton M, Ellis C, Newton P, Rozenberg P, Saddiqui S, van Haeringen K (2018). Contract cheating: a survey of Australian university students. *Stud High Educ.* <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2018.1462788>
- Ellis C, Zucker IM, Randall D (2018) The internal business of contract cheating: understanding the business processes and models of academic custom writing sites. *Int J Educ Integr* 14(1).
- Ferrell G (2013) Supporting assessment and feedback practice with technology: from tinkering to transformation. Final synthesis report for the Jisc Assessment and Feedback programme. Retrieved from <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/rd/projects/assessment-and-feedback>
- Higher Education Commission. (n.d.). Draft Policy-01 PSG-2023. Quality Assurance Agency. <https://www.hec.gov.pk/english/services/universities/QAA/Documents/QAA/RQF/Draft%20Policy-01%20PSG-2023.pdf>
- Hill, G., Mason, J., & Dunn, A. (2021). Contract cheating: an increasing challenge for global academic community arising from COVID-19. *Research and practice in technology enhanced learning*, 16, 1-20. DOI <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41039-021-00166-8>
- Higher Education Academy (HEA) (2010) Supporting Academic Integrity: Approaches and resources for higher education. Academy JISC Academic Integrity Service, The Higher Education Academy, York, UK. Retrieved from <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/supporting-academic-integrity-approaches-and-resources-higher-education>
- Khan, Z. R. (2022). The devil's in the detail – counting unique and organic contract cheating sites targeting higher education students in the UAE as a call to delegitimize them. *Int J Educ Integr* 18, 21. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40979-022-00114-z>
- Louise Kaktiņš (2018) Contract cheating advertisements: what they tell us about international students' attitudes to academic integrity, *Ethics and Education*, 13:2, 268-284, DOI: 10.1080/17449642.2017.1412178

- Rigby D, Burton M, Balcombe K, Bateman I, Mulatu A (2015) Contract cheating & the market in essays. *J Econ Behav Organ* 111:23–37. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2014.12.019>
- Rowland et al (2018). ‘Just turn to us’: the persuasive features of contract cheating websites, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 43:4, 652-665, DOI: 10.1080/02602938.2017.1391948
- Singh S, Remenyi D. Plagiarism and ghostwriting: The rise in academic misconduct. *S Afr J Sci.* 2016;112(5/6), Art. 2015-0300, 7 pages. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/sajs.2016/20150300>
- Vasilopoulos, E. (2021). *Researching Plagiarism and Technology in Second Language Writing: “Becomings”* (Doctoral dissertation, Université d'Ottawa/University of Ottawa). Retrieved from [Vasilopoulos\\_Eugenia\\_2021\\_thesis.pdf \(uottawa.ca\)](#)
- Vel P, Khan ZR (2021) Contract cheating incidents in schools and tertiary learning institutions in the UAE from a social Lens. In: *Proceedings for European conference on academic integrity and plagiarism 2021*. Uppsala University, Sweden, p 136 [https://academicintegrity.eu/conference/proceedings/2021/book\\_of\\_abstracts2021.pdf#page=13](https://academicintegrity.eu/conference/proceedings/2021/book_of_abstracts2021.pdf#page=13)
- Walker, M., Townley, C. (2012). Contract cheating: a new challenge for academic honesty? *J Acad Ethics* 10, 27–44 Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10805-012-9150-y>