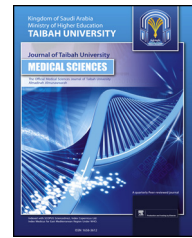Taibah University

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Original Article

The prevalence of academic dishonesty among Malaysian nursing students

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الملخص

أهداف البحث: تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقييم عدم الأمانة الأكاديمية بين طلبة التمريض في إحدى الجامعات الحكومية في شمال- شرق شبه الجزيرة في ماليزيا.

طرق البحث: استخدمت هذه الدراسة التصميم الوصفي والمستعرض لتقييم عدم الأمانة الأكاديمية بين طلبة التمريض باستخدام طريقة المعاينة الهادفة. يتألف المشاركون في هذه الدراسة من ٢٠١ طالبا من الدبلوم (السنة ٢ و٣) والدرجة العلمية (السنة ٢ إلى السنة ٤) من برامج التمريض. واستخدمت استبانة ذاتية موثقة لجمع البيانات. وتم الحصول على موافقة من لجنة الأخلاقيات في الجامعة قبل الدراسة.

النتائج: أظهرت هذه الدراسة أن ٨٢.١٪ و٧٤.٦٪ من طلبة التمريض قد شاركوا في فعل من عدم الأمانة الأكاديمية في الإعداد الأكاديمي والسريري مرة واحدة على الأقل، على التوالي. كان الشكل الأكثر شيوعا لعدم الأمانة الأكاديمية في الإعداد الأكاديمي هو الانتحال (٧٧.١٪). كان هناك ارتباط كبير بين الجنس وعدم الأمانة الأكاديمية في الإعداد السريري. كان هناك ارتباط إيجابي جيد بين عدم الأمانة الأكاديمية في الإعداد الأكاديمي والسريري.

الاستنتاجات: عدم الأمانة الأكاديمية هي مشكلة شائعة في الإعدادات الأكاديمية والسريرية بين طلبة التمريض. المدخلات المستمرة حول الأخلاقيات في منهج التمريض أمر مرغوب فيه لتحسين جودة التعليم بين كليات التمريض، وتقليل انتشار السلوكيات غير الأخلاقية بين الطلبة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: عدم الأمانة الأكاديمية؛ عدم الأمانة السريرية؛ ماليزيا؛ طلبة التمريض؛ الانتحال

Abstract

Objective: The aim of this study was to evaluate academic dishonesty among nursing students at a public university in Malaysia.

Methods: This study utilized a descriptive and cross-sectional design to evaluate academic dishonesty among nursing students using a purposive sampling method. The participants of this study consisted of 201 students from diploma (Year 2 and 3) and degree (Year 2 to Year 4) nursing programmes. A self-administered, validated questionnaire was used for data collection. Institutional ethics committee clearance was obtained prior to commencement of the study.

Results: The results of this study showed that 82.1% and 74.6% of nursing students had engaged at least once in an act of academic dishonesty in an academic or clinical setting, respectively. The most frequent form of academic dishonesty in an academic setting was plagiarism (77.1%). There was a significant association between gender and academic dishonesty in a clinical setting ($p < 0.01$). There was a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.603$, $p < 0.001$) between academic dishonesty in academic and clinical settings.

Conclusion: Academic dishonesty in both academic and clinical settings is a common problem among nursing students in Malaysia. Training on academic ethics is required in nursing curricula to improve the quality of education among nursing colleges and reduce the prevalence of unethical behaviours among students.

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Introduction

Education is necessary to increase student understanding of academic ethics to improve their attitudes and decrease their engagement in acts of academic dishonesty.[1] The literature defines academic dishonesty as any unauthorized assistance or unlawful benefit to student academic performance.[2] Academic dishonesty has become a serious problem in higher education and in various professions around the world.[3–5]

Integrity, sincerity, empathy, and honesty are the necessary attributes to uphold professional ethics in the field of nursing.[2,6] Owing to the significant responsibility that comes with the profession, it should be expected that the prevalence of academic dishonesty would be lower among nursing students.[7] However, several studies found that the incidence of academic dishonesty was increasing in nursing education in both developed and non-developed countries.[8–10] The majority of nursing students attending different nursing colleges in the United states,[11] Italy,[12] and South Korea[13] reported that they had engaged in at least one act of academic dishonesty.[8,14] This rise in the prevalence of academic dishonesty has been found to be related to advances in technology. As education becomes more technologically sophisticated, the problem of academic dishonesty increases, as technology makes it easier for students to plagiarize or share information.[15–17] In addition, nursing students may face problems in balancing the demands of their academic and clinical responsibilities.[18] Moreover, pressure, the volume of work, and the lack of interest in the required task have also contributed to the increase academic dishonesty.[19]

Q7 Hunter (2015)[20] commented in his article that academic dishonesty is one of the most destructive traits in Malaysian society today. He found that 95.7% of students had engaged in some form of plagiarism, 96% had completed an assignment with help from other students, 93% had cheated during exams, 92% had falsified data, and 90% had copied a friend's assignment.

Previous studies have reported on many forms of academic dishonesty among nursing students. This includes plagiarism,[21,22] cheating on exams,[11] secretly collaborating with peers on assignments,[23] as well dishonesty in clinical settings, such as violating patient privacy and not performing recording procedures properly.[11] While some studies have focused on distinct forms of academic dishonesty, five common themes can be found in the literature: premeditated cheating, spontaneous cheating on exams, plagiarism, improper use of resources, and clinical dishonesty.[3]

Considering the current prevalence of academic dishonesty in the nursing profession globally, it is essential to seriously examine this issue in the Malaysian context. To our knowledge, no previous study related to the present topic has been conducted in Malaysia. Thus, it is necessary to obtain detailed information regarding academic dishonesty among nursing students in Malaysia. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the prevalence of academic dishonesty among nursing students at a public university in Malaysia with respect to the following five categories of dishonesty: plagiarism, improper use of resources, premeditated cheating, spontaneous cheating, and clinical dishonesty.

Materials and Methods

This study utilized a cross-sectional design that aimed to evaluate academic dishonesty among nursing students at a public university northeast of Peninsular in Malaysia (herein referred to as University X). A total of 214 nursing students from diploma (Year 2 and 3) and degree (Year 2 to Year 4) programs from the nursing school of University X were invited to participate in the study. We included both diploma and degree students, as evidence has shown that students' academic year and program can affect academic integrity. Moreover, it has been found that levels of confidence and experience, as well as different learning styles can also affect academic integrity.[24,25] A purposive sampling method was used. Thirteen out of 214 participants were excluded from the study's analysis due to their refusal to join or returning incomplete questionnaires. The study excluded Year 1 nursing students of both programs (diploma and undergraduate), as the students had just started their studies, had no clinical experience, and did not yet have a cumulative grade point average (CGPA).

The researcher used a self-administered questionnaire that took an average of 15–20 min to complete. The first part of the questionnaire included four questions to collect data regarding the respondents' demographic factors, such as gender, academic year, and CGPA. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of 25 items from the Student Academic Dishonesty Questionnaire[3] to measure the prevalence of academic dishonesty among nursing students in academic and clinical settings. This part of the questionnaire was further subdivided into two sections: the first section contained 16 questions regarding dishonesty in the academic setting, while the second section contained nine questions regarding dishonesty in the clinical setting.

The questionnaire was validated to ensure that the content and language was appropriate for the Malaysian educational context. Content validity was carried out by sending the questionnaires to five experts who were lecturers in nursing and medical programs. In this phase, the content validity index (S-CVI) score was 0.94. An S-CVI average higher than 0.90 was considered to have excellent content validity.[26] Face validity was conducted by having ten Year 2 diploma nursing students discuss each item of the questionnaire. In terms of the questionnaire's clarity and comprehension, all the questions were perceived by the Year 2 students as comprehensible. The Cronbach's alpha value was 0.898.

All 25 items were rated using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 6, with 1 = never, 2 = seldom (1–2 times), 3 = sometimes (3–4 times), 4 = often (5–10 times), 5 = very