

Alternative Exams in Khartoum University, Case Study from College of Science

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Abstract--- *This study addresses the issue of alternative examinations at Sudanese universities; an issue that has remarkably stricken a phenomenal presence recently. The research aims at studying the factors affect such a phenomenon and the reasons why student choose this type of examinations and what they reap out of it. It also recommends ways of averting that problem. The descriptive-analytical method is used in the study. The research community was the University of Khartoum and the research sample consisted of the Faculty of Science. The Faculty was deliberately selected because of the many medical reports presented thereto. A comprehensive survey was conducted on all medical reports issued in one academic year, from the start-up to the end of the supplementary and alternative examinations. A comparison between the numbers of reports between the faculty of science and faculty of economic was conducted. One of the general findings is that there is significant difference between the percentage of reports in the faculties of science of the universities of Khartoum. In both universities, the percentage of reports issued during the final examinations is significantly greater than that during the academic year. Also, reports of female students are greater in number than those of male students; and external reports exceed internal ones.*

Keywords--- *Alternative Exams, Khartoum University, Descriptive-Analytical.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The university represents the environment in which the students receive their academic education, it is the framework in which the students exercise various activities. The students are considered as the main element in the educational system. Therefore, student's intervention in this balanced system without awareness or thinking of the importance of the educational rules and regulations spoils this coordination and disrupts the educational system. Since its establishment, the universities have organized a list of exams and success rules for students. The regulations are specific to the university and these rules must be applied to all faculties of the university in general. The exams play an important role in the evaluation of the students in the university. The student must give a reasonable excuse that prevents him from taking the final exam. The student must prove the condition of the disease by presenting a medical report that proves the date of his illness in the exam (1,2).

These medical reports can be extracted from the Medical and Health Services Center of the University of Khartoum, where this center is concerned with the health affairs of university staff, faculty members and students. The center also provides the required facilities with a doctor equipped with an ambulance and auxiliary cadres in the emergency situations. The medical reports issued by the Medical and Health Services Center are called internal

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reports. However, in urgent circumstances, the student receives treatment in other clinics outside the university and provides a report from the outer center. The report is then called an external report. In both cases, the medical reports shall be presented to a specialized medical committee of the Medical and Health Services Center to evaluate the medical report and verify its validity and then accept or reject it. The committee is composed of three doctors in addition to the director of the center, where the committee meets with the student to identify all the conditions surrounding his illness and to verify the truth of the disease and then make the decision to approve or reject the report and receive the approved reports to the college to which the student belongs and the student then has the right to attend an alternative exam(3).

In the recent period, the director of the university exams center noted the large numbers of medical reports the students bring before the exams, and that there are large numbers of students who bring an external medical report to prove their illness during the examinations, even though the university medical and health services center operates 24 hours a day. It has specialists from all medical sectors and always ready for medical examinations for each case. Considering this situation, the director of the center questioned the validity of these external reports. This gave him the impression that the number of students attending external reports is an abnormal number, and that situation deserves attention and research to find out the reasons and ways to control it. Due to this situation, we decided to investigate this case in Khartoum University and to give this research the necessary attention.

II. BACKGROUND

The alternative exam rules and regulations are clearly listed in the examination list. It is held with the approved of the university for the student who gave an acceptable excuse about some circumstance that prevents them from taking the final exam. The student must prove the condition of the disease by presenting a medical report proving the date of his illness which must be identical to the exam date (4,5). More recently, it has been noted the large number of reports, and that the number of external medical reports, rather than the University's Medical and Health Services Center, and the validity of these reports has been seriously questioned and stressed.

III. METHODOLOGY/MATERIALS

3.1 Statistical Analysis

The method used in this study was a descriptive-analytical method. The research community was the University of Khartoum and the research sample consisted of the Faculty of Science. The Faculty was deliberately selected because of the many medical reports presented thereto. A comprehensive survey was conducted on all medical reports issued during one academic from the start-up to the end of the supplementary and substitute examinations. A partial comparison was performed with the Faculty of economic and secondary information was used in the study.

Twelve variables were studied. These were the date of medical report, type of student, type of report, stage, department, type of illness, the subject of chemistry, the subject of physics, specialization, student's academic performance in final examinations, student's academic performance in supplementary and substitute examinations and the number of subjects sat for at substitute exams.

In the statistical analysis, the study uses: displaying variables and percentages, Chi square independence test,

coefficient of predictability Lambda, coefficient of ordinal association Gamma, correlation ratio Eta, Binomial test, Chi square goodness-of-fit test and testing the difference between two proportions. Then the study classifies reasons that make students opt for substitute exams into direct and indirect causes, some of the regulations taken by other universities to control the phenomenon were stated.

IV. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

One of the general findings is that there was a significant difference between the percentages of reports in the faculties of science and economics in University of Khartoum-in favor of the faculty of science.

The percentage of reports issued during the final examinations is significantly greater than that during the academic year. Also, reports of female students are greater in number than those of male students; and external reports exceed internal ones.

The percentage of fourth-year reports is the highest, with significant difference between the percentages of reports of different years in the college. There is no significant difference between the biology and mathematics departments, in terms of number of reports.

As to the University of Khartoum, 65 % of students passed their substitute and alternative exams. The percentage of those who pass their chemistry and physics exams amounts to 51.5 % and 50 %, respectively. In last years, alternative exams were not limited to students of low performance; in opposite of first year. On the contrary, the number of subjects for which students have substitute exams tends to decrease and more students pass their tests. The analysis of the collected data lead to findings that can be summarized as follows:

- The percentage of reports extracted in the final examination period is greater than the percentage of reports extracted during the school year.
- The percentage of female reports is higher than that of male reports.
- The percentage of external reports is higher than the percentage of internal reports.
- The percentage of level 4 students reports to the total number of reports is the highest among the reports of the rest of the stages, while the lowest for the fifth stage, the fourth stage students have experience in this field and want to earn extra time to graduate at a high grade by focusing more in a small number of subjects and postponed other subjects and take the alternatives exam.
- Students of the Department of Mathematics brought medical reports at a higher rate than Biology students.
- The percentage of reports in chemistry 34.7% higher than the rest of the reports.

4.1 Results of the Study and Relations between Variables

There is a significant correlation between the gender of students and the type of report. Both males and females are associated with the highest percentage of the external report. There is also a significant correlation between the gender of student and the type of department, and that males in the accounting section are associated with the highest percentage of the external reports. While females in biology sections are associated with the highest percentage of the external reports.

There is a significant difference between the percentage of reports in the final exams period, and the percentage during the academic year. There is a significant difference between the different levels in the college in terms of the percentage of medical reports provided. There is a significant difference between the percentage of reports in the fields of chemistry and physics, and chemistry is superior to physics in the number of reports. Figure 1 presents the percentage of the external reports in the final examination period comparing to the percentage of the medical reports in the rest of the year. Figure 2 presents the percentage of the external reports comparing to the internal reports.

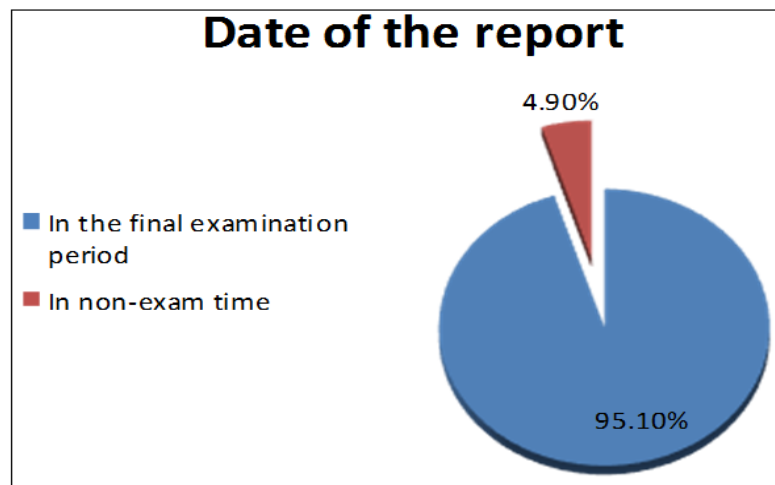


Figure1: The Percentage of the External Reports in the Final Examination Period

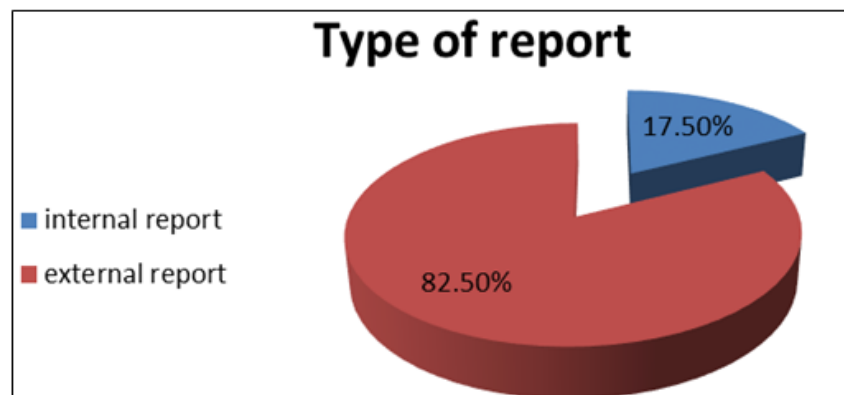


Figure 2: The Percentage of the External Reports and the Internal Reports

A number of recommendations were presented to the clinic, except in cases of accidents and surgery; to reject any external reports, to tighten control on females and to use the computer for monitoring the repetition of names during examinations and to reject any such repetition. Other recommendations to the faculty to continuously assess students' performance during academic year instead of one final exam, not to allow alternative exams for more than two academic years through the duration of study, and not to allow alternative exams at first year. It is also advised not to allow a fourth-year student to take more than one subject as a alternative exam. As for other years, it is recommended that the number of alternative exams should not exceed 20 % of the total number of subject. Also, recommended to shorten the period between final exam and alternative exams to just one week. Faculty should be

keen on finding causes when the number of students sitting for alternative exams to be more than normal; in any given subject and at any department. It is recommended also to appoint a social worker in each faculty, with an advisor for each year to assess the social conditions of the students and to periodically revise faculty rules and regulations, to provide an appropriate atmosphere for the new students.

Finally, we came up with recommendations after the analysis of the collected data: students must not be allowed to repeat the alternative exams for more than two times during the whole study years, so that students will consider the alternatives exams seriously because they fear to fall under real conditions and need to make alternative exams. Absolutely reject any external medical report except for accident reports and operations. The need to have a social officer in each college with a supervisor for each stage to assess the circumstances experienced by the student. The need to pay attention from the college and try to search for the reasons when the number of exam subject is large.

V. CONCLUSION

The importance of the research comes from the fact that it is the first study that deals with this subject in Sudan and to investigate the subject of controlling the process of conducting the alternatives examinations. University of Khartoum, can be considered as the mother University of the Various Sudanese Universities with its great history and place in the society, which is characterized by the acceptance of the highest percentage of students among the Sudanese through the office of admissions in higher education ministry. The fact is that it is important to research and discoverer the reason of the higher percentage of students who go through the alternative exams complex process in the Khartoum university. This problem motivated us to go through this research.

After analyzing the collected data, we find that the most important causes of the students' decisions to take the alternative exam are: the difficulty of some scientific subjects, the weakness of the academic level of students, this leads to the students fail to study and follow the materials of the courses through the year and thus the difficulty of controlling the study process of the final exams. Other important reasons are: the lack of lectures attendance regulations rules through the academic year, emergency conditions, dates of exams were scheduled without consideration of conflicts between subjects, Students' exam fear of failure, the disease may prevent the student from attending the exam. Students also believe that alternative exam questions will be repetitive of the main exam.

The benefits of the alternative exam based on student belief can be summarized by the following points: gaining extra time for study, taking an idea of the type of the questions in the exam, getting rid of the fear of the first final exam. Some actions taken by other universities to address the problem of the alternative exam: Rejecting external reports, reducing the period between the final exam and the alternatives tests to a week limit only because the students are thinking of the alternative exams just to take advantage of the time factor.

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