



Stakeholders' Perceptions of Examination Malpractice at the College of Distance Education University of Cape Coast, Ghana

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Examination malpractice and its implications to education have become a global menace that researchers are trying to find solutions to curb over the decades. This study, therefore, aimed at examining stakeholders'(students, Regional Coordinators (RCs), and Examination Unit staff) perceptions of examination malpractice at the College of Distance Education (CoDE) of the University of Cape Coast. The descriptive design was used for the study. A sample size of 259 respondents which comprises three Regional Coordinators, four staff of the CoDE examination Unit, and 252 students were selected from an accessible population of 3,102. The multistage and purposive sampling techniques were employed to select respondents across the selected study centers. A self-developed questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide were used to collect data from students and the other stakeholders. The findings of the study revealed that the majority (148) representing 58.7% of students perceived examination malpractice to be a common practice among students although unethical and wrong, whereas 124 (49.2%) of students indicated that examination malpractice was a wrongful act. The study therefore, concluded that the management of CoDE should make course modules readily available to students on time, and should severely punish culprits to deter other students from engaging in examination malpractices.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Examination malpractice has gained global attention for the past decades [1]. According to [2], the level of students' engagement in act of exam malpractices in primary, second cycle, and tertiary institutions in Africa and other parts of the world has become increasingly worrying and threatening to the educational system. [3] opined that the challenge and the risk posed by examination malpractices have been highlighted by educational actors and other stakeholders in Africa as a problem that requires urgent and substantive solutions. Examination malpractice defeats the core objectives of education which is to empower students with knowledge and skills needed for national development. If strategies are not adopted to curb this menace, its long repercussions will be educating students who will acquire certificates but will not be able to perform on the job.

[2] emphasized that examination and education are inseparable, as educational attainment is usually determined through the performance of its products in an examination or a set of examinations. Alhassan and Adamma further stated that examination influences what is taught and learned in schools, especially when the results are used to make important decisions such as selection and placement purposes. Examination, therefore, is the yardstick used to measure any academic achievement. It is used to assess how much learning has taken place and to what extent have the educational objectives and goals been achieved within a specific period. Oluwatelure as in [4] assert that examination is an important activity within the concept of the curriculum. The examination has two main discrete concepts: first to achieve the purpose for which it is designed and second, to be a reliable consistent means of measurement [5]. Thus, examination malpractice renders the validity of any examination void and there is no justification for using the examination results for its intended purpose.

[6] defined examination malpractice as any irregular behaviour or act exhibited by candidates or anybody charged with the responsibility of conducting examination (whether in or outside the examination hall, before, during, or after such examination). The Examination Malpractice Act as cited in [7] defined examination malpractice as 'any act of commission or omission by a person

who in anticipation of, before, during or after any examination, fraudulently securing unfair advantage for himself or any other person in such a manner that contravenes the rules and regulations of the examination and undermines the validity, reliability, authenticity of the examination and ultimately the integrity of the certificate issued. Examination malpractice is also defined as any deliberate act of wrongdoing, contrary to the rules of examinations [8]. [9] opined that, examination malpractice is misconduct or improper practice, before, during, or after any examination by examinees or others with a view of obtaining good results through deceitful means. From these three definitions, it can be concluded that examination malpractice is an unscrupulous act because it encourages mediocrity as students who succeeded through such unethical means may be rated equal to those who studied to achieve success.

There are several forms of examination malpractices: leakages, smuggling of foreign materials to the examination room, copying from another candidate (with or without permission), conspiracy (exchanging scripts in the examination room), and markers malpractice (which is a deliberate adjustment of marks designed to inflate or deflate a candidate's original mark [10]. [1] found causes of examination malpractice to be overcrowding of students in examination halls, students' inadequate preparation for examinations, and lecturers' inability to complete syllabi as indicated in the course outlines were identified among major causes of examination malpractice at the universities. Oluwatelure [as cited in 4] found one cause of examination malpractice: selling examination questions to lessen poverty. Others include an erroneous value system which leads to a serious quest for certification rather than the acquisition of knowledge and skills, inadequate examination hall, poor seating arrangement, poor invigilation, and socio-economic factors [Onyechere as cited in [11]. [12] identified causes that lead to examination malpractice to include cultural practices, school programmes, teaching and learning environment, and behaviour of teachers and students. [13] also reported that students were of the view that they would fail if they did not cheat, no matter how hard they learn.

[14] cited Nigeria as occupying the number one position in the World Examination Malpractice

Index. Emaikwu and Eba as cited in [15] reported that the widespread examination malpractice in tertiary institutions in Nigeria has led to a situation where the conduct of formal examinations as bases for evaluating the level of candidates' proficiency in absorbing, reproducing, and applying knowledge has become impossible. A study conducted in Nigeria by [15] also established examination malpractices among basic, secondary, and tertiary institutions. However, [16] study findings revealed that teachers and administrators perceived examination malpractice as a means of boosting the image of the school. These and other issues regarding the worrying trend of examination malpractices informed the current study, particularly to investigate the trend in distance learning in Ghana.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The occurrence of examination malpractices at all levels of the education systems in Africa and other parts of the world has been a major concern to the managers of education delivery and other stakeholders (Aghenta as cited in [17]). Several studies had been conducted in Ghana on the issue of examination malpractice [18,19, 13,12,20]. According to [18] and [19], examination malpractices have resulted in several cases where examination papers have been canceled. They added that culprits who engaged in examination malpractices were made to re-write some of the papers to serve as a deterrent to other candidates, and staff who were caught in the act of malpractice during examination suffered the punishment of losing their jobs whereas others were imprisoned [18, 19].

Cases of examination malpractices were investigated at the University of Cape Coast (UCC) [13, 18]. The Teaching and Examinations Section of UCC presented a memo on the nature and trends of examination malpractices among the University's regular students which ranges from examination questions leakage, bringing foreign materials to the examination room, writing on parts of one's body and clothes. Others include communicating in the examination room and the use of mobile phones during the examination period. Although the aforementioned studies had been conducted on examination malpractices in the university, it appears that no scientific study was done on students pursuing their programmes through the distance mode of the university. At the College of Distance Education (CoDE) of UCC, some incidence of

examination malpractices occurred and were recorded by the Academic Unit of the College [21]. Table 1 presents statistics on those examination malpractices among distance learners.

The statistics shown in Table 1 revealed that examination malpractices recorded in the 2013/2014 academic year were very high compared to the rest of the academic year but decreased in the 2017/2018 academic year. This decrease has proven that measures put in place by the management of CoDE to curb the menace are functioning. Some of the measures include the initiation of the coding system (Codes 1 to 4) for setting examination questions especially in the objectives test with different numbering systems but the same questions and answers. Again, the college engages the university lecturers as chief invigilators and senior staff as assistant invigilators during examinations instead of allowing only some course tutors who are not permanent staff of UCC to invigilate examinations. These measures although have proved to be successful, some students still engage in examination malpractices. If university students who are being trained to be teachers and also to become future leaders in the country engage in examination malpractice, then what moral justification do they have to advise the future youth on this menace. It appears that no scientific study has been done on the issue at CoDE. Against this background, this study was designed to examine stakeholders' perceptions of examination malpractice among distance learners and the strategies to curb this phenomenon at CoDE.

1.2 Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What are the perceptions of the major stakeholders (Students, Regional Coordinators, and Staff of Examination Unit) towards examination malpractice?
2. What are the differences in students' perceptions of examination malpractice across the study centres of CoDE?
3. What strategies could be adopted to solve issues of examination malpractices?

This study was guided by [22] Hierarchy of Needs Theory. According to the theory, people are motivated by different levels of needs at different times in their lives. These needs are individualistic and can change over time. They

vary in strength and importance and can, therefore, be arranged in a hierarchical order. According to Maslow, the first three needs on the hierarchy are lower-level needs, and the last two are higher-level needs. The lowest level needs decline in strength when they are satisfied, but the higher-level needs rather grow in strength on satisfaction. For example, if a person is hungry or thirsty, his desire to eat or drink declines after he is fully up or satisfied. However, if a person desires the position as provost of a college, he still desires a higher position even after occupying the position as provost. These needs are in ascending order, namely: Physiological, Safety and Security, Social, esteem, and self-actualization.

According to Maslow, physiological needs are the basic needs for sustaining human life. They are primarily concerned with the biological functioning of the human body and the most basic and prime motivator of behaviour. They include food, air, water, shelter, clothing, sleep, and sexual satisfaction. It is only when these needs are satisfied to a reasonable level that the next highest level in the hierarchy can motivate behaviour. The next higher-level needs, in this case, are safety and security needs. These needs are the needs for a safe and secure physical, mental, and psychological state of persons and their environment. Safety needs include protection from physical harm, ill-health, and economic disaster. Once you feel reasonably secure and have had enough to eat or drink, social needs begin to drive your behaviour, says Maslow. These needs represent the desire to have a satisfying relationship with others and to feel the sense of love, affection, friendship, belongingness, and acceptance. Again, ego and esteem needs relate to the desire

for a positive self-image as well as the respect and admiration of others. The satisfaction of ego and esteem needs helps the individual to be self-confident, independent, and powerful. Finally, Maslow regarded self-actualization as the highest category of human needs on his hierarchy. Self-actualization consists of the desire to become what one is capable of becoming. Self-actualization is sought through challenging assignments that involve independent thinking and creativity. It is achieved when one has maximized his or her potential to the fullest.

According to the theory, when one need is satisfied, the next highest becomes compelling. However, this straightforward progression is not always the case. There are instances where the individual returns to previously satisfied needs. For instance, an unprepared candidate who is sitting for an examination would want to pass by all means. In so doing, he or she would wish to satisfy the safety and security needs first before the physiological needs (thus just passing the examination). Thus, such a candidate would make sure no one is watching him before he or she goes on to solicit answers from a colleague or consult his or her foreign material. It is also possible for a candidate to remain at one level (say security/safety) when attempts to move up the hierarchy have failed. For instance, if a candidate would want to cheat and realises that an invigilator is watching him or her, upon several attempts if he or she realises that he can't cheat, he or then refrains and concentrates on what he or her can do. Examination malpractices can therefore be seen as thoughts, feelings, and desires that drive or influence students' behaviours to cheat in examinations.

Table 1. Examination malpractices statistics among distance learners per regional bases and year at CoDE

SN	Region	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	Total
1	Ashanti	130	19	23	32	08	212
2	Brong Ahafo	53	15	24	35	06	133
3	Central	31	15	09	10	05	70
4	Eastern	02	04	01	01	00	08
5	Greater Accra	00	06	00	00	06	12
6	Northern	00	05	00	00	09	14
7	Upper East	10	01	07	00	00	18
8	Upper West	00	02	02	00	00	04
9	Volta	00	08	08	00	02	18
10	Western	00	06	13	00	03	22
Total		226	81	87	78	39	511

Source: UCC-CoDE Basic Statistics, (2019)

This study looks at stakeholders' perceptions to get their views on how they perceive examination malpractice. A person's perception is seen by the researchers to be influenced by beliefs, thoughts, feelings, and desires. These desires are described by Maslow as needs. The need to acquire a certificate is linked to passing an examination and as such, people who are in dire need of a certificate can do anything to acquire it. It can be inferred from Maslow's theory that students' involvement in examination malpractice is a result of the satisfaction of their desires to pass examinations at all costs. These desires include pleasing parents, wanting to be adjudged and awarded the best students, socially earning prestige from mates and avoiding embarrassment, achieving a good job, and becoming what so much desire for. Examination malpractice mostly happens when unprepared students take advantage of others through cheating to earn high marks or pass the examination by all means.

2. METHODS

2.1 Design, Population, and Sample

To achieve a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study, a descriptive design was employed for the study. [23], opined that descriptive research is designed to collect data about the status of phenomena under study [24]. on the other hand referred to the descriptive survey as the study of current prevailing issues, views, and attitudes about growing trends. This design was found suitable because it enabled us to give a clear and detailed description of the opinions of our respondents on examination malpractices at CoDE-UCC. It is also very economical in terms of collecting data from a large sample [25]. The target population for the study was all CoDE students at 76 study centres offering education programmes across the country totalling 51,456 made up of 29,126 males and 22,330 females [26]

The accessible population was 3,102 made up of all Diploma in Basic Education (DBE) students of CoDE in 4 selected study centres (Vass, Nyarko, Yass, and Takyi). These study centres were purposively sampled from the Ashanti, Central, and Brong Ahafo Regions of the country because they were places where examination malpractices occurred most at the time of this study [27]. The 3 RCs for the selected regions and 4 staff of the Examination Unit (SEU) including its head were also purposively selected for the study. It should be noted that the 4 staff of the examination unit exclude national service persons in that unit. The Regional Coordinators were selected because they served as lectures and chief invigilators during face-to-face sessions and examinations thus have in-depth knowledge about students' involvement in examination malpractice. Also, the staff of the Examination Unit (SEU) was included in the study because they are in charge of the conduct of examinations, marking, and checking of students' scripts at CoDE. Also, its head served as a member of the Examination Malpractice Committee at CoDE. This brings the total sample size including students to 259.

With regards to the students' multistage sampling approach was used to select them for the study. The sample size for students of 252 was selected based on [28] sample selection criteria. In calculating the sample for the various levels, the sample for each level was divided by the total accessible population of students (3,095) and multiplied by the sample size (252). For example, to calculate the sample size for level 100 students, the total number of level 100 students (926) was divided by the accessible population of students' 3,095 multiplied by the sample size (252) which gave 75 as the sample.

Table 2 presents a summary of the population and sample sizes of students across the selected centres.

Table 2. Population and sample size for students' (respondents) at the selected Study Centres

Study centre	Level 100		Level 200		Level 300	
	Population	Sample	Population	Sample	Population	Sample
Nyarko	96	8	100	8	329	27
Yass	184	15	171	14	255	21
Takyi	100	8	121	10	260	21
Vass	551	44	383	31	550	45
Total	926	75	775	550	1,394	114

Source: Field survey, (2021)

The lottery method of the simple random sampling technique was used to select students from each level at the Study Centres. This was done based on a sampling frame generated by the researchers. For instance, this procedure was followed in obtaining a sample of 44 students in level 100 from the population of the UCC Study Centre and the three others.

2.2 Instruments for Data Collection

A self-developed questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide were the instruments used for data collection. The questionnaire was developed to collect data from the students and the semi-structured interview guide was developed to collect data from the RCs and the staff of the Examination Unit.

2.3 Validity and Reliability of Instruments

The validity and reliability of the instruments were done through the use of colleague researchers and experts. This was meant to ensure that the items in the questionnaire and the interview guide were adequately and comprehensively captured [29]. Saw validity as the extent to which an instrument measures what it purports to measure. In this regard, the corrections and suggestions made by the experts led to the modification of some items in the questionnaires as well as the interview guide. This brought about the removal of ambiguities, wrong phrases, and sequences in the instruments.

In this study, the questionnaire was pre-tested in the Nyametease study centre in the Ga South Municipality. This study centre was not part of the study centres sampled for this study. The Cronbach's alpha value of 0.706 was recorded on students' perceptions of examination malpractice. Checking the validity of the interview instruments for the other stakeholders' perceptions of examination malpractices, RC 1 was interviewed. This first interview provided the opportunity to refine, rephrase and clarify some questions in the guide.

2.4 Data Processing and Analysis

Data collected from students, RCs, and the Head of the Examination Unit were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively respectively. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation were used to analyse research question 1, and One-Way ANOVA was used to analyse research

question 2. These were done using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Version 21.0).

Concerning the qualitative data, the analytical procedure used for the data analysis was coding and the constant comparative method. First, the recorded interviews for the head of the examination unit and the RCs' perceptions of examination malpractices were transcribed. Thereafter, focus group discussions with the RCs and the staff of the Examination Unit were also transcribed. Initial codes or categories, emergent themes, and concepts from the texts were established and put into unique lists of codes. The coding was done using [30] process of analytical coding. This process group codes under three major themes. Open, axial, and selective coding,

Open coding is the process of moving back and forth between the data and concepts using inductive and deductive reasoning to identify repeated themes after transcribing the data. Axial coding is the process of relating codes (categories and concepts) to each other to identify relationships among the open codes. Selective coding is the process of re-reading the transcript and selecting any code that relates to the core variables identified. Pattern analysis was also used to identify, describe themes, concepts, and notes links between codes.

Further, the qualitative data sought suggestions that could be used to curb examination malpractices from CoDE. The RCs and the staff of Examination Unit suggestions were subjected to content analysis on the written documents to identify predominant keywords and concepts. These were transcribed and put into unique themes and meaningful patterns. These were then grouped into comprehensive subcategories or themes based on phrases or sentences. Qualitative data analyses were presented in narratives and sometimes quoted verbatim. These narratives were used to support the quantitative data during the discussion stage to clarify some findings from the quantitative results.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Research Question 1

What are Students, RCs, and Staff of Examination Unit's Perceptions of Examination Malpractices at CoDE?

Eight items were used to elicit responses on students' perceptions of examination malpractice while items 'a' to 'h' on the interview guide were used to elicit responses from RCs, staff, and Head of the Examination Unit regarding examination malpractice. The data obtained from the students were analysed using frequencies and percentages as well as means and standard deviations. Strongly Agree (SA) and agree were pulled together as 'Agree (A)' and Strongly Disagree (SD) and Disagree (D) as 'Disagree (D)'. In employing the mean and standard deviation for the analysis, a decision rule where $2.5 \leq M \leq 3.0$ indicates that the mean is perceived as agreed while, $2.0 \leq M \leq 2.4$ also indicates that the mean is perceived as disagreeing for students' perceptions of examination malpractice. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 shows the frequency distribution, percentage, mean, and standard deviation of the perceptions of the students about examination malpractices at the selected study centres of CoDE. According to Table 3, 138 (54.8%) students agreed that examination malpractice is an unethical act. This shows that more than half of them perceived examination malpractice as unethical (N=138, M=2.75, SD=1.02). Table 3 again shows that 194 (77.0%) of the students disagreed that examination malpractice is a means of rendering help to fellow candidates (N=194, M=2.08, SD=0.96).

3.2 Research Question 2

What are the differences in students' perceptions of examination malpractice at the Selected Study Centres of College of CoDE?

To establish whether the differences observed in the frequency counts and percentages were significant, One-Way ANOVA was computed for each of the eight statements depicting perceptions. The results are presented in Table 4.

The results from Table 4 revealed that there are no significant differences in students' perceptions regarding examination malpractice being; a means of rendering help to fellow humans, a common act these days, a wrongful act, and an unconscious act. Furthermore, the results revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in students' views regarding examination malpractice being; means to

meeting high expectations from parents, the behaviour of students, unethical act and deliberate, prepared, or planned act.

3.3 Research Question 3

What strategies could be adopted to solve issues of examination malpractices at the university?

The staff of the Examination Unit (SEU) and some of the RCs were interviewed and presented under the following themes:

3.3.1 Thorough inspection of students

In every examination, there is bound to be examination malpractice in one form or another. It is something that students plan very well before they enter the examination hall. It is very deliberate. There should be thorough inspection of students at the entrance of each examination hall to ride candidates of foreign materials: SEU 1.

Washrooms at the examination centres should be inspected during examinations to ensure that books and other materials having a bearing on the examinations are removed from there: SEU 2.

UCC security men and other standby invigilators should be dispatched to accompany candidates who wish to visit the washrooms in the course of the examination. SEU 3.

Inspection of the examination halls at the centres should be done to ensure that no foreign material is hidden under the desks or anywhere before the commencement of each exam: RC1.

CoDE should ensure that every student is issued with Identity Cards (IDs) and inspected during each examination session to curb impersonation: RC2.

3.3.2 Amendment and enforcement of Laws on Examination Malpractice

Examination malpractice has been happening all the time. It is common not only now. It has always existed. Some students know they might not be able to write the exam, so they plan on ways to pass. The laws against examination malpractice, therefore, should be amended to impose more severe punishments like imprisonment, dismissal, etc. to deter other candidates from engaging in the same, RC 2.

Table 3. Students' perceptions of examination malpractice

Statement	A N (%)	D N (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
Examination malpractice is a/an;	58(23.0)	194(77.0)	2.08	0.96	Disagree
means of rendering help to fellow humans	86(34.1)	166(65.9)	2.17	1.07	Disagree
means of meeting high expectations from parents					
common act in examinations these days	148(58.7)	104(41.3)	2.66	0.98	Agree
behaviour of students	102(40.5)	150(59.5)	2.38	1.04	Disagree
unethical act by students	138(54.8)	144(45.2)	2.75	1.02	agree
wrongful act by students	124(49.2)	128(50.8)	2.56	1.06	agree
unconscious act by students	109(43.3)	143(56.7)	2.44	1.09	disagree
deliberate, prepared, and planned act by students	69(27.4)	183(72.6)	2.21	1.01	disagree

Source: Field data, (2021)

Table 4. One-way ANOVA of differences in students' perceptions in the selected study centres

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
S1	Between Groups	3.490	3	1.163	1.256	.290
	Within Groups	229.760	248	.926		
	Total	233.250	251			
S2	Between Groups	.404	3	.135	.117	.950
	Within Groups	285.259	248	1.150		
	Total	285.663	251			
S3	Between Groups	.628	3	.209	.216	.885
	Within Groups	240.023	248	.968		
	Total	240.651	251			
S4	Between Groups	.098	3	.033	.030	.993
	Within Groups	269.759	248	1.088		
	Total	269.857	251			
S5	Between Groups	1.141	3	.380	.361	.782
	Within Groups	261.605	248	1.055		
	Total	262.746	251			
S6	Between Groups	.130	3	.043	.039	.990
	Within Groups	279.977	248	1.129		
	Total	280.107	251			
S7	Between Groups	2.262	3	.754	.628	.598
	Within Groups	297.960	248	1.201		
	Total	300.222	251			
S8	Between Groups	3.119	3	1.040	1.018	.385
	Within Groups	253.309	248	1.021		
	Total	256.429	251			

Laws on exam malpractice spelling out the sanctions should immediately be enforced against candidates who cheat to serve as a deterrent to other candidates, RC1.

Malpractice laws against Course Tutors and lecturers who aid and abate candidates to cheat during exam invigilation should also be strictly enforced against them if they compromise themselves without fear or favour, SEU 4.

Candidates should be assembled and constantly reminded of the laws and sanctions associated

with exam malpractice before each paper starts, SEU1.

The laws should be printed and posted at the entrance of each examination hall at the study centres, RC4.

3.3.3 Academic Counselling

Professional counsellors of CoDE should be engaged to counsel students of the need to avoid examination malpractice, RC 3.

Counsellors should counsel all students on effective learning strategies to help them do effective learning before exams, SEU 3.

Management of CoDE should ensure that study materials are provided to students on time to enable them adequately prepare ahead of time before writing examinations, SEU 1.

3.4 Discussion of Results

This finding in Table 3 contradicts that of [31] who found that 39% of the education stakeholders especially administrators and parents agreed that examination malpractice is a means of rendering help to fellow candidates.

One of the RCs interviewed indicated that:

“Yes, I agree, I perfectly agree. Students are friends and they have classmates and during examinations, some who initially didn’t intend to cheat are pressurised to do so from friends. Friends normally ask their colleagues at the blind side of invigilators to help them. Since they are friends, they try to satisfy them as means of rendering help to fellow candidates. In this context, I agree”. RC2.

Less than half of the students, 109 (43.3%) disagreed that examination malpractice is an unconscious act. Again, 69 (27.4%) students disagreed that examination malpractice is a deliberate, prepared, and planned activity. This refutes the findings of [31] who indicated that examination malpractice was a common, deliberate, and planned activity. Examination malpractice being deliberate, prepared and planned act signifies that examination malpractice occurs before the commencement of the examination.

The alarming issue is that if examination malpractice is not unconscious but deliberate or planned as perceived by the 69 (27.4%) students, then, what do they think examination malpractice is? Some responses such as examination malpractice is a common act in examinations these days as agreed by students of this study support the comment made by a staff of Examination Unit and some of the RCs interviewed whilst others contradicted:

In every examination, there is bound to be examination malpractice in one form or another. It is something that students plan very well before they enter the examination hall. It is very deliberate, SEU1.

Examination malpractice has been happening all the time. It is common not only now. It has always existed. Some students know they might

not be able to write the exam, so they plan on ways to pass, RC 2.

However, the findings contradict the view of RC1:

Well, in some places examination malpractice may be common but not here. It rarely occurs, RC1.

The revelation of RC1 contradicted that of his colleagues regarding examination malpractice being common at the selected study centres. His contradicted view could be that he wanted to safe guide or protect his position thereby refraining from bringing out the true reflection of the occurrence of examination malpractice at the selected study centres. Examination malpractice being common in examinations these days can be associated with the physiological desire that candidates would always want to satisfy as described by [23]. This is as a result of students’ desire to pass examinations at all costs to obtain certificates that would earn them jobs that would enable them to provide basic needs for themselves and their families.

This finding corroborates that of [32] and [33] that examination malpractice is an illegal or unethical behaviour portrayed by examinees in the process of testing their ability or knowledge using questions. Even though more than half of the students perceived examination malpractice as unethical, a little less than half (49.2%) of them indicated that examination malpractice was a wrongful act (N=124, M=2.56, SD=1.06). This means that not all the students who perceived examination malpractice as unethical perceived it as a wrongful activity.

It can also be found from Table 3 that more than half of the students (148) representing 58.7 % agreed that examination malpractice is a common activity these days (N=148, M=2.66, SD=0.98). This finding is in tandem with that of [13] on the perceptions and reasons of examination malpractice among students at the University of Cape Coast which revealed that examination malpractice was very common in any examination.

The findings of [31] corroborate the current findings to the extent that 39 percent of the education stakeholders especially administrators and parents agreed that examination malpractice was common and was a deliberate and planned activity. However, less than half of the students (109) representing 43.3% disagreed that examination malpractice is an unconscious act.

Again, 69(27.4%) students disagreed that examination malpractice is deliberate, prepared, and planned activity. This finding contradicts that of [31] who revealed that examination malpractice was a common, deliberate, and planned act. Examination malpractice being deliberate, prepared and planned act signifies that examination malpractice occurs before the commencement of the examination.

From Table 4, it can be seen that the differences between the groups as observed in the descriptive analysis are not statistically significant. All the significant values are greater than .05. What this means is that even though differences are observed in the descriptive analysis, the differences are not statistically significant. The findings corroborate that of [33] who found that students have the same views about examination malpractice regardless of the location they find themselves. [34] also confirming this finding revealed that differences in school location did not influence students' views and their eventual engagement in examination malpractices.

Furthermore, the findings from RCs and SEU showed that Examination malpractice could be curbed if the counselling needs and study material needs of students are met. This finding is in line with physiological and psychological needs which candidates would always want to satisfy as described by [23]. The findings further corroborate that of [31] who recommended academic counselling, making the punishment for engaging captured in exam rules severe and making laws governing examination visible to students at the examination halls.

The findings on RCs and SEU on severe punishment for candidates and invigilators, further supports that of [18] and [19] which revealed that culprits who engaged in examination malpractices were made to re-write some of the papers to serve as a deterrent to other candidates, and staff who were caught in the act of malpractice during examination suffered the punishment of losing their jobs whereas others imprisoned.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The key findings of this study revealed that the majority (148) representing 58.7% of students perceived examination malpractice to be a common practice among students although unethical and wrong, whereas 124 (49.2%) of students indicated that examination malpractice

was a wrongful act. Furthermore, the results revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in students' views at the selected centres regarding examination malpractice being; means to meeting high expectations from parents, the behaviour of students, unethical act and deliberate, prepared, or planned act. The act of examination-related malpractices pose devastating consequences to the culprits in the form of cancellation of paper(s), rustication, and dismissal. The institution of learning is not spared as it discourages prospective students from enrolling, decreased job or employment opportunities for the graduates, and uttermost embarrassment to parents and the candidates. All stakeholders (students, examination invigilators, managers of educational institutions, and parents) should be duly sensitized on the dangers of examination malpractice through workshops and seminars to help curb the menace.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study:

1. Since examination malpractice is perceived as a common, unethical, and wrongful act, it is recommended that the management of CoDE should sensitise stakeholders especially students on the sanctions outlined in the Students' Handbook against culprits of examination malpractice. Again, the sanctions outlined in the Students' Handbook against culprits of examination malpractice should be made stricter and more deterrent to ward off potential examination malpractices. This would help students to refrain from the act.
2. Again, the management of CoDE should ensure that course modules are distributed to students on time to enable them to read and prepare well before examinations.
3. Finally, since there was no significant difference in the perceptions of students from different study centres regarding examination malpractice, it is recommended that CoDE management should intensify education on examination malpractice across all the study centres for the students to know the need to refrain from engaging in examination malpractice.
4. Since inadequate preparation of students was found to be the main cause of examination malpractice, it is recommended that tutors should encourage students to put

in all their efforts to be able to prepare well before examinations.

5. Course tutors should ensure that all units in the modules are adequately covered, and students adequately prepare before quizzes and examinations.

No recommendation to students?

6. It is suggested that future research should go beyond perceptions and focus on actual culprits of examination malpractice to examine their personal views regarding examination malpractices and the main reasons for their engagement in examination malpractice.

CONSENT

Regarding ethical consideration, we discussed with the provost of CoDE when, how, and who data would be collected from in the selected study centres. The researchers then discussed other ethical issues with the students as well as the other stakeholders of the study. Informed consent was done and respondents were allowed to either continue as participants in the study or withdraw from it at any time. In this study, the researchers informed selected respondents about the purpose of the study. The respondents were given the freedom to choose to participate or not in the study. Confidentiality of the respondents was also ensured. In light of this, pseudonyms were used to represent the study centres selected for the study. This ensured that data provided to us could not be either traced to them or shared with any third party. Anonymity was guaranteed through the grouping of data provided rather than presenting individual responses.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

As per international standard or university standard written ethical approval has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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