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Examination Malpractice in Senior High Schools: Perspectives from First-Year Undergraduates

Dr Mary Afi Mensah, (PhD)[1*], Mr Suglo, Kabinaa Enoch[2], Mr Samuel Osei[3]

[1*]Faculty of Sustainable Development Studies, University for Development Studies, Tamale, Ghana

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0121-8944

[2]Department of Education, Regentropfen University College, Private Mail Bag, Bolgatanga, Upper East Region, Ghana

[3]Department of Educational Management and Policy Studies, University for Development Studies, Tamale, Ghana.

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Abstract

Purpose: This study examined the perspectives of Level 100 undergraduate students on cheating techniques employed during the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and their perceptions of the prevalence of such practices among their peers throughout SHS.

Methodology: Using a quantitative cross-sectional design, data were collected from a sample of 137 students, representing 66.3% of the total population of 208, through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was piloted and validated, with an acceptable Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .869. The data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics, frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations.

Findings: The descriptive results revealed that 24.8% of respondents identified the use of mobile phones as their primary cheating method, while approximately 18.2% reported relying on peer communication during examinations. The mean score for awareness of cheating methods was 2.41, indicating a moderate level of recognition, whereas the mean score for perceptions of cheating among peers was 2.31. However, students did not consider examination malpractice to be fully normalized among their peers (mean = 1.94).

Unique Contributions to Theory, Policy, and Practice: The findings underscore the need for educational reforms that promote academic integrity and discourage cheating behaviors. The findings contribute to policy by informing the development of examination integrity policies, and to practice by implementing strict examination protocols and integrity training initiatives to foster a culture of honesty, accountability, and critical thinking, ultimately enhancing the credibility of academic qualifications in Ghana.

Keywords: *Examination Malpractice, Academic Integrity, Cheating Techniques, WASSCE, Mobile Phones, Academic Ethics*

INTRODUCTION

School exams are considered essential for evaluating students' success in terms of their comprehension and application of the course material (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). However, cheating is unavoidable during the performance evaluation process (Diego, 2017; Forkuor et al., 2019). In the majority of postsecondary institutions, cheating has become common (Diego, 2017). This issue minimizes the objective of evaluating students' comprehension and implementation of the courses they have been taught (Diego, 2017; Forkuor et al., 2019). Diego (2017) noted that peer pressure is the primary cause of cheating and that it undermines the goals of comprehending, applying, and producing ideas as outlined in Anderson's updated Bloom's taxonomy. Diego (2017) also found that friendships can influence behavior, as they can make doing the right thing appear wrong, and actions that should be avoided, such as infidelity, seem more acceptable.

According to Akbarirad et al. (2021), cheating in exams costs the Iranian educational system and society a lot of money. As a result, these authors stressed the need to address this issue because cheaters frequently carry their improper behavior into their post-graduation workplaces. The authors went on to say that people are less inclined to cheat when they are honest. According to a 2021 study by Akbarirad et al., overall, 68% of students cheat, regardless of the type of cheating. As a result, the authors concluded that more training, stricter regulations, harsher punishments for offenders, and a ban on competitive behavior in the classroom were all necessary.

A study conducted in Pakistan by Iqbal et al. in 2021 revealed that academic cheating, whether during exams, study projects, or the entire assessment period of academic activities, is a severe problem pervasive in educational institutions worldwide. The authors further maintained that the problem is equally prevalent in Pakistan and predominant, especially during academic evaluation and examination periods. Although the role of institutions in preventing academic cheating is also up for debate, Iqbal et al. (2021) asserted that the problem of examination malpractice or cheating reflects the extent of social, psychological, and ethical standards of students involved in cheating. Examination malpractice negatively influences fair academic grading, behavior of non-cheating students, overall ethical behavior of the expected graduate, and quality standards of educational institutions (Iqbal et al., 2021). To ensure academic integrity, it is important to understand the factors that contribute to students' cheating.

A study by Iqbal et al. (2021) presented the frequency of academic cheating during exams at Pakistani higher education institutions, along with the variables that contribute to it and potential preventive methods. A Ghanaian researcher, Gyamfi (2022), carried out a study to determine how performance-based evaluation was perceived to affect exam misconduct at the SHS level. In his study, the author found that while graphs, angles, and construction attracted the least amount of malpractice, mensuration, sets, equations and inequalities, business mathematics, and algebraic expressions attracted the most (Gyamfi, 2022). For this reason, the author suggested that the West

African Examination Council offer a trial of Performance-Based Assessment in the SHS for a few chosen schools to help lower the incidence of examination malpractice.

In their research, Dadzie and Annan-Brew (2023) defined examination malpractice as any unusual behavior by examinees, examiners, or anyone else involved in a test, whether before, during, or following the exam, that gives some people an unfair advantage. The purpose of their study was to investigate how teachers and students in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis perceived the effectiveness of the strategies used to curb exam misconduct.

In the Sekondi-Takoradi metropolis, Dadzie and Annan-Brew (2023) noted that while pre-examination methods were effective, post-examination malpractices were only marginally effective. Teachers and students both concurred that it is ineffective to prohibit schools engaged in exam misconduct from administering external exams and to imprison supervisors who assist and encourage exam malpractice (Dadzie & Annan-Brew, 2023). Because students also employ innovative ways to cheat before, during, and after exams, the authors urged the West African Examination Council (WAEC) to increase the use of technological tools for student checks.

Although there has been considerable work examining cheating in education across many contexts, there is a significant gap in the literature with regard to Level 100 undergraduate students' perspectives on their cheating experiences/behaviors and perceptions in their Senior High School (SHS). Studies in Ghana, Pakistan, and Iran have either examined cheating behavior in higher education or, more generally, education systems or specific subjects. Studies have explored cheating attitudes in higher education; some studies have delved deeper into students' localized perspectives as they transitioned from SHS to university. Furthermore, many studies examined the efficacy of anti-cheating approaches drawing on the psychological and social factors contributing to cheating; nevertheless, reports from the students regarding techniques they engaged in or observed are limited. This is notable because cultural influences are capable of being culturally tied in diverse situations. This research aims to fill this gap by providing insights into the cheating techniques reported by students in Ghana, their perceptions of the prevalence of cheating in their experiences, and its contribution to discussions on academic integrity in Ghana's tertiary education institutions.

Objectives of the study

This study aimed to:

1. Identify the examination malpractice techniques employed by students during the WASSCE, as reported by Level 100 undergraduate students.
2. Investigate the perception of Level 100 undergraduate students regarding the prevalence of exam malpractice during their Senior High School (SHS) years.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The study was grounded in the Fraud Triangle (FT) Theory propounded by Donald Cressey in 1953. The FT theory is among the most enduring frameworks in understanding unethical and fraudulent behavior. Although the theory was originally developed to describe financial and work-related frauds, the theory has since been applied to a broad context, such as academic misconduct and examination malpractice, due to the psychological and situational dynamics that lie behind the motivations of individuals to commit dishonest acts. The FT theory, as proposed by Cressey (1953), grounded its assumptions on three core elements/factors, including pressure, opportunity, and rationalization. In the application of the theory to education, and especially to the situation of examinations gives a strong lens for analyzing how students cheat, how institutional systems enable such behavior, and how individuals justify their actions afterwards.

Conceptual Overview of the Fraud Triangle Theory

The groundbreaking contribution of Cressey (1953) on embezzlers is the book titled "Other People's Money: A Study in the Social Psychology of Embezzlement," which explored the reasons why people who are entrusted with managing money commit fraud. Cressey concluded that fraud does not emanate from inherent criminality but from situational convergence of personal and structural opportunity, and cognitive justification. The three interdependent elements that are pressure, opportunity, and rationalization constitute the triangle of the psychological route to deviant behavior. Over the years, scholars have generalized the model to diverse contexts, including corporate governance, cybercrime, and academic fraud (Desai, 2020; Guptam, 2024; Mandal & Amilan, 2024). This framework sheds light on the intricate interaction of both internal and external happenings that drive students to cheat during examinations within the academic communities. It elucidates the way students feel academic and social pressure, perceive exploitable loopholes in the administration of exams, and form mental explanations of their unethical behaviors. According to the theory, cheating, therefore, is not only a moral failure but a systematic pattern of behavior as a reaction to perceived situational stress and institutional vulnerabilities.

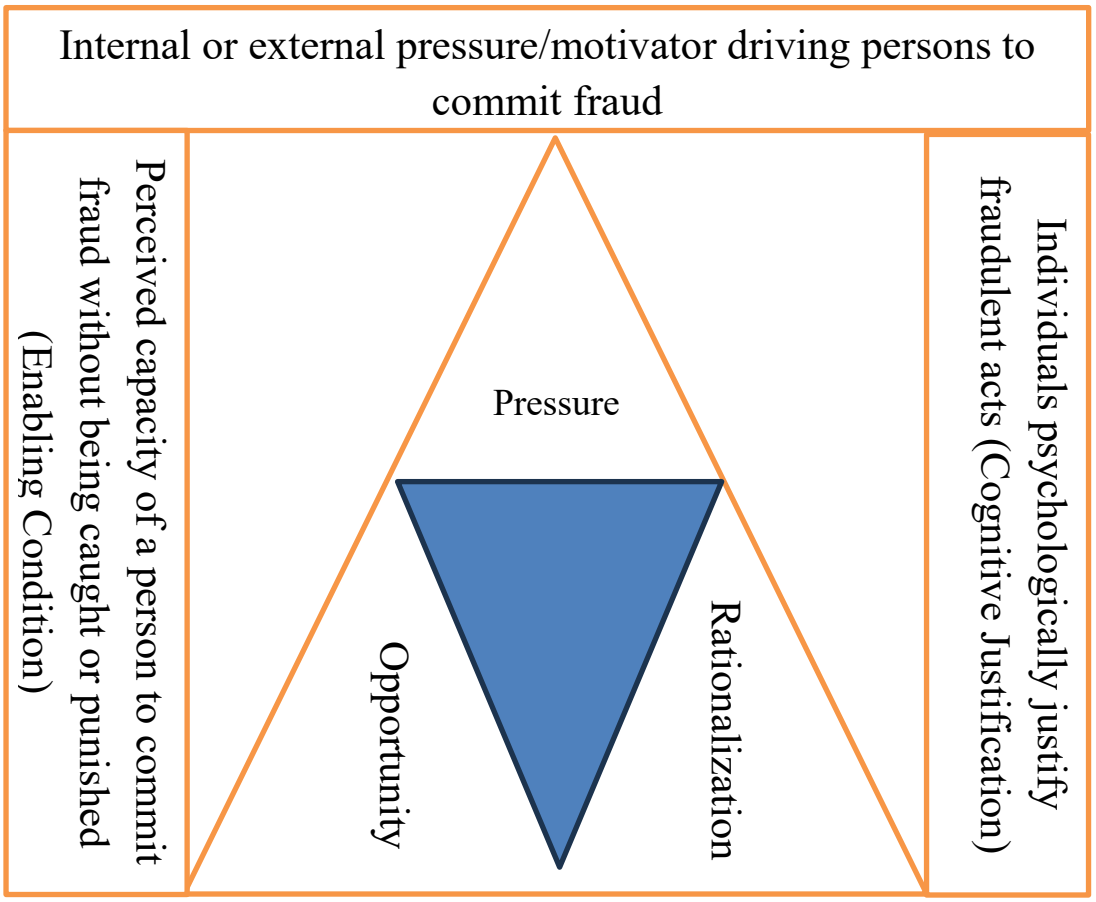

Figure 1: The Fraud Triangle (Researchers' own construct)

Pressure: The Motivational Catalyst

The pressure is the first element of the Fraud Triangle, which entails the internal or external pressure driving persons to commit fraud. The pressure takes different shapes in the academic life - it could be academic requirements, fear of failure, competition, parental pressure or institutional pressure in achieving high grades. Students who are undertaking high-stakes final exams may view the outcome of failure to be too harsh to bear, which makes them look at malpractice as a way of shortcutting the exam. According to Kumari et al. (2021), Wuthrich et al. (2021), and Jerrim (2023), the final examination period is usually filled with anxiety and stress, particularly where one test shows the overall progress or entry to higher education. Dilham (2021) also asserted that students who feel unconfident about their preparation and failure to see tests as challenging are more prone to the temptation of cheating as a coping strategy. In this situation, pressure operates as the psychological trigger that initiates the fraud process. This pressure is usually exacerbated by socio-economic and institutional pressures. Holmlund and Nybom (2023) claim that academic performance in most countries is directly correlated to social mobility and labor opportunities. Thus, students not only experience personal pressure but also systemic strain from families and

communities that view success in examinations as success in life. The result is a pervasive culture of "success at all costs", which justifies unethical shortcuts. This is to say, within the Fraud Triangle, pressure represents the motivational force that drives students to consider malpractice as a possible way to solve otherwise unattainable academic requirements.

Opportunity: The Enabling Condition

The second element of the Fraud Triangle, opportunity, is the perceived capacity of a person to commit fraud without being caught or punished. In examination, weaknesses in the systems of supervision, invigilation, assessment design, or institutional enforcement provide opportunities for students to engage in malpractice. Cressey (1953) stressed that opportunity does not bring about fraud, but it merely offers the channels through which motivated people can act on their pressures. Studies have indicated that intense malpractices are registered in an examination environment where administrative practices are weak. Adekalu et al. (2025) discovered that crowded examination rooms, untrained invigilators, and the format of questions predict the capacity of the students to cheat without being detected. Supportively, Appiah (2022) pointed to how institutional corruption, e.g., invigilator collusion or pre-exam question leaks, enables the malpractice. To support this claim, Boahen (2025) expresses his dissatisfaction with how some invigilators allow malpractice in the examination hall. Boahen noted that some invigilators even go to the extent of writing answers on the board for students to copy. It is these weaknesses that form the opportunity space, which allows unethical behavior to thrive. Technological advancement has also increased the opportunity for students to engage in examination malpractice (Kelley & Dooley, 2014; Oguche et al., 2023; Pinga et al., 2024). Menyechi and Kelechi (2023) noted that digital devices (such as mobile phones, smartwatches, and concealed earrings) have changed the face of cheating by offering discreet access channels and instant access to information. Remote and online examinations are convenient and introduce more proctoring and authentication vulnerabilities, which further expand the opportunity gap. Once students know that there are low chances of getting caught, the temptation to exploit such an opportunity increases exponentially, as the Fraud Triangle determines. Thus, handling examination malpractice itself, in addition to the moral and psychological interventions, needs to be accompanied by the institutional reforms that increase the control mechanisms and minimize the weak points that can be exploited.

Rationalization: The Cognitive Justification

Rationalization is the third element of the FT framework. The rationalization explains how individuals psychologically justify fraudulent acts to maintain a positive self-image despite violating ethical norms. Cressey (1953) suggested that offenders do not perceive themselves as criminals but rather as "trust violators" who, at times, justify or excuse unethical behavior as a necessity. Rationalization especially comes out in academic environments as students tend to defend the act of cheating as a survival or justice in an unfair system. Munachonga (2015) and Waweru (2020) discovered that most students justify malpractice by asserting that the exams are

either too hard, everybody cheats, or that the teacher did a bad job teaching them. Likewise, institutional corruption or favoritism can be seen by students as a moral justification of their own dishonesty, so that a cycle of rationalization can strengthen itself. This mental disorder would allow them to cheat without guilt and shame. Additionally, peer normalization reinforces rationalization; when peers give cheating stories to others and with no consequences, moral dissonance falls, and dishonesty becomes socially acceptable (Stephens, 2019). Rationalization can also be considered in terms of greater cultural attitudes to success and failure. Students tend to justify immoral conduct as a necessary evil in societies where academic success is overvalued and moral education is poor. The Fraud Triangle thus points out that, to curtail examination malpractice, punitive action is not the only solution, and so ethical realignment is also necessary. That is, challenging the narratives and cognitive rationalizations that perpetuate dishonesty.

Empirical Evidence on Examination Malpractice

Numerous empirical studies have been conducted in educational systems across the globe. Several of these studies, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, have reported the wide variety of examination malpractice strategies that students, teachers, and even administrators used. These forms of malpractices have evolved and become advanced with technology and transformation in examination methods (McCabe et al., 2006; Odongo et al., 2021). Adekalu et al. (2025) provide an elaborate typology of the common forms of cheating in secondary and tertiary institutions. He includes such behaviors as giraffine (stretching out one's neck to see the answer sheet of another candidate), carrying foreign material (e.g. microchips, slips of tiny notes) into the examination hall, using codes in electronic diaries, whispering answers, swapping of seats to get the answer script of other candidates, sharing of answer scripts and electronic gadgets like mobile phones and earphones. According to Adekalu (2025), these approaches are well-established within the examination culture and are frequently encouraged by the collaboration between peers and the looseness of supervision.

Asuru and Njigwum (2021) classify examination malpractice into three temporal phases, namely pre-examination, during examination, and after examination, and emphasize the fact that cheating does not occur on the test day. The pre-examination stage malpractice can take the form of leaking question papers, impersonation during the registration process, or colluding with other school authorities and other agents to gain access to confidential materials or/and information. During the examination phase, some common tricks are copying from fellow students, trading papers, whispering, or use of technological devices such as the hidden earpieces of Bluetooth. During the post-examination period, the malpractice comes in the form of modification of marks, manipulation of examiners or markers, and bribery of officials to tamper with the results. This categorization highlights the fact that examination malpractice is a process that may occur across the examination lifecycle and not just an event.

In a tertiary education setting, Mireku et al. (2024) performed a review of academic misconduct in Ghanaian universities and established that the most commonly reported ways of examination malpractice are attributed to unauthorized communication device usage, student-to-student collusion, copying as a result of invigilation lapses, and pre-examination question access. Similarly, in an international comparative study, Sendur (2022) found that the most prevalent global trends in examination malpractice are copying, crib notes, impersonation, falsification of results, and assistive technology. The author's observations have shown that the actual strategies used will depend on the context, but the motivational factors, which are pressure to perform better and lax enforcement, are almost universal. In West Africa, the phenomenon labelled "Miracle Examination Centers" is a systemic form of malpractice that goes beyond the behavior of the individual student. Some examination centers operated privately, as some studies in Nigeria have found (e.g., Agwu et al., 2020; 2022), collude with corrupt officials to leak question papers, cheat in exams, or even, as noted in some studies, replace submitted scripts. These centers appeal to students who have the money to pay to ensure high marks, hence commercially making cheating a service. Scholars observe that such centers not only corrupt the meritocratic role of examinations, but also deepen the inequality in the education system by placing more privileged students with the means to afford it.

Beyond West Africa, context-specific trends have been reported all over the world. In Northern Europe, students have been detected to be wearing concealed wireless earpieces and tiny cameras, which were linked to external assistants who apparently gave them real-time responses (Unsvåg, 2018). The government would have to enforce the use of radio-frequency jammers and biometric scans to block organized rings of cheating. In the United States and some European countries, digital learning has increased the use of contract cheating services, whereby students hire ghostwriters or hackers to impersonate them by taking online exams (Unsvåg, 2018; Dawson, 2020). These developments demonstrate that examination malpractice is not a uniquely African problem but a global phenomenon.

Examination malpractice is commonly categorized by scholars into traditional, technological, and institutional forms.

- **Traditional Malpractice:** This form of malpractice is referred to as the physical acts, such as copying, note-carrying, collusion, impersonation, and oral communication.
- **Technological malpractice:** This form of malpractice involves the use of digital devices such as phones, smartwatches, calculators with memory, online platforms or Bluetooth transmitters to find answers that are stored or for external communication.
- **Institutional malpractice**: This form of malpractice includes administrative corruption such as question leakage, alteration of scores, deliberate assistance by invigilators, and tampering with results databases.

Among these forms of malpractice, the technological and institutional forms are deemed the most challenging to detect and control since they often occur outside direct invigilation during examination, and may involve sophisticated networks of actors. Another study, by Abdulkareem et al. (2024), has gone further to explain that some of the students are now using organized cheating syndicates, and this refers to a group that specializes in bringing their phones into the examination halls, taking pictures of the papers, and sending them to other parties for solutions in real-time. The authors observe that this technological twist has introduced a novel group of offenders, not only students but intermediaries and service providers, making money off the facilitation of malpractice.

Notably, some studies focused on gender and social differences in malpractice patterns. While previous studies indicated that male students were more likely to be involved in examination malpractice such as copying or impersonation, recent evidence has shown that female students are also becoming more involved in the less obvious forms of malpractices, such as disguised notes or online support (Mireku et al., 2024). Similarly, technology access in urban schools can be associated with higher cases of cheating as compared to rural schools, which rely more on the traditional forms of cheating, such as whispering and copying (Gidado et al., 2024; Madara & Namango, 2016; Odongo et al., 2021). According to Swaniker (2022), malpractice occurs most often within large examination centers where overcrowding and inadequate invigilation make supervision challenging. Conversely, smaller centers where teacher-student relationships are high usually record comparatively fewer cases, which implies that the institutional culture and monitoring ability have a significant impact on cheating behavior.

The most constant observation from these studies is the development of malpractice techniques with anti-cheating strategies and/measures. As the authorities increase the physical search, students will switch to the hidden digital devices. As the digital control increases, collusion or administrative interference will also emerge on the agenda. These dynamics illustrate how cheating behavior can be adapted, highlighting the necessity for ongoing innovation in prevention methods.

METHODOLOGY

This study used quantitative research methodology and a cross-sectional research design. The study population comprised of 208 SHS graduates who were admitted to undertake their undergraduate education in the Faculty of Sustainable Development, University for Development Studies, Tamale, Ghana. Yamane formula was used to determine a sample size of 137. The research used a simple random sampling method in the selection of the respondents. The research instrument used in the data collection was a questionnaire with closed-ended statements. The closed-ended dimension took the 4-point Likert scale: 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Agree, and 4-Strongly Agree. The instrument underwent the scrutiny of various research professionals to enhance its validity. Fifteen percent (15%) of the population was involved in the piloting of the research instrument, and the piloted data produced an acceptable alpha coefficient of .869. The

data analysis instrument included descriptive statistics, frequencies, percentage, mean and standard deviation. Strict ethical guidelines were followed during the whole data collection process. The respondents waived written signatures in order to minimize or prevent linkage risk because there was no related danger to them during the data-gathering procedure. The respondents were given a Google Form outlining the study's aim, anonymity, voluntary participation, and data confidentiality, and their informed consent was acquired verbally. Also, by submitting full surveys, the respondents demonstrated their informed consent; they were aware that their involvement was completely optional and that their answers would only be used for research purposes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Under this section of the study, the data collected were cleaned, analyzed, and reported in statistical Tables 1 and 2. Each Table was then followed with an interpretation and reporting of the results using APA format based on the objectives of the study.

Objective one: To identify the examination malpractice techniques employed by students during the WASSCE, as reported by Level 100 undergraduate students

This objective of the study aimed to find out from students the innovative examination malpractice techniques they employed to cheat during WASSCE. Data were collected using an open-ended questionnaire from a sample of 137 SHS graduates who had just gained admission into the University for Development Studies, Faculty of Sustainable Development Studies, to pursue their undergraduate programs. Analysis of the data for this objective was done using descriptive statistics (frequency and percentages), and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Analysis of Examination Malpractice Techniques Students Used During WASSCE

S/N	Theme	Frequency	Percentage
1	Mobile Phones	34	24.8%
2	Written Materials	27	19.7%
3	Peer Communication	25	18.2%
4	Unauthorized Materials	20	14.6%
5	Bribing Invigilators	14	10.2%
6	Uncertainty/No Knowledge	17	12.4%
	Total	**137**	**100%**

Source: Primary data, 2025

The data gathered from Level 100 students concerning various forms of examination malpractice at WASSCE produced some meaningful themes. The first, and most commonly reported form of malpractice was the use of mobile phones, which was referenced by 24.8% of respondents, indicating a clear path for students to communicate answers and the accessibility of

communication for the students. Participants referred to written material (e.g., small notecards or written notes hidden on their bodies) in 19.7% of responses, indicating students attempted to conceal answers, using their bodies or clothing as a pathway to locate a means of cheating after realizing they would need these methods. Another common theme was peer communication, which was reported by 18.2% of students, indicating that students communicate or exchange answers on exams with each other. This was suggestive of students working collaboratively to exploit these types of cheating, using their social networks as a method to cheat. The use of unauthorized materials in the tests (e.g., textbooks or reference material) was reported by 14.6% of participants, reflecting that students used the textbooks as a reference for answers during the exam (despite understanding the materials were not authorized under exam policy). Furthermore, bribery of proctors was reported by 10% of students. This highlights a critical issue of corruption in assessment, which needs to be addressed by policymakers and stakeholders. Lastly, one in eight students (12.4%) reported being uncertain or stated that they did not know of any cheating techniques, suggesting that there is possibly a gap or divide between awareness and experience of cheating in exams.

Data from Table 1 also support previous studies, which have examined creative methods used by students while cheating on assessments (Odongo et al, 2021; McCabe et al, 2006). The research by Odongo et al (2021) provided an example of students being creative by using foreign objects and technology. Due to their impression of cheating and inadequate institutional mechanisms that created an environment conducive to cheating, students developed these strategies. Therefore, the authors contended that in order to reduce academic cheating, educational authorities and academic stakeholders should not only strengthen institutional measures to prevent cheating, as is now the case, but also make a deliberate effort to change students' perceptions of cheating. Additionally, this study unraveled how unauthorized materials were sent into the examination rooms by students. This study's findings are in line with those of Madara and Namango (2016) and Odongo et al. (2021), who also found similar results. Lastly, it was discovered that pupils were also using technology as a means of cheating. Another study that disclosed this method was carried out by McCabe et al. (2006). Students can now easily take images of the test with their phones and share them with others, according to Kelley and Dooley (2014), who discussed the use of technology in cheating. Additionally, the authors pointed out that even a graphic calculator can be used to store information that students can use later on in the exam without the invigilator seeing.

Objective two: To investigate the perceptions of Level 100 undergraduate students regarding the prevalence of exam malpractice during their Senior High School (SHS) years.

This objective of the study aimed to find out from students about the incidence of examination malpractice and its prevalence at the high school level. Data were collected using a closed-ended questionnaire from a sample of 137 SHS graduates who had just gained admission into the University for Development Studies, Faculty of Sustainable Development Studies, to pursue their

undergraduate programs. Analysis of the data for this objective was done using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation), and the results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Perceptions of Students about Prevalence of Examination Malpractice at Senior High School (SHS) Level

Statement	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Examination malpractice was widespread among students during my SHS years	137	1.00	4.00	2.08	.858
I have heard about and seen various forms of exam malpractice occurring during the WASSCE among my peers	137	1.00	4.00	2.41	.818
Cheating was a common practice during examinations at my SHS	137	1.00	4.00	2.04	.803
My mates used unauthorized materials during their exams during WASSCE	137	1.00	4.00	2.16	.769
I feel that the culture of exam malpractice is accepted or normalized among students at my SHS	137	1.00	4.00	1.94	.793
Some teachers were complicit in facilitating examination malpractice during my SHS years	137	1.00	4.00	2.05	.798
Examination malpractice is prevalent at the senior high school level	137	1.00	4.00	2.31	.793

Source: Primary data, 2025

Key: Min=minimum; Max=maximum; M=Mean; SD=Std. Deviation

The results indicate that Level 100 undergraduate students identify examination malpractice as an important issue in their Senior High School (SHS) experience. The highest mean score of 2.41 indicates that students are aware of the different types of cheating that occur among their peers during the WASSCE, while the lowest mean scores of 1.94 suggest that students were not likely to feel that the culture of examination malpractice was considered a normality at their school. These results indicate a need for explicit policies to support academic integrity and to reduce exam malpractice through certain designs, such as oversight of examinations, and teaching students about integrity issues in the educational context. To intervene, it could be suggested that educational institutions develop more extensive integrity training for students and staff to develop a culture of integrity.

This study reflects previous studies that have shown how prevalent forms of exam malpractice are in educational settings (e.g., Akbarirad et al., 2021; Gidado et al., 2024; Galloway, 2012; Honz et al., 2010; Iqbal et al., 2021). For example, Akbarirad et al. (2021) conducted a systematic review

and meta-analysis of the prevalence of different forms of academic or school cheating in Iran. Across the range of cheating methods, the authors found the total prevalence of cheating to be 68% (95% CI: 54-79%). The findings indicated that the means of cheating in examinations, projects, and theses are higher than the overall mean. According to the authors, student cheating should be minimized through providing necessary instruction, improving standards, increasing the severity of penalties towards students, and discouraging the spirit of competition in classroom situations. Moreover, Honz et al. (2010) examined the perceived nature and prevalence of cheating among high school students. The students were given the Academic Honesty Survey to analyze their attitudes towards and the occurrence of cheating in three academic settings. The results indicated that perceptions of the environment contribute to cheating incidents, and it was of varied occurrence across the academic environment. Previous studies have explored worries about the influence of teachers on academic honesty and also include recognition of teachers colluding to promote malpractice (Agwu et al., 2020; 2022; Boahen, 2025). This concern must be attended to in order to sustain the legitimacy of academic credentials.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

From the results presented in Table 1, the conclusion can be made that the most frequent examination malpractice mechanisms employed by students when cheating during the WASSCE were mobile phones, written materials, peer communication, unauthorized materials, and bribing invigilators. The results presented in Table 2 indicated that students moderately accepted that examination malpractice was a phenomenon at the senior high school level, with the highest mean of 2.41. This suggests students are conscious of the different types of cheating amongst peers during the WASSCE. The lowest mean score (1.94) suggested students thought that the culture of exam malpractice was not completely normalized in their schools.

Recommendation

Based on the results, this current study made the following actionable recommendations:

Firstly, Teachers, invigilators, and all concerned examination officials must ensure stricter enforcement of examination regulations. Implementing this recommendation will serve as a preventive measure to mitigate examination malpractice during WASSCE.

Secondly, integrity training, such as educational programs emphasizing ethical behavior, should be implemented by the guidance and counselling unit at the various senior high schools in Ghana to enhance academic integrity and discourage malpractice. Implementing comprehensive integrity training for students and staff will foster a culture that values honest academic practices.

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