

Journal of Online and Distance Learning (JODL)

Perceived Determinants of Students' Examination Corruption
in Distance Education



CARI
Journals

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study examined determinants of students' examination corruption at the College of Distance Education (CoDE), University of Cape Coast (UCC), Ghana.

Methodology: The participants of the study included students, Regional Coordinators (RCs), and staff of the Examination Unit at CoDE. A sample of 252 students was selected from an accessible population of 3,095 using a proportionate stratified sampling technique. The questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. Data were analysed with frequency and percentage counts, standard deviations, and presented in tables supported with transcribed views expressed by the RCs and the Head of Exams Unit (HEU).

Findings: The study's findings revealed that examination malpractice was perceived to be a common illegal behaviour among students. The study also found that deviant students engage in examination malpractices at CoDE due to inadequate preparation for examinations.

Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy: It was recommended that the management of the college should sensitise all stakeholders, particularly candidates on the sanctions stipulated in their Students' Handbook for culprits of examination corruption related activities. Also, the college should make study materials available to students on time to fully prepare for all exams.

Keywords: *Examination, malpractice, corruption, perception, students*

INTRODUCTION

Examination corruption is an illegal and unethical behaviour exhibited by candidates in the course of assessing their knowledge using questions (Sooze, 2004; Fasasi, 2006). Fassai revealed that examination corruption encourages mediocrity in the sense that students who succeed through such unorthodox methods may be rated equal to those who struggle on their own to excel. Candidates' engagement in examination corruption at all levels of education in Africa and other parts of the world has become increasingly problematic, and a threat to the integrity of the educational system (Sigauke, 2004). This study, therefore, sought to examine students' motivation toward examination corruption in the College of Distance Education (CoDE), University of Cape Coast (UCC), Ghana.

The examination of corruption or malpractice phenomenon has been given global attention (Akaranga & Ongong, 2013). Ajibola (2011) found that students' anxiety to get a certificate for jobs in most countries is responsible for candidates' engagement in examination malpractice. Many students and parents measure success by the acquisition of good certificates and good grades at school without bothering about the processes of certificate acquisition (Ajibola, 2011; Ikupa, 1997). Ikupa (1997) categorises students' reasons for their engagement in examination malpractice into three. These include psychological factors like stress and anxiety to meet the demands of various subjects, fear of failure, and scoring low grades. Others are environmental factors such as the unavailability of course modules and library facilities for students, and intelligent factors such as candidates' academic strength or intelligence quotient (IQ) level. Failure to recognize these intelligent factors can make weaker students compare themselves unnecessarily with naturally gifted ones. In so doing, the academically weaker ones may get involved in examination malpractice (Ikupa, 1997).

Adeyemi (2010) in a study on the determinants of examination malpractices in Nigeria revealed the following findings: 895 (97.3%) of the respondents indicated general indiscipline among students in the schools as a major cause while 884 representing 96% blamed the practice on non-implementation of the examination malpractice sanctions such as the imprisonment of culprits to serve jail terms. Other causes according to Adeyemi are; lack of effective invigilation during

external examinations (94.7%), Insufficient preparation for the examinations among many students (89.5%), and the desire among many students to pass the examinations at all costs (82.4%). Adekale (2009) and Omotosho (2012) also in a related investigation, identified laziness and inadequate preparation for examinations as factors responsible for students' engagement in examination malpractices.

Adekale (2013) in a follow-up study found that students engage in examination malpractice because there is a notion among students of today that nobody can pass examinations without some external assistance. This could be one of the major reasons why most students engage in examination malpractice apart from inadequate preparation and indiscipline among students. people who offer external assistance in Adekale's findings could be colleagues of students, invigilators, markers, or examination Officials. This act (external assistance) indicates that examination malpractice occurs during and after examinations.

Animasahun and Ogunniran (2014) on the other hand, revealed that some examinees plan to indulge in examination corruption whilst others get themselves in it out of ignorance, carelessness, or forgetfulness in compliance with peer pressure.

It is hard to believe that culprits of exam malpractice are ignorant of the rules governing examinations, this is because every accredited educational institution has a handbook for students spelling out the rules governing examinations. Mukadasi (2007) for instance indicated that Makerere university policy concerning examination irregularities stipulates that, if a candidate shows to another candidate their prepared coursework with a view of assisting the latter to do the coursework would constitute examination malpractice and if a student negligently exposes their coursework to another candidate to use or present as his own, also constitute examination malpractice. In effect, Makerere University's policy concerning examination irregularities focused on classroom scenarios. Blue Crest College (2015) also indicates that an examination offense shall be understood to be an attempt on the part of a candidate to gain an unfair advantage in examinations. The students' handbook of the college indicates that the following constitute examination malpractice; students' impersonating another candidate or allowing oneself to be impersonated, a candidate consulting or trying to consult another candidate, or consulting any book, notes, or other unauthorised materials during the examinations. Again, candidates' verbal or physical assault on an invigilator over an alleged examination offense, a candidate destroying materials suspected to help establish cases of examination malpractice and plagiarism.

According to UCC-CoDE (2017), the following rules and regulations constitute examination malpractices: students having foreknowledge of exam questions or possession of examination questions before the examination, students in possession of unauthorised materials in relation to the examinations and likely to be used during examinations. Again, students who copy from prepared notes or a colleague's script during the examination, and students who secretly look over

other candidates' work to cheat constitute examination malpractice. Further, a candidate who is suspected of hiding unauthorized material on them may be asked by the invigilator to submit themselves to a thorough body search. Refusal to comply constitutes an examination offense (UCC-CoDE Academic Programmes, Policies, and Regulations for Undergraduate Studies (2017). All the rules and regulations regarding examination irregularities as seen in Makerere University, Blue Crest, and the University of Cape Coast place much emphasis on classroom sit-down examinations. Even though rules and regulations governing exemptions are clearly stated in students' handbooks, it is not established whether or not students are aware of them. This study, therefore, examines among others, students' level of knowledge regarding rules and regulations governing exams, and students' reasons for engaging in exam-related malpractices.

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 governments and other stakeholders in the education sector Aghenta, (as cited in Adeyemi, 2010). Cases of examination malpractices have been reported in educational institutions in Ghana (Dabone, Graham, & Fabea, 2015; Amoo, 2018). Researchers apportion the causes of examination malpractices to the following;

general indiscipline among students in the schools, lack of effective supervision during external examinations, insufficient preparation for the examinations on the part of many students, and the desire among many students to pass the examinations at all costs (Adeyemi, 2010; Adekale, 2009 & Omotosho, 2012). Others indicated that the non-implementation of examination malpractice sanctions such as rustication and imprisonment of culprits to a jail term is to blame for the canker (Adeyemi, 2010).

An instance of non-implementation of examination malpractice was evident in a report submitted on 29th June, 2017 by a committee investigating an act of examination malpractice by a student at the Faculty of Arts at the University of Cape Coast. The report recommended that instead of applying the full penalty of rustication for two semesters as stipulated in the UCC Academic Programmes, Policies and Regulations for Undergraduate Students (Revised 2012), the student (offender) should be rusticated for a semester (Examination Committee's Report at the Dean's Office). This sanction was based on the fact that the student was found with foreign materials during the examination (Examination malpractice committee report, Faculty of Art, UCC, 2017).

Similarly, according to Animasahun and Ogunniran (2014), some candidates indulged in examination malpractices as a result of ignorance, carelessness, or forgetfulness in applying rules and regulations or due to peer pressure. This suggests that students' ignorance concerning the rules and regulations of examination malpractice could lead them to engage in the act. In the light of this, Mulenga and Bwalya (2022) recommended that proper mentoring of students and educating them on what is expected of them at every point in time would ameliorate students' behaviour in

the school environment thereby ensuring that both students and teachers' expectations would be met. When contradictions between teachers' and students' expectations of each other are eliminated, maladjusted behaviours like truancy and exam corruption-related practices would be moderated.

Some previous studies investigated stakeholders' perceptions of examination malpractice (Dorsah, Senyamator, Arhin, & Kumedzro (2022), mainstream exam malpractices, effects of exam malpractice on students' engagement and academic performance (Dabone, Graham, Fabea, & Dabone, 2015; Amoo, 2018). However, none of the aforementioned studies investigated students knowledge about the rules and regulations of examination and its corruption related issues in distance education.

This study, therefore, sought to determine whether or not students know of the rules and regulations regarding examination malpractice which is driving their continued engagement in the act. If the students know about the rules and regulations, then, what motivates them to engage in examination malpractice? It is in response to this question that this study investigated the determinants of examination corruption at CoDE. The study further examines students' knowledge of the rules and regulations regarding examination malpractice.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the level of students' knowledge of the rules and regulations regarding examination malpractice at CoDE?
2. What are the determinants of examination malpractice from the perspective of students, the Head of CoDE Examination Unit, and RCs?

Theoretical Framework

The Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

This theory began as the Social Learning Theory (SLT) in the 1960s by Albert Bandura and metamorphosed into the SCT in 1986, and proposes that learning or behaviour occurs in a social context with a dynamic and reciprocal interaction of the person, environment, and behaviour (Wayne, 2019). The unique feature of SCT is the emphasis on social influence and its emphasis on external and internal social reinforcement. SCT considers the unique way in which individuals acquire and maintain behavior, while also considering the social environment in which individuals perform the behavior. The theory takes into account a person's past experiences, which factor into whether behavioral action will occur. These past experiences influence reinforcements, expectations, and expectancies, all of which shape whether a person will engage in a specific behaviour such as exam malpractice, and the reasons why a person engages in that behaviour.

The following first five constructs were part of the SLT and the construct of self-efficacy was added when the theory was developed into the SCT (Wayne, 2019).

Reciprocal Determinism - This is the pivotal construct of SCT which refers to the dynamic and reciprocal interaction of an individual such as a student with a set of learned experiences such as cheating in exams, the environment (external social context where others cheat and there was no strict invigilation), and behaviour (responses to stimuli like outwitting invigilators to achieve goals).

Behavioural Capability - This refers to a person's actual ability to perform a behaviour through essential knowledge and skills. To successfully perform a behaviour, a student who cheats in exams actually knows what to do and how to do it. They learn from the consequences of their corrupt behaviours, especially when not caught. This affects the environment (the reputation of the institution) in which they live and study.

Observational Learning - This asserts that people can witness and observe a behaviour by others such as an exam candidate copying from foreign materials or another candidate's work, and then reproduce those practices. If individuals see a successful demonstration of a behaviour by other candidates, they can also complete the behaviour successfully.

Reinforcements - This refers to the internal or external responses to a person's behaviour that affect the likelihood of continuing or discontinuing the behaviour. Reinforcements can be self-initiated or in the environment, and reinforcements can be positive or negative. This is the construct of SCT that most closely ties to the reciprocal relationship between behavior and environment. Therefore, when candidates who cheat are caught and dealt with severely in line with the rules of the university (CoDE), they may discontinue that behaviour in the future. However, if the cheating candidates are not caught or are caught and left to go free, then according to this construct of SCT, they may continue in the future. This would be a favourable environment for the act.

Expectations - This refers to the anticipated consequences of a person's behaviour. Outcome expectations of exam candidates can be good grades or financial rewards. People anticipate the consequences of their actions before engaging in the behaviour, and these anticipated consequences can influence the successful completion of the behaviour (cheating in exams). Expectations derive largely from previous experience (successful cheating). While expectancies also derive from previous experience, expectancies focus on the value that is placed on the outcome and are subjective to the individual or student.

Self-efficacy - This refers to the level of a person's confidence in his or her ability to successfully execute external goals. Self-efficacy is unique to SCT. Self-efficacy is influenced by a person's specific capabilities such as skills in cheating in exams without being caught and other individual factors, as well as favourable or relaxed invigilation hall (environmental).

METHODS

Design, Data Population and Sample

The descriptive survey design was adopted and used for this study. A total of 51,456 trainees at 76 distance education study centres were the target population (Senyamator, Amponsah, Banini & Edjah, 2020). The accessible population was 3,095 which comprised all Diploma in Basic Education (DBE) trainees at four selected study centres. These centres were Kumasi Anglican Senior High School (KASS), Serwaa Nyarko Girls, Techiman SHS, and UCC) selected from the Ashanti, Central and Brong Ahafo Regions. The three (3) regions were purposively sampled because they were places that recorded the highest incidence of examination malpractices at the time of this study (CoDE, UCC Basic Statistics, 2017). The three Regional Coordinators (RCs) for the selected regions and one Examinations Unit head were also purposively sampled. The RCs and the head of the Examination Unit (HEU) were selected because they served as lecturers and chief invigilators during course facilitation sessions, quizzes, and examinations, thus having a lot of knowledge and experience about students in examination corruption issues. Table 1 presents a summary of the population of trainees across the selected study centres.

Table 1: Students Population across Levels in each Study Centres

Study Centre	Levels		
	Level100	Level200	Level 300
Serwaa Nyarko	94	100	329
KASS	183	171	255
Techiman	98	121	260
UCC	551	383	550
Total	926	775	1,394

Source: Field survey, (2022)

A proportional stratified sampling technique was adopted to select students for the study. Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) criteria were adopted for selecting the sample of 252 for the study. The sample for each level was derived by dividing 3,095, by the population of each study centre, multiplied by 252. The sample for level 100 students, for instance, their population (926) was divided by the students' population of 3,095 multiplied by the sample size (252) to get 75, the sample for that level. This process of sample selection was replicated across the four study centres.

The lottery sampling technique was used to select students from each level at the Study Centres. This was done based on sampling frames.

Students sampled based on levels in each Study Centre are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Students Sampled Based on Levels in Each Study Centre

Study Centre	Levels		
	Level 100	Level 200	Level 300
Serwaa Nyarko	8	8	27
KASS	15	14	21
Techiman	8	10	21
UCC	44	31	45
TOTAL	75	63	114

Source: Field survey, (2022)

INSTRUMENTS, DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from students, Regional Coordinators and the head of the exam Unit respectfully. Data were analysed with frequency and, percentage counts, standard deviations, presented in tables supported with transcribed views expressed by the RCs and Head of Exams Unit in line with the issues investigated

Research Question 1: In the views of Students, RCs and the Head of Examination Unit, what are the Rules and Regulations Regarding Examination Malpractice at the selected study centres at CoDE?

This research question sought to identify students' views on the rules and regulations governing exams and the attendant malpractices. Students' data were analysed with frequencies, percentages counts and standard deviations. In using the mean and standard deviations, a decision rule of $1.0 \leq M \leq 1.50$ means that students 'Disagree' with the statements that constitute examination malpractice, while $1.50 \leq M \leq 2.0$ indicates that students 'Agree' that the statements constitute examination malpractice was applied. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Students' Knowledge about the Rules and Regulations Regarding Examination Malpractice

Statement	A	DA	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
	N (%)	N (%)			
Bringing to the washroom any unauthorized material (books, paper, written information) during examinations	129 (51.2)	123 (48.8)	1.51	0.50	Agree
Bringing to the examination room any unauthorized material during examinations	169 (67.1)	83 (32.9)	1.67	0.47	Agree
Copying from prepared notes	157 (62.3)	95 (37.7)	1.62	0.49	agree
Copying from script from colleague	168 (66.7)	84 (33.3)	1.67	0.47	agree
Entering the examination room before you are invited to	166 (65.9)	86 (34.1)	1.66	0.48	Agree
Found with notes on one's body while examination is in progress	164 (65.1)	88 (34.9)	1.65	0.48	agree
Found with note on one's clothes while examination is in progress	168 (66.7)	84 (33.3)	1.67	0.47	agree
Talking to a candidate while examination is in progress	148 (58.7)	104 (41.3)	1.59	0.49	agree
Tempering with answer booklets in an attempt to cheat during examinations	171 (67.9)	81 (32.1)	1.68	0.47	agree

Looking over one's shoulders in order to cheat during examinations	146 (57.9)	106 (42.1)	1.58	0.49	agree
Exchanging question papers during examinations	173 (68.7)	79 (31.3)	1.69	0.46	agree
Impersonation (someone writing an examination for a candidate)	181 (71.8)	71 (28.2)	1.72	0.45	agree
Writing after "Stop work" has been announced	137 (54.4)	115 (45.6)	1.54	0.49	agree
Tearing off answer booklet(s) during examinations	173 (68.7)	79 (31.3)	1.69	0.46	agree
Taking out used answer booklet(s) after examinations	165 (65.5)	87 (34.5)	1.66	0.48	agree
Taking out unused answer booklet(s) after examination	165 (65.5)	87 (34.5)	1.66	0.48	agree
Refusing to be searched by an invigilator upon the invigilator perceiving that such candidate possesses a foreign material	140 (55.6)	112 (44.4)	1.56	0.49	agree
Substituting an answer script/booklet prepared outside the examination room/hall	162 (64.3)	90 (35.7)	1.64	0.48	agree
Destroying evidence relating to an alleged irregularity	158 (62.7)	94 (37.3)	1.63	0.49	agree
Bribing an invigilator in relation to an alleged irregularity	150 (59.5)	102 (40.5)	1.59	0.49	agree
Bribing a witness in relation to an alleged irregularity	145 (57.5)	107 (42.5)	1.58	0.49	agree

Attempting to bribe an invigilator in relation to an alleged irregularity	172 (68.3)	80 (31.7)	1.68	0.47	agree
Attempting to bribe a witness in relation to an alleged irregularity	143 (56.7)	109 (43.3)	1.57	0.49	agree
Forging false documents in relation to an alleged irregularity	168 (66.7)	84 (33.3)	1.67	0.47	agree
Intimidating an invigilator or other members of the university staff or witnesses in relation to irregularity matters	157 (62.3)	95 (37.7)	1.62	0.49	agree
insulting/assaulting supervisor(s) or Invigilators as a candidate	132 (52.4)	120 (47.6)	1.52	0.50	agree
Taking purses or wallets into the examination room(s)	106 (42.1)	146 (57.9)	1.42	0.49	disagree

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Table 3 shows that the majority of the students (181) representing 71.8% agreed that impersonation constituted examination malpractice (N=181, M=1.72, SD= 0.45). The finding is in line with the exam regulations of the UCC-CoDE (2017) and Blue Crest College (2015) which stipulated that the examination malpractices include impersonating another candidate or allowing oneself to be impersonated and consulting or trying to consult any book, notes, or other unauthorized materials during the examination. These regulations indicate how examination malpractice occurs before and during examinations through a conscious act of planning and preparing.

Again, 173 (68.7%) of the students agreed that exchanging question papers during examinations constituted examination malpractice (N=173, M=1.69, SD=0.46), tearing off parts of the answer booklet (N=173, M=1.69, SD=0.46), tempering with answer booklets in an attempt to cheat (N=171, M=1.68, SD=0.47). It is also shown that 172 (68.3%) students agreed that attempting to bribe invigilators in relation to an alleged irregularity during examination constituted examination malpractice (N=172, M=1.68, SD=0.47). However, before a student exchanges question papers with his or her colleague, he or she would make sure that no invigilator is watching (safety desire) before proceeding to indulge in the act.

The findings are in line with the University of Cape Coast (2017) which indicates that exchanging question papers, bribing, or attempting to bribe an invigilator in relation to an alleged irregularity

constituted examination malpractice. Again, possession of foreign materials in connection with the examination question and likely to be used in the course writing the exams, copying from prepared materials or from another candidate's script during the examination, and gradually looking over other candidate's scripts so as to cheat are major deviant behaviours that constitute examination malpractice. The Head of the Examination Unit (HEU) interviewed made a similar revelation;

"I think the issues that constitute examination malpractices are many and I cannot mention all but a significant one is exchanging of question papers, the possession of a document that has bearing on the examination and using the said document. It is in two folds. Holding the document is an offense while the use of the document is also an offense". (HEU)

Table 3 again indicates that 146 (57.9%) of the students disagreed that taking purses or wallets into the examination room(s) constitutes examination malpractice (N=146, M=1.42, SD=0.49). The finding contradicts that of the UCC-CoDE (2017) which states that a student insulting/assaulting supervisors or invigilators and/or taking purses or wallets into the examination hall constitute examination malpractice. Similarly, the RC interviewed indicated that;

...examination malpractice involves going against anything in the university's handbook. Some specifics involve talking to friends, asking for help from friends during exams, and entering the examination hall with foreign materials. (RC3)

The students' disagreement with the fact that taking purses or wallets into the examination room(s) constitutes examination malpractice could be that perhaps, they are not knowledgeable about all the rules and regulations regarding examination malpractice at CoDE. In effect, it could be that Regional Coordinators (RCs) do not organise seminars for students to increase their knowledge about the rules and regulations regarding examination malpractice at CoDE or a section of students do not read their Hand Books which may have accounted for students' disagreement to this statement.

The results imply that the top four responses as to what constitutes examination malpractice included impersonation, exchanging question papers during an examination, tearing off parts of the answer booklet, and attempting to bribe an invigilator in relation to alleged examination irregularity. The other significant responses included tampering with answer booklets in an attempt to cheat during examinations and bringing into the examination room any unauthorized material during examinations. The implication of all these findings is that the range of coverage of activities that constitute examination malpractices is broad. However, students agreed to the activities that constituted examination malpractice as stated in the rules and regulations of CoDE. This signifies that the students are aware/ or knowledgeable about the rules and regulations governing the conduct of the examination.

Research Question 2: In the views of Students, RCs and the Head of Examination Unit, what accounts for Students' Engagement in Examination Malpractice at CoDE?

This research question sought to identify the factors that account for students' engagement in examination malpractice at the selected study centres at CoDE. Items 42-51 on the questionnaire elicited students' responses that pointed to their engagement in examination malpractice. Item 3 on the interview guide for RCs and the head of the Examination Unit elicited responses on the factors that accounted for students' engagement in examination corruption. The students' data were analysed with frequencies, percentages counts, and standard deviations. A decision rule of $2.55 \leq M \leq 3.20$ indicates agreement with the statements, whilst $1.6 \leq M \leq 2.44$ mean disagreement with the reasons for students' engagement in examination malpractice was applied. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Students' reasons for Engagement in Examination Malpractice

Statement	A N (%)	D N (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
It is impossible to pass my examination without external assistance	26 (10.3)	226 (89.7)	1.63	0.81	disagree
Anxiety to get a certificate for a job or promotion	142 (56.3)	110 (43.7)	2.55	1.09	agree
Inadequate preparation for examinations	190 (75.4)	62 (24.6)	3.19	1.02	agree
Inadequate mastery of course modules	109 (43.3)	143 (56.7)	2.44	1.07	disagree
Some course tutors assistants to other students	110 (43.7)	142 (56.3)	2.28	1.19	disagree
Some external invigilators assistants to other students	87 (34.5)	165 (65.5)	2.16	1.09	disagree
For fear of failure on my part	42	210	1.66	0.96	disagree

	(16.7)	(83.3)			
If you don't cheat, those who do will have advantage	90 (35.7)	162 (64.3)	2.13	1.06	disagree
Course tutors do not teach well to understand concepts	95 (37.7)	157 (62.3)	2.17	1.09	disagree
Inadequate coverage of the course modules will make me cheat	117 (46.4)	135 (53.6)	2.39	1.12	disagree

Source: Field survey, (2022)

It is clear from Table 4 that the majority of the students (226) representing 89.7% disagreed that it is impossible to pass their examination without external assistance (N=226, M= 1.63, SD= 0.81). The finding refutes that of Alutu and Aluede (2006) which revealed that students' indulgence in examination malpractice is due to the fact that they believe that it is impossible to pass an examination without external assistance. It is evident that the majority of the students agreed that impersonation constituted examination malpractice. Their agreement about this rule perhaps might have influenced them to disagree with the statement that it is impossible to pass their examination without external assistance. In effect, students' agreement with the rules and regulations concerning examination malpractice and the consequences thereof could deter them from engaging in examination malpractice if proper invigilation mechanisms are put in place.

Table 4 further shows that 190 (75.4%) of the students agreed that they would not engage in examination malpractice if they were fully prepared for examinations (N=190, M= 3.19, SD= 1.02). This finding confirms That of Adekale (2009) and Omotosho (2012). Adekale (2009) revealed that laziness and inadequate preparations among students lead them to engage in examination malpractice. Omotosho (2012) also found that inadequate preparations for examination and laziness on the part of students lead them to engage in examination malpractice. It can be deduced from the findings that, in situations where students do not prepare adequately for examinations, they may resort to wrongful means and conducts to pass their examinations. Without adequate preparation, the ability to write examinations successfully becomes difficult (Omotosho, 2012). The response of the students is in tandem also with the comments made by the RC1 interviewed;

“Unpreparedness on the part of students is what causes examination malpractice. Some candidates do not prepare adequately and so they resort to cheating. Those who prepare well, hardly cheat.” (RC 1)

“When the student has not prepared, when the student has not understood the concept that was taught, it is likely that the student will seek unethical means to pass the examination. In the case of CoDE, many a time, our students do not attend Face-to-Face interactions, which leads them to engage in examination malpractice during examination. Sometimes too when the study materials are not user friendly, the students may not understand what is been taught”. (HEU)

This implies that the belief that candidates’ inadequate preparation for the examination, could lead to examination malpractice is high. Though students disagreed with the statement that it is impossible to pass their examination without external assistance, the fear of failure will make them cheat. However, from the students’ views, it could be presumed that students would seek external assistance if they are not fully prepared thereby engaging in examination malpractice. Therefore, if students are given enough time to prepare for the examination, examination malpractice would be minimised.

Further, from Table 4, more than half of the students 142(56.3%) agreed that anxiety to get certificates for jobs or promotions led to examination malpractices (N=142, M= 2.55, SD= 1.09). The findings are in line with that of Ajibola (2011) who revealed that the anxiety to get a certificate for a job in most countries leads candidates to engage in examination malpractice. The implication is that students intentionally indulge in examination malpractice because of the desire of getting certificates for jobs.

Finally, from Table 4, 143 (56.7%) disagreed with the statement ‘inadequate mastery of course modules will lead them to cheat’ (N=143, M= 2.44, SD= 1.07). This finding contradicts that of Ikupa (1997) who indicated that the factors that account for candidates’ engagement in examination malpractice include: Environmental factors such as inadequate coverage of syllabus and inappropriate sitting arrangement of candidates at the examination halls could entice candidates to engage in examination malpractice. Other reasons are psychological factors like stress and anxiety to meet the demands of various subjects; creating tremors of failure, or scoring low grades compel candidates to fall for the menace. Any of these reasons can be responsible for students’ engagement in examination malpractices. Identifying these factors can help set out the measures that could help mitigate or curb the occurrence of the canker among students. The findings as indicated are congruent with the views expressed by the RC2 interviewed:

“Even though it is possible that course tutors may not be able to complete the course content, the distance learning system is such that the student is expected to do most of the studies on their own. The course modules are made in such a way that if they study, they can understand most of the issues on their own. So, I think the main issue is students not preparing well before examination”. (RC 2)

Overall, it can be inferred from the results in Table 4 that the major factors that account for students’ engagement in examination malpractice included “inadequate preparation towards

examinations and anxiety to get a certificate for a job or promotion”. The responses of the other RCs and the head of the Examination Unit interviewed showed that they agreed with the students on most of the issues. Specifically, the Head of the Examination unit head indicated that inadequate preparation of students is the major factor that causes students’ examination malpractice. Aside from this, RC 2 also indicated that examination malpractice happens when students do not trust in their abilities to pass. However, one issue that the RCs and the head of the Examination Unit disagreed on was the inability of course tutors to complete modules leading to examination malpractice. The RCs revealed that students and course tutors have their roles to play so course tutors cannot be held responsible for students’ engagement in examination malpractice. On the other hand, the Examination Unit Head indicated that due to the voluminous nature of some course modules, tutors are not able to complete them. This could lead to students’ engagement in exam malpractice. Again, some course tutors seem to lack mastery of the content knowledge, hence, their inability to complete the course within the semester. He (HEU) added that a lack of mastery of the content knowledge on the part of the course tutor could lead to students’ inability to understand certain key concepts which could lead to their (students) involvement in examination malpractice.

Conclusions

It is concluded that impersonation, exchanging question papers during examinations, tearing off parts of the answer booklets, and attempting to bribe an invigilator in relation to alleged examination irregularity constituted examination malpractice. Students are knowledgeable about the rules and regulations that constitute examination malpractice at the College of Distance Education. Students engage in examination malpractices as a result of the fear of failing due to poor preparation for examinations, which perhaps could be attributed to the late distribution of course modules. This may not give students ample time to prepare adequately for examinations, hence, indulging in examination malpractice.

Recommendations

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

1. Regional RCs of CoDE should continue to organize seminars for students on the rules and regulations regarding examination malpractice at the College of Distance Education (CoDE), University of Cape Coast. This will keep reminding students and help increase their knowledge about what constitute examination malpractices with respect to the rules and regulation.
2. The principal cause of examination malpractice was ineffective preparation. it is, therefore, recommended that students be counselled to do everything possible to prepare well prior to all examinations. Again, course tutors should ensure that all units in the modules are

covered and treated to enable students to be well equipped for writing quizzes and examinations.

3. The management of the college should ensure that study materials are distributed to students on a timely basis.

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