

# TYPES AND LEVELS OF INVOLVEMENT IN EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE AS PERCEIVED BY UNDERGRADUATES IN GOMBE STATE UNIVERSITY

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## Abstract

*The purpose of the study was to investigate types and levels of students' involvement in examination malpractice as perceived by undergraduates at Gombe State University. This study is a descriptive survey. The population for this study was all undergraduates of Gombe State University drawn across five faculties of the University. Stratified sampling and random sampling techniques were used in selecting the respondents. The instrument adopted for the study was a researcher-designed questionnaire tagged "Perceived Types and Levels of Involvement in Examination Malpractice Questionnaire" (PTLIEMQ). A percentage table was used to describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents and a pie-chart to answer research question 2. Also, the mean rating was used to answer the research question one. The null hypotheses generated were tested using Chi-square inferential statistics. The study revealed that the commonest type of examination malpractice among undergraduates at Gombe State University was a giraffe. It was also discovered that the greater proportion of the undergraduates sampled were averagely involved in examination malpractice. There was a significant difference in the level of students' involvement in examination malpractice as perceived by undergraduates at Gombe State University based on gender, age, level, and faculty of study. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that more effort should be put in place to ensure the effective supervision of students during examinations to be able to curb giraffe. It was also recommended that concerted efforts should be made at improving the level of discipline among students through counseling services and there should be full implementation of the examination malpractice decree.*

**Key words:** Examination, Examination malpractice, Undergraduate Students.

## Background of the Study

The poor and declining academic performance of students in Nigerian schools owing to examination malpractice is becoming so alarming that the achievement of the set goals of education for sustainable development is endangered. Education is the key to development in any nation and Nigeria is no exception. This has led to a quest to acquire better grades in education by all means as employers of labour place emphasis on certificates especially that of the university before one can be given any reasonable position in any organization (Gu, 2011)

The main objective of university education is to train students to acquire the requisite knowledge and skills to enable them to contribute effectively to national development (National Policy on Education,

2004). This training requires periodic assessment and evaluation in form of examinations to ascertain the level of competence of students. Although examinations are not the only instruments for assessing students' knowledge in the university, they have emerged as the major established yardstick and the most practical way of assessment. Since it is the major way of assessing the students, it has led to students devising every possible means to pass the examination at all costs thereby resulting in what we call examination malpractice.

According to Hornby (2005), malpractice refers to careless, wrong, or illegal and undesirable professional behavior during and after examinations. It is regarded as the national tragedy of education in Nigeria. Examination malpractice is defined as the deliberate wrongdoing contrary to official examination rules (Maheshwari, 2011). Ugwu (2012) defined it as any deliberate wrongdoing contrary to official examination rules and designed to place a candidate at an unfair advantage. Maheshwari (2011) stated that different forms of malpractice are commonly committed at the pre-conduct, conduct, and evaluation stages.

Ayanniyi & Anya (2017) identified forms of examination malpractices to include tattoo, token, contract, expo, computo, impersonation, question paper leakage, aiding of students by lecturers, collusion among students, use of unauthorized materials in the examination hall, giraffe or extending of neck to copy from others and spying during an examination. Maheshwari (2011) identified leakage of question papers to spying, changing answer books, impersonation misconduct in the examination centre, approaching invigilators/examiners, making false entries in award list/examination registers, and issuing fake certificates/degrees as forms of malpractice.

According to Onyibe (2015), general moral decadence and a high premium placed on achievement and certificates by Nigerians have in recent times spawned examination fraud, prompting parents to bribe their ways in order to help their wards. The general over-dependence on educational certificates as a measure of one's knowledge and competence to secure jobs has led to a mad rush by most people for educational certificates (Odili, 2012). In a bid to acquire such certificates, many have resorted to unethical means-foremost among which are examination malpractices-just to acquire the certificates at all costs. The problem of inadequate places in Nigerian tertiary institutions has been a serious challenge to the teeming population of candidates seeking admission into the institutions. This challenge encourages examination malpractice to get good results for gaining admission. It is quite obvious that the number of students admitted yearly is negligible relative to the number of applications. The report by the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Education (FME, 2016) for the period 1999 - 2016 indicates that the rate of admission into universities ranges between 5% and 32% . In detail, a total of 417,773 candidates applied for admission in 1999/2000, but only 78,550 candidates were admitted, which represents an admission rate of 19%. Due to the increased enrolment which coincides with establishment of the NOUN (2002), recent years have seen an increase in the admission rate from 5% in 2002/03 to 9% in 2009/10, and to 32% in 2014/15.

Maheshwari (2011) stated that the phenomenon of examination malpractice has become endemic in the educational system. Students are involved because they want to achieve success; parents are involved because they want good grades for their wards; teachers and others are involved because of the financial, material, and other intangible gains derivable from involvement in examination malpractice.

Several punitive measures were taken to help serve as a deterrent to those involved in the act but to

no avail. Examination Malpractice Act 33 of 1999 (revised edition) stipulates punishment ranging from a fine of N50, 000.00 to N 100, 000.00 and imprisonment for a term of 5 years without the option of fine for violators of the offenses stipulated in the Act. This new development is due to the inability of the appropriate authorities to enforce the old Decree 20 of 1985. Despite all these laws, examination malpractice has been on the increase and this may be due to non-implementation of the laws.

These persistent attitudes toward involvement in examination malpractice have drawn the attention of several researchers to look into the problem. For instance, issues regarding examination malpractice with regards to means of curbing them were carried out by some researchers (Oko, 2016; Asinya, 2012); researches on examination malpractice behaviour of students in Secondary Schools has been done (Udo, 2011; Onuka & Durowaju, 2013), some cases have also been made on the causes and spread of examination malpractices (Oko, 2016; Petters & Okon, 2014).

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, key variables such as gender and age of students have been identified as predictors of involvement in examination malpractice as found in the literature, but nothing or not much has been done on the variables of level and Faculty of undergraduates in the Universities, more especially in Gombe State with a different location and population. Also, the instruments used by the researchers were different from the one the present researcher used.

The study, therefore, seeks to bridge the identified gap, by further investigating the problem of undergraduates' perceptions on types and levels of involvement in examination malpractice on the variables of gender, age, level, and faculty of study dimensions in Gombe State University.

### **Methodology**

This study is a descriptive survey research design. The population for the study was all undergraduates of Gombe State University drawn across five faculties of the University. These Faculties are Faculty of Education, Faculty of Science, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, and Faculty of Pharmaceutical sciences.

Multi stage sampling technique was adopted in selecting the study sample. Based on Gay (1987) suggestion for fair representation, a total 20% sample of seven hundred and seventy eight students (778) was randomly selected from 200-400 levels across the five stratified Faculties from a target population of 3891 (Source: Academic Office of Gombe State University) to represent the entire total number of undergraduate students used in the study.

The research instrument which is "Perceived Types and Levels of Involvement in Examination Malpractice Questionnaire" (PTLIEMQ) after it was developed, was face and content validated by experts in the Department of Social Sciences Education, Faculty of Education, the University of Ilorin before being considered as suitable for use. The questionnaire was also trial-tested and its coefficient of reliability for proper use determined at an index of 0.76

Pie charts and mean ratings were used to describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents as well as to answer research questions. The null hypotheses generated were tested using Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) inferential statistics. All these hypotheses were tested at 0.5 levels of significance.

### **Research Questions**

This study provided answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the perceived types of examination malpractice among undergraduates at Gombe State University?
2. What is the level of students' involvement in examination malpractice as perceived by undergraduates at Gombe State University?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were drawn to direct the process of the research:

- H<sub>01</sub>:** There no significant difference in the level of students' involvement in examination malpractice as perceived by undergraduates at Gombe State University based on gender.
- H<sub>02</sub>:** There no significant difference in the level of involvement in examination malpractice as perceived by undergraduates in Gombe State University based on age
- H<sub>03</sub>:** There no significant difference in the level of involvement in examination malpractice as perceived by undergraduates in Gombe State University based on the level of study
- H<sub>04</sub>:** There no significant difference in the level of involvement in examination malpractice as perceived by undergraduates at Gombe State University based on the Faculty of study.

### **Answering of Research Questions**

#### **Research Question 1:**

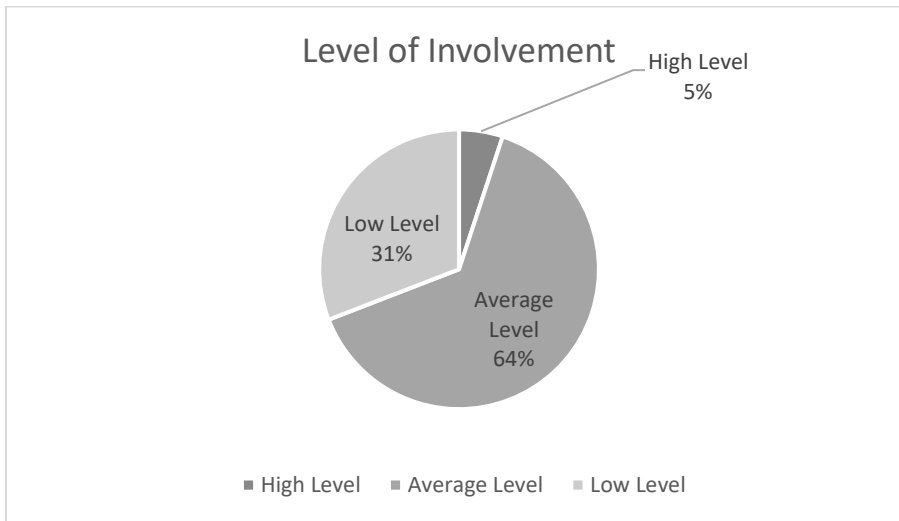
*What are the perceived types of examination malpractice mostly involved in by undergraduates at Gombe State University?*

**Table 1: Ranking Order of Types of Examination Malpractice among Undergraduates in Gombe State University**

No	Types of examination malpractices among undergraduates in Gombe State University	Frequen cy	Mean	Ranking
1.	Giraffing (extending neck to copy from another student)	771	2.93	1 <sup>st</sup>
2.	Taking handwritten materials and textbooks to the examination hall	771	2.65	2 <sup>nd</sup>
3.	Copying or dubbing from another student	771	2.64	3 <sup>rd</sup>
4	Use of phones	771	2.59	4 <sup>th</sup>
5	Disorderliness (Obstruction)	771	2.54	5 <sup>th</sup>
6	Collusion (collaboration in order to cheat)	771	2.40	6 <sup>th</sup>
7	Inscription	771	2.33	7 <sup>th</sup>
7	Exchange of answer scripts among students.	771	2.33	7 <sup>th</sup>
9	Examination leakage	771	2.30	9 <sup>th</sup>
10	Aiding students by lecturers	771	2.13	10 <sup>th</sup>
11	Bribery (giving gift or money to invigilator)	771	2.08	11 <sup>th</sup>
12	Non-submission of scripts	771	1.99	12 <sup>th</sup>
13	Smuggling prepared answer script into the hall	771	1.92	13 <sup>th</sup>
14	Impersonation (writing on behalf of another student)	771	1.90	14 <sup>th</sup>
15	Use of mercenaries	771	1.33	15 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Weighted Mean Score</b>			<b>34.08</b>	

Table 1 indicates that 771 undergraduates participated in this study. The table revealed that the commonest type of examination malpractice among undergraduates in Gombe State University was Giraffing, followed by Taking handwritten materials and textbooks, copying or dubbing, and disorderliness.

**Research Question 2:** *What is the level of students' involvement in examination malpractice as perceived by undergraduates at Gombe State University?*



**Fig. 1: Level of Students' Involvement in Examination Malpractice as Perceived by Undergraduates in Gombe State University**

Figure 6 indicates that out of 771 undergraduates participated in this study, a total of 39 (5%) are highly involved in examination malpractice; 494 of (64%) are averagely involved; while 238 of (31%) are lowly involved in examination malpractice.

### Hypotheses Testing

**H<sub>01</sub>:** *There no significant difference in the level of students' involvement in examination malpractice as perceived by undergraduates at Gombe State University based on gender.*

**Table 2: Chi-square Analysis on Level of Students' Involvement in Examination Malpractice based on gender**

Group	High	Average	Low	Total	$\chi^2$
Male	26 (34.70)	493 (448.44)	46 (81.86)	565	202.48
Female	13 (4.30)	11 (55.56)	46 (10.14)	70	
<b>Total</b>	39	504	92	635	

**Critical level of sig. = 0.05;df=2;critical  $\chi^2$  =5.991**

Table 2 shows that the calculated Cal. ( $\chi^2$ ) value is 202.84 with a calculated significant of 5.991 computed at the critical alpha level of significance 0.05. Since the calculated value 202.48 is greater than the critical value (5.991) at critical alpha level of significance (0.05), this shows that the null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** *There no significant difference in the level of students' involvement in examination malpractice as perceived by undergraduates at Gombe State University based on age.*

**Table 3: Chi-square Analysis of Level of Students' Involvement in Examination Malpractice based on Age**

Age range	18-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	Total	$\chi^2$
High	22 (23.77)	6 (10.82)	7 (2.94)	3 (0.61)	1 (0.86)	39	
Average	442 (301.14)	45 (137.12)	3 (37.16)	3 97.69)	1 (10.89)	494	534.11
Low	6 (145.08)	163 (66.05)	48 (17.90)	6 (3.70)	15 95.25)	238	
Total	470	214	58	12	17	771	

**Critical level of sig. = 0.05, df=8, critical  $\chi^2 = 2.18$**

Table 3 shows that the calculated Cal. ( $\chi^2$ ) value is 534.11 with a calculated significant of 2.18 computed at the critical alpha level of significance 0.05. Since the calculated value 534.1 is greater than the critical value (2.18) at critical alpha level of significance (0.05), this shows that the null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** *There no significant difference in the level of students' involvement in examination malpractice based on educational level.*

**Table 4: Chi-square Analysis of Level of Students' Involvement in Examination Malpractice based on educational level**

	200 level	300 level	400 level	Total	$\chi^2$
High	15 (13.770)	7 (12.49)	16 (11.75)	38	
Average	248 (179.00)	242 (162.31)	4 (152.69)	494	645.28
Low	16 (86.24)	4 (78.20)	218 (73.56)	238	
Total	279	253	238	770	

**Critical level of sig. = 0.05;df=4;critical  $\chi^2 = 9.488$**

Table 4 shows that the calculated Cal. ( $\chi^2$ ) value is 645.28 with a calculated significant of 9.488 computed at the critical alpha level of significance 0.05. Since the calculated value 645.28 is greater than the critical value (9.488) at critical alpha level of significance (0.05), this shows that the null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

**H<sub>04</sub>:** *There no significant difference in the level of students' involvement in examination malpractice based on Faculty.*

**Table 5: Chi-square Analysis of Level of Students' Involvement in Examination Malpractice based on Faculty**

Group	Edu	Science	Arts & soc. Sci.	Medicine	Pharmacy	Total	$\chi^2$
High	19 (3.24)	2 (2.85)	1 (17.26)	3 (0.34)	4 (0.31)	29	
Average	51 (55.18)	203 (133.72)	235 (294.06)	2 (5.84)	3 (5.19)	494	373.05
Low	15 (26.58)	1 964.43)	217 (141.67)	4 (2.82)	1 (2.50)	238	
Total	85	206	453	9	8	761	

**Critical level of sig. = 0.05; df=8; critical  $\chi^2=15.507$**

Table 5 shows that the calculated Cal. ( $\chi^2$ ) value is 373.05 with a calculated significant of 15.507 computed at the critical alpha level of significance 0.05. Since the calculated value 373.05 is greater than the critical value (15.507) at critical alpha level of significance (0.05), this shows that the null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

### **Conclusion**

It could be concluded that the commonest type of examination malpractice among undergraduates at Gombe State University was Giraffing (extending neck to copy from another student). It was also concluded that the greater proportion of the undergraduates sampled were averagely involved in examination malpractice. Also, there was a significant difference in the level of students' involvement in examination malpractice as perceived by undergraduates at Gombe State University based on gender, age, level, and faculty of study of the students.

The implications of examination malpractice among students are frightening and devastating. It makes formal assessments unreliable, educational objectives unattainable, and portends a bleak future for any society. To checkmate or curb examination malpractice in Nigerian schools, students, lecturers, parents, and the school management have roles to play because the study has revealed that they are advocates of examination malpractice. Orientations, guidance, and counseling programmes should be organized often to change the perception of students towards examination malpractice.

### **Recommendations**

1. There should be increased efforts at the effective supervision of students during examinations to be able to curb giraffing in the examination hall.
2. It was also, recommended that concerted efforts should be made at improving the level of discipline among students through counseling services in the schools.
3. There should be the full implementation of the examination malpractice decree by the Federal Government of Nigeria.
4. The Examination departments in Higher Education institutions should conduct training workshops for all undergraduates, invigilators, tutors, lecturers, and administrators on best practices in examination management and awareness of the various forms of malpractice.

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