

DIMENSIONS OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN EDO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study evaluated the dimensions of academic dishonesty among undergraduate students at public universities in Edo State, Nigeria. The survey design was considered appropriate for this study. This study's population included all 569,398 regular undergraduate students in public universities in Edo State, Nigeria, from which a sample size of 569 students was drawn using stratified random sampling. The research instrument used for the collection of data was designed by the researcher. After content validation of the instrument by experts, the reliability of the instrument was established at 0.79 using the test-retest reliability technique. Mean (\bar{X}) and standard deviation (S.D) were used to analyse the research question while the t-test statistical technique was used to test the two hypotheses formulated for the study. Plagiarism, paper-facilitated cheating such as using smuggled textbooks into the hall, technology-facilitated cheating such as cheating with phone devices, unauthorized collaboration, multiple submissions of a single academic effort by several students, and copying from another student during an examination or allowing another to copy your work are the dimensions of academic dishonesty perpetrated among undergraduates in public universities, according to the findings. Also, sex and study level differences were found, with male and older students demonstrating more involvement than their counterparts (females and the relatively new students) in the perpetration of academic dishonesty. Based on the findings it was recommended among others that the university administration should work to implement a learning management system (LMS) such as student canvas that is integrated with Turnitin, iThenticate.com, or any other plagiarism tool to help verify the originality of every assignment, thesis, or dissertation submitted to every lecturer or supervisor.

Keywords: Evaluation, Examination Malpractice, Academic Dishonesty, Achievement

Introduction

The third level of education after secondary school is thought of as tertiary education across the globe. It is regarded as education offered in post-secondary education institutions, which in the case of Nigeria comprises Colleges of Education,

Polytechnics, Mono-technics and Universities among others. Therefore, universities serve as centers of excellence where information is shared and sought after by individuals who are interested in learning. This may be the reason why Egbai (2021) classified it as an academic community made up of intellectuals, including administrators in control of the system's teaching and non-teaching activities as well as teaching and non-teaching employees. To this aim, the crucial roles performed by tertiary institutions as a tool for social engineering and societal effectiveness cannot be overstated since these institutions stimulated progress and spread societal awareness for the upkeep and adaptation of social structures (Saana, Ablordeppey, Mensah, & Karikari, 2016).

The objectives of higher education in universities among others are essential to the creation of a prosperous society. This is because of its contributions to the development of higher-level competencies and skills, which are crucial for national development, especially in the context of globalization and the movement toward knowledge-based economies (Akporehe 2022). Just like other key levels of education, certification is a common reward for academic accomplishment, given to students who finished their studies successfully and with high academic standing in most nations of the world including Nigeria. Hence, students are therefore required to take public examination at the conclusion of their secondary education, such as the West African Senior School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE), administered by the West African Examination Council (WAEC), the Senior School Certificate (SSCE), administered by the National Examination Council (NECO), and the National Technical and Business Certificate Examinations (NTCE/NBCE), administered by the National Business and Technical Examinations Board (NABTEB).

As a result, examinations play a crucial role in both our educational and professional life nowadays. They serve as the foundation for a thorough examination of students and clients by teachers and counselors. A series of performance assessments that will ultimately lead to a well-founded conclusion must be provided in order to determine if a student is deserving of being promoted to next or upper class. Fear and anxiety are almost always present when using examination as a tool for decision-making. Many test takers would do their hardest to pass the test. Additionally, a lot of school administrators and parents would like to look into ways to help their students and children earn high marks (Jacob, Oluwafeyisayomi, & Jacob, 2018). As a result, they engage in academic dishonesty.

Academic dishonesty, according to Okoroafor, Henning, Chibuike and Rajput (2016) is any illegal act carried out by a student alone or in cooperation with others, such as other students, parents, teachers, supervisors, invigilators, printers, or any other individual or group, before, during, or after examination in order to obtain unjustified marks or grades. The methods used to carry out this unlawful act may include bringing unauthorized materials into the examination room, interfering with the testing process, purchasing examination papers, altering grades after the test,

impersonation, or using money or the candidate's own body to get points (Egbai, 2020). Academic dishonesty, as pointed out by Parnter (2022) may include copying and sneaking materials into test rooms and examination halls.

Jacob, *et al* (2018) claims that the use of phones or other electronic devices, copying, bringing in of foreign materials into test rooms, irregular activities within and outside the examination halls, impersonation and cooperation, among other things, are all aspects of academic dishonesty. To Aluede, Omoregie, and Osa-Edoh (2006), academic dishonesty can take many different forms, such as examination leakage, impersonation, cheating and collusion, swapping of scripts, smuggling of answer sheets into exam rooms, forging of results or certificates, and verbal or physical assault on test administrators. Impersonation, bringing in foreign materials (books, calculators), substituting worked scripts, stealing, converting, misappropriating scripts, collusion in the examination hall (copying), and even mass/organized cheating involving assistance from teachers and outsiders.

Ubaka, Fajemirokun, Nduka, and Ezenwanne, (2013) noted that the three types of academic dishonesty may be categorized as follows: cheating in examinations, plagiarism, and making up justifications (e.g. lying about the reason for not completing coursework). The findings from their study showed that a wide range of academic dishonesty has been documented, from the most common plagiarism or copying to cyber-cheating and data falsification among others. In their evaluation of the research on college students, Rinn, Boazman, Jackson, Barrio (2014) found that students who feel pressure to achieve and who have a history of academic dishonesty are more likely to engage in practices like plagiarism and cheating. Additionally, those who cheat in class have high expectations for accomplishment, low expectations for rewards, and a competitive attitude toward academics. There are reasons to believe that academic dishonesty is a multifaceted rather than a monolithic construct, as the behaviors that fall under the general term of academic dishonesty occur with varying frequencies and are perceived by students as having different levels of severity (Tadesse, & Getachew, 2010; Ubaka, Fajemirokun, Nduka, & Ezenwanne, 2013). Students' inventive use of technology broadens the spectrum of potential dishonest actions, as well as the difficulty of detection (Saana, Ablordeppey, Mensah, & Karikari, 2016).

Egbai (2020) noted that academic dishonesty may take many distinct forms. They range from impersonation, question leaks, results manipulation, computer fraud, and dishonest activities committed by law enforcement, security personnel, and test invigilators. Athanason and Olasehinde (2002) found that, typically, the proportion of female students who cheated varied from 0.05 to 0.99 (median = 0.56) while those of male students ranged from 0.16 to 0.91 (median = 0.61) in their study of the data from the reviewed literature. Boys and girls' claimed average proportions did not substantially differ from each other. According to the findings of several research that included data on ratios and the actual number of men and women involved, 21% of women and 26% of men have cheated overall. This showed that

males were found to be more likely than women to purposefully cheat on a test.

Numerous studies have been conducted to look at sex and demographic disparities in students' academic dishonesty. Egbai (2020) looked at how post-graduate students at Federal Universities of South-South, Nigeria, evaluated sex and age impersonation as academic dishonest behavior. The survey research study, which included 440 men and 490 women from three universities and three faculties of the same institutions in South-South, Nigeria, used a multi-stage stratified random sampling approach. The sample was chosen using a stratified random sampling strategy. The results showed that the study's participants engaged in academic dishonesty that included sex and age impersonation. Impersonation was shown to be more prevalent among female pupils than male students.

Jacob, Oluwafeyisayomi, and Jacob (2018) investigated the frequency of academic dishonesty among university freshmen in Kwara State, Nigeria. The undergraduate students at the four universities in Kwara State made up the population for the research. Using proportional and stratified selection approaches, 1476 (15%) of the 9843 400-level undergraduate students at the sampled institutions were chosen as the study's sample. The results of this research showed that there was no gender-based difference in the frequency of academic dishonesty among university freshmen in Kwara State, Nigeria. However, dependent on the kind of institution and level of study, there were considerable differences in the frequency of academic dishonesty among university students in Kwara State, Nigeria.

In the study of undergraduate students' self-reported academic dishonesty at Jimma and Addis Ababa Universities, Tadesse and Getachew (2010) discovered that 96.4% of respondents admitted to engaging in dishonesty related to assignments, compared to 82.1% and 82% in relation to research and exams, respectively. Scores on the performance avoidance and mastery orientation scales, the cumulative grade point average (CGPA), knowledge of academic norms and regulations, assessment procedures, faculty, and university attended all significantly predicted the various forms of academic dishonesty. When Nathanson, Paulhus, and Williams (2006) looked at individual differences as cheating predictors, they neglected to take into account a number of crucial personality traits (the Big Five, perfectionism, and subclinical psychopathy). A thorough battery of personality tests was completed by 1,291 individuals. Demographic factors including gender, race, and level of education did not substantially improve the ability to anticipate cheating.

Concern among those involved in the education sector has grown over the prominence that academic dishonesty has acquired in the educational system. Every examination season, there are inventive and new ways to cheat. To the point where certification has almost completely lost its credibility in the nation, the examination process has become endangered. Certificates no longer appear to reflect students' skill and competence at the secondary and tertiary levels of education (Olasehinde-Williams, 2009). School administrators, parents, students, exam administrators, and even lecturers in tertiary institutions have been accused of encouraging such acts of

indiscipline.

Furthermore, despite being aware of the consequences associated with engaging in academic dishonesty, observation has revealed that the majority of first-year students at public universities in Edo State, Nigeria, use various methods other than traditional ones to cheat during exams. The majority of the time, students who engage in this dishonorable behavior utilize devices like smartphones, iPads, and iPhones, among others, to: look up answers on the internet during tests and even take pages from their textbooks that likely include exam questions into the exam room. Some of them use their phone's earpiece to conduct quiet conversations, send texts to pals outside the test room, or even receive multimedia messages on social media while the exam is taking place. In order to address the ever-growing threat, it is important to analyze the dimensions of academic dishonesty among students. Hence, the purpose of this research is to evaluate the dimensions of academic dishonesty among students in public university institutions in Edo State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The guiding research questions answered in this investigation are:

- 1) What are the dimensions of academic dishonesty perpetrated among undergraduates in Public universities in Edo state?
- 2) Is there a difference in the dimension of academic dishonesty perpetuated among undergraduates in public universities in Edo state based on sex?
- 3) Is there a difference between study level (100 =200 level) and 300 and higher on the dimension of academic dishonesty perpetuated among undergraduates in public universities in Edo state?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested in this study:

- 1) There is no significant difference between male and female undergraduates on the dimensions of academic dishonesty perpetrated in Public universities in Edo State, Nigeria
- 2) There is no significant difference between new (100-200 level) and 300 level and higher) undergraduates on the dimensions of academic dishonesty perpetrated in public universities in Edo State, Nigeria

Methodology

The descriptive survey design was used in this investigation. All eighty six thousand and seventy (86070) regular undergraduate students in two major public universities in Edo State, Nigeria were the population of this study. These include: Ambrose Alli University in Ekpoma, Edo State having 36570 (Ambrose Alli University ICT unit, 2024) and the University of Benin, Benin City having 49500 (Uniben ICT Unit 2024) as at 2023/24 academic session .Using a stratified random sampling technique, a sample size of 569 students across all undergraduate students representing 0.7% %

of the whole population was selected. The researcher treated each university as a stratum and utilized this sampling technique to choose 1% of the student population per institution.

The researcher developed the questionnaire that was utilized to collect the required data. Section A comprises questions pertaining to the demographic features of the students, such as sex and study level. While Section B was created to extract information from students on the aspects of academic dishonesty committed by students, There are 9-items on the instrument. On a four point Likert scale, each item received a score rating of Strongly Agreed (SA) - 4, Agreed (A) - 3, Disagreed (D) - 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) - 1. The instrument's face and content validity was carried out by experts in Measurement and Evaluations. This was done to make sure that the items on the questionnaire are relevant, understandable, and exact and that they measure the construct that the instrument is meant to assess. The test-retest procedure was used to ascertain the internal consistency otherwise known as the instrument's dependability coefficient. This technique was used to collect responses from a total of 20 students from another institution. The first group of students were given a test, the same group of students were given the same test after a few weeks. On a likert-type scale, their responses to the first and second tests were scored, and analysed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation. The coefficient yielded an r-value of 0.79 to confirm the internal consistency and instrument's dependability.

. The research questions were answered with mean (\bar{X}) and the standard deviation (S.D.) While research hypotheses were tested using the t-test statistical method at a significance level of 0.05.

Results

Result of the analysis of research question and test of hypotheses are presented in the tables below

Research question One: What are the dimensions of academic dishonesty perpetrated among undergraduates in public universities in Edo State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean Score and Standard score of academic dishonesty are perpetrated among undergraduates in Public universities in Edo State, Nigeria.

Items	Dimensions of Academic Dishonesty	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
1.	Forgery – such as admission falsification and certificate racketeering.	2.21	1.05	Disagreed
2.	Plagiarism – intentionally or knowingly submitting a part or entire assignment/project of another as one's own for assessment	2.86*	1.12	Agreed
3.	Impersonation – such as writing an examination for another person using their name and identity.	2.47	1.14	Disagreed
4.	Paper facilitated cheating – such as copying answers from a note, paper with scribbled answers or textbook smuggled into the examination hall.	2.71*	1.25	Agreed
5.	Technology facilitated cheating such as searching answers to a test or examination using electronic gadgets like phones/tablets.	2.78*	1.01	Agreed
6.	Unauthorized collaboration on a take home assignment or examination that is meant to be an individual assignment	2.94*	1.12	Agreed
7.	Multiple submissions of a single assignment/project to several lecturers to earn different marks by several students	2.68*	1.07	Agreed
8.	Copying from another student during an examination or allowing another to copy your work	2.66*	1.03	Agreed

* Criterion mean ($\bar{X} \geq 2.50$)

Result in Table 1 shows that students agreed on all the items except forgery and impersonation at a mean score of 2.21 and 2.47 respectively. Since the rest of the 6 items have a mean score that is higher than the criterion mean of 2.50, it is evident that plagiarism, paper facilitated cheating such as the use of textbooks smuggled into the hall, technology facilitated cheating such as cheating with phone devices, unauthorized collaboration, multiple submissions of a single academic effort by several students, and copying from another student during an examination or allowing another to copy your work are the dimensions of academic dishonesty perpetrated among undergraduates in public universities in Edo State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between male and female undergraduates on the dimensions of academic dishonesty perpetrated in Public universities in Edo State, Nigeria

Table 2: Sex Difference Analysis on the Dimensions of Academic Dishonesty Perpetrated among Undergraduates in Public universities in Edo State, Nigeria

s/n	Variables	Sex	N=569	\bar{X}	S.D	t-cal.	Sig.	Remark
1.	Forgery	Female	296	2.29	0.89	-2.90*	.004	Different
		Male	273	2.56	1.22			
2.	Plagiarism	Female	296	2.29	0.90	-4.20*	.000	Different
		Male	273	2.70	1.28			
3.	Impersonation	Female	296	2.35	0.85	-4.10*	.000	Different
		Male	273	2.70	1.11			
4.	Paper facilitated cheating	Female	296	2.63	0.93	-2.11*	.036	Different
		Male	273	2.83	1.21			
5.	Technology facilitated cheating	Female	296	2.75	0.83	-0.53	.596	Not Different
		Male	273	2.80	1.25			
6.	Unauthorized collaboration	Female	296	2.35	0.98	-5.70*	.000	Different
		Male	273	2.91	1.25			
7. C	Multiple submissions	Female	296	2.33	0.84	-3.16*	.002	Different
		Male	273	2.62	1.14			
8.	Copying	Female	296	2.34	0.93	-2.71*	.007	Different
		Males	273	2.62	1.21			

* t-value significant at 0.05 level of significance

Result in Table 2 shows that the calculated t-values of all the dimensions of academic dishonesty are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) except the t-value for technology facilitated cheating was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is a significant difference between male and female undergraduates on the dimensions of academic dishonesty perpetrated in Public universities in Edo State, Nigeria. This further implies that the dimensions of academic dishonesty perpetrated among undergraduate students in public universities in Edo State, Nigeria differed by sex. A closer look at the mean score distribution on various academic dishonesty shows that males had higher mean scores suggesting that they were more involved in the perpetration of most academic dishonesty.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference between new (100-200 level) and old (300 level and higher) undergraduates on the dimensions of academic dishonesty perpetrated in public universities in Edo State, Nigeria

Table 3: Study Level differences on the Dimensions of Academic Dishonesty Perpetrated among Undergraduates in Public Universities in Edo State, Nigeria

s/ n	Variables	Study level	N=569	\bar{X}	S.D	t-cal.	Sig.	Remark
1.	Forgery	New	238	2.34	0.92	-2.71*	.008	Different
		Old	331	2.58	1.22			
2.	Plagiarism	New	238	2.32	1.00	-3.60*	.000	Different
		Old	331	2.68	1.30			
3.	Impersonation	New	238	2.32	0.91	-3.80*	.000	Different
		Old	331	2.71	1.11			
4.	Paper facilitated cheating	New	238	2.65	0.86	-2.05*	.045	Different
		Old	331	2.83	1.09			
5.	Technology facilitated cheating	New	238	2.79	0.86	-0.06	.985	Not Different
		Old	331	2.80	1.59			
6.	Unauthorized collaboration	New	238	2.33	0.94	-5.80*	.000	Different
		Old	331	2.89	1.09			
7.	Multiple submissions	New	238	2.31	0.82	-3.10*	.002	Different
		Old	331	2.58	1.14			
8.	Copying	New	238	2.40	0.97	-2.48*	.014	Different
		Old	331	2.63	1.23			

* *t*-value significant at 0.05 level of significance

Result in Table 3 shows that the calculated *t*-values of all the dimensions of academic dishonesty are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) except the *t*-value for technology facilitated cheating was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is a significant difference between old and new undergraduates on the dimensions of academic dishonesty perpetrated in Public universities in Edo State, Nigeria. This further implies that the dimensions of academic dishonesty perpetrated among undergraduate students in public universities in Edo State, Nigeria differed by level of study. A closer look at the mean score distribution on various academic dishonesty shows that old students had higher mean scores than their counterparts that are new students. This suggests those old students who expectedly are more familiar with their university environment were more involved in the perpetration of most academic dishonesty.

Discussion of Findings

The findings indicated that undergraduates in public universities in the Edo state engage in a variety of forms of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, the use of paper-based methods of cheating, such as sneaking textbooks into the classroom, technology-based methods of cheating, such as using mobile devices, unauthorized collaboration, multiple submissions of a single academic effort by several students, and copying from another student during an exam or allowing someone else to copy your work. This supports Egbai's (2020) submission that academic dishonesty includes impersonation, question leaks, outcomes manipulation, and technology-based fraud. The findings of Tadesse and Getachew (2010), that 96.4% of

respondents reported participating in dishonesty related to assignment copying, plagiarism, and cooperation, are similarly consistent with this.

The findings indicated that male and female students varied significantly on the aspects of academic dishonesty committed at public institutions in Edo State, Nigeria. The outcome supports the findings of Athanason and Olasehinde (2002), who discovered that men were more likely than women to intentionally cheat on a test. Egbai (2020) discovered that imitation was more common among female students than male students, in a reverse but comparable order. Ubaka, Fajemirokun, Nduka, and Ezenwanne (2013), on the other hand, discovered no difference between male and female students in terms of cheating on their schoolwork.

Conclusion

Academic dishonesty is a societal issue that has wreaked unfathomable destruction on the Nigerian educational system as a whole. A closer look at the mean score distribution on various academic dishonesty shows that males had higher mean scores suggesting that they were more male involved in the perpetration of most academic dishonesty. A closer look at the mean score distribution on various academic dishonesty shows that old students had higher mean scores than their counterparts that are new students. This suggests that old students who expectedly are more familiar with their university environment were more involved in the perpetration of most academic dishonesty.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made for the study:

- 1) The university management should endeavour to implement a Learning Management System (LMS) such as student canvas integrated with 'Turnitin', 'Ithenticate.com' or any other plagiarism to help verify the originality of every assignment, thesis and dissertation submitted to every lecturer or supervisors. This is expected to curb all unscrupulous academic activities such as multiple submissions of the same assignment, “copy and paste activities” and unauthorized collaboration.
- 2) Higher education institutions should engage guidance counselors and educational psychologists to assist create an intervention plan that would teach students how to manage their behavior in the face of societal pressures that would otherwise lead them to do ethical behaviours.
- 3) Parents and guardians should make an effort to take a greater interest in their children's or wards' academic performance and dissuade them from engaging in any unethical behavior that would cause them to make compromises in order to get academic success that is not warranted.

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