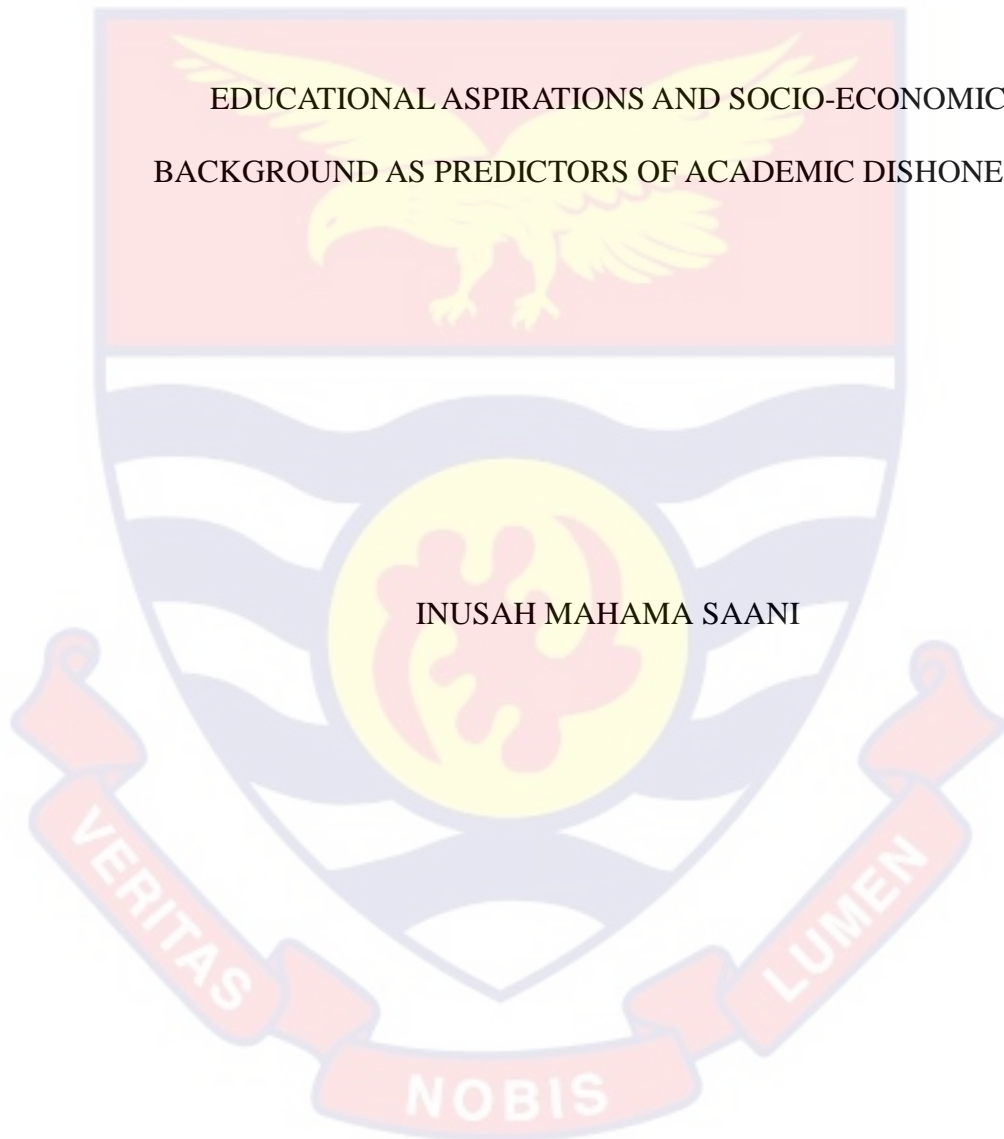UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC

BACKGROUND AS PREDICTORS OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

INUSAH MAHAMA SAANI

2023

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC

BACKGROUND AS PREDICTORS OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

BY

INUSAH MAHAMA SAANI

Thesis submitted to the Department of Education and Psychology of the

Faculty of Educational Foundation, College of Education Studies, University

of Cape Coast, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of

Master of Philosophy degree in Measurement and Evaluation

OCTOBER, 2023

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature:... Date:...........................

Name: …………………………………………………………………..

Supervisors' Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis was supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Supervisor's Signature:... Date:........................

Name: ………………………………………………………………….

ii

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify the educational aspirations of and the predictors of academic dishonesty practices among postgraduate master of philosophy students. This study adopts a positivist research paradigm employed a descriptive survey design with a quantitative approach to investigate the predictors of academic dishonesty among postgraduate MPhil students at UCC College of Education. Using a convenience sampling technique, data were collected from 105 respondents. The study revealed that University of Cape Coast master of philosophy students harbor elevated educational aspirations, associating higher studies with personal growth, financial upliftment, and societal contribution. A concerning trend of academic dishonesty was observed among these students. The study identified a modest but noteworthy positive relationship between the intensity of educational aspiration and tendencies of academic dishonesty. Gender had a significant influence on academic dishonesty although income did not predict academic dishonesty. The study recommended offering specialized courses, workshops, or mentorship programs to support students in their quest for advanced skills and knowledge. Programs or counseling services can be implemented to enlighten students about the potential benefits of continuous learning, even after securing a job. The data paves the way for exploring deeper nuances. Educational institutions should consider adopting more stringent measures that deter students from engaging in such activities.

KEYWORDS

Educational aspiration

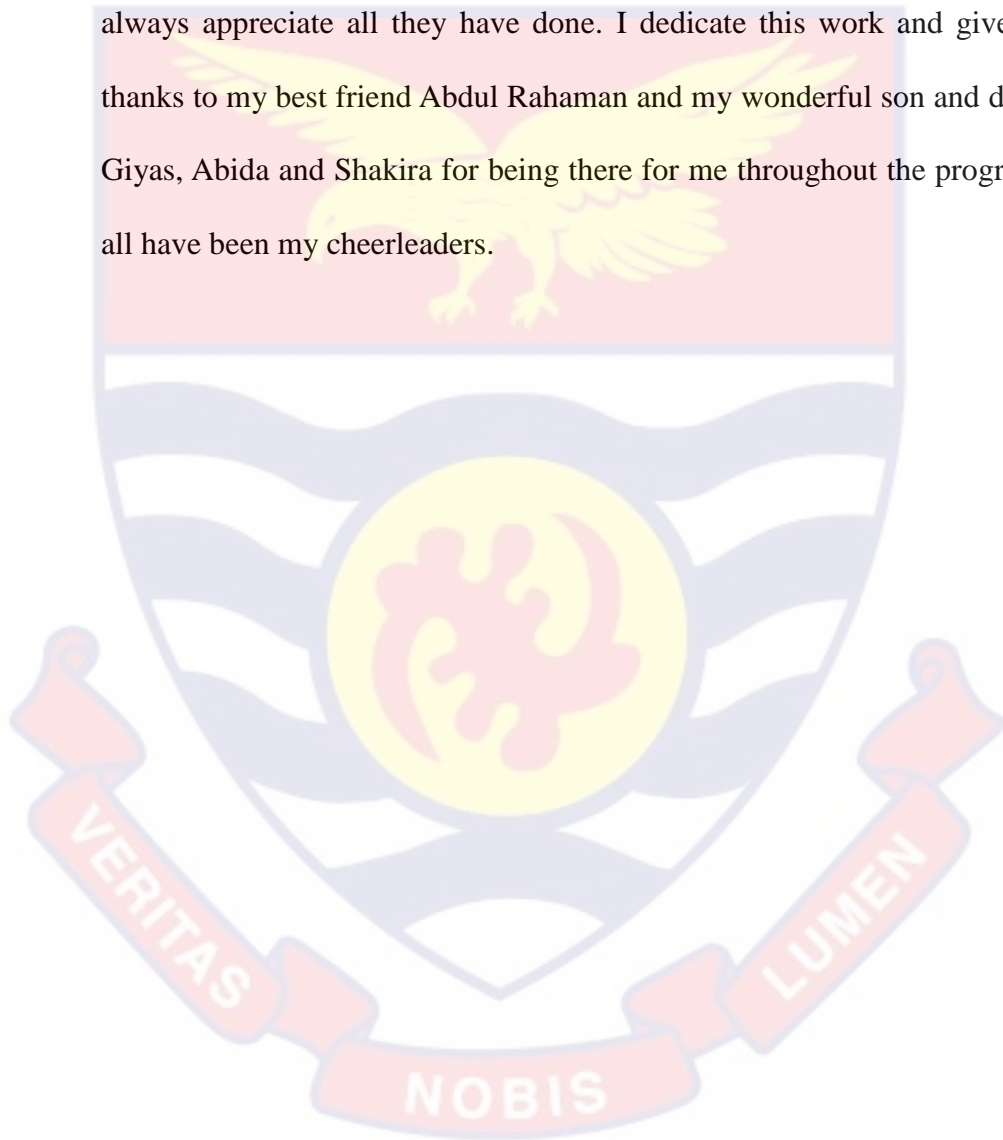Academic dishonesty

Socio-economic background

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Kenneth Asamoah Gyimah for his continues support of my Master of Philosophy study, for his patience, kindness, motivation, encouragement and guidance. His expertise, his support and belief in my abilities helped me throughout my study.

I would like to thank our lecturer Dr. Regina Mawusi Nugba for her greatest support and valuable suggestions. I especially thank my parents Mrs Inusah Awabu, my wife and friends, Takyi-Wadieh, Abdul Rahaman, Abdul Razak and to our wonderful children Giyas, Abida and Shakira, who have supported me with their love and patience throughout my study. I also wish to express my profound gratitude to all my friends who contributed in various ways to make the program a success.
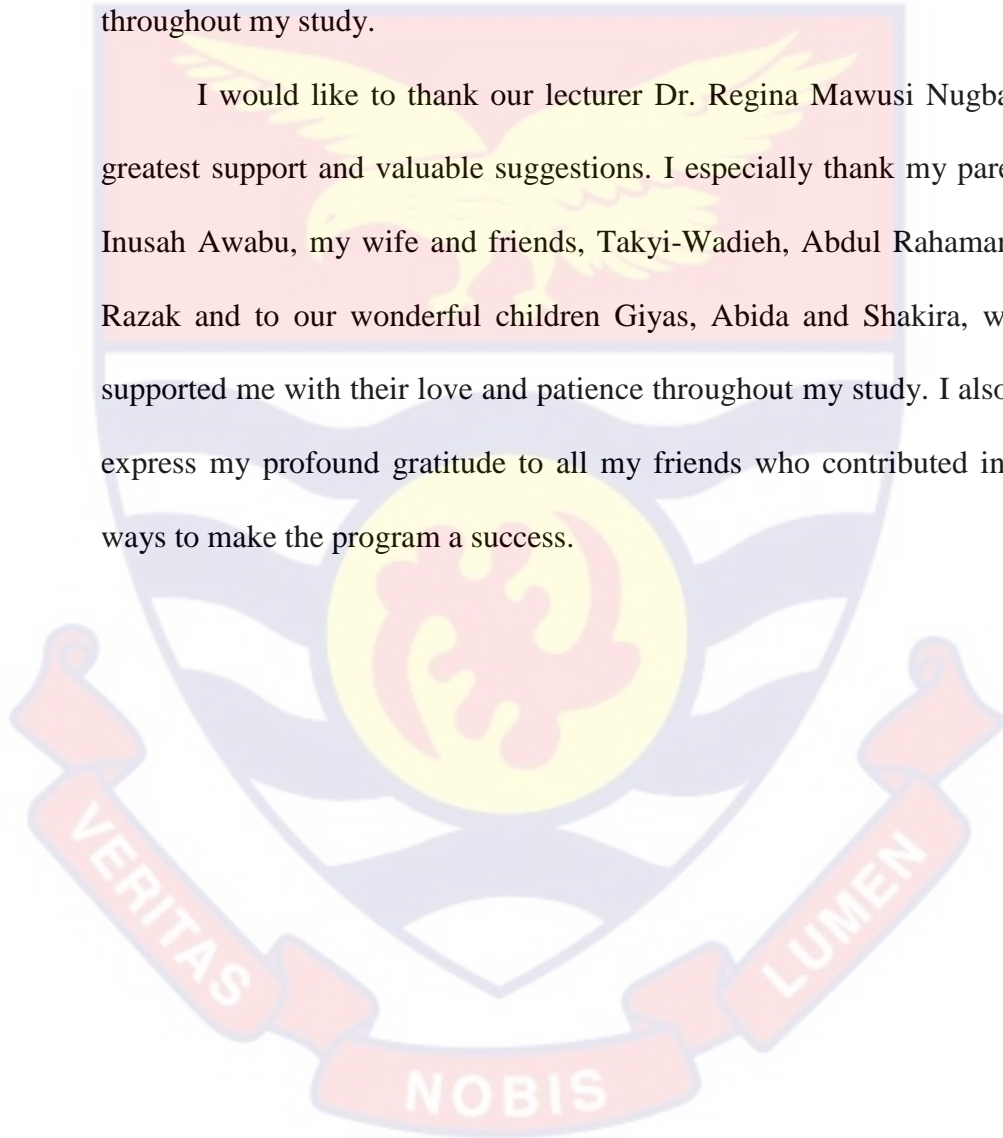
DEDICATION

I dedicate my thesis work to my family and many friends. A special feeling of gratitude to my loving Parent, Mrs. Inusah Awabu whose words of encouragement and push for tenacity ring in my ears. I also dedicate this thesis to many of my friends who have supported me throughout the process. I will always appreciate all they have done. I dedicate this work and give special thanks to my best friend Abdul Rahaman and my wonderful son and daughters Giyas, Abida and Shakira for being there for me throughout the program. You all have been my cheerleaders.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

ACRONYMS

EA- Educational Aspiration

AD- Academic Dishonesty

MPHIL- Master of Philosophy

UCC- University of Cape Coast

SES- Socio-Economic Status

SCT- Social Cognitive Theory

TRA- Theory of Reasoned Action
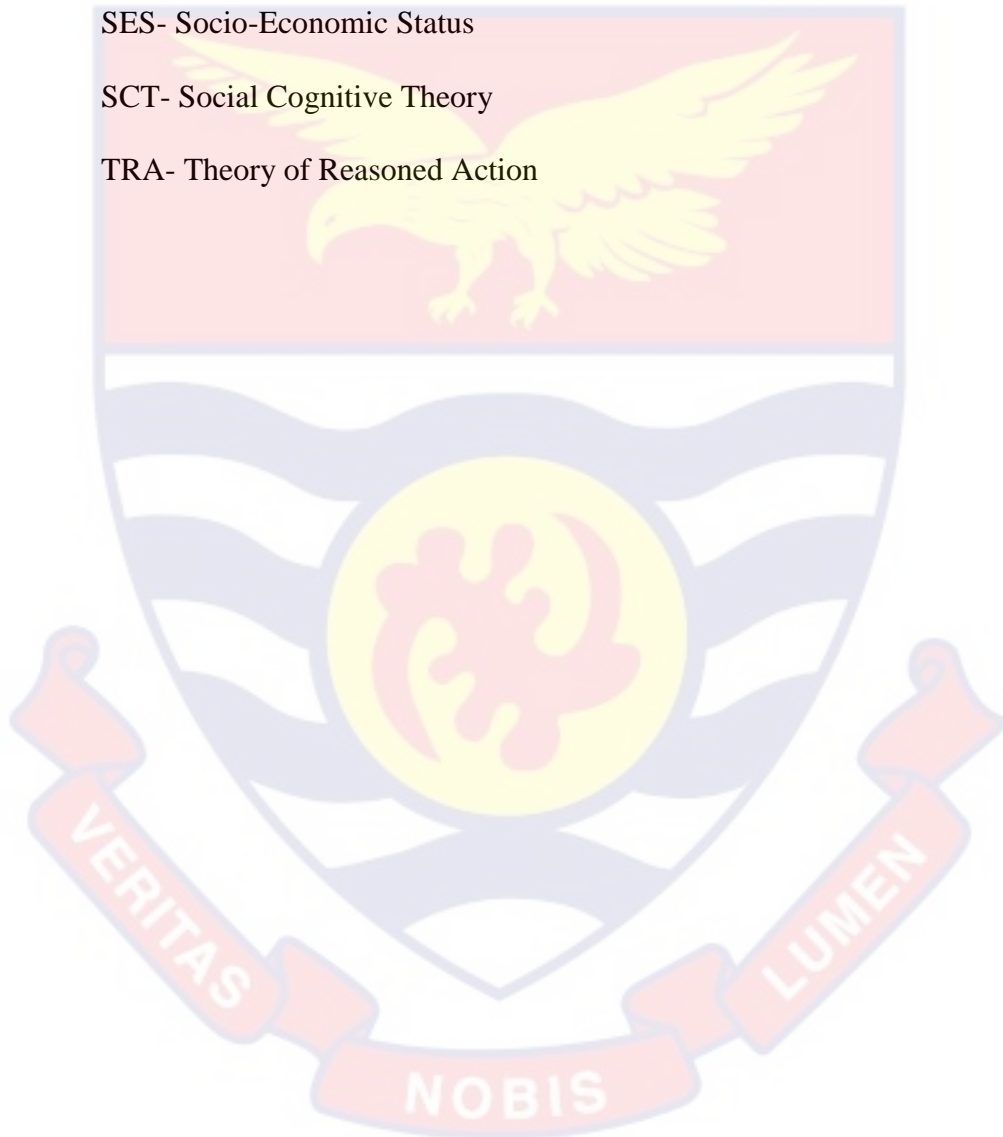
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary landscape of higher education is marked by an ever-evolving educational paradigm and an increasing concern regarding the integrity of academic pursuits. In this context, the present thesis, delves into the intricate relationship between students' educational aspirations, socio-economic background, and the prevalence of academic dishonesty within the specific context of graduate students of University of Cape Coast (UCC) under the College of Educational Studies. This research seeks to uncover how these two pivotal factors, aspirations, and socio-economic backgrounds, may serve as predictors of academic dishonesty, shedding light on a pressing issue within the realm of higher education. Through empirical investigation and analysis, this study aims to provide valuable insights that can inform evidence-based interventions to foster a culture of academic integrity, not only within the UCC College of Education but also within the broader educational landscape.

Background to the Study

In today's competitive world, the sphere of education is undergoing rapid transformations. At the forefront of discussions in higher education is the topic of academic dishonesty, which significantly compromises the integrity of the educational system. Recent years have seen a surge in concerns regarding this, especially among postgraduate students, including those in MPhil programs (Barnett, Namiba, & Okabe, 2015).

Academic dishonesty encompasses a range of deceptive actions undertaken by students. This includes but is not limited to plagiarism, cheating during exams, and the falsification of data. It involves a calculated attempt by

students to claim credit for work that is not their own or to otherwise misrepresent their academic performance (McCabe, Butterfield, & Trevino, 2012). The implications of such behaviours are profound, not only diminishing the worth of educational qualifications but also casting a pall over the institution's reputation.

Central to our understanding of academic dishonesty is the concept of educational aspirations. It refers to the ambitions, goals, or targets that students establish concerning their academic future. Research has illuminated that students with pronounced educational aspirations are inclined to exhibit constructive academic behaviours. This encompasses diligence in course work, consistent class attendance, and timeliness in meeting academic requirements (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000). However, there's a vacuum in research when it comes to the nuanced relationship between these aspirations and academic dishonesty. Is it conceivable that high aspirers, driven by a fear of failure, might resort to dishonesty when faced with academic adversity? This inquiry lies at the heart of the current research.

Another pivotal factor in understanding academic dishonesty is the socio-economic milieu from which students hail. This encompasses family income, the educational qualifications of parents, and overall social standing. Empirical studies, such as those conducted by Kleinig (2011) and Holman & Cahill (2016), have underscored that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are more susceptible to resorting to academic dishonesty. The underlying rationale could be the compounded pressures they face, the desire to bridge socio-economic gaps, or simply the absence of adequate academic resources and support.

Another dimension worth exploration is the gender dynamic. Some research indicates that gender plays a role in academic dishonesty, with societal expectations and pressures differing between males and females (Whitley, Nelson, & Jones, 1999). Gender-based analysis might provide more granular insights into the motivations behind academic dishonesty and how they vary across genders.

The focal point of this investigation lies within the UCC College of Education, which serves as an invaluable setting. It mirrors the broader academic landscape, bustling with MPhil students navigating a critical phase in their educational journey. Through their varied experiences, motivations, challenges, and behaviours, a diverse array of insights emerges, enriching our understanding. Examining academic dishonesty within this specific setting is likely to yield findings that could be both unique to this institution and resonant with broader educational trends.

The repercussions of academic dishonesty are multifaceted. For students, it's a betrayal of their own potential; for educational institutions, it's a dent in their credibility; and for the broader society, it signifies a degradation of the value of education. As we navigate the 21st century, with its myriad challenges and opportunities, understanding the underpinnings of academic dishonesty becomes paramount. Not just for punitive reasons, but to understand, empathize, educate, and evolve.

This study, therefore, seeks to build upon existing research and carve a niche in understanding the specific dynamics of academic dishonesty among MPhil students at the UCC College of Education. The findings promise to not

only shed light on this pressing issue but also pave the way for informed, evidence-based interventions to foster a culture of academic integrity.

Statement to the Problem

Academic dishonesty is a major problem in higher education institutions worldwide. While several studies have investigated the prevalence of academic dishonesty and the factors that contribute to it, little is known about the influence of students' aspirations and socio-economic background on academic dishonesty among postgraduate MPhil students in UCC College of Education.

According to Kleinig (2011), students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are at a higher risk of engaging in academic dishonesty. Similarly, Holman and Cahill (2016) found that students' backgrounds, including their family income and parental education, can predict academic misconduct. Moreover, research has shown that students with higher educational aspirations are more likely to engage in positive academic behaviours, such as studying and attending class (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000).

Despite the potential influence of educational aspirations and socio-economic background on academic dishonesty, there is a lack of research on this topic in the context of UCC College of Education postgraduate MPhil students. Therefore, it is essential to investigate the level of educational aspirations of MPhil UCC C college of education students, the prevalence of academic dishonesty among postgraduate MPhil students, the reasons for engaging in academic dishonesty among postgraduate MPhil UCC students, and the influence of educational aspirations and socio-economic background

4

on academic dishonesty among postgraduate MPhil students in UCC College of Education.

The findings of this study can inform the development of strategies to prevent academic dishonesty among postgraduate MPhil students in UCC College of Education and other higher education institutions. It can also provide insights into the role of students' aspirations and socio-economic background in academic dishonesty and inform future research on this topic.

Post graduate students are expected to maintain academic integrity and refrain from engaging in academic dishonesty. However, the current situation suggests that academic dishonesty remains prevalent among postgraduate students (Barnett, Namiba, & Okabe, 2015). Despite the institution's efforts to promote academic integrity, students continue to engage in various forms of academic dishonesty, such as plagiarism, cheating on exams, and falsifying data. This situation is a significant concern, as academic dishonesty undermines the integrity of the educational system and raises questions about the credibility of academic qualifications (McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 2012). A study by Dzakadzie (2018) on the prevalence and predictors of academic dishonesty among undergraduate students in public universities in Ghana revealed a significant prevalence of academic dishonesty among students of university of cape coast

Moreover, research suggests that students' aspirations and socio-economic background may play a role in their propensity to engage in academic dishonesty (Bajaj & Paul, 2016; Johnson, Crosnoe, & Elder Jr, 2001). This gap between the ideal situation and the current situation suggests a need to investigate the factors that contribute to academic dishonesty among

5

MPhil students, with a focus on their educational aspirations and socio-economic background, in order to develop effective interventions that can prevent such behaviour and promote academic integrity.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of students' aspirations and socio-economic backgrounds on academic dishonesty among MPhil students enrolled at the University of Cape Coast (UCC) College of Education.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were to assess:

1. Level of educational aspirations of MPhil students

2. Prevalence of academic dishonesty among postgraduate MPhil students

3. Reasons for engaging in academic dishonesty among postgraduate MPhil. students

4. Influence of educational aspirations on academic dishonesty of postgraduate MPhil. students

5. Influence of socio-economic background (gender and income) on academic dishonesty of postgraduate MPhil. students

Research Questions

1. What is the level of educational aspirations of University of Cape Coast master of philosophy students?

2. What is the prevalence rate of academic dishonesty among University of Cape Coast master of philosophy students?

3. What are the reasons that motivate students to engage in academic dishonesty?

Research Hypotheses

1. H_o: There is no significant relationship between educational aspiration and academic dishonesty of postgraduate Master of Philosophy students of University of Cape Coast

2. H_o: Socio-economic background has no significance influence on academic dishonesty of postgraduate MPhil UCC students

Significance of the Study

The investigation into the correlation between students' aspirations, socio-economic background, and academic dishonesty among UCC College of Education MPhil students offers valuable insights with significant implications for academia, policy formulation, and even broader societal dynamics.

By assessing the level of educational aspirations of MPhil students, this study sheds light on the depth and nature of the ambitions held by postgraduate students. This information is vital for educators, academic institutions, and policymakers to better understand and cater to the educational needs and aspirations of this specific demographic.

Academic dishonesty remains a serious concern for educational institutions worldwide, jeopardizing the integrity and value of academic certifications. By determining its prevalence among postgraduate MPhil students, this study pinpoints areas of concern, potentially prompting institutions to re-evaluate their academic honesty policies and mitigation strategies.

7

Knowing the prevalence of academic dishonesty is one thing, but understanding the reasons behind such behaviours allows for a more nuanced response. By unveiling these motivations, academic institutions can address root causes, rather than merely imposing punitive measures. This could lead to more effective prevention strategies, curricula redesign, or counseling programs tailored to address these underlying reasons.

The study's focus on the influence of educational aspirations on academic dishonesty breaks new ground by suggesting that the very ambitions that drive students to pursue higher education might also tempt them to cut corners. This complex interplay can reshape how institutions view the motivations of their students, prompting a deeper exploration into how educational aspirations can be both nurtured and managed in an ethically responsible manner.

Socio-economic factors such as gender and income have long been posited as influencing various academic behaviours. By focusing on their influence in relation to academic dishonesty, the study contributes to a broader understanding of how socio-economic factors intersect with academic ethics. Such insights can drive more equitable policies, ensuring that all students, regardless of their socio-economic background, have the resources and support they need to succeed without resorting to dishonest means.

This study offers a multi-dimensional exploration into the predictors of academic dishonesty among a specific student group, potentially serving as a blueprint for similar investigations in other institutions or student demographics. The insights gained have the potential to influence academic

8

policies, inform educational strategies, and shape a more equitable, honest, and supportive educational landscape for all students.

Delimitation

The delimitation of a study refers to the parameters that were set by the researcher, which define the boundaries of the investigation.

The study specifically focused on MPhil students from the UCC College of Education. This means that the findings might not be generalized to students from other programs, levels of study, or institutions without further research.

While the study examined educational aspirations and socio-economic factors (specifically gender and income) as predictors of academic dishonesty, there may be other significant predictors such as peer influence, personal values, and past academic experiences that were not considered in this research.

The research was conducted at the UCC College of Education. Hence, cultural, regional, or institutional nuances particular to this location may not be applicable to MPhil students in other parts of the country or world.

Limitations

In the course of conducting this research on the influence of students' aspirations and socio-economic background on academic dishonesty among UCC College of Education MPhil students, several limitations were encountered, which should be considered when interpreting the findings:

The data, largely gathered through surveys or interviews, was self-reported. This methodology inherently poses challenges in ensuring complete honesty from respondents, especially concerning sensitive topics like

9

academic dishonesty. Respondents may have refrained from disclosing dishonest behaviours due to perceived repercussions or the desire to present themselves in a positive light.

The sample size and diversity, while adequate, may not comprehensively represent the broader population of MPhil students at the UCC College of Education. As a result, the generalizability of the findings might be restricted.

The study's cross-sectional nature means that the data represents a snapshot in time, not accounting for potential longitudinal changes in attitudes or behaviours among students. Although meticulous in our approach, there might have been unforeseen external factors influencing academic dishonesty that were not addressed in the study. These could range from personal challenges faced by students to evolving institutional policies during the study period.

The research did not include a comparative group from a different institution or program. Consequently, it remains uncertain whether the findings are specific to MPhil students at UCC College of Education or might be reflective of broader postgraduate academic trends.

Definition of Terms

Academic dishonesty: Any academic behaviour which does not comply with outstated assessment requirements.

Educational aspirations: refers to goals, targets and ambition students possess towards further education

Socio-economic background: This refers to the gender and income level of respondents.

10

Organization of the study

The study is structured into five main sections. In the initial chapter, the introductory portion covers various aspects, including the study's background, statement of the problems, its research objectives, questions, hypotheses, significance, delimitation and limitations of the study. Moving on to the subsequent chapter, Chapter two delves into the conceptual, theoretical and empirical underpinnings of the research inquiries and hypotheses. Chapter three offers an outline of the research methods, encompassing the study's framework, target population, sample size, sampling approach, as well as the techniques used for data collection and analysis. In the fourth chapter, the study's findings are presented and dissected. Finally, the fifth chapter summarizes the research, presents its conclusions, and offers recommendations for future research.
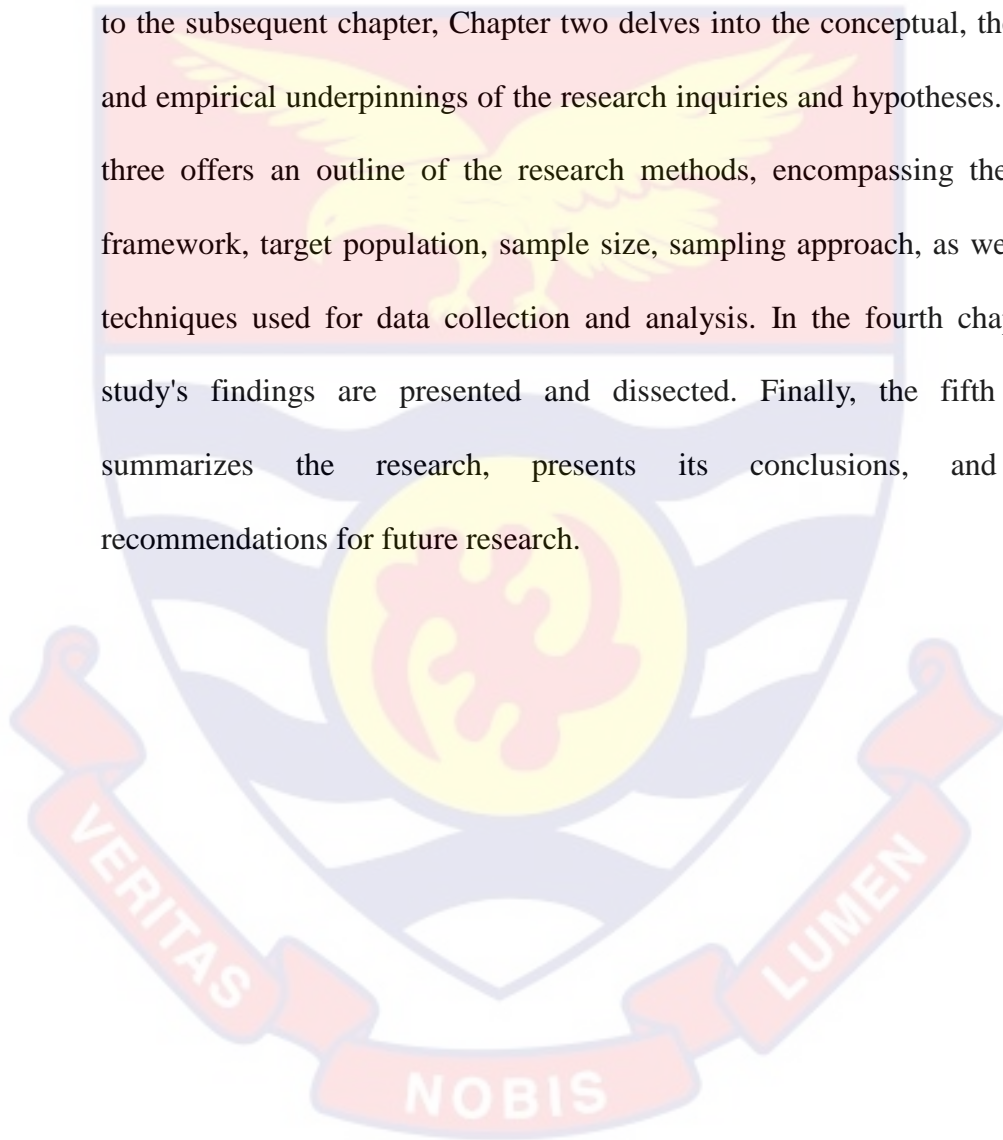
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of students' aspirations and socio-economic backgrounds on academic dishonesty among MPhil students enrolled at the University of Cape Coast (UCC) College of Education. This chapter delves into the theoretical underpinnings of the study, with a primary focus on providing a conceptual examination of the following topics: The theory of reasoned action, Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory, educational assessment, academic dishonesty, educational aspirations and the concept of socio-economic background.

Furthermore, this chapter includes an empirical analysis of the existing literature, encompassing the following areas: level of educational aspirations of students, prevalence of academic dishonesty among students, reasons for engaging in academic dishonesty, relationship between educational aspirations and academic dishonesty of students, and the influence of gender and income level on academic dishonesty.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of reasoned action (Ajzen, & Fishbein, 1980)

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), developed by Icek Ajzen and Martin Fishbein in 1980, is a foundational social psychology theory that provides a framework for understanding how individuals make decisions and engage in behaviours. It posits that human behaviour is influenced by two key factors: attitudes and subjective norms, both of which are shaped by an individual's beliefs and values (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). This theory has been widely applied across various domains, including health, education, and

business, to predict and comprehend human behaviour. In this comprehensive exploration, we delve into the nuances of the Theory of Reasoned Action, its components, applications, and relevance to understanding academic dishonesty among postgraduate MPhil students at the UCC College of Education.

According to Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) theory of reasoned action (TRA), conduct is predicted by volition and purpose. In this vein, Mimiaga, Reisner, Reilly, Sorou and Safren (2009) claimed that according to TRA, people are more likely to carry out the proposed conduct if they perceive it as a positive attitude and believe that others want them to (subjective norm). These factors also raise people's intention (motivation) to carry out the suggested activity. Numerous research have demonstrated a strong relationship between attitudes and perceived norms and behavioural intention as well as behaviour.

Nonetheless, certain research findings suggest a constraint with this theory: intentional action does not always translate into real activity. The theory of planned behaviour, a model that takes into account the influence of non-volitional elements on conduct, evolved in response to a counterargument against the significant correlation between behavioural intention and actual behaviour (Mimiaga et al., 2009).

Components of the Theory of Reasoned Action

Attitudes:

Attitudes, in the context of the TRA, represent an individual's personal evaluation or perception of a specific behaviour. These evaluations can be positive or negative, and they reflect the extent to which an individual believes

13

that engaging in a particular behaviour will lead to favorable or unfavorable outcomes. For example, in the case of academic dishonesty, attitudes would involve a student's personal assessment of this behaviour—whether they view it as ethically acceptable, morally wrong, beneficial, or harmful to their academic progress.

Research on attitudes and the link between attitudes and behaviours in social psychology led to the development of the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein 1980). According to the paradigm, the majority of socially significant activities are under volitional control, and the best and most direct predictors of a behaviour is an individual's intention to engage in it. In turn, intention is said to depend on two fundamental factors: the subject's subjective norm (the expectations of significant individuals for the activity in issue) and the subject's attitude toward the behaviour (the person's overall assessment of executing the behaviour).

According to Peters and Templin (2010), people will typically have strong intentions to carry out a specific action if they view it favorably and if they think significant individuals agree with them. Depending on the behaviour and population, the two components' relative importance may change. It is believed that an individual's attitude reflects their primary behavioural beliefs about the potential negative effects of their actions on themselves (Peters & Templin, 2010). For instance, someone who thinks engaging in a certain conduct will primarily have beneficial effects on them personally will have a positive attitude toward the behaviour. In particular, attitude is defined as the product of an individual's salient behavioural beliefs about the action's consequence, each of which is weighted by the individual's

14

assessment of that outcome. One way to develop an indirect measure of attitude that is based on beliefs is to multiply each behavioural belief by the associated outcome evaluation, then add up the results.

Subjective Norms:

Subjective norms pertain to the perceived social pressure or influence that individuals experience regarding a specific behaviour (Peters & Templin, 2010). They reflect the extent to which an individual perceives that significant other, such as peers, family members, or teachers, expect them to engage in or refrain from the behaviour in question. According to Abraham and Sheeran (2003), in the context of academic dishonesty, subjective norms would encompass a student's perception of whether their peers or family members approve or disapprove of cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of academic dishonesty.

Similar to this, a person's subjective norm is based on their opinions about whether or not they should engage in a particular action. A person will feel pressured by society to engage in the behaviour if they think the majority of important referents think they should (Ajzen, 1991). In particular, it is maintained that an individual's salient normative views about each referent—each of which is weighted by their incentive to comply with that referent—are the basis for their subjective norm (Abraham & Sheeran, 2003; Ajzen, 1991). You can calculate an indirect measure of subjective norm by multiplying each normative belief by the associated compliance incentive, then adding up all of the referents.

McGilligan, McClenahan and Adamson (2009) noted that a lot of behaviours can't just be done at will; they need to be successfully executed,

15

which calls for certain abilities, opportunities, resources, or collaboration. An attempt was made to expand the TRA to cover behaviours that are not fully within volitional control, such as using a condom or quitting smoking, with the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen 1991). Ajzen expanded the TRA by including a variable called perceived behavioural control to account for these kinds of behaviours. This is the perceived ease or difficulty of carrying out the behaviour, and it is thought to be influenced by both anticipated challenges and prior experience (McGilligan et al., 2009; Ajzen, 1991).

Just as subjective norm is a result of normative views, so too is seen behavioural control a function of control beliefs, according to Ajzen (1991). It is believed to directly affect intention. Stronger intents should result from increased perceived behavioural control over desired activities (Norman & Conner, 2006). According to Rhodes and Dickau (2013), through two distinct mechanisms, perceived behavioural control may also directly predict behaviour. First, assuming no change in purpose, a person with greater perceived behavioural control is probably going to put in more effort and stick with it longer than a person with lower perceived control. Secondly, individuals might accurately perceive their level of actual control over the activity.

Behavioural Intention:

Behavioural intention is a critical construct in the TRA. It represents an individual's expressed readiness or intention to engage in a particular behaviour (Rhodes & Dickau, 2013; Webb & Sheeran, 2006). Behavioural intention is influenced by both attitudes and subjective norms. Using the example of academic dishonesty, a student's intention to cheat in an exam

16

would be shaped by their personal attitudes toward cheating and their perception of whether their peers and family members expect or discourage such behaviour.

Behaviour:

Behaviour, the ultimate outcome of the TRA, is the actual engagement in a specific action or behaviour (Warshaw & Davis, 1985). It is influenced by an individual's behavioural intention. According to Lin (2006), in the academic context, behaviour would refer to a student's actual engagement in academic dishonesty, such as cheating on a test, plagiarizing a paper, or fabricating research data.

Applications of the Theory of Reasoned Action

The TRA has found applications in numerous domains and has been instrumental in predicting and understanding human behaviour (Warshaw, 1980). In the context of academic dishonesty, the TRA has been employed to explain why students choose to engage in dishonest academic practices.

One study conducted by Bretag et al. (2011) provides a noteworthy example of the TRA's application. The research explored academic dishonesty among university students and found that students' attitudes toward academic dishonesty and their perceptions of subjective norms significantly predicted their intention to engage in such behaviours. Specifically, students who held more favorable attitudes toward academic dishonesty and perceived greater social pressure or approval from their peers were more likely to express an intention to engage in dishonest academic practices.

17

Relevance to the Current Study

In the present study, the TRA serves as a theoretical framework that can illuminate the factors influencing academic dishonesty among postgraduate MPhil students at the UCC College of Education. Given the central role of attitudes and subjective norms in the TRA, we can apply this theory to understand the dynamics surrounding academic dishonesty in this specific academic context.

Attitudes Towards Academic Dishonesty: Postgraduate MPhil students may hold diverse attitudes regarding academic dishonesty. Some may view it as a shortcut to success, while others may consider it ethically wrong and detrimental to their educational journey. Using the TRA, we can examine how these attitudes influence their behavioural intentions related to academic dishonesty. Do students with more favorable attitudes toward academic dishonesty express a greater intention to engage in such behaviours?

Subjective Norms and Academic Dishonesty: Subjective norms within the TRA encompass the perceptions of social pressure and influence from significant others. Among MPhil students, these significant others might include peers, faculty members, and family members. By applying the TRA, we can investigate whether students perceive that their peers or other influential individuals within their academic environment approve or disapprove of academic dishonesty. Additionally, we can explore whether these perceived subjective norms affect their intention to engage in or refrain from academic dishonesty.

Educational Aspirations and Socio-Economic Background as Predictors: The TRA framework allows us to examine how educational

18

aspirations and socio-economic backgrounds, which are likely to shape both attitudes and subjective norms, serve as predictors of academic dishonesty among postgraduate MPhil students. Do students with higher educational aspirations tend to have more negative attitudes toward academic dishonesty and perceive stronger disapproval from their academic and social circles? Conversely, are students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds more likely to perceive academic dishonesty as a means to overcome academic challenges due to resource constraints?

Implications for the Study and Academic Integrity

The application of the TRA in this study aims to delve deeply into the underlying factors that influence the behaviour of postgraduate MPhil students concerning academic dishonesty. It allows for a systematic examination of their attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioural intentions related to behaviours such as cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty. Through the TRA framework, researchers can uncover how these students perceive academic dishonesty. Do they engage in dishonest practices because they believe it is a means to achieve better grades, or do they consider it ethically unacceptable and thus refrain from such actions? Understanding these attitudes helps pinpoint their motivations.

Additionally, the TRA helps researchers investigate whether students feel pressured or influenced by their peers, faculty members, or family members when it comes to academic dishonesty. This insight can reveal the extent to which social pressures contribute to their decisions. By employing the TRA, the study can also predict students' behavioural intentions concerning academic dishonesty. Are they more likely to cheat or engage in

dishonest behaviour if they hold positive attitudes toward such actions and perceive subjective norms that support these behaviours?

The insights derived from this application of the TRA have significant implications for academic integrity within the UCC College of Education. They can inform the development of targeted interventions designed to motivate and support students in their academic journey. For instance, if the research indicates that students with low educational aspirations are more likely to engage in dishonest behaviour, interventions can be tailored to address this specific issue.

Moreover, the insights can contribute to the creation of educational programs and initiatives aimed at promoting academic integrity. These programs can be customized to address the specific attitudes and subjective norms prevalent among postgraduate MPhil students, making them more effective.

Furthermore, the study's findings can inform the development and refinement of academic integrity policies within the institution. If certain factors are identified as contributing to academic dishonesty, policies can be updated to address these issues proactively.

Ultimately, the goal is to foster a culture of academic integrity within the UCC College of Education. The insights from the TRA-based study contribute to a cultural shift where honesty, ethical behaviour, and a commitment to academic excellence are valued and upheld.

Importantly, the application of the TRA provides an evidence-based approach to addressing academic dishonesty. Rather than relying on assumptions or anecdotal evidence, the institution can develop strategies

grounded in empirical research. These evidence-based strategies are more likely to be effective because they directly address the factors influencing students' decisions. These strategies can be customized for different student groups, recognizing that they may exhibit varying attitudes and subjective norms related to academic dishonesty. Such customization ensures that interventions are tailored to the unique challenges and motivations of MPhil students.

Furthermore, by continually assessing the effectiveness of interventions based on the TRA's insights, the UCC College of Education can engage in an ongoing process of improvement. This iterative approach allows for adaptation to the evolving dynamics of academic dishonesty and the changing needs of students.

Applying the Theory of Reasoned Action to the study of academic dishonesty among postgraduate MPhil students at the UCC College of Education is not just an exploration but an actionable endeavor. It empowers the institution with insights that can drive evidence-based interventions and strategies. By understanding the factors that influence academic dishonesty and using this knowledge to shape policies, programs, and the academic culture, the college can make meaningful strides toward promoting and preserving a culture of academic integrity. Ultimately, this benefits not only the institution but also the students, guiding them toward ethical academic practices and success.

Social Cognitive theory

Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) is a widely recognized framework in psychology that offers a comprehensive

understanding of how individuals acquire and maintain behaviour. It encompasses key elements such as observational learning, self-efficacy, and self-regulation (Bandura, 1986). SCT asserts that individuals actively engage with their environment and shape their behaviour through cognitive processes.

Observational learning is a central concept in SCT, highlighting that individuals can learn by observing and imitating the behaviours of others. This learning process is reinforced by the consequences associated with these behaviours (Bandura, 1977). SCT also places significant emphasis on self-efficacy, denoting an individual's belief in their ability to perform specific behaviours (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy is influenced by personal, environmental, and behavioural factors and plays a pivotal role in determining behaviour.

SCT has been effectively applied to various domains, including academic contexts, where it can provide insights into behaviours such as academic dishonesty. For instance, research has demonstrated that self-efficacy is a significant predictor of academic honesty among undergraduate students (Kibler & Scheid, 2011). Additionally, self-efficacy and academic goals have been identified as predictors of academic cheating among high school students (Ferrari, Nota, & Soresi, 2010).

In the context of postgraduate MPhil students at the UCC College of Education, SCT offers a valuable framework for understanding how their behaviour is influenced by self-efficacy and the interplay of personal, environmental, and behavioural factors. Specifically, it helps us comprehend how self-efficacy in academic tasks can influence academic dishonesty. Students with low self-efficacy may be more inclined to engage in dishonest

22

practices if they feel incapable of meeting academic standards. Moreover, environmental factors, such as the perceived attitudes of peers and family members towards academic dishonesty, can also influence self-efficacy and behaviour.

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory serves as a theoretical foundation for understanding how individuals acquire and maintain behaviour, including academic dishonesty. Within this framework, self-efficacy emerges as a central concept that shapes academic behaviour. The application of SCT in the present study offers insights into the factors influencing academic dishonesty among postgraduate MPhil students and informs the development of strategies to mitigate this behaviour.

The self-efficacy of postgraduate MPhil students regarding their academic abilities becomes a crucial factor in this context. Those with low self-efficacy may consider academic dishonesty as a means to cope with perceived inadequacies, while those with high self-efficacy are more likely to have confidence in their ability to succeed academically through honest means.

Furthermore, SCT recognizes the dynamic interaction between personal, environmental, and behavioural factors. Personal factors such as past experiences and individual differences in self-regulation can influence students' self-efficacy beliefs. Environmental factors, including faculty attitudes and institutional policies, can shape self-efficacy by promoting a discouragement of academic dishonesty. Behavioural factors, such as successful experiences with honest academic practices, can reinforce self-efficacy beliefs.

23

In an empirical study applying SCT, researchers would employ various methods such as surveys and interviews to assess self-efficacy beliefs, personal factors, and environmental influences related to academic dishonesty among postgraduate MPhil students. Surveys may include questions designed to gauge students' self-efficacy in their academic abilities and their perceptions of the attitudes of peers, family members, and faculty towards academic integrity. Interviews could provide deeper insights into personal values and past academic experiences, shedding light on the role of these factors in shaping self-efficacy beliefs and decisions regarding academic dishonesty.

The application of SCT in this study carries significant implications. It can provide nuanced insights into the multifaceted factors that influence academic dishonesty among postgraduate MPhil students. These insights can guide the development of targeted interventions and strategies aimed at fostering a culture of academic integrity within the UCC College of Education. For example, if self-efficacy is identified as a critical factor, interventions can be designed to boost students' confidence in their academic abilities and ethical decision-making. Additionally, SCT can inform the design of evidence-based educational programs that address personal, environmental, and behavioural factors to promote ethical behaviour and discourage academic dishonesty.

Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory offers a robust theoretical framework for comprehending the acquisition and maintenance of behaviour, including academic dishonesty. It illuminates the intricate interplay between self-efficacy, personal, environmental, and behavioural factors that influence students' decisions regarding academic dishonesty among postgraduate MPhil

students at the UCC College of Education. The application of SCT provides a structured approach to understanding these dynamics and offers valuable insights that can drive evidence-based interventions, ultimately fostering a culture of academic integrity within the institution.

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is a psychological model developed by Icek Ajzen in 1985 that seeks to explain human behavior by focusing on individuals' intentions to perform specific actions. According to TPB, behavioral intentions are influenced by three main factors: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1985).

The TPB posits that a person's intention to perform a specific behavior is the strongest predictor of whether they will actually engage in that behavior. Three key factors influence intention:

Attitudes: Attitudes refer to individuals' overall evaluations or judgments of performing a particular behavior. In the context of TPB, attitudes are determined by beliefs about the outcomes or consequences of engaging in the behavior. Positive attitudes towards a behavior are likely to lead to intentions to perform that behavior, while negative attitudes are associated with intentions to avoid it (Ajzen, 1985).

Subjective Norms: Subjective norms represent the perceived social pressure or influence from others regarding whether to engage in a specific behavior. This factor takes into account individuals' perceptions of the expectations and approval or disapproval of significant others, such as family members, peers, or societal norms. The stronger the perceived social pressure

to perform or not perform a behavior, the more likely individuals are to form intentions consistent with those norms (Ajzen, 1985).

Perceived Behavioral Control: Perceived behavioral control refers to individuals' beliefs about their ability to successfully perform a behavior. It encompasses perceptions of both internal and external factors that may facilitate or hinder the behavior. Internal factors include personal skills, abilities, and resources, while external factors involve environmental constraints or opportunities. Higher levels of perceived behavioral control are associated with stronger intentions to perform the behavior (Ajzen, 1985).

According to TPB, behavioral intentions are the immediate determinants of behavior. However, intentions alone do not guarantee that the behavior will occur. Actual behavior is also influenced by factors beyond individuals' control, such as situational constraints or unexpected circumstances. Nevertheless, TPB posits that intentions serve as reliable predictors of behavior under normal circumstances (Ajzen, 1985).

The Theory of Planned Behavior has been widely applied across various domains to understand and predict human behavior. It has been used to study behaviors such as health-related behaviors (e.g., exercise, diet, medication adherence), environmental conservation behaviors, consumer behaviors, and social behaviors (e.g., voting, volunteering) (Ajzen, 1991).

In academic settings, TPB has been employed to investigate behaviors such as academic achievement, engagement in educational activities, and academic dishonesty. By understanding the underlying factors that influence these behaviors, educators and policymakers can develop targeted interventions to promote positive outcomes among students (Ajzen, 1991).

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) offers a robust framework for examining the psychological determinants of academic dishonesty among postgraduate students, which aligns closely with the objectives of the study on "Aspirations and Socio-Economic Background of Postgraduate Students as Predictors of Academic Dishonesty in the University of Cape Coast." TPB posits that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control collectively influence individuals' intentions and behaviors. In this study, attitudes towards academic success, career goals, and the importance of integrity are pertinent factors that may shape students' intentions to engage in academic dishonesty. Moreover, subjective norms, including perceptions of peer behavior and societal expectations within the academic environment, can provide insights into the prevalence of academic dishonesty among postgraduate students. Additionally, TPB's construct of perceived behavioral control can illuminate students' beliefs about their ability to succeed academically without resorting to dishonest practices, thus highlighting perceived barriers or facilitators to maintaining academic integrity. By exploring how educational aspirations influence these factors, the study can assess their impact on students' likelihood of engaging in academic dishonesty. Furthermore, considering the influence of socio-economic background, including gender and income, within the framework of TPB can provide a nuanced understanding of the social influences shaping students' perceptions of academic integrity norms and their perceived control over academic success, thereby informing targeted interventions to promote academic integrity among postgraduate students at the University of Cape Coast.

Conceptual Review

Educational Assessment

Educational assessment is a vital aspect of the education system as it provides information on students' knowledge, skills, and competencies. It is used to determine students' academic progress, strengths, and weaknesses and to make decisions about educational programs and interventions (Pellegrino, Chudowsky, & Glaser, 2001). Educational assessment can take various forms, including standardized tests, teacher-made tests, portfolios, and performance assessments.

Educational assessment serves multiple purposes, including measuring student achievement, diagnosing learning needs, evaluating instructional effectiveness, and guiding educational decision-making (Popham, 2009). Assessments can be categorized into formative, summative, and diagnostic assessments, each serving distinct purposes in the assessment cycle (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

Formative assessments are conducted during the learning process to provide feedback to both students and teachers, enabling adjustments to instruction and learning strategies. Summative assessments, on the other hand, evaluate student learning outcomes at the end of a learning period or course. Diagnostic assessments identify students' strengths and weaknesses to inform instructional planning and intervention strategies.

A variety of assessment methods and tools are employed in educational settings to gather information about student learning. Traditional methods include standardized tests, quizzes, essays, and performance tasks. These methods are often supplemented with alternative assessments, such as

28

portfolios, projects, presentations, and observations, which provide a more comprehensive view of student learning (Stiggins, 2005).

Advancements in technology have also transformed assessment practices, with the proliferation of computer-based assessments, online platforms, and digital tools for data collection and analysis. Computer-adaptive testing, simulation-based assessments, and learning analytics are among the innovative approaches that offer opportunities for more personalized and adaptive assessment experiences (Bennett & Gitomer, 2009).

In the context of academic dishonesty, educational assessment can play a role in deterring students from engaging in this behaviour. A study by Johnson and Olivo (2013) found that students who believed their teachers used assessments that measured their understanding of the subject matter were less likely to cheat. The authors suggested that when students perceive that assessments are fair and valid, they are more likely to engage in honest academic practices.

Additionally, educational assessment can be used to identify students who may be at risk of engaging in academic dishonesty. For example, if a student consistently performs poorly on assessments, they may feel pressure to cheat to maintain their academic standing. Identifying these students and providing them with targeted support and interventions can help prevent academic dishonesty.

In the present study, educational assessment can be used to determine the prevalence of academic dishonesty among postgraduate MPhil students. Assessments can also provide insight into students' academic progress and the factors that influence their academic performance, including their aspirations

29

and socio-economic background. This information can be used to develop strategies to prevent academic dishonesty and support students' academic success.

Educational assessment is a crucial aspect of the education system that provides information on students' academic progress, strengths, and weaknesses. It can also play a role in preventing academic dishonesty by creating a fair and valid assessment system and identifying students who may be at risk of engaging in this behaviour.

Educational aspirations refer to an individual's desired level of education or career attainment. These aspirations can be influenced by a variety of factors, including socio-economic status, parental education, and the individual's own academic achievements and interests.

Research has shown that higher educational aspirations are associated with greater academic achievement and success. For example, a study by Jackson and colleagues (2014) found that high school students with higher educational aspirations had better grades and were more likely to attend college.

The role of socio-economic status in shaping educational aspirations has also been explored in the literature. Studies have found that individuals from higher socio-economic backgrounds tend to have higher educational aspirations than those from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Hill & Tyson, 2009). This can be due to differences in the resources and opportunities available to individuals from different socio-economic backgrounds.

Parental education has also been found to play a role in shaping educational aspirations. Research has shown that children whose parents have

higher levels of education tend to have higher educational aspirations themselves (Rothstein & Evans, 2005).

The relationship between educational aspirations and academic dishonesty, the focus of this study, has also been explored in the literature. A study by Park (2003) found that students with higher educational aspirations were less likely to engage in academic dishonesty than those with lower aspirations.

Research on educational aspirations has shown that they are an important predictor of academic achievement and success. They can be influenced by socio-economic status, parental education, and individual academic achievements and interests. Additionally, higher educational aspirations have been associated with lower levels of academic dishonesty.

The concept of Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty is a multifaceted and contentious issue that has persisted in educational institutions worldwide, challenging the principles of academic integrity and ethical behaviour among students. This phenomenon encompasses a wide range of deceptive actions undertaken by students with the aim of gaining an unfair advantage in their academic pursuits. These actions pose a significant threat to the integrity and credibility of the educational system (McCabe, Butterfield, & Trevino, 2012).

Academic dishonesty encompasses various behaviours, with plagiarism and cheating during examinations being among the most common manifestations (Whitley, Nelson, & Jones, 1999). Plagiarism involves presenting someone else's work, ideas, or words as one's own without proper attribution. Cheating during exams includes activities such as using

31

unauthorized materials, copying from others, or communicating with peers during assessments (Barnett, Namiba, & Okabe, 2015).

Beyond plagiarism and cheating, academic dishonesty can extend to other deceptive practices, such as falsifying research data, fabricating citations, submitting the same work for multiple assignments without permission, and acquiring and using unauthorized assistance (Franklyn-Stokes & Newstead, 1995).

The consequences of academic dishonesty are profound and far-reaching, affecting students, educational institutions, and society as a whole. These implications highlight the gravity of this ethical dilemma:

1. Diminished Educational Value: Academic dishonesty erodes the educational value of assignments and assessments. When students resort to dishonest practices, they miss out on the opportunity to genuinely engage with the learning process, acquire knowledge, and develop critical skills (McCabe et al., 2012).

2. Eroded Institutional Credibility: Educational institutions depend on the credibility and reputation of their academic programs and degrees. Instances of academic dishonesty tarnish this credibility, devaluing the qualifications awarded by the institution (Kleinig, 2011).

3. Ethical Erosion: Academic dishonesty perpetuates a culture of dishonesty and ethical erosion. Students who engage in dishonest practices may carry these unethical behaviours into their professional lives, potentially causing harm to their future workplaces and society at large (Holman & Cahill, 2016).

4. Unequal Opportunities: When some students gain an unfair advantage through dishonest means, it creates inequalities within the educational system. Those who uphold academic integrity may feel unfairly disadvantaged (Barnett et al., 2015).

5. Loss of Trust: Trust is a foundational element of any educational system. Academic dishonesty erodes the trust between students, faculty, and institutions. This breakdown in trust can lead to a toxic learning environment (Whitley et al., 1999).

Academic dishonesty is not a new phenomenon; it has deep historical roots. Studies by Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead (1995) revealed that academic misconduct has been a concern spanning several generations. This historical continuity underscores the persistent nature of the problem.

Research indicates that gender can play a role in academic dishonesty. Societal expectations and pressures may differ between males and females, influencing their motivations for engaging in dishonest behaviour (Whitley et al., 1999). Understanding these gender-based differences can provide more nuanced insights into the motivations behind academic dishonesty.

Academic dishonesty represents a significant ethical dilemma in the educational sphere, encompassing behaviours such as plagiarism, cheating, and falsification of data. Its implications are far-reaching, affecting students, educational institutions, and society. By acknowledging its historical continuity and considering gender dynamics, educators and institutions can better understand this complex issue and work toward fostering a culture of academic integrity.

Types of Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty is a pervasive issue in educational institutions globally, undermining the fundamental principles of honesty and integrity within academia. It erodes the educational process and diminishes the value of genuine achievements. According to Krou, Fong and Hoff (2021), academic fraud is a pervasive and alarming issue in the field of education. Krou et al. claimed that academic dishonesty among students is associated with demographic indicators, although there may be many changing aspects that make it challenging to establish. According to Krou et al., academic dishonesty may be lessened, nevertheless, if students' motivation—a known variable—allows for opportunities to mold their values, beliefs, and aspirations. In this regard, they suggested that a research synthesis is required in light of the expanding body of literature on this subject in order to resolve conflicting results and pinpoint important motivational elements linked to academic dishonesty.

Below is an exploration of the various types of academic dishonesty:

Plagiarism

Plagiarism, perhaps the most common form of academic dishonesty, involves presenting someone else's ideas, words, or work as one's own without proper attribution (Pecorari, 2019; Martin, 1994). This may entail copying and pasting text from a source without citation, paraphrasing without appropriate credit, or even self-plagiarism by recycling one's own prior work.

Similarly, Anderson and Steneck (2011) noted that plagiarism is a major transgression of scientific norms and a type of research misconduct. It is the false presenting of another person's thoughts or words as one's own

34

without giving due credit to the original author. Plagiarism is more complicated than this definition implies in certain ways (Davis, Grover, Becker, & McGregor, 1992; Scanlon, 2003). In this regard, the U.S. Federal Government, for instance, has created and improved its policies regarding misconduct during the last thirty years, and federal agencies and research institutions have set up procedures for handling claims and instances of plagiarism. Currently, instructional tactics and plagiarism-detection software are the main targets of anti-plagiarism activities (Anderson & Steneck, 2011).

Cheating on Exams

Examination cheating encompasses a variety of activities, such as peeking at a peer's answers, using unauthorized materials or cheat sheets, or impersonating another student during a test (Grijalva, Nowell, & Kerkvliet, 2006). According to Kennedy, Nowak, Raghuraman, Thomas and Davis (2000), some students resort to electronic devices to access illicit information during exams. Cheating is a major concern on many college campuses. For example, Davis, Grover, Becker, and McGregor (1992) reported that between 40% and 60% of their student respondents reported cheating on at least one examination. The 1990s also witnessed the unprecedented growth of distance learning and Web-based courses. Because students and faculty do not interact directly in such classes, they offer a unique venue for academic dishonesty. The present project explored student and faculty views concerning cheating and distance learning. The results indicated that both faculty and students believe it is easier to cheat in distance learning classes. Additional factors that impact the perceived ease of cheating in these classes are evaluated.

Fabrication of Data

According to Horton, Kumar and Wood (2020), fabricating data in research projects or laboratory reports constitutes a grave form of academic dishonesty. Students may invent experimental results, observations, or survey responses to fulfill project requirements (Bretag et al., 2018), undermining the integrity of scientific inquiry.

This type of academic dishonesty was highlighted in a study by Friedman, Blau and Eshet-Alkalai (2016). It contrasted between "traditional" or analog dishonesty and digital dishonesty, drawing on Pavela's (1997) paradigm of academic dishonesty kinds (cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, and facilitation). Friedman et al.'s study examined instances of student misconduct in the classroom, the causes of such misconduct, and the harshness of the sanctions for academic integrity infractions. Students' dishonest actions were examined using the Self-Concept Maintenance model (Mazar, Amir, & Ariely, 2008) and the Motivational Framework for Committing an Act of Academic dishonesty (Murdock & Anderman, 2006).

Friedman et al. (2016) evaluated 315 protocols from the Disciplinary Committee at The Open University of Israel in 2012–2013; these protocols cover every crime the Committee looked into over the course of a year and a half. Analog dishonesty was shown to be more common than digital dishonesty. The students claimed that the need to uphold a positive self-image as an honest person in spite of breaking ethical rules was the most common cause of their academic dishonesty. It was discovered that the consequences of analog dishonesty were harsher than those of digital dishonesty.

36

Remarkably, despite no discernible gender differences in dishonesty types or in any other study-examined feature, women were punished more severely than men. The results of this study provide insight into the extent and causes of academic dishonesty and could help organizations deal with this issue more successfully.

Collusion

Collusion occurs when students collaborate on assignments or essays intended to be completed individually, without proper authorization from instructors (Brimble & Stevenson-Clarke, 2005). This, according to Parkinson et al. (2022), compromises the individual learning and assessment process. According to Wideman (2011), postsecondary educational institutions are struggling to find a solution to the problem of academic dishonesty. Wideman indicated that over the previous 30 years, more than 100 investigations have been carried out; nevertheless, these studies have not produced the data required to adequately address this issue. In fact, studies show that academic fraud is on the rise. In this regard, Wideman investigated what nursing students at an Ontario institution understood and meant by academic dishonesty. Interviews were conducted with eleven students to find out how they felt about academic dishonesty.

Wideman (2011)'s study revealed events and behaviours associated with cheating. The students' accounts of their real lives, which include instances of academic dishonesty, were also noteworthy. Consequently, this study showed that the reasons and methods by which these nursing students were cooperating with one another and cheating were influenced by

37

environmental factors, including a compassionate curriculum, a demanding workload, faculty attitudes, and technology.

Contract Cheating

Contract cheating involves the engagement of third parties, such as essay mills or ghostwriters, to complete assignments on behalf of students (Newton & Lang, 2016). This practice undermines the very essence of academic integrity, as students pay for the completion of their assignments. According to Walker and Townley (2012), the term "contract cheating" has been used to describe academic dishonesty. In order to turn in the paid tasks as their own, students hire writers to complete their schoolwork, usually using the internet. Bretag (2019) noted that this type of cheating entails the same epistemological and ethical issues as previous types, but it also takes a different approach. Because it is so hard to identify, is arguably more fraudulent than certain other forms of plagiarism, and seems to be linked to a number of systemic issues in contemporary higher education, educators are concerned about it.

Unauthorized Collaboration

Instructors may permit collaboration on specific assignments, but when students engage in unauthorized collaboration on tasks intended for individual work, academic integrity is breached (Draper, Ibezim, & Newton, 2017). According to Divall and Schlesselman (2016), when a student collaborates with someone else on a project, exam, or assignment that they will turn in for credit without the instructor's express consent, it is known as unauthorized collaboration. This is relevant for in-class or homework assignments, papers,

38

labs, or assignments for homework where students are not permitted to work in groups without permission from their instructor.

In this regard, Minarcik and Bridges (2015) noted that because it gives the student a greater and unfair advantage over other students who were working separately to finish the course work, unauthorized collaboration is a violation of academic integrity. Thus, Minarcik and Bridges concluded that being able to provide assistance when it is forbidden is an unfair advantage, regardless of the source of the assistance or the answers shared.

Multiple Submission

Submitting the same assignment or paper for credit in multiple courses without instructor consent is a form of academic dishonesty known as multiple submission (McCabe & Pavela, 2000). According to Yang (2012), unless the instructor has given special permission in advance, turning in an assignment, report, or essay that was turned in earlier for a different course is considered academic dishonesty. If you are taking two courses concurrently, you may turn in the same essay as long as both of your teachers have approved it beforehand. In this vein, Sileo and Sileo (2008) suggested that before turning in an academic activity, students should always get clarification from a faculty member if they have any doubts regarding an issue pertaining to academic integrity.

Meaning of Educational Aspirations

Educational aspirations are the ambitions, goals, and targets that individuals set for themselves regarding their educational pursuits and achievements (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000). These aspirations encompass a broad spectrum of educational objectives, ranging from completing primary

39

and secondary education to obtaining undergraduate and advanced degrees. They reflect an individual's vision of their educational journey and the level of attainment they aim to reach.

Components of Educational Aspirations

1. **Academic Goals**: Educational aspirations often include specific academic goals, such as achieving a particular grade point average, excelling in a particular subject, or pursuing a degree in a specific field. These goals provide direction and purpose to an individual's educational journey.

2. **Career Aspirations**: Educational aspirations are closely linked to career aspirations. Individuals set educational goals that align with their desired career path, whether it involves vocational training, professional certification, or advanced degrees required for specific professions (Lent et al., 2000).

3. **Personal Growth**: Educational aspirations are not solely focused on external achievements. They also encompass personal growth and development. Individuals may aspire to expand their knowledge, critical thinking skills, and intellectual curiosity through education.

Factors Influencing Educational Aspirations

Several factors contribute to the formation and evolution of educational aspirations:

1. Personal Beliefs and Values: An individual's beliefs and values play a significant role in shaping their educational aspirations. Those who place a high value on education may set ambitious goals for

40

themselves, driven by a genuine desire for knowledge and personal growth.

2. Family Background: Family background, including the educational attainment of parents or guardians, can influence an individual's educational aspirations. Children from families with a tradition of higher education may be more likely to aspire to advanced degrees (Lent et al., 2000).

3. Peer and Social Influence: Peer groups and societal expectations can shape educational aspirations. Positive peer influences and social support can encourage individuals to pursue higher education, while negative influences may hinder their aspirations.

4. Economic Considerations: Economic factors, such as financial resources and opportunities for scholarships or financial aid, can significantly impact educational aspirations. Limited financial resources may limit the extent to which individuals can pursue their educational goals.

5. Educational Environment: The educational environment, including the quality of schools, availability of extracurricular activities, and access to academic support, can influence educational aspirations. A supportive and enriching educational environment can inspire individuals to aim higher (Lent et al., 2000).

Educational aspirations have a profound impact on academic behaviour. Research has shown that individuals with higher educational aspirations tend to exhibit constructive academic behaviours, such as diligence

41

in coursework, consistent class attendance, and timeliness in meeting academic requirements (Lent et al., 2000).

The connection between educational aspirations and academic behaviour suggests that one's aspirations serve as a motivating force. Individuals who aspire to achieve specific educational goals are more likely to engage in activities that support their aspirations. This can include seeking out educational opportunities, pursuing academic excellence, and persisting in the face of challenges.

To create the right regulations and educational interventions to deter such behaviour, it is essential to have a complete understanding of academic dishonesty and the students who engage in it. By surveying undergraduates at a major public institution in the USA, the current study investigates the prevalence of academic dishonesty and the characteristics (such as gender, course enrolment, and grades) of students who engage in various types of the conduct. 57.19% of 292 students acknowledged engaging in academic dishonesty in the six months prior, with test-cheating being the most common type (51.71%). In comparison to women and students in a science course, men and students in a study techniques course had much higher report rates for both plagiarism and making up justifications. Poor grades

While the relationship between educational aspirations and academic behaviour is generally positive, it is also essential to explore the nuances of this connection. For example, it raises questions about how high educational aspirations may intersect with academic dishonesty. Is it conceivable that students with pronounced educational aspirations might be driven by a fear of

failure and, in some cases, resort to dishonesty when faced with academic adversity (Lent et al., 2000)?

Understanding the nuanced relationship between educational aspirations and academic dishonesty is an area that merits further research. It is essential to examine whether certain educational aspirations, when coupled with external pressures or unrealistic expectations, may inadvertently contribute to academic dishonesty.

Educational aspirations encompass the ambitions and goals individuals set for their educational journey. These aspirations are influenced by personal beliefs, family background, social influences, economic considerations, and the educational environment. They play a crucial role in shaping academic behaviour and are generally associated with positive academic outcomes. However, the interplay between high educational aspirations and academic dishonesty remains a topic for exploration, offering opportunities for research and intervention to foster a culture of academic integrity.

Factors Influencing Educational Aspirations

Educational aspirations, defined as individuals' desires and goals regarding their educational attainment, are influenced by a multitude of factors ranging from personal characteristics to socio-economic context. Understanding these factors is crucial for educators, policymakers, and researchers seeking to promote academic achievement and educational attainment among students.

1. Personal Characteristics

Individual traits and characteristics play a significant role in shaping educational aspirations. Self-efficacy, defined as individuals' beliefs in their

43

ability to succeed academically, has been consistently linked to higher educational aspirations (Bandura, 1997). Students who perceive themselves as capable and competent are more likely to set ambitious educational goals for themselves.

Furthermore, personality traits such as conscientiousness and openness to experience have been associated with higher educational aspirations (Poropat, 2009). Conscientious individuals tend to be goal-oriented and disciplined, leading them to set higher academic goals. Meanwhile, individuals high in openness to experience are more likely to seek out new challenges and opportunities for learning, contributing to their aspirations for higher education.

2. Socio-economic Background

Socio-economic background exerts a significant influence on educational aspirations. Research consistently demonstrates that students from higher socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds tend to have higher educational aspirations compared to their peers from lower SES backgrounds (Sirin, 2005). Factors such as parental education, family income, and parental expectations play crucial roles in shaping students' aspirations.

Parental involvement and support have been identified as key predictors of educational aspirations among students. Parents who are actively involved in their children's education and provide support and encouragement are more likely to have children with higher educational aspirations (Davis-Kean, 2005). Additionally, parental expectations regarding their children's educational attainment strongly influence students' own aspirations, with

44

higher parental expectations associated with higher student aspirations (Halle, Kurtz-Costes, & Mahoney, 1997).

3. School Environment and Peer Influence

The school environment and peer influence also contribute to shaping students' educational aspirations. Research suggests that positive school climates characterized by supportive teachers, rigorous academic programs, and opportunities for extracurricular involvement are associated with higher educational aspirations among students (Loukas & Robinson, 2004).

Peer influence can both positively and negatively impact students' educational aspirations. Peer groups that value academic achievement and encourage educational goals can bolster students' aspirations (Anderman & Freeman, 2004). Conversely, negative peer influences, such as peer pressure to engage in risky behaviors or devalue academic success, can undermine students' aspirations (Eccles & Roeser, 2011).

Understanding the concept of Socio-Economic Background

Socio-economic background, often abbreviated as SES (Socio-Economic Status), is a comprehensive construct that encompasses an individual's or a family's social and economic standing within a society (McLoyd, 1998). It is a multidimensional concept that considers various factors related to social and economic well-being, ultimately shaping an individual's life experiences and opportunities.

Socio-economic background comprises several key components. Income, occupation, education, wealth and assets, and neighborhood and environment are all integral aspects (McLoyd, 1998; Adler & Stewart, 2007; Haveman & Smeeding, 2006).

45

The significance of socio-economic background is evident in its implications for individuals and their life trajectories. It serves as a foundation that shapes access to opportunities, resources, and overall well-being. It influences educational opportunities, health outcomes, career and employment prospects, social mobility, and psychosocial well-being (Adler & Stewart, 2007; Haveman & Smeeding, 2006; McLoyd, 1998).

One particularly significant interplay is between socio-economic background and academic achievement. Research consistently demonstrates that students from higher SES backgrounds tend to perform better academically, on average, compared to their lower SES peers (Sirin, 2005). This academic disparity can be attributed to various factors, including access to educational resources, parental involvement, and a supportive learning environment.

Socio-economic background is a multifaceted concept that encompasses economic and social dimensions. It significantly influences individuals' access to opportunities and resources, ultimately shaping their life trajectories. Recognizing the profound impact of socio-economic background is crucial for addressing disparities in education, health, and employment opportunities. By understanding and addressing these disparities, societies can work toward greater equity and social justice.

Empirical Review

Level of educational aspirations of students

Educational aspirations, which encompass students' goals and expectations regarding their educational attainment, have significant implications for academic achievement, educational choices, and future career

opportunities. Understanding the factors that shape students' educational aspirations is crucial for designing interventions and policies to support and enhance educational outcomes. They are a strong predictor of future educational attainment, and they can be influenced by a variety of factors, including students' socioeconomic background, parental influence, peer influence, their academic achievement, and their experiences in school (Dzakadzie, 2018).

Research has consistently demonstrated that socio-economic background plays a crucial role in shaping students' educational aspirations. Students from higher socio-economic backgrounds often exhibit higher educational aspirations compared to their counterparts from lower socio-economic backgrounds. For instance, in a study by Sirin (2005) Sirin, it was found that students from higher socio-economic backgrounds had higher educational aspirations due to greater exposure to educational opportunities and resources.

In journal papers published between 1990 and 2000, a meta-analysis of the literature on socioeconomic status (SES) and academic achievement was conducted. The sample, drawn from 74 separate samples, contained 101,157 students, 6,871 schools, and 128 school districts. Results revealed a moderate to substantial correlation between SES and achievement. The unit, the source, the range of the SES variable, and the kind of SES-achievement measure, however, moderate this relationship. Additionally, factors including school level, minority status, and school location can affect the relationship. In order to determine whether the SES-achievement correlation has altered since White's initial review was published, the author carried out a replication of

White's (1982) meta-analysis. The average correlation has somewhat decreased, according to the findings. Future research and policy considerations with a practical bent are discussed.

One study, conducted by Khattab (2015), found that students' educational aspirations are influenced by their socioeconomic background. The National Pupil Database (NPD) was utilized to match the Wave 1 and Wave 3 data from the LSYPE with the data used in this investigation. The initial round of data was gathered in 2004 from a sample of 15,770 young people (students) between the ages of 13 and 14 who attended 647 various schools. The majority of the study's metrics were drawn from Wave 1, but administrative data on GCSE exams taken by the end of Year 11 (ages 15 to 16) were used to determine achievement. Wave 5 has produced a new variable that assesses whether or not the student has applied to a university course. To show how the typology could be used as a predictor, this variable was used as a dependent variable.

Students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to have higher educational aspirations than students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. This is likely due to the fact that students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds have more access to resources and opportunities that can help them achieve their educational goals.

The study by Rothon, Arephin, Klineberg, Cattell, and Stansfeld (2011) examines both structural factors, such as socioeconomic status and school characteristics, and socio-psychological factors, including self-efficacy beliefs, parental expectations, and peer influence. The researchers conducted a longitudinal analysis, following a sample of adolescents over a period of time

48

to examine the relationships between these factors. The findings of the study suggest that socioeconomic status is a significant structural influence on educational aspirations. Adolescents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds tend to have higher aspirations compared to those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

This finding aligns with the thesis title, which emphasizes the influence of socio-economic background on educational aspirations. Furthermore, socio-psychological factors also play a crucial role in shaping educational aspirations. Self-efficacy beliefs, or individuals' confidence in their own abilities, were found to be positively associated with higher educational aspirations. Parental expectations were identified as influential factors, with adolescents having higher aspirations when their parents had higher educational expectations for them. Peer influence was also observed, with adolescents being influenced by the educational aspirations of their peers.

Parental influence is a key factor in shaping students' educational aspirations. This study examined the process of how socioeconomic status, specifically parents' education and income, indirectly relates to children's academic achievement through parents' beliefs and behaviours. Data from a national, cross-sectional study of children were used for this study. The subjects were 868 8-12-year-olds, divided approximately equally across gender (436 females, 433 males). This sample was 49% non-Hispanic European American and 47% African American. Using structural equation modeling techniques, the author found that the socioeconomic factors were related indirectly to children's academic achievement through parents' beliefs and behaviours but that the process of these relations was different by racial

49

group. Parents' years of schooling also was found to be an important socioeconomic factor to take into consideration in both policy and research when looking at school-age children. Studies have shown that parents' educational background and expectations significantly impact students' aspirations. For example, in a study by Davis-kean (2005) as highlighted above, it was found that parents' educational expectations strongly predicted students' educational aspirations. Moreover, parental involvement and support in academic matters have been linked to higher levels of educational aspirations among students.

In their study, students' help-seeking tendencies in the sixth grade (N = 217) were evaluated in relation to motivational correlates and the effects on academic performance. At the start and conclusion of the school year, grades for each student were taken from their academic records. Students evaluated their academic self-efficacy and social demonstration goals at the halfway point of the year, and teachers commented on their tendency to seek assistance from others. Academic self-efficacy and first-quarter grades were positively associated with adaptive assistance seeking and adversely associated with avoidant help seeking. Additionally, adaptive help seeking was adversely correlated with a social demonstration-approach goal. When adjusting for first quarter grades, help-seeking behaviours predicted third quarter grades.

Peer influence also plays a role in shaping students' educational aspirations. Students' aspirations may be influenced by the educational goals and ambitions of their peers. A study by Ryan, Shin, and instruction (2011) found that students with high-achieving peers were more likely to have higher educational aspirations compared to those with lower-achieving peers.

The study by Yuping (2014) investigated the relationship between educational expectations, school experiences, and academic achievements over time. The findings of the study suggest that educational aspirations play a significant role in influencing academic achievements. Higher educational aspirations were associated with higher academic achievements among the students. This finding supports the idea that the level of educational aspirations, is positively related to academic achievements.

Furthermore, the study revealed that school experiences mediate the relationship between educational expectations and academic achievements. Positive school experiences, such as supportive teacher-student relationships, a stimulating learning environment, and access to educational resources, were found to enhance academic achievements. On the other hand, negative school experiences, such as a lack of teacher support or an unsupportive school climate, were associated with lower academic achievements. The level of educational aspirations of students is a complex issue that is influenced by a variety of factors. However, the research suggests that students' socioeconomic background, their academic achievement, and their experiences in school all play a role in shaping their educational aspirations.

Prevalence of academic dishonesty among students

Academic dishonesty, such as cheating and plagiarism, poses a significant challenge to the integrity of educational institutions. Therefore, understanding its prevalence among students is crucial for developing effective strategies to prevent and address these unethical practices. The consequences of academic dishonesty extend beyond immediate academic repercussions, as it can have long-term negative effects on students' ethical

development, personal integrity, and future professional careers. Furthermore, academic institutions also suffer from the erosion of academic standards and loss of credibility (Ashworth, Bannister, & Thorne, 2017)

Dzakadzie (2018) conducted a cross-sectional study to identify the prevalence and correlates of academic dishonesty among first-year students enrolled in Ghanaian public universities. Three Ghanaian public institutions were used to choose a sample of 1,200 undergraduate students and 144 instructors utilizing basic random, multistage, purposeful, and convenience selection methods. In order to gather information from students and lecturers, respectively, the study used the prevalence and predictors of the Academic Dishonesty Instrument for Students (PPADIS) and the prevalence and predictors of the Academic Dishonesty Instrument for Lecturers (PPADL). The study's findings showed that students claimed a prevalence rate of 48% among themselves, with the most common academic dishonest behaviour being "'observing another student plagiarizing in an exam or quiz but failing to report them to the instructor. 90% of lecturers reported seeing academic dishonest behaviour, with "copying another student" being the most common type. The suggested predictive model for academic dishonesty was examined using structural equation modeling (SEM). The findings indicated that utilizing intention as a mediator, attitude, aim, subjective norms, cost, and self-efficacy explained a considerable variation in academic dishonest behaviour across students. Similarly, the association between intention and academic dishonesty was significantly moderated by moral obligation. As a result, it can be said that the model provides a helpful conceptual framework for

understanding how attitude, goal, cost, self-efficacy, and subjective norms affect academic dishonesty among undergraduate students.

From Dzakadzie (2018) findings it is obvious that his study was appropriate to be generalized since his sample size was large enough as 1200 respondents compared to the current study where respondents were only 105 students. However, his findings as far as prevalence of academic dishonesty is concern was 48% for students seen their friends' plagiarizing exams and quizzes whiles in this current study the prevalence of academic dishonesty in teas related dishonesty is more prevalent among postgraduate MPhil students in UCC.

A growing body of research has been dedicated to studying the prevalence of academic dishonesty among students. Various studies (Adzima, 2020; Brimble & Stevenson-Clarke, 2005; Fatemi & Saito, 2020; McCabe & Trevino, 1993) have found that academic dishonesty is a widespread problem, with prevalence estimates ranging from 2% to 78%. The most common forms of academic dishonesty include plagiarism, cheating on exams, and fabrication of data. Plagiarism, which involves using someone else's work without proper attribution, was highlighted by McCabe and Trevino (1993). Cheating on exams, as identified by Rettinger and Gallant (2022), encompasses actions like copying from other students, using unauthorized materials, or taking unauthorized breaks.

Additionally, a survey conducted by Fatemi and Saito (2020) revealed that an alarming 30% of postgraduate international students admitted to unintentional plagiarism. This phenomenon necessitates an in-depth analysis of the contributing factors underlying this problem. By identifying and

understanding these factors, educators and institutions can develop targeted strategies to effectively address and mitigate unintentional plagiarism.

Measuring the prevalence of academic dishonesty among students is challenging, as many individuals may be unwilling to admit engaging in dishonest behaviour. Nevertheless, several studies have been conducted to estimate its prevalence. For instance, a study by Brimble and Stevenson-Clarke (2005) surveyed 1206 students and 190 academic staff at four major universities in Queensland, Australia. The study found that 75% of students admitted to some form of academic dishonesty, while only 25% of staff believed this to be the case. The most common forms of academic dishonesty reported by students were plagiarism (65%), cheating on exams (55%), and collusion (45%).

Adzima(2020) Academic dishonesty in higher education is a problematic issue that has an impact on educational institutions all across the world. The fact that multiple studies have found rising rates of cheating and plagiarism over the past few decades is concerning, and they have offered a variety of justifications and ideas for this pattern. The expanding market for online education is a relatively new development in both higher education and the debate of academic dishonesty. Online education has grown in popularity over the past ten years, expanding its influence in global education marketplaces. Academic dishonesty is considered as having a new set of potential and concerns with the trend toward online education. Due to the well-documented issue of high cheating rates in traditional (face-to-face) learning.

Satterlee (2002) conducted a study to investigate why pupils cheat in classrooms and posited that pupils cheat because of ; fear of failure, the desire for a higher grade, peer pressure to do well in school, a lack of self-efficacy, and competition are some of the explanations given. Academic dishonesty in the classroom is also influenced by institutional culture. Teachers can proactively start making modifications that urge dishonesty.

Miller (2017) said that although evidence suggests that higher-achieving students report cheating less frequently than lower-achieving students, the rates of cheating among this group are nonetheless shocking. Academic dishonesty is encouraged by some elements of the high-achieving student environment. Using a motivational framework, they investigated at honesty among the best performers and first analyzed the motivations behind cheating among these students. We go over the kids' abilities to justify cheating actions as well as their own performance standards, social comparison and competition, pressure to succeed, and pressure to compare themselves, were the motivations behind academic dishonesty.

Ives and Guikin (2020) conducted a study with 1390 college students from five public universities in Moldova responded to a survey about 22 different types of academic misconduct, sharing their experiences and opinions in the process. More than half of the variance was explained by a five-factor solution to the frequencies of these actions. How frequently students saw other students engaging in these activities and how well-liked the actions were the two most accurate indicators. The lowest variance was predicted by the demographic predictors of these behaviours (gender,

academic specialty, year in school, institution, grade average, and scholarship status). The findings' implications and constraints are examined.

In this study, 673 college students from the US, France, and Greece were evaluated to see how the social learning theory relates to the causes of academic dishonesty. In addition to the individual factor of conscientiousness and the demographic element of age, we discovered support for the social learning hypothesis such that perceived peer dishonesty was incrementally valid as a predictor of self-reported academic dishonesty across three nations. Contrary to expectations, the U.S. sample was the only one that supported the perceived punishment for academic fraud. After accounting for other variables such as age, conscientiousness, perceived punishment for cheating, and peer dishonesty across three nations, justification for academic dishonesty added incremental variance. Cultural differences also contributed to over 50% of the variance in academic dishonesty that could be explained, with French students apparently engaging in much more academic (Hendy, Montargot, & Papadimitriou, 2021).

Similarly, a study by Mensah and Azila-Gbettor (2018) surveyed 355 students at a three-year higher national diploma awarding technical university in Ghana. Their results indicated that 48% of students admitted to cheating on exams. The authors discovered that there was no significant relationship between religiosity and examination cheating. However, they did find that students who perceived their peers as cheaters were more likely to engage in cheating themselves. Additionally, the authors observed that students who feared failing were more prone to cheating.

Brimble and Stevenson (2005) noted that academic dishonesty is a crucial problem for the integrity of higher education institutions' academic programs, and it has recently been receiving more public attention. In this study, 1206 students and 190 academic staff from four major Queensland universities participated in a survey about student academic misconduct. In order to establish effective ways to address the issue of academic dishonesty/misconduct, the survey's objectives were to ascertain the prevalence of academic misconduct and examine the extent to which attitudes of dishonesty are shared among students and staff. The findings show that students tolerate academic dishonesty better than professionals do, especially when it comes to plagiarism and falsifying research findings. professionals also significantly underestimate how common academic misconduct is.

It can therefore be deduced from their findings that, students embraced academic misconduct more than professionals which is in line with the current study findings because master of philosophy students were more embraced with misconduct related to exams and quizzes but less associated with dishonesty related to plagiarism, falsification of data among others

Another study by Coughlin (2015) focused on the prevalence of plagiarism among students in five universities in Mozambique. The author utilized plagiarism detection software to analyze 150 theses and monographs from these institutions. The results revealed that 75% of the analyzed works contained significant, much, or very much plagiarism. Only 16% had very little or no plagiarism. The most common form of plagiarism identified was copying and pasting from other sources without proper attribution. Moreover, the author noted that plagiarism was more prevalent in certain departments,

such as linguistics and law. The study concluded that plagiarism is highly prevalent in Mozambique and recommended the implementation of plagiarism detection software and training on plagiarism prevention in universities and colleges.

In a recent study by Atikuzzaman and Yesmin (2023), the focus was on addressing the concerns of institutional authorities regarding academic dishonesty among research students in a public university in Bangladesh. Through qualitative research, the authors conducted interviews with 15 authorities, including department chairpersons, faculty deans, the university's proctor, and the director of the students' guidance and counseling cell. The findings revealed that the authorities expressed significant concerns about the pervasiveness of academic dishonesty among research students. They also raised concerns about the absence of a coherent policy addressing academic dishonesty and the lack of adequate training provided to faculty members for effectively detecting and preventing instances of academic dishonesty. Therefore, the authors emphasized the urgent need for a clear and comprehensive policy addressing academic dishonesty within the university context. They also highlighted the importance of equipping faculty members with appropriate training to enhance their abilities in identifying and preventing academic dishonesty. Additionally, the authors recommended the cultivation of a culture of academic integrity within the university, creating an environment where students feel comfortable reporting instances of academic dishonesty.

Based on the reviewed studies, it is evident that academic dishonesty is a widespread problem in higher education. Although the prevalence varies

across studies, a significant number of students engage in dishonest behaviour. This empirical review provides insights into the prevalence of academic dishonesty among students, emphasizing the urgent need for proactive measures to prevent and address it. By promoting a culture of academic integrity, providing educational interventions, and employing technological solutions, educational institutions can work towards mitigating the prevalence of academic dishonesty and fostering an environment conducive to honest learning.

Reasons for engaging in academic dishonesty

Academic dishonesty, encompassing behaviours such as cheating and plagiarism, remains a pervasive issue in educational settings. Understanding the underlying reasons for students' engagement in such unethical practices is crucial for developing effective strategies to prevent and address academic dishonesty. Research studies consistently indicate that academic dishonesty is a widespread issue across different educational levels, including high schools, colleges, and universities (Jensen, Arnett, Feldman, & Cauffman, 2002). The prevalence rates of specific dishonest behaviours vary but include cheating on exams, copying from peers during assignments, and submitting plagiarized work (Davis, Drinan, & Gallant, 2011)

Factors contributing to academic dishonesty among students were found to be multifaceted. High levels of competition, perceived pressure to achieve high grades, lack of ethical awareness, and weak enforcement of academic integrity policies were identified as common factors (McCabe, Butterfield, & Trevino, 2012)

One major factor contributing to academic dishonesty is the pressure to achieve high grades. Studies have shown that students often resort to cheating as a means of meeting academic expectations (Anderman & Danner, 2008; Davis et al., 2011). Students may perceive cheating as a shortcut to success, particularly when they believe that the stakes are high and the consequences of failure are significant (McCabe et al., 2012).

Keith (2018) in his review of literature on causes of academic dishonesty found out that, there was Academic dishonesty, which included actions like plagiarism, cheating, and fabricating facts or references, was a pervasive and alarming concern in higher education. What Is Academic Dishonesty? by Berkeley City College provides a comprehensive list of actions that constitute academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty undermines the learning process and provides cheaters an unfair edge over those who follow the rules. It may be as basic as peeking over a classmate's shoulder during a quiz or as complex as hiring a ghostwriter online for a course paper.

Another important motivation for academic dishonesty is the fear of failure. Research indicates that students who experience high levels of anxiety or fear about their academic performance are more likely to engage in cheating (Diego, 2017; McCabe & Trevino, 1993). They may view cheating as a way to avoid the negative emotions associated with poor grades or disappointing their parents or teachers.

The influence of peers also plays a significant role in students' decision to engage in academic dishonesty. Social norms and the perception that others are cheating can create a "cheating culture" that normalizes such behaviour (Diego, 2017). Students who observe their peers cheating may feel compelled

to conform to these norms to maintain a sense of fairness or to avoid being at a disadvantage (McCabe, Treviño, & Butterfield, 2001).

Furthermore, the availability and accessibility of technology have contributed to new forms of academic dishonesty. The internet and online resources have made it easier for students to engage in plagiarism and other forms of cheating (Hosny & Fatima, 2014; Park, 2017). Students may be tempted to copy and paste information without proper citation or purchase pre-written essays from online platforms.

In addition, some studies have highlighted a lack of ethical awareness or understanding of academic integrity as a contributing factor to academic dishonesty (Awasthi, 2019; Brimble & Stevenson-Clarke, 2005). Students who have not been adequately educated on the importance of academic integrity may not fully comprehend the ethical implications of their actions, leading them to engage in dishonest practices.

The reasons for students engaging in academic dishonesty are multifaceted and encompass various factors such as pressure to achieve high grades, fear of failure, peer influence, technological advancements, and ethical awareness. By recognizing these underlying reasons, educators and institutions can develop targeted interventions and educational programs to promote academic integrity and prevent academic dishonesty.

Relationship between educational aspirations and academic dishonesty of students

Academic dishonesty is a serious problem that can have a number of negative consequences for students, including academic failure, disciplinary action, and even expulsion. There are a number of factors that can contribute

to academic dishonesty, including pressure to succeed, peer pressure, and a lack of understanding of academic integrity.

One factor that has been shown to influence academic dishonesty is educational aspirations. Students who have high educational aspirations are more likely to be honest in their academic work, while students who have low educational aspirations are more likely to cheat or plagiarize.

There are a number of possible explanations for this finding. First, students with high educational aspirations may be more likely to see cheating or plagiarism as a form of self-sabotage. They may believe that cheating or plagiarizing will prevent them from achieving their academic goals. Second, students with high educational aspirations may be more likely to be motivated by a sense of intrinsic value. They may believe that it is important to be honest in their academic work, regardless of the consequences.

A number of studies have found a link between educational aspirations and academic dishonesty. For example, a study by (Anderman & Danner, 2008)found that students with high educational aspirations were less likely to cheat on exams than students with low educational aspirations. Similarly, a study by (Diego, 2017) found that students with high educational aspirations were more likely to report that they would never cheat on an exam. In a study by McCabe et al. (2012), it was observed that students with higher educational aspirations were less likely to engage in cheating and plagiarism. The authors suggested that students who held ambitious educational goals had a stronger intrinsic motivation to succeed and were more likely to adopt ethical approaches to achieve their desired outcomes.

Conversely, students with lower educational aspirations have been found to be more prone to academic dishonesty. In their study, Anderman and Danner (2008) discovered that students with lower aspirations were more likely to engage in cheating behaviours. The authors argued that students with diminished aspirations may resort to dishonest practices as a means of compensating for perceived deficiencies in their abilities or opportunities.

The review of literature suggests that educational aspirations can play a role in academic dishonesty. Students with high educational aspirations are more likely to be honest in their academic work, while students with low educational aspirations are more likely to cheat or plagiarize. This is likely due to a number of factors, including the belief that cheating or plagiarism will prevent them from achieving their academic goals, and a sense of intrinsic value that motivates them to be honest.

Educational aspirations play a significant role in influencing the occurrence of academic dishonesty among students. Higher aspirations have been consistently linked to lower levels of cheating and plagiarism, as students with ambitious goals are more likely to prioritize academic integrity. Conversely, students with lower aspirations may be more susceptible to academic dishonesty, potentially as a result of compensatory behaviours or diminished motivation. Furthermore, educational aspirations mediate the relationship between academic motivation and academic dishonesty, highlighting their importance in shaping students' ethical choices.

The Influence of Gender and Income Level on Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty, a term synonymous with cheating, has been a subject of significant concern in educational systems across the globe. Its

63

pervasive nature in academia underscores the importance of understanding the factors that might predispose individuals to such behaviour. Among the variables explored, gender and income level have consistently emerged as notable determinants. This essay delves into the literature examining the nexus between these two factors and academic dishonesty.

McCabe, Treviño, & Butterfield (2001) underscored the ambiguity surrounding gender's role in academic dishonesty. Their findings revealed that while certain studies highlighted males as more predisposed to dishonesty, others found no marked gender difference. Digging deeper, the potential reasons behind these discrepancies can be found in the Gender Socialization Theory. As Leming (1980) posits, societal constructs might inadvertently condition males to be inherently competitive, consequently pushing them to risk dishonest behaviours to secure success.

Further adding to the discourse, Gilligan (1982) provides a moral development lens. Arguing that males and females tread different paths in moral development, Gilligan's perspective implies that these distinct paths might influence their propensities for academic dishonesty. For males, a focus on rules and justice is paramount, whereas females navigate their moral compass based on relationships and care.

Shifting the focus to income level, Stone, Jawahar, & Kisamore (2009) presented the perspective that students hailing from lower socioeconomic strata might experience amplified pressures to excel academically, thereby resorting to dishonest means. This is further supported by Haines, Diekhoff, LaBeff, & Clark (1986), who introduced the Resource Deprivation Theory. The theory emphasizes that students from economically challenged

64

backgrounds might lack critical academic resources, compelling them to embrace dishonest behaviours. Adding another layer, Bourdieu's (1986) concept of cultural capital underscores that students from affluent backgrounds possess inherent cultural assets, such as familiarity with academic norms, potentially decreasing their likelihood of academic dishonesty.

However, literature that exclusively examines the intersection of gender and income in the context of academic dishonesty is scant. Some studies hint at the distinctive pressures that might besiege low-income females due to societal expectations, combined with the multifaceted nature of their identity (Crenshaw, 1989).

The tapestry of literature indicates that while gender and income levels are pivotal in understanding academic dishonesty, they are inexorably intertwined with a myriad of cultural, moral, and societal determinants. To fully grasp the extent of their influence, there is an imperative need for further nuanced research that not only deciphers their independent impact but also examines the interplay between them.

Summary of Literature Review

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) posits that human behaviour is influenced by two key factors: attitudes and subjective norms. Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) is a widely recognized framework in psychology that offers a comprehensive understanding of how individuals acquire and maintain behaviour. It encompasses key elements such as observational learning, self-efficacy, and self-regulation (Bandura, 1986). SCT asserts that individuals actively engage with their environment and shape their

behaviour through cognitive processes. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) seeks to explain human behavior by focusing on individuals' intentions to perform specific actions. According to TPB, behavioral intentions are influenced by three main factors: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1985).

Educational aspirations, which encompass students' goals and expectations regarding their educational attainment, have significant implications for academic achievement, educational choices, and future career opportunities.

Academic dishonesty, such as cheating and plagiarism, poses a significant challenge to the integrity of educational institutions. The consequences of academic dishonesty extend beyond immediate academic repercussions, as it can have long-term negative effects on students' ethical development, personal integrity, and future professional careers.

66
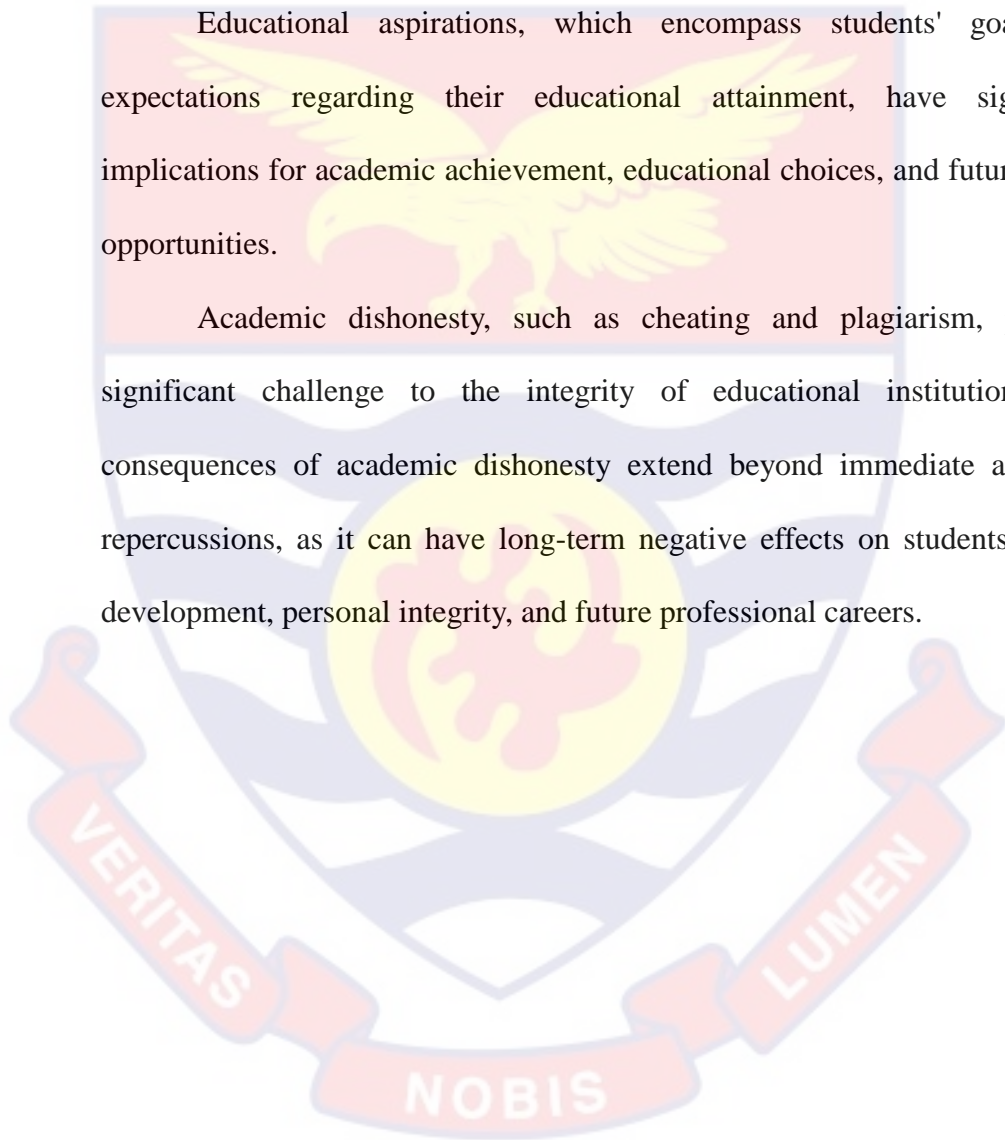
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of students' aspirations and socio-economic backgrounds on academic dishonesty among MPhil students enrolled at the University of Cape Coast (UCC) College of Education. This section presents an overview of the methods employed in gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data. It begins by outlining the research design and detailing the procedures used to conduct the study. The chapter provides information about the study's location and the population it focuses on. Additionally, it discusses the sample selection process and data collection methods. The chapter explains the measurement scales utilized in the study. Within this section, instrument adaptation and validation are addressed. It subsequently delves into the data analysis process, illustrating how the collected data were managed and analyzed.

Research Paradigm

The adoption of a positivist paradigm in this study is warranted as it facilitates a rigorous and objective investigation into the influence of students' aspirations and socio-economic backgrounds on academic dishonesty among MPhil students at the University of Cape Coast (UCC) College of Education. This paradigm aligns with the study's objectives, emphasizing empirical evidence, measurable data, and statistical analysis. By employing quantitative research methods, it enables the measurement of variables, the identification of causal relationships, and the potential for generalizing findings to a wider context. Additionally, a positivist approach helps mitigate researcher bias,

67

ensuring that the study's outcomes are based on objective observations and reducing the potential for subjective interpretations in a sensitive topic area such as academic dishonesty.

Research Approach

The quantitative approach was particularly suitable for this study as it aimed to quantify and measure the respondents' level of educational aspirations, the extent of academic dishonesty, and demographic information related to their socio-economic background (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This approach allowed for precise measurement and statistical analysis of these variables, facilitating data-driven conclusions. By employing structured surveys or questionnaires, we were able to gather standardized, numerical data from a sizable sample of MPhil students at the University of Cape Coast (UCC) College of Education.

This data was essential for conducting robust statistical analyses such as regression models or correlation studies to explore the relationships between aspirations, socio-economic background, and academic dishonesty. Additionally, quantitative data enabled the researcher to assess the magnitude and significance of these relationships, providing valuable insights into the predictors of academic dishonesty among MPhil students. The quantitative approach was instrumental in ensuring the reliability and validity of our findings and allowed for a systematic, evidence-based exploration of the research questions.

Research Design

The research design opted for in this study was a descriptive cross-sectional survey design, as outlined by Creswell & Creswell (2017). Various

68

compelling reasons guided this choice, each bolstering the appropriateness of the selected methodology. The descriptive cross-sectional survey design was considered apt due to its capacity for conducting a thorough exploration of the phenomena under scrutiny, notably educational aspirations and academic dishonesty among postgraduate MPhil students at the UCC College of Education. Numerous pivotal justifications underpin the adoption of this research design.

Firstly, this research design enabled the collection of a wide range of data, including information on the respondents' educational aspirations, the prevalence of academic dishonesty, and the reasons behind engaging in such behaviours (Babbie, 2016). This comprehensive data collection approach was essential to gain a holistic understanding of the factors influencing academic dishonesty. Surveys are known for their efficiency and scalability in data collection, making them practical when dealing with a relatively large sample size, as was the case with postgraduate MPhil students (Babbie, 2016). A survey questionnaire was a practical means to collect data from this diverse group of respondents.

Secondly, the quantitative nature of the survey instrument promoted objectivity in data collection and analysis, a crucial aspect of research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The results obtained from a structured survey questionnaire are generally considered more objective, and the findings can often be generalized to a broader population with similar characteristics (Babbie, 2016). The survey design offered the possibility of conducting comparative analyses, allowing researchers to compare data on educational aspirations, academic dishonesty prevalence, and socio-economic background

across different subgroups within the participant population. This provided valuable insights into potential patterns and variations.

Lastly, given the practical constraints of conducting research within an academic setting, a survey design offered a cost-effective and time-efficient means of data collection compared to other data collection methods, such as interviews or observations (Babbie, 2016). The adoption of a descriptive survey design with a quantitative approach was a well-justified choice for this study. It enabled the collection of comprehensive, objective, and quantifiable data on educational aspirations and academic dishonesty among postgraduate MPhil students, along with insights into their socio-economic backgrounds. This design was particularly suited to the research objectives, sample size, and available resources, facilitating a rigorous investigation into the factors influencing academic integrity within the chosen academic context.

Population

The population for this study consisted of MPhil postgraduate students at the College of Education, University of Cape Coast. According to the College of Education under the department of education and psychology, there were 161 MPhil students for the 2020 academic year. These postgraduate students were chosen as the target population for this study due to their unique perspectives and experiences in the education domain. As MPhil students, they have already completed their undergraduate degrees and have decided to further their education by pursuing an advanced research-oriented program. This ensures that the respondents possess a solid foundation in educational theory and practice, making them ideal subjects for the research inquiry.

However, since it may not always be feasible to study the entire population (the target group), the accessible population for this particular study was limited to MPhil students specifically from the Faculty of Educational Foundations within the College of Education, University of Cape Coast. This narrower focus helped streamline the research to a specific subset of the larger population that was of particular interest due to its relevance to the study's research questions and objectives.

The Faculty of Education consists of three departments, these are Education and Psychology, Guidance and Counselling, and Basic Education. The Department of Education consists of M.Phil. Clinical Health, M.Phil. Measurement and Evaluation, M.Phil. Educational Psychology, M.Phil. Special Education and M.Phil. Sociology of Education. The department of Guidance and Counselling offers M.Phil. Guidance and Counselling whiles the department of Basic Education offers M.Phil. Basic Education.

Sampling Procedure

Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table was used to determine the sample size of 105 respondents for the study. According to Krejcie and Morgan, a sample of 105 is sufficient representation of a population of 161 graduate students. In this study, a convenience sampling technique was employed to collect data from the sample. The inclusion criteria for participation in the study were being enrolled in the MPhil program and expressing willingness to take part in the research.

Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method commonly used in research when practical considerations, such as time, resources, and accessibility, impose limitations on the sampling process

(Babbie, 2016). This approach involves selecting respondents based on their convenience and availability, making it a pragmatic choice for recruiting respondents for the study.

Given the constraints faced by the research, including the need to gather data efficiently and within a limited timeframe, convenience sampling offered a practical and feasible approach to participant selection. The population of MPhil students at the UCC College of Education provided a readily accessible pool of potential respondents who met the study's criteria. This sampling technique allowed the research team to efficiently collect data while working within the confines of logistical and resource constraints (Babbie, 2016).

Data Collection Instrument

The study used an adapted questionnaire for data collection. The questionnaire consists of 6 sections. Section A looked at the demographic information of the respondents. The survey is structured into four main sections. Section A is dedicated to collecting demographic data, including information on respondents' sex, monthly income/allowance, and occupation. Section B assesses respondents' aspirations using a specific scale. Section C investigates the perceived prevalence and seriousness of academic dishonesty. Finally, Section D explores the reasons behind academic dishonesty. These sections collectively aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing academic misconduct among the respondents, including their demographic background, aspirations, perceptions, and motivations for engaging in such behaviours.

72

Aspirations Scale

Tsey (2019) personally designed and validated the students' aspiration scale. Based on the broad indicators in the literature, Tsey constructed students' aspiration scale in two dimensions: educational aspiration and occupational aspirations. The students' aspiration scale had both positive and negative items of which responses adhered to a 4-point Likert-type scale of measurement. In scoring the items on the scale, negative items were scored on a point scale, ranging from 1-4. That is, strongly agree was valued 1-point, agree for 2-points, disagree is 3-points, and strongly disagree for 4-points.

For positive items, strongly agree was 4-points, agree 3-points, disagree 2-points, and strongly disagree 1-point. Apart from item number 9, all the other items on the scale were positive items. Seventeen items (17) were used to measure the construct, "students' aspiration." Ten out of the 17 items were crafted to solicit information on the first dimension of the scale (educational aspiration), while the remaining 7 items solicited information on the second dimension of the scale (occupational aspiration). In order to ensure high content validity, items were constructed from a wide range of behaviours that demonstrate students' aspiration (Allen & Yen, 2002).

The adapted version of the instrument retained ten items from the original educational aspiration scale developed by Tsey (2019). These items collectively assess respondents' educational aspirations, gauging their attitudes and motivations towards pursuing postgraduate studies. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement on a 4-point scale. The statements in this scale covered a range of factors influencing educational aspirations. Overall, these items provide insights into

73

respondents' educational aspirations and their underlying motivations in pursuing postgraduate studies.

Prevalence and Seriousness of Academic Dishonesty

Section C of the instruments proposed twenty scenarios relating to academic dishonesty. This was adapted from (Brimble & Stevenson-Clarke, 2005). The adaptation of Section C of the instrument, originally proposed by Brimble and Stevenson-Clarke (2005), involved a modification to focus solely on one aspect: assessing how prevalent respondents believed academic misconduct to be within the student community. In the original instrument, Section C covered a broader range of issues related to academic dishonesty, including behaviours such as plagiarism and cheating on examinations. For each of these behaviours, respondents were asked to provide responses to four distinct questions.

In the adapted version of the survey, these four dimensions were condensed into one, focusing solely on the respondents' perceptions of the prevalence of academic misconduct within the student community. The response options for this adapted section included: Never, seldom (1-2 times), Occasionally (3-5 times), or Frequently (6 or more times). This adaptation streamlined the survey, making it more concise and focused specifically on the prevalence aspect while omitting responses related to perceived seriousness, appropriate penalties, and personal history.

The rationale for this adaptation was to simplify data collection and analysis, as the prevalence of academic misconduct is a key metric of interest in many academic integrity studies. By concentrating on this single aspect, the researcher was able to efficiently gather valuable data on the perceived

frequency of misconduct among students without overwhelming respondents with an extensive questionnaire.

Reasons for Academic Dishonesty

Section D of the instrument, adapted from Brimble and Stevenson-Clarke (2005), focused on understanding the reasons behind academic misconduct among students. In the original instrument, students who had engaged in academic misconduct were asked to nominate their reasons for such conduct, while staff members were asked to indicate the reasons, they had been given by students to justify their behaviour. The responses in both cases covered a wide range of possible reasons, with ten of these reasons receiving more than 20 percent support among both staff and students. Interestingly, the results showed significant differences between the reasons cited by students for engaging in academic misconduct and the reasons reported by academic staff as provided by students. This divergence suggests that the explanations students give to academic staff may not accurately represent the true motivations underlying their behaviour.

In the adapted version of the survey, this section contained 20 questions, each presented as a statement, and respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with these statements using a 4-point scale: 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Agree, 4= Strongly Agree. This adaptation allowed for a systematic exploration of the various factors that may drive students to engage in academic misconduct, offering insights into their perceptions and attitudes toward these reasons. By utilizing a Likert-type scale, researchers can quantitatively assess the extent to which these reasons influence students' behaviour, providing valuable data for analyzing the

75

underlying motivations behind academic misconduct in a more structured and measurable manner

Pre-Testing of Instruments

The questionnaire underwent a modification process where items originally designed for undergraduate colleges of education students were adapted to suit graduate students. Consequently, questions pertaining to undergraduate students were adjusted to align with the graduate student population. Given these modifications, it became imperative to conduct a pilot test of the instrument. The graduate student population at UDS shares some characteristics with the graduate population we aim to study at UCC. Both universities are public institutions in Ghana, providing a relevant testing ground for research instruments and procedures. The questionnaires were administered once to the pre-testing respondents

To assess the suitability of the modified items and to gauge the time required for survey completion, a pilot test was carried out. It involved the administration of the questionnaire to a sample of 40 graduate students at the University for Development Studies.

The sample size of 40 for the pre-test aligns with recommended guidelines for pre-testing in research, which typically involve a sample size that is smaller than the intended sample for the full study (Polit & Beck, 2017). A commonly suggested range for pilot sample sizes is around 10% of the planned sample size (Bryman, 2016). In this case, the pilot sample size of 40 students represents approximately 38% of the intended sample size of 105.

The rationale behind selecting a smaller pilot sample is rooted in practicality and resource constraints. Pre-testing is primarily focused on

76

identifying and addressing issues with the research instrument and data collection process, and it does not aim to provide statistically meaningful results for the research objectives of the full study (Polit & Beck, 2017). Therefore, a smaller sample is sufficient to achieve the goals of pre-testing while conserving resources and time.

Additionally, pre-testing is an iterative process, meaning that adjustments to the questionnaire may be necessary based on the feedback and findings from the pilot test (Hair et al., 2018). A smaller sample allows for more efficient revisions and refinements to the instrument before it is administered to the larger sample of 105 students.

Validity and Reliability of Instruments

In order to establish the validity of the study, both face validity and content validity were carefully conducted. This entailed seeking input and advice from experts in the Department of Education and Psychology, as well as regulatory authorities. It is crucial to emphasize that while face validity and content validity are not subjected to statistical measurement, they serve as vital components in affirming the credibility and pertinence of the study's measures.

The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each of the subscales. The results showed that the subscales had acceptable to good levels of internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.75 to 0.86 (Hair, Sarstedt, Hopkins, & Kuppelwieser, 2014). The section on educational aspirations involved respondents' agreement or disagreement with statements about their educational goals. The internal consistency reliability of this section was measured using Cronbach's alpha. The obtained alpha coefficient was 0.81,

indicating good internal consistency. The section on Academic-Related Activities (Prevalence of academic dishonesty) yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.86 indicating a high internal consistency. The section on reasons for academic dishonesty involved respondents' agreement or disagreement with statements explaining their motivations. The internal consistency reliability of this section was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.75, indicating acceptable internal consistency

Table 1: Summary of Questionnaire Reliability Results by Subscale

Subscale	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Educational Aspirations	10	0.81
Academic Related Activities	20	0.86
Reasons for Engaging in Academic Dishonesty	20	0.75
Total	30	0.81

Data Collection Procedure

The initial step in the data collection process involved seeking approval from the University of Cape Coast's College of Education studies Review Board for the study. Once all necessary approvals were secured, the questionnaire was distributed to the respondents.

The questionnaire was administered to respondents personally. The instrument was distributed to participants after their normal lectures. Respondents were given a two-week window to complete the questionnaire and were then requested to return the completed questionnaire to the researcher. In Section B and D of the questionnaire, respondents were required to provide their responses on a four-point Likert scale, which was coded as

follows: 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Agree, 4= Strongly Agree. In Section C of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to indicate the frequency of their engagement in specific activities using the following scale: (1) Never; (2) Seldom (1-2 times); (3) Occasionally (3-5 times); or (4) Frequently (6 or more times). After the two-week period, the collected questionnaires were coded and prepared for subsequent analysis.

Ethical Consideration

This research adhered to ethical guidelines and received approval from College of Education Review Board. Prior to their involvement, all respondents provided written informed consent. They were briefed about the study's objectives, their rights, potential risks and benefits, and the voluntary nature of their participation, with the assurance of withdrawal without repercussions at any point.

To safeguard confidentiality and anonymity, no participant's name or personal details were recorded. Moreover, respondents were assured that their data would be used exclusively for research purposes and that their identities would remain undisclosed in any publications or presentations of the study's findings. This study received College of Education Studies review board approval with protocol number CES/ERB/UCC/edu/v8 – 23/75 (refer to Appendix B), on August 22, 2023.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations was used to analyse the data obtained from the research question one, two and three. A four likert scale questionnaire was administered to participants to

respond based on their level of agreement with 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree and 4 = strongly agree. The average response of 2 and above was considered high and an average response below 2 was interpreted as low.

Correlational analysis was used to test the research hypothesis one. Two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used in testing the research hypothesis. The choice of these specific inferential techniques was based on the nature of the hypotheses. Correlational analysis is suitable for research questions that focus on the relationship between variables, while ANOVA is ideal for situations where you have a categorical independent variable with multiple levels and want to compare the means of the dependent variable across those levels. By using a combination of descriptive and inferential statistics, this study aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data and effectively address the research questions and hypotheses.
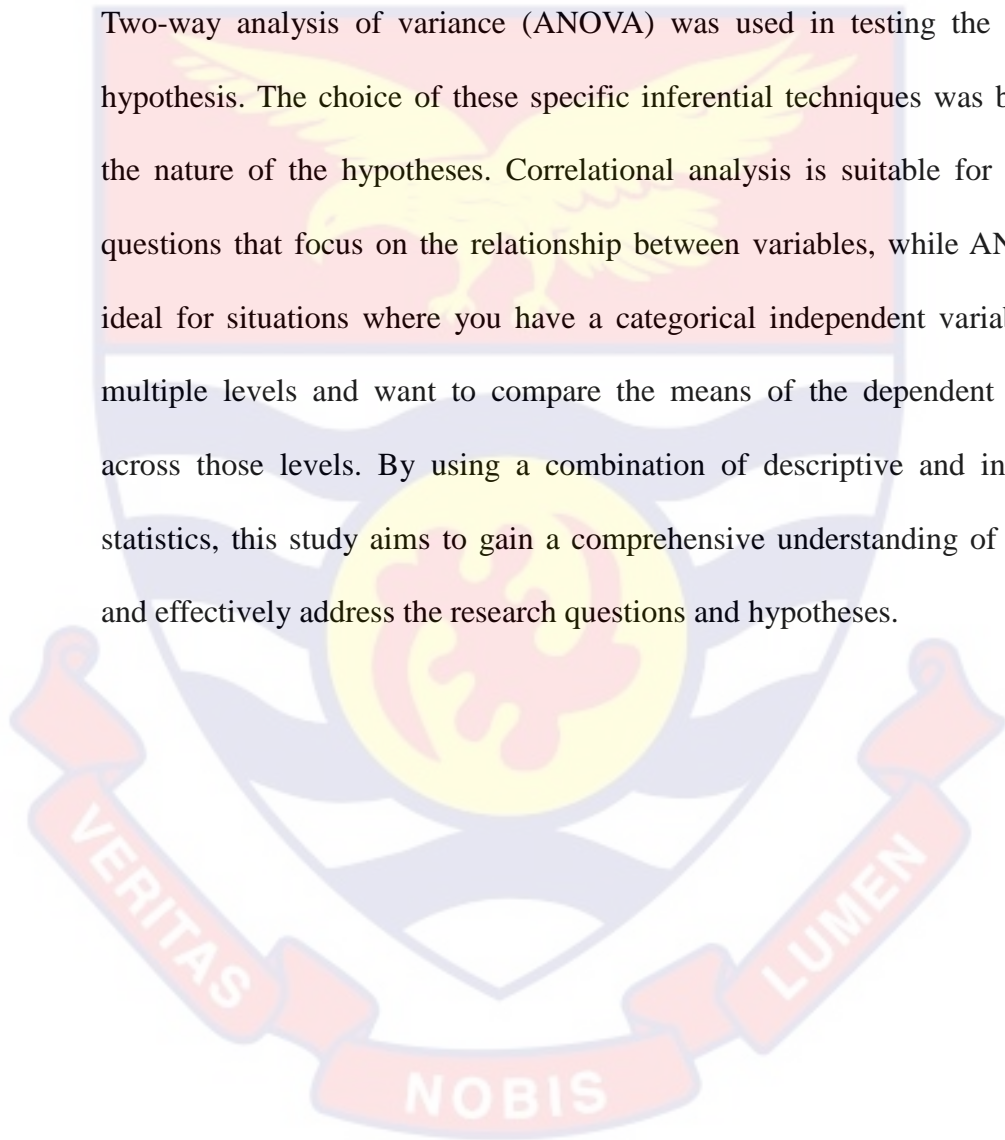
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Overview

This chapter presents the findings obtained from the research conducted, focusing on the research objectives of the study. This section provides a comprehensives analysis and discussion of the findings, shedding light on the key insights and implications discovered through the study. The findings presented in this chapter will contribute to a deeper understanding of the research topic and will serve as a basis for drawing meaningful conclusions and recommendations. The study had a 100% response rate. Out of the 105 respondents who agreed to participate in the study, all the 105 returned the questionnaires.

Presentation of Findings

Demography of respondents

In this tabular format, the demographic characteristics are organized neatly with the corresponding frequencies and percentages for each category. It provides a clear and concise representation of the participant demographics.

Table 2: Demographic distribution of respondents according to SEX

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	49	46.7
Female	56	53.3
Total	**105**	**100.0**

Source: Field survey (2023)

Data from Table 2 revealed that Out of the 105 respondents, 49 were males. This translates to 46.7% of the overall group. On the other hand,

females were slightly more predominant, making a sum of 56 in number. In percentage terms, females represented 53.3% of the group.

It is clear from this analysis that while the sample contains more females than males, the difference isn't vast. The relatively balanced distribution between the two genders at 53.3% for females and 46.7% for males illustrates a near-even split, emphasizing the comprehensive nature of this sample.

Table 3: demographic distribution of respondents according to Income/allowance per month

Income/allowance	Frequency	Percentage
Ghs 1001-2000	53	50.5
Ghs 2001-3000	30	28.6
Ghs 1000 or less	16	15.2
Ghs 3001-4000	5	4.8
Ghs 4000 and above	1	1.0

Source: Field survey (2023)

Data from Table 3, provides a detailed insight into five distinct income brackets. The sample for this study comprised various individuals, each falling within a specific income range measured in Ghanaian cedis (Ghs).

The majority of respondents, precisely 53 of them, earn between Ghs 1001 to Ghs 2000, which represents a significant 50.5% of the total sample. This indicates that half of the respondents fall within this income bracket. Following this, the next prominent category is the Ghs 2001-3000 range. Here, 30 respondents or 28.6% of the total, lie within this segment.

Interestingly, a noteworthy 15.2% of the sample, totaling 16 individuals, earn Ghs 1000 or less, placing them in the lower end of the income spectrum. On the higher end, those earning between Ghs 3001 to Ghs

82

4000 are fewer in number, with only 5 respondents, or 4.8% of the entire group. The least represented bracket in this sample is the Ghs 4000 and above category, with a mere 1% representation, which translates to just one individual.

From this data, it's evident that the bulk of the respondents have their monthly income or allowance ranging between Ghs 1001 and Ghs 3000, while the extremes, both low and high, are less represented in this sample. This distribution offers a comprehensive perspective on the economic standing of the respondents, showcasing the predominance of middle-income earners.

Research Question One: What is the level of educational aspirations of University of Cape Coast master of philosophy students?

The purpose of this research question is to assess the level of educational aspirations among MPhil (Master of Philosophy) students at UCC. By examining the educational aspirations of these students, the research aims to gain insights into their academic goals, motivations, and aspirations for further education.

The data for this study was collected from a survey of 105 first-year graduate students at the College of Education, University of Cape Coast. The survey asked students to rate their agreement with a series of statements about their educational aspirations. The findings of the research question one is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Educational Aspirations of University of Cape Coast master of philosophy students

Items	M	SD
I am highly encouraged to continue my education beyond postgraduate degree	3.4762	.82153
Postgraduate studies is a way for me to obtain advantaged skills in order to support my career in the future	3.4000	.83896
Further studies is a way for me to obtain prestigious profession in the society	3.3714	.79973
Further education is a way for me to raise the socio¬-economic status of my family	3.4286	.78271
Furthering my education will help me develop intellectual capacity needed for the development of myself, my nation and the world at large	3.6095	.75314
Progressing in my educational career is very important to me since I desire to be well established in order to help people who are less privileged	3.4190	.79398
I have plans to enrol on some professional programmes to acquire some professional degree after my first degree	3.3048	.83348
Higher education is a way for me to get advantaged skills that can help me to earn high income in future	3.2500	.93217
Once I finish my postgraduate education needed for a particular job, I see no need to continue in school	2.2692	1.21664
As far as I know now, the highest degree to earn is doctors' degree	2.6893	1.19664

Source: Field survey (2023)

Data as showing in Table 4, elucidates the attitudes of students towards further education, captured through mean scores and standard deviations. A closer examination reveals that students display a strong inclination towards pursuing higher education for a range of motivations. For instance, the

statement "I am highly encouraged to continue my education beyond postgraduate degree" received a mean score of 3.4762 with a moderate standard deviation of 0.82153, suggesting a general consensus towards the positive role of postgraduate studies in students' lives.

Similarly, students showed strong agreement with the idea that "Postgraduate studies is a way for me to obtain advantaged skills to support my future career," evidenced by a mean score of 3.4000 and a standard deviation of 0.83896. This trend continues with the acknowledgment that further studies could elevate the socio-economic status of one's family, receiving a mean score of 3.4286 and a standard deviation of 0.78271.

The aspiration to contribute to personal and societal development through furthering one's education received the highest mean score of 3.6095, with a relatively low standard deviation of 0.75314, indicating a strong and uniform belief in the transformative power of higher education.

However, the findings also indicated areas of moderate disagreement among students. The statement "Higher education is a way for me to get advantaged skills to earn a high income in the future" had a comparatively lower mean score of 3.2500 and a higher standard deviation of 0.93217, indicating more varied opinions on the financial incentives of higher education.

In terms of limitations, students showed the least agreement with the statements "Once I finish my postgraduate education needed for a particular job, I see no need to continue" and "As far as I know now, the highest degree to earn is a doctor's degree," with mean scores of 2.2692 and 2.6893 respectively. These lower mean scores, combined with higher standard

deviations, revealed divergent views on the necessity and the ultimate aim of higher education.

University of Cape Coast master of philosophy students generally hold high educational aspirations and perceive advanced studies as a multifaceted tool for personal, financial, and societal advancement. Nonetheless, there exists a spectrum of opinions on the ultimate goals and the financial utility of higher education.

Research Question Two: What is the prevalence rate of academic dishonesty among University of Cape Coast master of philosophy students?

The purpose of this research question is to investigate and determine the prevalence rate of academic dishonesty among MPhil (Master of Philosophy) students at UCC. Academic dishonesty refers to unethical or dishonest behaviours related to academic work, such as cheating, plagiarism, or unauthorized collaboration.

To gather data for this research question, a questionnaire was used. The questionnaire consisted of 20 items that assessed various behaviours and incidents related to academic dishonesty. The data collected through the questionnaire was then analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically means and standard deviations. Descriptive statistics provide a summary of the data, allowing for a better understanding of the prevalence rate of academic dishonesty among MPhil students. The mean score provides an average measure of the prevalence, while the standard deviation indicates the extent of variability in the responses.

Table 5: Prevalence of Academic dishonesty

Items	M	SD
Copying from another student during a test.	3.1923	.99588
One student allowing another to copy from them in a test	3.3810	.73877
Taking unauthorised material into a test – notes, pre-programmed calculator	3.4476	.78423
Giving answers to another student by signals in a test	3.4095	.82852
Receiving answers from another student by signals in a test.	3.4762	.76076
Getting someone else to pretend they are the student – impersonating the student in a test	3.4078	.87936
Continuing to write after a test has finished	3.2286	1.04933
Gaining unauthorised access to test material before sitting – test paper, marking schedule	2.4286	1.37880
Requesting special consideration/deferred exam (eg for illness) knowing that the conditions are not genuinely met	1.7143	1.40544
Padding out a bibliography with references that were not actually used	1.6476	1.35150
Paying another person to complete an assignment	1.5810	.98821
Writing an assignment for someone else	1.6667	1.39137
Paraphrasing information from a web site, book or periodical without referencing the source	1.3714	.77531
Copying information directly from a web site, book or periodical with reference to the source but no quote marks	1.3173	.75382
Copying information directly from a web site, book or periodical without referencing the source	1.3524	.79640
Copying information directly from another student's assignment (current or past) without their consent	1.2667	.73729
Copying information directly from another student's assignment (current or past) with their consent.	1.6857	2.27999
Falsifying the results of one's research	1.3942	.84092
Working together on an assignment when it should be individual	1.4272	.84716
Preventing other students access to resources required to complete an assignment	1.6635	.97154

Source: Field survey (2023)

Table 5 explores the prevalence of various forms of academic dishonesty among the respondents. The data is structured by mean and

standard deviation for each dishonest practice. The means indicate the frequency with which students engage in these dishonest acts. Higher mean values suggest that the dishonest act is practiced more frequently by the students. On the Likert scale provided, a score closer to 4 suggests that these acts occur frequently.

Beginning with exam-related dishonesty, the data revealed that students are notably engaging in behaviours such as copying from another student during a test, with a mean of 3.1923, and one student allowing another to copy from them during an exam, with a mean of 3.3810. Other practices such as taking unauthorized material into a test, giving or receiving answers via signals, and impersonation in a test also have means above 3.0000 Continuing to write after a test has concluded is another area where students show significant dishonesty, with a mean of 3.2286.

From the above results it can therefore be explained that, the higher rate of these dishonest behaviours by MPhil UCC college of education students emanated from low self-efficacy of students which is deduced from Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory. Thus, those students had low beliefs in their abilities to cope with the academic standards. Therefore, low self-efficacy is a factor contributing to academic dishonesty. Self-efficacy can be described as the belief a person holds to be able to carry out a particular behaviour.

However, some dishonest behaviours, such as gaining unauthorized access to test material before sitting, seem less prevalent, with a mean of 2.4286. Moreover, falsely requesting special consideration for exams when conditions aren't genuinely met is also less common with a mean of 1.7143.

In terms of assignment-related dishonesty, the least prevalent forms of dishonesty include padding out a bibliography with unused references (mean of 1.6476), paying another person to complete an assignment (mean of 1.5810), and writing assignments for others (mean of 1.6667). Alarmingly, the practices of paraphrasing information without appropriate referencing, copying information directly without appropriate referencing, or with referencing but no quotation marks, all have mean values less than 1.5. This suggests that these are less frequent dishonest practices among the students. Another observation is that the practice of copying directly from another student's assignment without their consent had the least mean of 1.2667. Interestingly, copying from a student's assignment with their consent had a higher mean of 1.6857.

Falsifying research results, working collaboratively on assignments meant to be individual, and preventing peers from accessing necessary assignment resources all have mean values hovering around 1.5, indicating they are relatively infrequent practices among the respondents.

The research findings illustrate varying levels of academic dishonesty among students, with exam-related behaviors such as copying from peers and continuing to write after a test being relatively common. However, certain dishonest practices, like gaining unauthorized access to test material and falsifying reasons for special consideration, are less prevalent. Similarly, in assignment-related dishonesty, behaviors such as padding bibliographies and paying others to complete assignments are less frequent, while copying or paraphrasing without proper referencing is relatively rare. Notably, copying from peers without consent is less common than with consent.

Research Question Three: What are the reasons that motivate students to engage in academic dishonesty?

The aim of this research question is to delve into the complex realm of student behaviour by examining the underlying motivations that drive individuals to engage in academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty encompasses various unethical actions, including cheating, plagiarism, and unauthorized collaboration, which undermine the principles of academic integrity. By scrutinizing the reasons that underpin such behaviours, this study seeks to unravel the intricate factors that influence student conduct in educational settings.

To gather pertinent data for this research question, a well-designed questionnaire was employed as a data collection tool. The questionnaire comprised of a series of items probing students about their motivations and rationales for partaking in acts of academic dishonesty.

The obtained data underwent meticulous analysis employing descriptive statistics, specifically means and standard deviations. Descriptive statistics furnish a concise summary of the data, facilitating an enhanced comprehension of the underlying motivations propelling students to commit academic dishonesty. The mean scores offer an average estimation of the perceived motivations, while the standard deviations provide an indication of the variability present in the responses.

Table 6: Reasons for engaging in academic dishonesty

Reason	M	SD
I wasn't likely to be caught.	2.63	.94
I wanted to help a friend.	2.59	.89
The assessment was too time-consuming	1.61	.29
The assessment was too difficult.	2.42	.80
I had a personal crisis.	1.52	.83
I didn't think it was wrong	1.56	.85
It was easy – the temptation was too great.	2.60	.91
The due date was too soon	2.5	.84
The teacher hadn't taught me well enough	1.60	.87
I was under pressure to get good grades	1.76	.97
Other students do it (or urged me to do it).	2.80	.96
I thought the assessment was unfair.	1.84	.99
I thought if I helped someone else, they might help me.	1.70	.90
I hadn't heard of other students being penalised before.	1.72	.99
The due date coincided with other assessments due.	1.83	1.01
The content of the assessment was not of interest to me	1.82	.96
My teacher encouraged it.	1.91	1.01
Cheating is a victimless crime – it doesn't harm anyone.	1.69	.86
It was unintentional	1.82	.95
No reason.	1.74	.90

Source: Field survey (2023)

Data from Table 6 shows the findings of the study on student reasons for engaging in academic dishonesty. The strongest agreement among students was observed in statements related to avoiding detection ("I wasn't likely to be caught" - M = 2.63, SD = 0.94) and succumbing to peer pressure ("Other students do it (or urged me to do it)" - M = 2.80, SD = 0.96). This highlights the significant influence of social dynamics and the fear of consequences on students' decisions to engage in academic dishonesty. It underscores the

importance of addressing not only individual moral compasses but also the broader social environment within educational institutions.

While not as pronounced as the desire to avoid detection and peer pressure, there was still moderate agreement among students regarding time pressure ("The assessment was too time-consuming" - M = 1.61, SD = 0.29) and altruistic motives ("I wanted to help a friend" - M = 2.59, SD = 0.89). This suggests that students may resort to cheating when faced with competing demands on their time or when driven by a desire to assist their peers. Educators and institutions need to consider strategies for managing workload and fostering a collaborative rather than a competitive academic environment.

Some students also endorsed cheating due to the difficulty of assessments ("The assessment was too difficult" - M = 2.43, SD = 0.80) and the perceived ease of engaging in dishonest behavior ("It was easy - the temptation was too great" - M = 2.60, SD = 0.91). This highlights the importance of ensuring assessments are appropriately designed to challenge students while also providing adequate support and resources to prevent resorting to dishonest means.

Conversely, students generally disagreed with the notion that cheating is acceptable or victimless ("I didn't think it was wrong" - M = 1.56, SD = 0.85; "Cheating is a victimless crime" - M = 1.69, SD = 0.86). Additionally, there was strong disagreement regarding blaming teaching quality for their dishonesty ("The teacher hadn't taught me well enough" - M = 1.60, SD = 0.87). These findings suggest that most students maintain a moral stance against cheating and do not see it as a justified response to external factors.

Several reasons received mean scores close to 2, indicating a more neutral stance among students. These include pressure for good grades, unfair assessments, and due date conflicts. Interestingly, reasons such as "My teacher encouraged it" (M = 1.91, SD = 1.01) and "It was unintentional" (M = 1.82, SD = 0.95) had the lowest mean scores, suggesting that students rarely attribute their cheating behavior to teacher influence or unintentional actions.

Research Hypotheses One: There is no significant relationship between educational aspiration and academic dishonesty of postgraduate Master of Philosophy students of University of Cape Coast

The purpose of this research hypothesis was to investigate the potential relationship between educational aspiration and academic dishonesty among postgraduate MPhil students at UCC. The hypothesis posited that there was no significant relationship between educational aspiration and academic dishonesty among these students.

Table 7: Correlation between education aspiration and academic dishonesty

Variable	N	1	2	p
1. Educational aspiration	105	1		
2. Academic dishonesty	105	.226	1	0.021

Source: Field survey (2023)

A Pearson correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between educational aspiration and academic dishonesty. The results showed a weak positive correlation between the two variables, $r(105) = 0.226$, $p = 0.021$. This indicates that there is a small positive relationship between educational aspiration and academic dishonesty.

Table 7 depicts the Pearson correlation coefficient between two variables: Educational aspiration (EA) and Academic dishonesty (AD). The Pearson correlation coefficient measures the linear relationship between two data sets. The coefficient value ranges from -1 to 1, where -1 means a perfect negative correlation, 1 signifies a perfect positive correlation, and 0 indicates no correlation.

In the table 7, the correlation between EA and AD is .226, which signifies a weak positive relationship between the two variables. This means that as educational aspirations slightly increase, there's a tendency for academic dishonesty to also slightly increase. However, the relationship is not strong.

The "Sig. (2-tailed)" row gives the p-value for the correlation, which is .021. This is less than the commonly used significance level of .05, implying that the correlation is statistically significant, albeit weak. This suggests that there is a statistically significant, though weak, relationship between educational aspirations and academic dishonesty in the sample of 105 respondents.

Research Hypotheses Two: There is no significant influence of socio-economic background on academic dishonesty of postgraduate MPhil UCC students

The purpose of this research hypothesis was to investigate the potential influence of gender and income on academic dishonesty among postgraduate MPhil students at UCC. The hypothesis posited that there was no statistically significant influence of socio-economic background on the occurrence of academic dishonesty among these students.

To gather data for this hypothesis, a questionnaire was used as the primary data collection instrument. The questionnaire likely included items that measured both socio-economic background and academic dishonesty. Respondents were asked to provide information about their socio-economic background (income or allowance level).

The collected data were subsequently analyzed using a two-way ANOVA. The Report on Two-Way ANOVA on the Relationship between Sex, Income, and Academic Dishonesty is shown in Table 7 and 8

Table 8: Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances for Academic Dishonesty

Source	F	df1	df2	Sig.
Academic dishonesty	1.454	8	96	.185

Source: Field survey (2023)

Before conducting the ANOVA analysis, the assumption for equality of variance was tested as shown in Table 7. The Levene's test for equality of variances indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was not violated, $F(8, 96) = 1.454$, $p = .185$

Table 9: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for Academic Dishonesty

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	3.697	8	.462	2.573	.014
Intercept	132.256	1	132.256	736.255	.000
Sex	2.867	1	2.867	15.958	.000
Income	1.050	4	.263	1.462	.220
sex * income	1.687	3	.562	3.131	.029
Error	17.245	96	.180	-	-
Total	531.112	105	-	-	-
Corrected Total	20.942	104	-	-	-

Source: Field survey (2023)

95

A two-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the influence of sex and income on academic dishonesty (AD). The main effect of sex was significant, $F(1, 96) = 15.958$, $p < .000$, suggesting that there were differences in academic dishonesty based on sex. Conversely, the main effect of income was not significant, $F(4, 96) = 1.462$, $p = .220$, implying that academic dishonesty does not vary significantly across different income groups.

Of particular note is the significant interaction effect between sex and income on academic dishonesty, $F(3, 96) = 3.131$, $p = .029$. This indicates that the influence of income on academic dishonesty is different for different sex groups. While income alone does not seem to significantly impact academic dishonesty, there is an interaction between sex and income that needs further exploration to understand its implications on academic behaviours.

A Post-hoc test was conducted using Tukey to find out the interaction effect. In the lowest income bracket of GHC 1000 or less, males (M=2.284, S.E = 0.069) exhibit a slightly higher mean Academic Dishonesty score compared to females (M=2.187, S.E = 0.109).

This trend persists in the next income bracket of GHC 1001 - 2000, where males maintain a slightly higher mean Academic Dishonesty score (M=2.258, S.E = 0.173) than females (M=2.045, SD=0.087). Notably, in the income bracket of GHC 2001 - 3000, males show a notably higher mean Academic Dishonesty score (M=2.995, S.E=0.300) compared to females (M=2.071, SD=0.113).

Furthermore, in the income bracket of 3001-4000, males (M=2.975, S.E = 0.300) exhibit a higher mean Academic Dishonesty score compared to females (M= 1.997, S.E = 0.245). However, data for females is absent in the

96

highest income bracket, "Above GHC 4000," limiting a complete comparison across all income levels.

Discussion of Findings

Educational Aspirations Level of University of Cape Coast master of philosophy students

From the findings of the study, it is evident that students possess strong educational aspirations. Their beliefs about continuing their education, gaining advanced skills, achieving a prestigious profession, uplifting their socio-economic status, and contributing to societal development were especially prominent. The relatively high mean scores suggest that the majority of students opine that postgraduate education as a beneficial pathway to personal and societal enhancement.

However, this keen inclination towards further education is contrasted with their views on whether there's a need to continue education after fulfilling job prerequisites or their perception of the zenith of academic achievement (i.e., a doctor's degree). These findings, given their lower mean scores and higher variability, reveal a more diverse array of perspectives.

The findings resonate with prior literature emphasizing the weight of educational aspirations on students' academic trajectories. For instance, as Sirin (2005) and Khattab (2015) pointed out, socio-economic background significantly impacts students' aspirations. The results parallel this observation, suggesting that the MPhil students, who presumably come from various socio-economic backgrounds, show strong educational aspirations, likely influenced by the benefits and opportunities that come with higher education.

Moreover, a meta-analysis conducted by Sirin (2005) on the relationship between socio-economic status of students and academic achievement can be relied on since the study used large sample sizes and included school and location. The study therefore can be generalized as compared to this current study which was confined to only University of Cape Coast Master of Philosophy college of education students with relatively small sample size of 105 respondents. As a result the findings are not in line with Sirin (2005) because the current findings revealed that educational aspirations was based on the benefits and opportunities attached to high education.

The role of parental influence, as highlighted by Davis-kean (2005), suggests that students' aspirations could be boosted by their parents' own educational backgrounds and expectations. The study findings echo this, given the emphasis students place on using education as a tool to raise their families' socio-economic status.

Additionally, peer influence, as delineated by Ryan and Shin(2011), aligns with the findings. Since MPhil programs typically attract high-achieving individuals, the collective educational aspirations might elevate due to the shared drive and motivation among peers.

Prevalence of Academic Dishonesty among University of Cape Coast master of philosophy students

The findings of the study shed light on the prevalence of academic dishonesty among students in different forms. By presenting both the mean and standard deviation, the data captures not just the average prevalence but also the variance in responses among students. From the findings it's apparent that academic dishonesty in the form of test-related cheating practices is a

significant concern, with many of these actions having means closer to 4. This suggests a frequent occurrence of such acts. The practices include copying from another student during a test, using unauthorized material, and signaling answers, among others. Conversely, specific forms of dishonesty, like padding bibliographies, paraphrasing without appropriate referencing, or fabricating research results, seem to be less prevalent, with mean scores lower than 2. This distinction highlights that while exam-related dishonesty is notably prevalent, certain forms of assignment-related dishonesty are less frequent.

The implications of the findings surrounding academic dishonesty present a multi-faceted challenge for educational institutions. Firstly, the observed high prevalence of test-related cheating practices poses a substantial threat to the integrity of academic evaluations. Such behaviours not only compromise the authentic assessment of students' knowledge and abilities but also undermine the very essence of educational merit. If students are able to succeed through deceptive means rather than genuine effort and understanding, the core values of education are placed at risk.

However, it's not enough to merely put deterrents in place. There's also a clear requirement for awareness programs. The data suggests that certain forms of academic dishonesty, particularly those related to assignments like unintentional paraphrasing without proper referencing, may stem from ignorance rather than deliberate deceit. This calls for educational institutions to invest more in awareness initiatives. By rolling out programs that underscore the significance of academic honesty and provide explicit training on the correct methods of referencing, students can be better equipped to avoid unintentional breaches of integrity.

Lastly, the influence of peer perceptions and behaviour cannot be overlooked. The findings hint at a concerning trend: students' perceptions of what's commonplace amongst their peers can heavily influence their own choices. If dishonesty is perceived as the norm, they are more likely to partake in such behaviours. This observation, which echoes the findings of Mensah and Azila-Gbettor (2018), underscores the importance of cultivating a robust culture of academic integrity within educational settings. In an environment where academic dishonesty is neither practiced nor accepted, students are less likely to see such behaviour as a viable or acceptable option.

The findings of the study resonate with the literature on academic dishonesty. As per the studies cited, academic dishonesty, especially in the form of cheating during tests and plagiarism, is alarmingly prevalent in different educational settings worldwide, from Australia (Brimble & Stevenson-Clarke, 2005) to Ghana (Mensah & Azila-Gbettor, 2018) and Mozambique (Coughlin, 2015). The data aligns with these findings, suggesting that this is a global concern.

Also, the acknowledgment of unintentional plagiarism among postgraduate students by Fatemi and Saito (2020) emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between unintentional mistakes and deliberate deceit. The variance in the practices of academic dishonesty (as depicted by the standard deviation) further reinforces the findings of McCabe & Trevino (1993) and Rettinger & Gallant (2022), indicating that academic dishonesty isn't a monolithic issue but comprises various actions, each with its patterns and causes.

Motivations for Academic Dishonesty among University of Cape Coast master of philosophy students

The third research question aimed to understand the reasons behind students' engagement in academic dishonesty. The findings, as detailed in Table 6, offer a perspective on why students resort to such behaviours. Some of the most prevalent reasons include the pressure to achieve high grades, the perception of not being caught, peer influence, and the convenience offered by technology, among others.

The data corroborates with existing literature on academic dishonesty. For instance, the pressure to achieve high grades was one of the dominant reasons, a finding supported by Anderman & Danner (2008) and Davis et al. (2011). The data reflects students' perceptions of the high stakes involved in academic performance, compelling them to take shortcuts to success. McCabe et al. (2012) further emphasize that when students are under immense pressure, whether self-imposed or from external sources, the temptation to resort to cheating increases, especially when they deem the potential repercussions of failure significant.

Fear of failure also emerges as a strong motivator, resonating with research from Diego (2017) and McCabe & Trevino (1993), where students, anxious about their performance, viewed cheating as a mechanism to circumvent feelings of inadequacy or to avoid disappointing significant figures in their lives.

The findings from research question three align well with existing literature on academic dishonesty. Similar to the studies by McCabe, Treviño, & Butterfield (2001) and Diego (2017), our data emphasizes the influence of

101

peers and societal norms on individual behaviour. Moreover, the identified reasons resonate with the broader issues discussed in literature, such as the impact of technological advances and the critical role of ethical education.

Relationship between Educational Aspirations and Academic Dishonesty

The results of the study indicate a weak but statistically significant positive correlation between educational aspirations and academic dishonesty, with a Pearson correlation value of .226. This suggests that as educational aspirations increase, there is a slight rise in tendencies towards academic dishonesty. This is counterintuitive to our original expectation based on the hypothesis.

This finding carries crucial implications for educational institutions and educators. The observation that even students with high educational aspirations may engage in academic dishonesty challenges the common belief that ambition alone can deter unethical practices. It underscores the necessity of promoting academic integrity not just among students who are perceived as less motivated, but across the entire spectrum of educational aspirations.

The literature has predominantly shown a protective influence of high educational aspirations against academic dishonesty. Studies like Anderman & Danner (2008) and Diego (2017) found that students with high aspirations are less likely to engage in dishonest practices. They posited that such students might view cheating as detrimental to their long-term goals. Additionally, McCabe et al. (2012) suggested that high aspirations correlate with intrinsic motivations to succeed ethically. However, our findings provide a nuanced perspective, suggesting that the relationship between aspirations and academic dishonesty isn't straightforward.

While our findings do resonate with the idea that students with diminished aspirations might resort to dishonest practices (as suggested by Anderman & Danner, 2008), it also raises questions about why those with high aspirations might have shown a slight inclination towards dishonesty. One possibility could be the intense pressure and competition that high-aspiring students face, driving them towards unethical shortcuts.

The Influence of Gender and Income Level on Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty is an issue that has merited significant attention given its implications on the value of education, trust within academic institutions, and overall moral standing of students. The hypothesis under consideration sought to understand the nuanced influences of gender and income on tendencies towards academic dishonesty.

The findings from the two-way ANOVA suggest that gender plays a significant role in academic dishonesty, with there being clear differences based on sex. However, income level, when examined as an independent factor, does not have a significant bearing on academic dishonesty. Interestingly, the interaction between gender and income emerged as significant. This suggests that while income on its own might not be a strong determinant, its influence when coupled with gender is noteworthy.

These findings partially reject the hypothesis: while gender is indeed a determinant, income level in isolation doesn't seem to be. However, the interplay between gender and income presents a more intricate narrative that demands exploration.

The significant main effect of gender on academic dishonesty aligns with the varied findings in the literature, as depicted by McCabe, Treviño, &

103

Butterfield (2001). The inherent societal constructs and the distinct moral paths suggested by Gender Socialization Theory and Gilligan's perspective could be potential reasons behind this.

The non-significance of income, as an isolated factor, might challenge some established notions like those proposed by Stone, Jawahar, & Kisamore (2009). However, when income interplays with gender, it becomes a significant factor, highlighting the multifaceted nature of academic dishonesty's determinants.

The ambiguity in gender's role, as highlighted by McCabe, Treviño, & Butterfield (2001), finds some clarity in our findings, suggesting that gender is indeed a determinant. The non-significance of income as an independent factor is intriguing, especially given the perspectives of Stone, Jawahar and Kisamore (2009) and Haines, Diekhoff, LaBeff and Clark (1986). Our findings suggest that while socioeconomic status might influence many aspects of academic life, its direct influence on academic dishonesty is perhaps overshadowed by other determinants, unless combined with gender.

The significant interaction between gender and income suggests that certain gender-income group combinations might be more predisposed to academic dishonesty than others. This intricate relationship demands a closer look, especially considering intersectional frameworks like that of Crenshaw (1989). For instance, low-income females might be under different societal pressures than their male or high-income counterparts.

While the findings provide valuable insights into the roles of gender and income in academic dishonesty, it's evident that the landscape is intricate. The interwoven nature of societal constructs, moral pathways, economic

challenges, and inherent biases means that academic dishonesty cannot be pinned down to a single or even a couple of determinants. There's a dire need for more in-depth research that holistically evaluates the plethora of influencing factors and their interplays, offering a comprehensive understanding and solutions to counteract this pervasive challenge in academia.

The Influence of Gender and Income Level on Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty, a term synonymous with cheating, has been a subject of significant concern in educational systems across the globe. Its pervasive nature in academia underscores the importance of understanding the factors that might predispose individuals to such behaviour. Among the variables explored, gender and income level have consistently emerged as notable determinants. This essay delves into the literature examining the nexus between these two factors and academic dishonesty.

McCabe, Treviño, & Butterfield (2001) underscored the ambiguity surrounding gender's role in academic dishonesty. Their findings revealed that while certain studies highlighted males as more predisposed to dishonesty, others found no marked gender difference. Digging deeper, the potential reasons behind these discrepancies can be found in the Gender Socialization Theory. As Leming (1980) posits, societal constructs might inadvertently condition males to be inherently competitive, consequently pushing them to risk dishonest behaviours to secure success.

Further adding to the discourse, Gilligan (1982) provides a moral development lens. Arguing that males and females tread different paths in moral development, Gilligan's perspective implies that these distinct paths

might influence their propensities for academic dishonesty. For males, a focus on rules and justice is paramount, whereas females navigate their moral compass based on relationships and care.

Shifting the focus to income level, Stone, Jawahar, & Kisamore (2009) presented the perspective that students hailing from lower socioeconomic strata might experience amplified pressures to excel academically, thereby resorting to dishonest means. This is further supported by Haines, Diekhoff, LaBeff, & Clark (1986), who introduced the Resource Deprivation Theory.

The theory emphasizes that students from economically challenged backgrounds might lack critical academic resources, compelling them to embrace dishonest behaviours. Adding another layer, Bourdieu's (1986) concept of cultural capital underscores that students from affluent backgrounds possess inherent cultural assets, such as familiarity with academic norms, potentially decreasing their likelihood of academic dishonesty.

However, literature that exclusively examines the intersection of gender and income in the context of academic dishonesty is scant. Some studies hint at the distinctive pressures that might besiege low-income females due to societal expectations, combined with the multifaceted nature of their identity (Crenshaw, 1989).

106

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Summary

The chosen research design was a descriptive survey, enabling comprehensive data collection and objectivity in analysis. The study focused on Master of Philosophy students from the College of Education, University of Cape Coast, using a convenience sampling technique. The research instrument, including sections on educational aspirations, academic dishonesty, and reasons for misconduct, underwent pilot testing to ensure suitability. Validity and reliability assessments indicated sound measurement properties. Ethical considerations were upheld, and data analysis employed both descriptive and inferential statistics to explore the relationships between educational aspirations, socio-economic background, and academic dishonesty.

Summary of findings

In this study about University of Cape Coast Master of Philosophy students, the findings found some important things. This section highlights the main points that were discovered:

Insights from the study indicate that University of Cape Coast master of philosophy students predominantly harbor elevated educational goals. They associate higher studies with opportunities for personal growth, financial upliftment, and societal contribution. Yet, opinions differ on the imperative and monetary returns of pursuing advanced education.

The investigation reveals a concerning trend of academic dishonesty among University of Cape Coast master of philosophy students, with a

107

particular spike in dishonest behaviours during examinations. In contrast, dishonesty related to assignments appears less frequent. Notably, the magnitude of various dishonest practices isn't uniform.

The reasons propelling students towards academic dishonesty are multifaceted. Factors range from the belief in minimal detection risk and aiding peers to external pressures such as limited time and personal emergencies. Ethical stances on dishonest practices demonstrate variability, with some students swayed by the allure of easy success, peer influences, and academic stressors. An unexpected observation was the indication by some students that faculty members might inadvertently promote dishonest practices.

The data points to a modest yet noteworthy positive relationship between the intensity of educational ambitions and tendencies of academic dishonesty in University of Cape Coast master of philosophy students. The implication being, a marginal uptick in educational aspirations correlates with a slight rise in dishonest tendencies.

Socio-economic factors, gauged by income levels, don't seem to have a pronounced effect on academic dishonesty for these students. Intriguingly, a marked interplay is observed between gender and income in relation to academic dishonesty, suggesting income-related effects on dishonesty differ between genders. This intersection demands further investigative probing.

Conclusion

A significant revelation from this study is the troubling prevalence of academic dishonesty among graduate students, particularly during

examination periods. This may have adverse consequences on the quality of students churned out of the educational system.

Upon further exploration into the underlying reasons behind academic dishonesty, a multitude of interconnected factors influencing these behaviours are uncovered. From perceptions of low risks of detection to personal challenges and differing ethical perspectives, the causes are varied, underscoring the necessity for comprehensive approaches to addressing academic dishonesty.

The significant agreement with motivations related to avoiding detection and succumbing to peer pressure underscores the pervasive influence of social dynamics and fear of consequences on cheating behaviors. Moreover, the moderate agreement with time pressure and altruistic motives suggests that external pressures and desires to assist peers can also contribute to cheating tendencies.

This study found a weak positive correlation between educational aspiration and academic dishonesty. This suggests that students with higher educational aspirations may engage in academic dishonesty slightly more than those with lower aspirations.

Regarding the formulated hypotheses, the research identifies a discernible yet mild positive association between educational goals and academic dishonesty. However, the strength of this correlation is modest, suggesting the presence of other influential factors guiding dishonest actions. Moreover, the relationship between socio-economic status and dishonest behaviour appears intricate, with income not being the sole determinant but exhibiting a significant interplay with gender.

Recommendation

In light of the findings obtained from the study on the educational aspirations, academic dishonesty patterns, and their underlying motivations among University of Cape Coast master of philosophy students, it becomes crucial to contemplate on actionable steps that can be taken to enhance the learning experience, maintain academic integrity, and address systemic challenges. The recommendations stem from a deep understanding of the intricacies uncovered during the research and are tailored to address the specific nuances of the University of Cape Coast Master of Philosophy academic environment. This section endeavors to provide a blueprint for action that, if implemented judiciously, can foster an environment of genuine learning and uphold the sanctity of academic pursuits.

1. Recognizing the high aspirations of students can help in tailoring academic programs to meet these expectations. Institutions might benefit from offering specialized courses, workshops, or mentorship programs to support students in their quest for advanced skills and knowledge. For students, knowing that their peers share high aspirations can foster a supportive academic environment. This collective motivation can encourage collaborative learning and resource-sharing.

2. The results also suggest a need for school authorities to address the diversified views on the extent of education. Programs or counseling services can be implemented to enlighten students about the potential benefits of continuous learning, even after securing a job. The data paves the way for exploring deeper nuances.

110

3. The sheer scale of dishonest practices indicates an urgent need for preventive measures. Educational institutions, in response, should consider adopting more stringent measures that deter students from engaging in such activities. Practical steps could range from stricter invigilation during exams to the integration of technological aids, such as plagiarism checkers. Furthermore, the introduction of honor codes can serve as moral reminders, emphasizing personal responsibility and ethical conduct in academic pursuits.

4. The counselling center of the department should provide Counseling and academic support to students engaging in dishonest practices due to time constraints and personal crises, universities should offer counseling services and academic support that addresses these issues. This can help alleviate academic pressures and provide alternative solutions to their problems.

5. The Institutional Research Department and Academic Assessment Committee should conduct similar studies periodically. This ensures that interventions remain relevant and effective in curbing academic dishonesty.

REFERENCES

Abraham, C., & Sheeran, P. (2003). Acting on intentions: The role of anticipated regret. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 42*(4), 495-511.

Adkins, J., Kenkel, C., & Lim, C. L. (2005). Deterrents to online academic dishonesty. *The Journal of Learning in Higher Education*, *1*(1), 17-22.

Adler, N. E., & Stewart, J. (2007). The MacArthur scale of subjective social status. In J. R. Soc. Sci, 3, 129-152.s

Adzima, K. (2020). Examining online cheating in higher education using traditional classroom cheating as a guide. *Electronic Journal of E-Learning*, *18*(6), pp476-493.

Ajzen, I. (1985). From intentions to actions: A theory of planned behavior. In J. Kuhl & J. Beckmann (Eds.), Action control: From cognition to behavior (pp. 11–39). Springer.

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behaviour. Organizational behaviour and human decision processes, 50(2), 179-211.

Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (1980). Understanding attitudes and predicting social behaviour. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Anderman, E. M., & Danner, F. (2008). Achievement goals and academic cheating. Revue internationale de psychologie sociale, 21(1), 155-180.

Anderman, E. M., & Freeman, T. M. (2004). Students' sense of belonging in school. In P. R. Pintrich & M. L. Maehr (Eds.), Advances in motivation and achievement (Vol. 13, pp. 27–63). JAI Press.

Anderson, M. S., & Steneck, N. H. (2011, January). The problem of plagiarism. In *Urologic oncology: Seminars and original investigations* (Vol. 29, No. 1, pp. 90-94). Elsevier.

Ashworth, P., Bannister, P., & Thorne, P. (2017). Guilty in whose eyes? University students' perceptions of cheating and plagiarism in academic work and assessment. Studies in higher education, 22(2), 187-203.

Awasthi, S. (2019). Plagiarism and academic misconduct: A systematic review. DESIDOC Journal of Library Information Technology, 39(2).

Babbie, E. R. (2016). The practice of social research. Cengage Learning.

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioural change. Psychological Review, 84(2), 191-215.

Bandura, A. (1986). Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Bandura, A. (1997). Self-efficacy: The exercise of control. Freeman.

Baran, L., Jonason PK (2020) Academic dishonesty among university students: The roles of the psychopathy, motivation, and self-efficacy. PLoS ONE 15(8): e0238141. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone

Barnett, R., Namiba, A., & Okabe, M. (2015). Academic ethics: Is anybody doing it? Ethics & Behaviour, 25(3), 197-201.

Bennett, R. E., & Gitomer, D. H. (2009). Transforming K–12 assessment: Integrating accountability testing, formative assessment, and professional support. Educational Testing Service.

Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (1998). Inside the black box: Raising standards through classroom assessment. Phi Delta Kappan, 80(2), 139–148.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (pp. 241-258). Greenwood.

Bretag, T. (2019). Contract cheating will erode trust in science. *Nature*, *574*(7780), 599-600.

Bretag, T., Harper, R., Burton, M., Ellis, C., Newton, P., van Haeringen, K., Saddiqui, S., & Rozenberg, P. (2013). Contract cheating and the academic integrity movement. Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 35(1), 1-12.

Brimble, M., & Stevenson-Clarke, P. (2005). Perceptions of the prevalence and seriousness of academic dishonesty in Australian universities. 32(3), 19-44.

Bryman, A. (2016). Social research methods. Oxford University Press. Colnerud, G., & Rosander, M. (2009). Academic dishonesty, ethical norms and learning. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, *34*(5), 505-517.

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, (1), 139-168

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. Sage publications.

Davis, S. F., Drinan, P. F., & Gallant, T. B. (2011). Cheating in school: What we know and what we can do: John Wiley & Sons.

Davis, S. F., Grover, C. A., Becker, A. H., & McGregor, L. N. (1992). Academic dishonesty: Prevalence, determinants, techniques, and punishments. *Teaching of Psychology*, *19*(1), 16-20.

Davis-Kean, P. E. (2005). The influence of parent education and family income on child achievement: The indirect role of parental expectations and the home environment. Journal of Family Psychology, 19(2), 294–304.

Diego, L. A. B. (2017). Friends with Benefits: Causes and Effects of Learners' Cheating Practices during Examination. IAFOR Journal of Education, 5(2), 121-138.

DiVall, M. V., & Schlesselman, L. S. (2016). Academic dishonesty: whose fault is it anyway?. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, *80*(3).

Draper, M. J., Ibezim, V., & Newton, P. M. (2017). Development of a contract cheating detection system. Journal of Academic Ethics, 15(2), 103-124.

Dzakadzie, Y. (2018). *Prevalence and Predictors of Academic Dishonesty among Undergraduate Students in Public Universities in Ghana* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Cape Coast).

Eccles, J. S., & Roeser, R. W. (2011). Schools, academic motivation, and stage-environment fit. In R. M. Lerner & L. Steinberg (Eds.), Handbook of adolescent psychology: Vol. 2. Contextual influences on adolescent development (3rd ed., pp. 125–153). Wiley.

Ferrari, L., Nota, L., & Soresi, S. (2010). Academic self-efficacy beliefs and quality of experience in learning. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 39(6), 595-606.

Fowler, F. J. (2013). Survey research methods. Sage publications.

Franklyn-Stokes, A., & Newstead, S. (1995). Undergraduate cheating: Who does what and why? Studies in Higher Education, 20(2), 159-172.

Friedman, A., Blau, I., & Eshet-Alkalai, Y. (2016). Cheating and Feeling Honest: Committing and Punishing Analog versus Digital Academic Dishonesty Behaviours in Higher Education. *Interdisciplinary Journal of E-Learning & Learning Objects*, *12*.

Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. Harvard University Press.

Grijalva, T. C., Nowell, C., & Kerkvliet, J. (2006). Academic honesty and online courses. College Student Journal, 40(1), 180-185.

Haines, V. J., Diekhoff, G. M., LaBeff, E. E., & Clark, R. E. (1986). College cheating: Immaturity, lack of commitment, and the neutralizing attitude. *Research in Higher Education, 25*(4), 342-354.

Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2018). Multivariate data analysis (8th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Halle, T. G., Kurtz-Costes, B., & Mahoney, J. L. (1997). Family influences on school achievement in low-income, African American children. Journal of Educational Psychology, 89(3), 527–537.

Haveman, R., & Smeeding, T. M. (2006). The role of higher education in social mobility. The Future of Children, 16(2), 125-150.

Hendy, N. T., Montargot, N., & Papadimitriou, A. (2021). Cultural differences in academic dishonesty: A social learning perspective. *Journal of Academic Ethics*, *19*, 49-70.

Hill, N. E., & Tyson, D. F. (2009). Parental involvement in middle school: A meta-analytic assessment of the strategies that promote achievement. Developmental Psychology, 45(3), 740-763.

Hollinger, R. C., & Lanza-Kaduce, L. (2009). Academic dishonesty and the perceived effectiveness of countermeasures: An empirical survey of cheating at a major public university. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, *46*(4), 1137-1152

Holman, A., & Cahill, M. (2016). Academic dishonesty and workplace dishonesty: A multilevel analysis. Journal of Business Ethics, 139(3), 537-549.

Horton, J., Kumar, D. K., & Wood, A. (2020). Detecting academic fraud using Benford law: The case of Professor James Hunton. *Research Policy*, *49*(8), 104-114.

Hosny, M., & Fatima, S. (2014). Attitude of students towards cheating and plagiarism: University case study. Journal of Applied Sciences, 14(8), 748-757.

Hosny, M., & Fatima, S. (2014). Attitude of students towards cheating and plagiarism: University case study. Journal of Applied Sciences, 14(8), 748-757.

Ives, B., & Giukin, L. (2020). Patterns and predictors of academic dishonesty in Moldovan university students. *Journal of Academic Ethics*, *18*, 71-88.

Jackson, K. M., Trochim, W. M. K., & Congdon, H. B. (2014). Socioeconomic and psychosocial predictors of academic achievement. Educational Research and Evaluation, 20(6), 471-488.

Jensen, L. A., Arnett, J. J., Feldman, S. S., & Cauffman, E. (2002). It's wrong, but everybody does it: Academic dishonesty among high school and college students. Contemporary educational psychology, 27(2), 209-228.

Johnson, S. D., & Olivo, G. (2013). Academic cheating and perceptions of mastery goal structure: A review and recommendations. Journal of Educational Psychology, 105(1), 1-27.

Keith, I. Literature review: Academic dishonesty. What causes it, how to prevent it. Retrieved from https://academictech.uchicago.edu/2018/11/16/literature-review-academic-dishonesty-what-causes-it-how-to-prevent-it/

Kennedy, K., Nowak, S., Raghuraman, R., Thomas, J., & Davis, S. F. (2000). Academic dishonesty and distance learning: student and faculty views. *College Student Journal, 34*(2), 309-315

Khattab, N. (2015). Students' aspirations, expectations and school achievement: What really matters? British educational research journal, 41(5), 731-748.

Kibler, W. L., & Scheid, K. L. (2011). Academic dishonesty and self-efficacy: Does one really affect the other? Journal of College Student Development, 52(3), 227-237.

Kleinig, J. (2011). Cheating lessons: Learning from academic dishonesty. Harvard University Press.

Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, *30*(3), 607-610.

Krou, M.R., Fong, C.J. & Hoff, M.A. Achievement Motivation and Academic Dishonesty: A Meta-Analytic Investigation. *Educ Psychol Rev* **33**, 427–458 (2021).

Leming, J. S. (1980). Cheating behaviour, subject variables, and components of the internal-external scale under high and low risk conditions. *Journal of Educational Research*, 74(2), 83-87.

Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (2000). Contextual supports and barriers to career choice: A social cognitive analysis. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 47(1), 36-49.

Lin, H. F. (2006). Understanding behavioural intention to participate in virtual communities. *CyberPsychology & Behaviour*, *9*(5), 540-547.

Loukas, A., & Robinson, S. (2004). Examining the moderating role of perceived school climate in early adolescent adjustment. Journal of Research on Adolescence, 14(2), 209–233.

Martin, B. (1994). Plagiarism: a misplaced emphasis. *Journal of Information Ethics*, *3*(2), 447-451.

Mau, W. C., & Bikos, L. H. (2000). Educational and vocational aspirations of minority and female students: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 78*(2), 186-194.

Mazar, N., Amir, O., & Ariely, D. (2008). The dishonesty of honest people: A theory of self-concept maintenance. Journal of Marketing Research, 45(6), 633-644.

McCabe, D. L., & Pavela, G. (2000). Some good news about academic integrity. Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning, 32(5), 32-38.

McCabe, D. L., & Trevino, L. K. (1993). Academic dishonesty: Honor codes and other contextual influences. The journal of higher education, 64(5), 522-538.

McCabe, D. L., Butterfield, K. D., & Trevino, L. K. (2012). Cheating in college: Why students do it and what educators can do about it: JHU Press.

McCabe, D. L., Butterfield, K. D., & Trevino, L. K. (2012). Cheating in college: Why students do it and what educators can do about it: JHU Press.

McCabe, D. L., Treviño, L. K., & Butterfield, K. D. (2001). Cheating in academic institutions: *A Decade of Research*. *11*(3), 219-232.

McCabe, D. L., Trevino, L. K., & Butterfield, K. D. (2012). Cheating in college: Why students do it and what educators can do about it. Johns Hopkins University Press.

McGilligan, C., McClenahan, C., & Adamson, G. (2009). Attitudes and intentions to performing testicular self-examination: Utilizing an extended theory of planned behaviour. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 44*(4), 404-406.

McLoyd, V. C. (1998). Socioeconomic disadvantage and child development. *American Psychologist, 53*(2), 185-204.

Miller, A. D., Murdock, T. B., & Grotewiel, M. M. (2017). Addressing academic dishonesty among the highest achievers. *Theory Into Practice*, *56*(2), 121-128.

Mimiaga, M. J., Reisner, S. L., Reilly, L., Soroudi, N., & Safren, S. A. (2009). Individual interventions. In *HIV prevention* (pp. 203-239). Academic Press.

Minarcik, J., & Bridges, A. J. (2015). Psychology graduate students weigh in: Qualitative analysis of academic dishonesty and suggestion prevention strategies. *Journal of Academic Ethics*, *13*, 197-216.

Mohammadkarimi, E. (2023). Teachers' reflections on academic dishonesty in EFL students' writings in the era of artificial intelligence. *Journal of Applied Learning and Teaching*, *6*(2).

Murdock, T. B., & Anderman, E. M. (2006). Motivational perspectives on student cheating: Toward an integrated model of academic dishonesty. *Educational Psychologist, 41*(3), 129–145.

Newton, P. M., & Lang, C. (2016). Custom essay writers, freelancers, and other paid third parties. In T. Bretag (Ed.), Handbook of Academic Integrity (pp. 249-271). Springer.

Norman, P., & Conner, M. (2006). The theory of planned behaviour and binge drinking: Assessing the moderating role of past behaviour within the theory of planned behaviour. *British Journal of Health Psychology, 11*(1), 55-70.

Obeidat, M. R., & Abdelfattah, F. M. (2019). The prevalence and nature of academic dishonesty among university students in the Middle East: A systematic review. *Journal of Academic Ethics, 17*(1), 1-33.

Park, C. (2003). In other (people's) words: Plagiarism by university students— literature and lessons. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 28*(5), 471-488.

Park, C. (2017). In other (people's) words: plagiarism by university students—literature and lessons. Academic ethics, 525-542.

Parkinson, A. L., Hatje, E., Kynn, M., Kuballa, A. V., Donkin, R., & Reinke, N. B. (2022). Collusion is still a tricky topic: student perspectives of academic integrity using assessment-specific examples in a science subject. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, *47*(8), 1416-1428.

Pecorari, D. (2019). Plagiarism in second-language writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 43*, 1-5.

Pellegrino, J. W., Chudowsky, N., & Glaser, R. (2001). Knowing what students know: The science and design of educational assessment. National Academies Press.

Peters, R. M., & Templin, T. N. (2010). Theory of Planned Behaviour, Self-Care Motivation, and Blood Pressure Self-Care. *Research Theory Nursing Practice, 24*(3), 172-186.

Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2017). Nursing research: Generating and assessing evidence for nursing practice (10th ed.). Wolters Kluwer.

Popham, W. J. (2009). Classroom assessment: What teachers need to know (6th ed.). Pearson.

Poropat, A. E. (2009). A meta-analysis of the five-factor model of personality and academic performance. *Psychological Bulletin, 135*(2), 322–338.

Rhodes, R. E., & Dickau, L. (2013). Moderators of the intention-behaviour relationship in the physical activity domain: a systematic review. *British Journal of Sports Medicine, 47*(4), 215-225.

Rothon, C., Arephin, M., Klineberg, E., Cattell, V., & Stansfeld, S. (2011). Structural and socio-psychological influences on adolescents' educational aspirations and subsequent academic achievement. *Social Psychology of Education, 14*, 209-231.

Rothstein, J., & Evans, W. (2005). Do higher test scores in Texas make for better schools? Policy Memorandum No. 107. Economic Policy Institute.

Ryan, A. M., & Shin, H. (2011). Help-seeking tendencies during early adolescence: An examination of motivational correlates and consequences for achievement. *Learning and Instruction, 21*(2), 247-256.

Satterlee, A. G. (2002). Academic Dishonesty among Students: Consequences and Interventions.

Scanlon, P. M. (2003). Student online plagiarism: how do we respond?. *College Teaching*, *51*(4), 161-165.

Sileo, J. M., & Sileo, T. W. (2008). Academic dishonesty and online classes: A rural education perspective. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, *27*(1-2), 55-60.

Sirin, S. R. (2005). Socioeconomic status and academic achievement: A meta-analytic review of research. *Review of Educational Research, 75*(3), 417–453.

Stiggins, R. J. (2005). From formative assessment to assessment for learning: A path to success in standards-based schools. *Phi Delta Kappan, 87*(4), 324–328.

Stone, T. H., Jawahar, I. M., & Kisamore, J. L. (2009). Using the theory of planned behaviour and cheating justifications to predict academic misconduct. *Career Development International, 14*(3), 221-241.

Treviño, L. K., & Nelson, K. A. (1995). Managing moral hazard in autonomous work teams: The importance of procedural justice. *Academy of Management Review, 20*(1), 103-134.

Wajda-Johnston, V. A., Handal, P. J., Brawer, P. A., & Fabricatore, A. N. (2001). Academic dishonesty at the graduate level. *Ethics & Behaviour*, *11*(3), 287-305

Walker, M., & Townley, C. (2012). Contract cheating: A new challenge for academic honesty?. *Journal of Academic Ethics*, *10*, 27-44.

Warshaw, P. R. (1980). A new model for predicting behavioural intentions: An alternative to Fishbein. *Journal of marketing research*, *17*(2), 153-172.

Warshaw, P. R., & Davis, F. D. (1985). The accuracy of behavioural intention versus behavioural expectation for predicting behavioural goals. *The Journal of Psychology*, *119*(6), 599-602.

Webb, T. L., & Sheeran, P. (2006). Does changing behavioural intentions engender behaviour change? A meta-analysis of the experimental evidence. *Psychological bulletin*, *132*(2), 249.

Whitley, B. E., Nelson, A. B., & Jones, C. J. (1999). Gender differences in cheating attitudes and classroom cheating behaviour: A meta-analysis. *Sex Roles, 41*(9-10), 657-680.

Wideman, M. (2011). Caring or collusion? Academic dishonesty in a school of nursing. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, *41*(2), 28-43.

124

Winardi, R. D., & Anggraeni, M. A. (2017). Academic dishonesty among accounting students: Some Indonesian evidence. *Jurnal Akuntansi Dan Keuangan Indonesia*, *14*(2), 2.

Yang, S. C. (2012). Attitudes and behaviours related to academic dishonesty: A survey of Taiwanese graduate students. *Ethics & Behaviour*, *22*(3), 218-237.

Yuping, Z. (2014). Educational expectations, school experiences and academic achievements: A longitudinal examination. An International Journal, 12(1), 43-65.

Yuping, Z. (2014). Educational expectations, school experiences and academic achievements: A longitudinal examination. *An International Journal, 12*(1), 43-65.
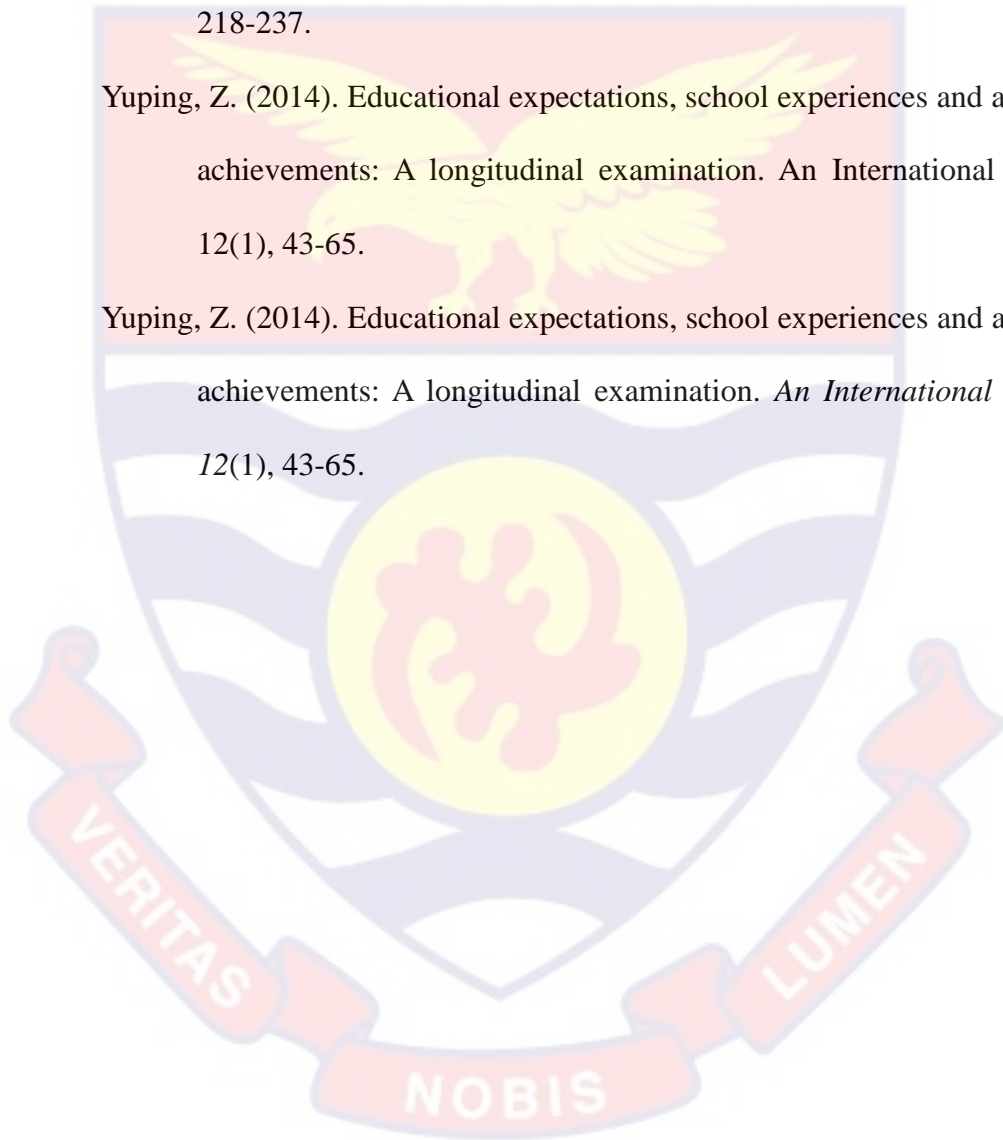
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES

FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGY

Dear Respondent,

The purpose of this survey is to gather data from students about their educational aspirations and academic activities. You are encouraged to be as honest as possible. The confidentiality of your response is guaranteed. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

DIRECTIONS: Please tick [√] where appropriate

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Sex
   a. Male ( )
   b. Female ( )

2. Income/allowance per month
   a. Ghs 1000 or less ( )
   b. Ghs 1001-2000 ( )
   c. Ghs 2001-3000 ( )
   d. Ghs 3001-4000 ( )
   e. Ghs 4000 and above ( )

3. Occupation
   a. Student (Part time work) ( )
   b. Government employee ( )
   c. Teacher/Educator ( )
   d. Consultant ( )
   e. Other (Please specify) ( )

126

Section B: Educational Aspirations

The statements represent your educational aspirations. Indicate whether you agree or disagree with these statements using the scale: 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Agree, 4= Strongly Agree.

S/N	Statement	SD	D	A	SA
1.	I am highly encouraged to continue my education beyond postgraduate degree				
2.	Postgraduate studies is a way for me to obtain advantaged skills in order to support my career in the future				
3.	Further studies is a way for me to obtain prestigious profession in the society				
4.	Further education is a way for me to raise the socio-economic status of my family				
5.	Furthering my education will help me develop intellectual capacity needed for the development of myself, my nation and the world at large				
6.	Progressing in my educational career is very important to me since I desire to be well established in order to help people who are less privileged				
7.	I have plans to enrol on some professional programmes to acquire some professional degree after my first degree				
8.	Higher education is a way for me to get advantaged skills that can help me to earn high income in future				
9.	Once I finish my postgraduate education needed for a particular job , I see no need to continue in school				
10.	As far as I know now, the highest degree to earn is doctors' degree				

Section C: Academic Related Activities

Indicate how often you have engaged in the following activities in your education. Use the scale: (1) **N**ever; (2) **S**eldom (1-2 times); (3) **O**ccasionally (3-5 times); or (4) **F**requently (6 or more times). These sections were the same for both surveys.

S/N	Statement	N	S	O	F
1	Copying from another student during a test.				
2	One student allowing another to copy from them in a test				
3	Taking unauthorised material into a test – notes, pre-programmed calculator				
4	Giving answers to another student by signals in a test				
5	Receiving answers from another student by signals in a test.				
6	Getting someone else to pretend they are the student – impersonating the student in a test				
7	Continuing to write after a test has finished				
8	Gaining unauthorised access to test material before sitting – test paper, marking schedule				
9	Requesting special consideration/deferred exam (eg for illness) knowing that the conditions are not genuinely met				
10	Padding out a bibliography with references that were not actually used				
11	Paying another person to complete an assignment				
12	Writing an assignment for someone else				
13	Paraphrasing information from a web site, book or periodical without referencing the source				
14	Copying information directly from a web site, book or periodical with reference to the source but no quote marks				
15	Copying information directly from a web site, book or periodical without referencing the source				
16	Copying information directly from another student's assignment (current or past) without their consent				
17	Copying information directly from another student's assignment (current or past) with their consent.				
18	Falsifying the results of one's research				
19	Working together on an assignment when it should be individual				

| 20 | Preventing other students access to resources required to complete an assignment | | | | |

Section D: Reasons for Engaging in Academic Dishonesty

S/N	Statements	SD	D	A	SA
1	I wasn't likely to be caught.				
2	I wanted to help a friend.				
2	The assessment was too time-consuming				
4	The assessment was too difficult.				
5	I had a personal crisis.				
6	I didn't think it was wrong				
7	It was easy – the temptation was too great.				
8	The due date was too soon				
9	The teacher hadn't taught me well enough				
10	I was under pressure to get good grades				
11	Other students do it (or urged me to do it).				
12	I thought the assessment was unfair.				
13	I thought if I helped someone else, they might help me.				
14	I hadn't heard of other students being penalised before.				
15	The due date coincided with other assessments due.				
16	The content of the assessment was not of interest to me				
17	My teacher encouraged it.				
18	Cheating is a victimless crime – it doesn't harm anyone.				
19	It was unintentional				
20	No reason.				

129

APPENDIX B: ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES
ETHICAL REVIEW BOARD

UNIVERSITY POST OFFICER
CAPE COAST, GHANA

Our Ref. CES/ERB/UCC/edu/V8-23/75

Your Ref.................

Date: 22nd August, 2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

ETHICAL REQUIREMENTS CLEARANCE FOR RESEARCH STUDY

Chairma CES-ERB
Prof. J. O. Omotosho
jomotosho@ucc.edu.gh
0243784739

Vice Chairman, CES-ERB
Prof. K. Edjah
kedjah@ucc.edu.gh
0244742357

Secretary CES-ERB
Prof. Linda Dzama Forde
forde@ucc.edu.gh
0244786680

The bearer, Inusah Mahama Shaani

Reg. No. Ef/MEP/20/0008

M.Phil./Ph.D student in the Department of Education and Psychology .... in the College of Education Studies University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana. He/She wishes to Undertake of research study on the topic:

Predictors of academic dishonesty among University of Cape Coast College of Education Mphil students

The Ethical Review Board (ERB) of the College of Education Studies (CES) has assessed his/her proposal and confirmed that the proposal satisfies the College's ethical requirements for the conduct of the study.

In view of the above, the researcher has been cleared and given approval to commence his/her study. The ERB would be grateful if you would give him/her the necessary assistance to facilitate the conduct of the said research.

Thank You.

Yours faithfully,

Prof. Linda Dzama Forde
(Secretary, CES-ERB)

130

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM

Title: ASPIRATIONS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS AS PREDICTORS OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

Introduction: You are being invited to participate in a research study conducted by Inusah Mahama Saani, a researcher from University of Cape Coast. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between students' aspirations, socio-economic background, and academic dishonesty among MPhil students at the UCC College of Education. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and this form provides you with information about the study so that you can make an informed decision about your participation.

Procedure: If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire that will inquire about your personal aspirations, socio-economic background, and experiences related to academic honesty. The questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Your responses will be confidential, and your identity will be kept anonymous.

Risks and Benefits: There are minimal risks associated with participating in this study. The questions in the questionnaire are related to your personal experiences and opinions, and no direct harm is expected. Your participation will contribute to a better understanding of the factors that influence academic dishonesty among MPhil students, which may help improve academic integrity programs in the future.

Confidentiality: Your responses will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. No personally identifiable information will be included in

the study's findings or reports. Your data will be stored securely and only accessible to the researcher and authorized personnel.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences. Your decision to participate or not will not affect your relationship with the UCC College of Education or any educational opportunities.

Contact Information: If you have any questions about the study, you can contact the researcher, Inusah Mahama Ssaani, at nabilasaani3030@stu.ucc.edu.gh .

Consent: By agreeing to participate, you acknowledge that you have read and understood the information provided in this form. You understand that your participation is voluntary, and you consent to the use of your responses for research purposes.

Please select one of the following options:

☐ I agree to participate in the study.

☐ I do not wish to participate in the study.

Participant's Name: _____

Participant's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Thank you for considering participation in this research study. Your contribution is greatly appreciated.