

Strategies for Curbing Examination Malpractices: A Mediating Role of Gender

Justice Dadzie, Ruth Annan-Brew (PhD), John Ahorsu-Walker

Department of Education and Psychology, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana

Abstract: The purpose of the study was to examine the perception of teachers and students towards the efficiency of the techniques implemented to reduce examination malpractices in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis. Two hypotheses were tested. The design for the study was a descriptive survey. The sample of the study comprised 280 invigilation teachers and 370 students from 10 public senior high schools in Sekondi-Takoradi. A 4-point rating scale questionnaire named "Stakeholders Perceptions of the Effectiveness of the Strategies for Curbing Examination Malpractice Questionnaire (SPESCEMQ)" was adapted. Means, standard deviation and, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used for analysing data. The results of the study revealed that the strategies adopted for curbing pre-examination malpractice strategies were effective, but post-examination malpractices were slightly effective in Sekondi-Takoradi, Ghana.

Keywords: Examination misconduct, Gender, Pre-examination strategies, During examination strategies, Post examination strategies

I. INTRODUCTION

The cornerstone to economic prosperity is education. It is the only way to get information in all aspects of life, which is the foundation of progress. As a result, every country invests extensively in educating its citizens so that they are well-versed in all aspects of the country's economy. At every educational attainment, the educated are expected to demonstrate some degree of knowledge to contribute to the overall economic growth of the nation. As a result, to demonstrate that one has attained the appropriate level of knowledge, he or she must pass an examination at that level of education. The outcome of the examination defines an individual's advancement. Therefore, an examination can be seen as one of the most essential and practical techniques of determining the level of student performance in a certain line of study or instruction. "Any test that will give a true assessment of students' performance must be legitimate, trustworthy, and free of examination misconduct" (Onuka & Durowoju, 2013 p. 342).

1.1 Background to the Study

Education, according to Asante-Kyei and Nduro (2014), is amongst the most important elements for every nation's socioeconomic growth. An examination, in their opinion, is one of the assessment strategies that is used to review and assess the output of the educational structure regularly. Academia helps to develop students' talents, competencies, and job-ready skills in preparation for the labour market. As a result, an examination is a necessary process in the educational system. According to Asante-Kyei and Nduro (2014), examination

continues to be one of the most acceptable techniques for evaluating and appraising what students have learned. They contended that any activity made during examination may jeopardize the legitimacy, reliability, and authenticity of the grades, as well as the certificates obtained. Because of the competitive nature of the job market, as well as cultural expectations, students are frequently under pressure to do whatever it takes to pass their examination. As a result, some students turn to unethical measures to pass their examination.

Examination functions as a decision-making tool, therefore it instills dread and worries in the hearts of teachers, students, and other stakeholders (Onuka & Durowoju, 2013). As a result, many students would try everything to pass the examination. The conduct of examination is therefore a vital exercise in any educational institution since the exercise might lose its meaning and purpose if not carried out properly. To conduct an examination, certain authorized practices and principles must be properly followed. Failure to adhere to such procedures leads to examination malpractice.

Examination malpractice has grown into a malignant issue in the school system, and as such it manifests itself in a variety of ways. It is unfortunate that most countries' examination systems, especially African countries like Nigeria and Ghana, are plagued with examination misconducts or wrongdoings. Examination malpractice is one of the most widespread societal problems facing the education system to every degree, and also due to the reason that it may be detected among pupils at the basic schools is even more concerning. This is because the basic school serves as the basis for each child's educational progress. Examination misconduct, according to Denga and Denga (as cited in Cornelius-Ukpepi & Nifor, 2012), is prospering in pre-school and elementary institutions, where the youngsters appear to be naive and immature. It becomes worse as you progress up the educational ladder. This is because certificates are given out for job searches, promotions, and continuing education.

Examination plays an important function in both our academic system or operations as well as the community or society. Due to the obvious ever-increasing number of examination malpractices in Ghana, including both public and private examinations done around the country, it is impossible to talk about incident-free examinations that would provide legitimate and accurate examination results. Examination malpractice has been observed since 1914, but a recent instance of the phenomenon is exceptional (Adamu, 2013).

An examination can be external (public examination) or internal (school-based examination). External bodies, such as the government, give high-stakes standardized examination concentrating on the accomplishment of cognitive abilities after particular levels (primary and secondary) usually to select students for the transition to higher levels.

Public examinations, also known as external examinations, differ from examination organised in schools, which are related to the internal system or school-based, and in which teachers are actively involved in the assessment of their students, continuous assessment, terminal, and promotion examinations are examples of school-based examinations. In Ghana, the Ministry of Education, examination boards, parents, school administrators, classroom teachers, and even students rely on their assessments of educational achievements on success in public examinations (Oredein, 2004).

Public examination appears to be the most popular criterion by which society assesses the output of its educational system. This is because success in public examinations is increasingly utilized as a prerequisite for entrance to higher levels of education, job placement, and certificate and diploma awards. According to Joshua (2008), the assessment may therefore be used to classify students into high and low abilities. He went on to say that individuals having greater abilities are given priority over those possessing lower capabilities, which students possessing lower abilities will naturally want. As a result, to display their abilities, they engage in a variety of vices, one of which is examination malpractice.

A variety of distinct variables contribute to examination misconduct. According to Maduabum and Maduabum (2003) and Onyechere (2005), the following factors contribute to examination malpractice: students' lack of appropriate examination preparation, a drive to pass at any costs, non-completion of syllabuses, carelessness in punishing offenders, and continual strike action at educational institutions example as can be seen in Ghana. Furthermore, Onyechere (2005) divides public examination misconduct into three categories: pre-examination, during-examination, and post-examination malpractice.

According to Dzakadzie (2015), examination questions are obtained before the examination day under the pre-examination category. Impersonation, cheating during the examination, giraffe, use of prohibited materials in examination halls, and external help by individuals are examples of during-examination malpractice. Post-examination malpractices, on the other hand, can be traced back to public examination board officials. Common forms at this stage include forgery of results slips, repackaging of examination papers to include those written out of the examination room in partnership with invigilators as well as supervisors, disbursement of cash to markers for some concessions, such as rewriting the examination, shady dealings of computer operators in examination bodies who acquire wealth from applicants in altering test outcome, and generally known as "sorting,"

particularly with examination body officials (Obo, 2008; Joshua, 2008; Ojerinde, 2008).

In Ghana, examination misconduct has continued to take many forms. According to Yayra (2015), it might take the following forms: the selling of examination question papers, the smuggling of important text materials into examination halls, impersonation, disorderliness in examination rooms, forging of result slips, giraffe, and others. To make matters worse, it is thought that this behaviour is not limited to students only, Parents, instructors, school administrators, and examination authorities all conspire with students to commit this misbehaviour, and the collaboration of one or more of these actors make it more difficult to counteract (Ijaiya, 2004).

Examination misconduct has been reported by a variety of stakeholders in the education system, including teachers, students, parents, administrators, among others. According to Onyechere (2008), students become engaged not because they lack preparation and perhaps are frightened of failing, precisely since they shine in a framework where everybody can be a cheat. Adebayo (2002) discovered according to his research, students cheat because they believe that everybody is doing it, and they often believe that it is a method of supporting others in their studies. In the same vein, Oluwature (2008) discovered that the young in the community saw nothing wrong with "giraffing," impersonation, and entering examination halls with illicit materials when she studied how people of the university regard honesty in academia as well as concerns in examination. As a result, the youth might even make a career by writing examination for others.

Still, on perception, Oluwature (2004) revealed that teachers saw examination misconduct (especially the sale of examination materials) as a way to alleviate poverty. According to Oluwature, this might be due to the country's insufficient compensation system. However, evidence suggests that multiple fraudulent practices in standardized tests have their roots in either the trustees of the examination questions, examination bodies entangled in the examination process, printers of question papers, or the delay in the commencement of an examination, and the police, who are supposed to be the watch dog of society, turn out to be the agents of this crime after receiving their settlements (bribe) (Onyechere, 2005).

According to Moser (2003) gender is describes as the range of socially constructed roles and relationships, as well as human qualities such as attitudes, behaviours, values, and levels of relative power and influence that are ascribed to the different sexes on a distinct premise. It is also characterised as the economic, political, and cultural advantages and disadvantages of being male or female. Gender is a learned identity that develops over time and varies greatly within and between cultures.

Gender, according to Oredein (2004), has a significant impact on an individual's proclivity to cheat, particularly during examinations. Lobel and Levanon (2004) claimed that males commit more examination malpractice than females, but Leming (2005) believed that females commit more

examination malpractice than males. It has been argued that this variable (gender) corresponds to a certain degree and cannot be separated from examination malpractice; as a result, they have connected the gender of students as causes for examination malpractice.

Examination malpractice is one social problem that is disturbing the Ghanaian education sector and it requires a prompt remedy. Examination malpractice occurs in all levels of the Ghanaian educational sector but the focus of this study is the secondary education level. Studies have shown that a lot of failures and anomalies happen in the careers of individuals because of the impact of the scourge of examination malpractice at this crucial level of education. The more the government, head teacher, examination bodies and other well-meaning individuals try to find solutions to the problem, the more the perpetrators also device ways to frustrate such efforts.

The problem is becoming more alarming day after day; it is metamorphosing from the era of students copying from fellow students to using sophisticated electronic gadgets such as cell

phones and concealed ear pieces. The problem of examination malpractice has reduced certificates issued in Ghana into a worthless paper, such that a number of students with outstanding results cannot defend their certificates. The performances of such students are not commensurate to the quality of their certificates. Most disheartening is the situation where students who have secured admission to study abroad are subjected to dehumanizing treatment because of suspicion on the authenticity of their certificates.

The problem of cheating at examinations is of serious concern to some parents, educators, educational administrators, and government because it is a major factor that can destroy the entire education system in Ghana which Sekondi-Takoradi is not an exception. For instance, cases of examination malpractices in Ghana increased from 22,391 in 2018 to 48,855 cases in 2019 (WAEC 2019). Table 1 shows the number of candidates involved in examination malpractice in WASSCE from 2015 to 2019.

Table 1: Candidates Involved in Examination Malpractices in WASSCE from 2015 to 2019

Examination Type			2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
WASSCE	MAY/JUNE	Candidates involved	12,754 4.76%	14,229 5.26%	13,793 4.77%	22,391 7.14%	48,855 14.12%

Source: WAEC-Ghana (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019)

In the year 2014/15 two senior high schools from Sekondi-Takoradi results were withheld due to misconduct that occurs during the writing of the examination. However, in the year 2017/18 three senior high schools from Sekondi-Takoradi result was withheld due to examination malpractice. The 2020 WASSCE saw over 500 students from Sekondi-Takoradi caught in the act of malpractice. Thus, it is worthy to point out that examination malpractices need to be investigated within the Metropolis.

Various examination bodies are recognised to have used a variety of strategies to combat examination misconduct. One of these measures is the cancellation and withholding of candidates' results. The problem of examination malpractice, on the other hand, has persisted unabated. Could it be that the numerous techniques being used to combat examination malpractice in Ghanaian public examinations are ineffective? The problem of the study therefore is; what are the opinions of teachers and students in the education system about the efficacy of the techniques utilized in Ghana's public examinations to prevent examination misconduct?

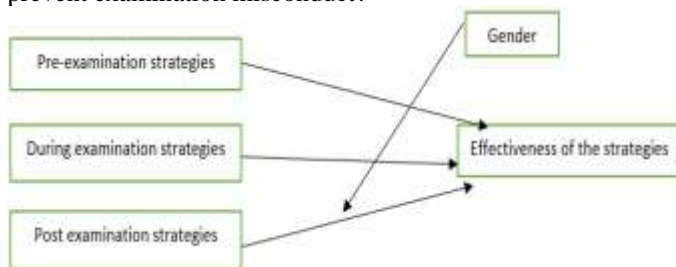


Figure 1: conceptual framework of the effectiveness of the strategies as perceived by teachers and students.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between male and female students on their perception with respect to the effectiveness of strategies adopted for curbing pre-examination malpractices, during examination malpractices, and post-examination malpractices.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between male and female students on their perception with respect to the effectiveness of strategies adopted for curbing pre-examination malpractices, during examination malpractices, and post-examination malpractices.

II. RESEARCH METHODS AND MATERIAL

2.1 Participants

The study's intended population included all teachers (1458) and students (26,847) in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis. This study's accessible population included all teachers who participate in invigilation during WASSCE and form 3 students in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis. Teachers who invigilate are made up of 988 from all ten public senior high, while students are made up of 9, 949 from all ten public secondary schools.

For the study, a total of 370 forms 3 students from Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis which is made up of 189 male students consisting 51.1% and 181 female students consisting 48.9% and 280 invigilation teachers which is made up of 125 male teachers consisting 44.6% and 155 female teachers consisting 55.4% were chosen from a pool of potential participants. A

multi-stage sampling procedure was used in this investigation which comprises two or more sampling techniques. Firstly, involved the use of the purposive sampling technique in the selection of schools, all schools in Sekondi-Takoradi were used. The second stage involved the use of a proportionate stratified sampling technique in selecting the number of 370 forms 3 students out of the total of 9,949 students and 280 invigilation teachers out of the total of 988 senior high invigilation teachers as respondents (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Again, this is necessary since the various schools vary in the numerical strength of the students and teachers. The third stage was involve using the simple random sampling (lottery method) technique in selecting the specific students and teachers from each of the schools to serve as respondents.

2.2 Measures

Every research project is unique, and as a result, research designs are developed to meet the specific needs of each study. Others believe that while selecting a suitable research design, the most important factor to examine is whether the design is capable of giving trustworthy responses to the research questions (Polit & Beck, 2004). The research design used in this study was a descriptive survey.

The instrument used to gather data for the study was Stakeholders Perceptions of the Effectiveness of the Strategies for Curbing Examination Malpractice Questionnaire (SPESCEMQ) developed by Uchekwe Joy Oluchukwu, based on the literature reviewed. It consists of two parts. Part 1 is the personal data section, which was used to collect personal information from the respondents. Part 2 consists of 70 items arranged in three 3 Sections. Section A was used to examine the perception of various education sector stakeholders with respect to the effectiveness of the strategies adopted in curbing pre- examination malpractice in public examinations. Section B was used to examine the perception of various education sector stakeholders with respect to the effectiveness of the strategies adopted in curbing examination malpractice during examinations. While Section C was used to examine the perception of various education sector stakeholders with respect to the effectiveness of the strategies adopted in curbing post-examination malpractice in public examinations. The reliability of the instrument was .860.

The questions were constructed on a 4-point rating scale Very Effective (V.E) = 4, Effective (E) = 3, Slightly Effective (S.E) = 2, and Not Effective, (N.E) = 1.

2.3 Pilot Testing

Pilot testing was done in Cape Coast Metropolis. After pilot testing, the instrument was subjected to a test of internal consistency using Cronbach Alpha (r). Section B, which comprises 14 strategies has a reliability index of 0.838, Section C, which comprises 9 strategies has a reliability index of 0.802, while Section C, with 8 strategies has a reliability index of 0.806. The overall Sections, which comprise 31 strategies have a reliability index of 0.909.

III. RESULTS

This research hypothesis sought to find out if there is a difference between gender of teachers and students on their mean perception with respect to the effectiveness of strategies adopted for curbing pre-examination malpractices, during examination malpractices, and post-examination malpractices. Multivariate analysis of variance was used to check if differences exist in terms of the gender of students concerning the strategies adopted for curbing pre-examination malpractices, during examination malpractices, and post-examination malpractices.

3.1 Research Hypotheses 1

There is no significant difference between male and female students on their mean perception with respect to the effectiveness of strategies adopted for curbing pre-examination malpractices, during examination malpractices, and post-examination malpractices.

Table 1: Perception of Students on Examination Strategies

	GENDER	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pre-examination malpractice	Male	41.9259	8.22844	189
	Female	42.0387	8.12907	181
	TOTAL	41.9811	8.16909	370
During examination malpractice	Male	25.9524	5.77438	189
	Female	26.4033	5.51239	181
	TOTAL	26.1730	5.64461	370
Post examination malpractice	Male	20.6931	5.92515	189
	Female	20.9171	5.33425	181
	TOTAL	20.8027	5.63732	370

Table 2: Box's Test of Equality of Covariance

Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices ^a	
Box's M	2.703
F	.447
df1	6
df2	976236.928
Sig.	.848

Table 3: Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Pre-examination malpractice	Based on Mean	.879	1	368	.349
	Based on Median	.914	1	368	.340
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.914	1	364.666	.340
	Based on trimmed mean	.893	1	368	.345
During-examination malpractice	Based on Mean	.459	1	368	.499
	Based on Median	.582	1	368	.446
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.582	1	367.969	.446
	Based on trimmed mean	.501	1	368	.479
Post-examination malpractice	Based on Mean	.697	1	368	.404
	Based on Median	.634	1	368	.426
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.634	1	360.042	.426
	Based on trimmed mean	.687	1	368	.408

Table 4: Multivariate Tests

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.970	3908.346 ^b	3.000	366.000	.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.030	3908.346 ^b	3.000	366.000	.000
	Hotelling's Trace	32.036	3908.346 ^b	3.000	366.000	.000
	Roy's Largest Root	32.036	3908.346 ^b	3.000	366.000	.000
GENDER	Pillai's Trace	.002	.268 ^b	3.000	366.000	.849
	Wilks' Lambda	.998	.268 ^b	3.000	366.000	.849
	Hotelling's Trace	.002	.268 ^b	3.000	366.000	.849
	Roy's Largest Root	.002	.268 ^b	3.000	366.000	.849

A one-way between-group multivariate analysis of variance was performed to investigate gender differences in the strategist adopted in curbing examination malpractice. Three dependent variables were used: pre-examination malpractices, during examination malpractices, and post-examination malpractices. The independent variable was gender. Preliminary assumption testing was conducted to check for normality, linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers with no serious violation noted. Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices indicated a sig-value of .848 which is greater than .05 indicating that the assumption of homogeneity was satisfied. From Levene Test of Equality of Error Variances table, no value indicated a significant value, therefore we can assume equal variance. From the Multivariate Tests table, it indicated a sig-value of Wilks lambda to be .849 which is greater than .05. as such we fail to reject the null hypothesis which states that the mean rating of male and female students would not differ significantly with respect to the effectiveness of the strategies adopted in curbing pre-examination malpractice, during examination malpractice and post-examination malpractice. There was no statistically significant difference between male and female students on the combined dependent variable: $F(3, 366) = .268$, $p\text{-value} = .849$; wilks' lambda = .998; partial eta squared = .002.

3.2 Research Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference between male and female teachers on their perception with respect to the effectiveness of strategies adopted for curbing pre-examination malpractices, during examination malpractices, and post-examination malpractices.

Table 5: Perception of Teachers on Examination Malpractice Strategies

	GENDER	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pre-examination malpractice	Male	43.4480	7.00053	125
	Female	42.6968	7.44013	155
	TOTAL	43.0321	7.24401	280

During examination malpractice	Male	27.8320	5.38477	125
	Female	27.1871	4.92909	155
	TOTAL	27.4750	5.13817	280
Post examination malpractice	Male	22.7840	5.20326	125
	Female	21.4516	4.90189	155
	TOTAL	22.0464	5.07308	280

Table 6: Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices

Box's M	6.022
F	.992
df1	6
df2	496728.107
Sig.	.429

Table 7: Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Pre-examination malpractice	Based on Mean	.039	1	278	.843
	Based on Median	.035	1	278	.852
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.035	1	276.591	.852
	Based on trimmed mean	.013	1	278	.909
During-examination malpractice	Based on Mean	.103	1	278	.748
	Based on Median	.031	1	278	.860
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.031	1	258.078	.860
	Based on trimmed mean	.047	1	278	.829
Post-examination malpractice	Based on Mean	1.328	1	278	.250
	Based on Median	1.597	1	278	.207
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.597	1	277.193	.207
	Based on trimmed mean	1.392	1	278	.239

Table 8: Multivariate Tests

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.977	3851.845 ^b	3.000	276.000	.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.023	3851.845 ^b	3.000	276.000	.000
	Hotelling's Trace	41.868	3851.845 ^b	3.000	276.000	.000
	Roy's Largest Root	41.868	3851.845 ^b	3.000	276.000	.000
GENDER	Pillai's Trace	.018	1.639 ^b	3.000	276.000	.181
	Wilks' Lambda	.982	1.639 ^b	3.000	276.000	.181
	Hotelling's Trace	.018	1.639 ^b	3.000	276.000	.181
	Roy's Largest Root	.018	1.639 ^b	3.000	276.000	.181

A one-way between-group multivariate analysis of variance was performed to investigate gender differences in the strategies adopted in curbing examination malpractice. Three dependent variables were used: pre-examination malpractices, during examination malpractices, and post-examination malpractices. The independent variable was gender. Preliminary assumption testing was conducted to check for normality, linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers with no serious violation noted. Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices indicated a sig-value of .429 which is greater than .05 indicating that the assumption of homogeneity was satisfied. From Levene Test of Equality of Error Variances table, no value indicated a significant value, therefore we can assume equal variance. From the Multivariate Tests table, it indicated a sig-value of Wilks lambda to be .181 which is greater than .05. as such we fail to reject the null hypothesis which states that the mean rating of male and female teachers would not differ significantly concerning the effectiveness of the strategies adopted in curbing pre-examination malpractice, during examination malpractice and post-examination malpractice. There was no statistically significant difference between male and female teachers on the combined dependent variable: $F(3, 276) = 1.639$, $p\text{-value} = .181$; wilks' lambda = .982.

IV. DISCUSSION

4.1 Research Hypothesis 1

The findings suggests that there is no significant difference in male and female students concerning the effective strategies adopted for curbing pre-examination, during the examination, and post-examination malpractice. Both male and female students had a positive perception towards the effectiveness of the strategies adopted in curbing pre-examination, during examination and post examination malpractices. The findings concurred with a statement by Badejo and Gandonu (2001), argues that gender was no indices for examination malpractice among students. The study and concurred with Olatoye (2006) who indicates that examination malpractice is not a product of gender, rather, it is a common problem across males and females. This indicates that both male and female students have the same opportunity of taking part in examination malpractice. The findings disagreed with Olasehinde-Williams, Abdullahi, and Owolabi's (2003) argument that more males than females were involved in cheating in an examination. The findings from this current study also disagreed with Omotere (2010) that more females than males are involved in examination malpractice.

4.2 Research Hypothesis 2

The findings show that there is no significant difference in male and female teachers concerning the effective strategies adopted for curbing pre-examination, during the examination, and post-examination malpractice. Both male and female teachers had a positive perception towards the effectiveness of the strategies adopted in curbing pre-examination, during examination and post examination malpractices. The findings concurred with a statement by Badejo and Gandonu (2001) gender was no

indices for examination malpractice among students. Given this, the implication for counselling was recommended, this tells us that gender has no role to play when it comes to examination malpractice both female and male students cheat in examinations. The findings disagreed with Asante-Kyei and Nduro, (2014) argument that those male students have the higher tendency to cheat to indulge in sharp practices during the examination. The findings also disagreed with Omotere (2010) that more females than males are involved in examination malpractice. These findings were an indication of the stakeholders within the education sector to be taken through active involvement of other stakeholders within the education sector to reduce cases of students and teachers involving in examination malpractices.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the major findings of this study, the following conclusions were made. Teachers' and students' perception of the effectiveness of the strategies adopted for curbing examination malpractices in public examinations in Sekondi-Takoradi has been determined in this study. The teachers' and students' perceptions were ascertained at three different levels of examination malpractices (pre-examination, during examination, and post-examination). Notwithstanding male and female students also had a positive perception towards the strategies adopted for curbing examination malpractice. However, male and female teachers also had positive perception of strategies adopted for curbing examination malpractice. Ghana Education Services should organise workshop for both teachers and students in order to make the strategies for curbing examination malpractices very effective.

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