A STUDY ON

WHISTLEBLOWING: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF STUDENTS RESPONSE TO EXAMINATION MALPRCTICE

PROJECT REPORT

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

Purpose- This study is aimed at investigating the willingness of Nigerian university students to whistle blow as well as to ascertain students view on examination malpractice.

Methodology- This study used the qualitative method of research, and data was obtained through the use of in depth interviews. A total of 35 students from a Nigerian university participated in the study. The method of thematic analysis was used to analyze the data.

Findings-The findings of this indicated that students have little or no intention to whistle blow and while they believe that examination malpractice is wrong, they generally view whistleblowing as having a negative connotation.

Research Implications-The findings of this study has implications for bodies and organizations interested in promoting whistleblowing activities as well as whistle blowers protection.

Value-This study gives valuable insights into understanding how university students view whistleblowing which is an important information for organizations who intend to hire these students after they graduate.

Keywords-Whistleblowing, Fraud, examination malpractice, organizational wrongdoings.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project work to God Almighty the giver of life, my source of strength, the source of all knowledge and without whom the completion of this work would not be possible.

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While writing this paper I have received a tremendous amount of assistance as well as support from various individuals

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.

1.1 Background to the Study

The term whistleblowing is thought to have its roots in two different activities. First the term follows from the practice of the police who blew the whistle when attempting to apprehend a suspected criminal; Second, it follows the practice of referees during sporting events who blow their whistle to stop an action. However, the difference is the person blowing the whistle is not merely an independent observer, but instead, he or she is a stakeholder or an employee of an organization who reports the wrongdoing of a colleague or an institution as a whole.

Due to whistleblowers activity, the public is made aware of ethical and legal abuses in business and government organizations. They inform the public about violation of law, misuse of public funds, falsifying of documents, mismanagement of resources, misuse of public facilities, unethical research practices, excessive spending, unsafe products, corruption, or ecological waste.

Although whistleblowing could be considered to be a step against the organization, it is actually an act of support and courage to the organization in a more comprehensive perspective.

The Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE) (2012) is of the opinion that whistleblowing is the most common technique of stopping in-house accounting fraud. When equated with other fraud exposure mechanisms like internal controls and auditing, it has been ascertained that whistleblowing is more effective in the uncovering of fraud [Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE), 2010].

Examiners report on occupational fraud and abuse indicated that 46.2% of institutional frauds are primarily detected by tips provided by personnel with internal audit and internal controls detecting only 19.4% and 23.3% respectively (ACFE) (2008).

Recently, an analysis was carried out of over 2410 cases of work-related fraud in more than 114 countries by the ACFE and it revealed that close to 40% of such cases were reported by whistleblowers [ACFE, 2016]. This statistic evidently displays the significance of whistleblowing in the fight against fraudulent practices in different institutions.

According to Smaili and Arroyo (2017), tips from whistleblowers have proven to be a more potent means of uncovering fraud than internal or external audits. This explains why studies have heighted the need for whistleblowing to be seen as an effective mechanism for exposing organization misconducts. Eaton and Akers (2007) are of the opinion that the whistleblowing act should be seen as one of the ways an organization exhibits good leadership and reflects genuine interest in the improvement of corporate governance.

However, some people are still of the opinion that whistleblowers are not loyal member of the organization. This is the reason Jeffrey Wigand (2011), the former vice president of research and development at the Brown & Williamson Tobacco (B&W) is not happy with the word ↑whistleblower↓ because it is laden with a negative connotation.

This is why he suggests a new phrase be used: ↑Person of Conscience↓ (Devin & Maassarni, 2011). Similarly, Grant (2002) sees whistleblowers as ↑heroes↓ or ass the ↑saints of secular culture.↓ It is important to note that fraud can occur in different systems or institutions and even the education system is not spared. This leads us to the second part of this paper which is Examination Malpractice.

Examination Malpractice can be described as fraud that takes place within the school system which can occur right from primary, to secondary and to tertiary levels of education. Examination Malpractice is a corrupt practice which is thriving strongly within our system which

is a real issue. This is because the culture of diligence, hard work, honesty, decency and academic excellence is hardly present in the current generation of youths from different institutions of learning in Nigeria.

The Examination process is supposed to be a yard stick against which candidate's competence and progress are formally appraised and measured in the educational system but it has been tainted with the practice of Examination Malpractice. This has led to a decline in the quality of graduates from schools in Nigeria.

A situation where an individual who identifies as being a graduate is unable to write a presentable letter is a cause for concern. Examination Malpractice had led to a substantial gap between the examination score and the actual level of acquired knowledge. This scourge can be reduced by the implementation of whistleblowing systems in institutions of learning.

Most of the debate regarding whistleblowing in schools has been concerned with postgraduate malpractice and academic fraud, there is need for it to also be addressed at the undergraduate level. Jennings considers that there are insufficient procedures to combat fraud in undergraduate settings.

He proposes that an atmosphere which engenders and reinforces certain basic conduct should be created. It is advised that students should not only agree to uphold the code of conduct but should also be involved in the formulation and defense of these principles as well as their adjudication.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem.

In spite of the important role whistleblowing plays in the growth and development in the society, it is still an act that is generally frowned upon. This negative perception of whistleblowing has unfortunately been ingrained in the minds of students and as a result different forms of

educational fraud such as Examination Malpractice have been adopted as the norm. This is a real problem because not only does it produce unqualified graduates, it also produces employees who are willing to ignore organizational wrongdoing as thy will likely have more to lose if they decided to whistle blow.

1.3 Aims and Objectives of the Study.

1) To learn about university students→perception of Exam Malpractice.

2) To analyze students→willingness to whistle blow.

3) To ascertain the barriers to whistleblowing among university students.

1.4. Relevance of the study.

This study will provide information to individuals and organizations interested in promoting whistleblowing in higher institutions. In addition, this study will provide insight on university students' view on whistleblowing. Furthermore, the outcome of this study will provide future researchers with a different perspective with which to analyze whistleblowing in higher institutions.

1.5. Scope of Study.

The scope of this study is limited to interviewing 35 students from a Nigerian University. The Semi-structed interview will be carried out over a period of two weeks and each candidate will be asked a series of questions in order to analyze their perceptions of whistleblowing in relation to Examination Malpractice.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.

2.1. The Concept of Whistleblowing

The concept of whistleblowing emerged in the late 1970s and has gained noteworthy traction over the years and across various disciplines such as psychology, law, health sciences, management, sociology, and public administration.

According to Marcia Miceli and Janet Near, "Whistleblowing as the disclosure by organization members be it former or current of illegal, immoral or illegitimate practices to persons or organizations that may be able to effect action". They further suggests that the whistleblower lacks the authority required to make the change being sought and as such must appeal to someone of greater power or authority. Whistleblowing can be seen as calling attention to a misconduct which takes place within an organization.

Whistleblowing can also be defined as an individual's likelihood to report an observed wrongdoing which in his or her judgement is immoral, illegal, unethical or illegitimate. Whistleblowing is different from informing because a whistleblower reveals the information hoping that the recipient will take action to stop the wrongdoing. This suggests that with whistleblowing the goal is to stop n action or to prevent a malpractice of the same nature from reoccurring in the future.

A rather narrow judgement of whistleblowing is to an extent retained by the French phrase ↑lanceur d→alerte↓ which literally means ↑those who give the alarm.→It is important to not that giving alarm is not the same as calling a foul and it can be done prior to something bad actually occuring.

The 1980s gave rise to different seminal papers on the concept of whistleblowing, including a paper by Near and Miceleli (1985) which described whistleblowing as a process that involves the following elements:

1) The Whistleblower: As previously stated, whistleblowers need to be either former or current member of the organization who is without the authority to put an end to the wrongdoing or someone whose activities are within the control of the firm. A whistleblower is someone who believes that there is a risk of harm if an unethical behavior is not brought to light.
2) The Whistleblowing Act: This is the act of disclosing an illegal, unethical, immoral, illegitimate practice that brings harm to a third party or the interest of the general public to persons or bodies that might be able to bring about change
3) The Complaint Receiver: this is the person or agency who actually receives the complaint. It is a third party (external Whistleblowing) or someone other than or in addition to the immediate supervisor (internal Whistleblowing). External recipients include government regulatory bodies, the media, or special concern units. There are some researchers who are of the belief that only external whistleblowing is the true case of whistleblowing but some others are of the opinion that complaint can be logged internally, externally, or a combination of both.
4) The Organization: This is the public or private institution who is the target of the Whistleblowing and who will be called upon(or not) to respond to the disclosure.

Sayḡan and Bedǔk (2013) opined that the employees in an organization should feel responsible for the public good and should avoid overlooking any inappropriate practices when they have

observed them, so they should make sure of the whole process from safety of the money invested in the bank to the water delivered hygienically.

Baltic (2017) is of the opinion that whistleblowing is done by employees who are conscious and aware of the laws as well as accepted ethical judgements and illegitimate actions and behaviors.

Below are some organizational wrongdoings that an employee could speak up about;

Table 1

Types of Organizational Wrongdoings

Category	Constituents
Stealing	Stealing of funds, stealing of property, accepting bribes/kickbacks, use of an influential position for personal benefit, unfair advantage to contractor, and employee abuse of office.
Wasting	Wasting of organizational assets, wasting social benefits.
Mismanagement	Management cover-up of poor performance and making false projections of performance.
Safety Problems	Unsafe or non-compliant products and unsafe working conditions.
Sexual Harassment	Unwelcome sexual advances/request for sexual favors and verbal/physical contact of sexual nature.
Unfair Discrimination	Discrimination based on race, sex, religion, etc.

Legal Violations	Violations of law, etc.

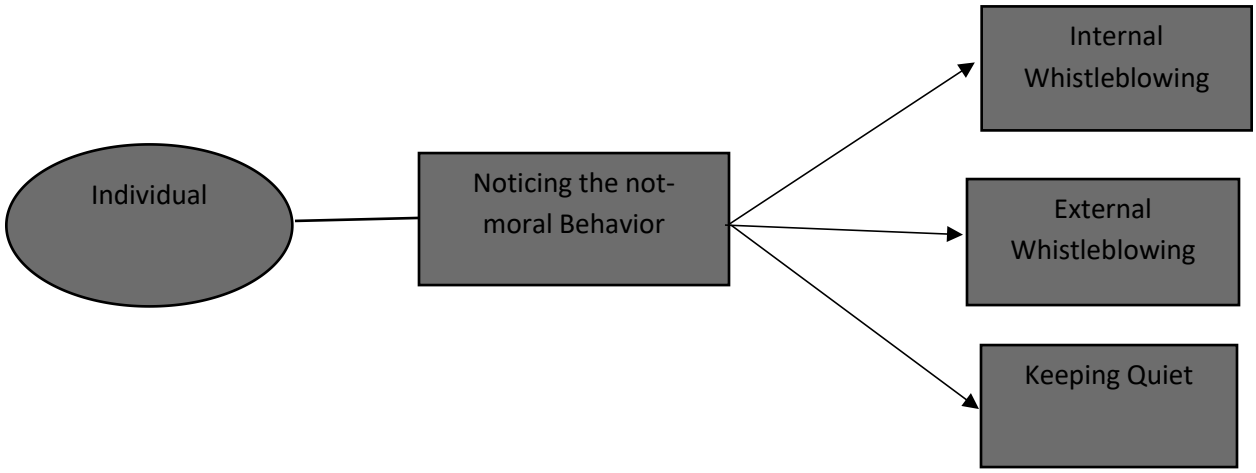
Source: Dasgupta and Ankit (2010)

2.2 The Whistleblowing Process

As earlier stated the person who begins the whistleblowing process is called a whistleblower. After an individual witness a malpractice or wrongdoing within an organization, there are three options available to them;

1) To be quiet
2) To blow the whistle to an individual within the organization
3) To blow the whistle to an individual outside the organization. This is usually done if the whistleblower believes that the problem cannot be solved within the institution.

Figure 1



Source: Kiziloğlu, E, & Çeilk, A. (2015). Whistleblowing behavior in organizations and work morality interaction. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Education Research,* 1(2), p.333.

There are several steps that have been identified to lead to whistleblowing behavior. They are;

1) Awareness of the wrongdoing: Here the individual who observed a wrongdoing decides whether the activity is illegal, immoral, illegitimate or not. The degree of awareness depends on factors which include the observers→position or their personal, professional, or organizational standards of ethics.
2) Assessment of the seriousness of the wrongful act: If the observer is convinced that whistleblowing is the only way to put an end to the wrongful act, he or she is more likely to do so. The observer→s characteristics such as financial and emotional support also helps him or her decide on what to do.
3) Responsibility for taking action.
4) Assessment of the consequences.

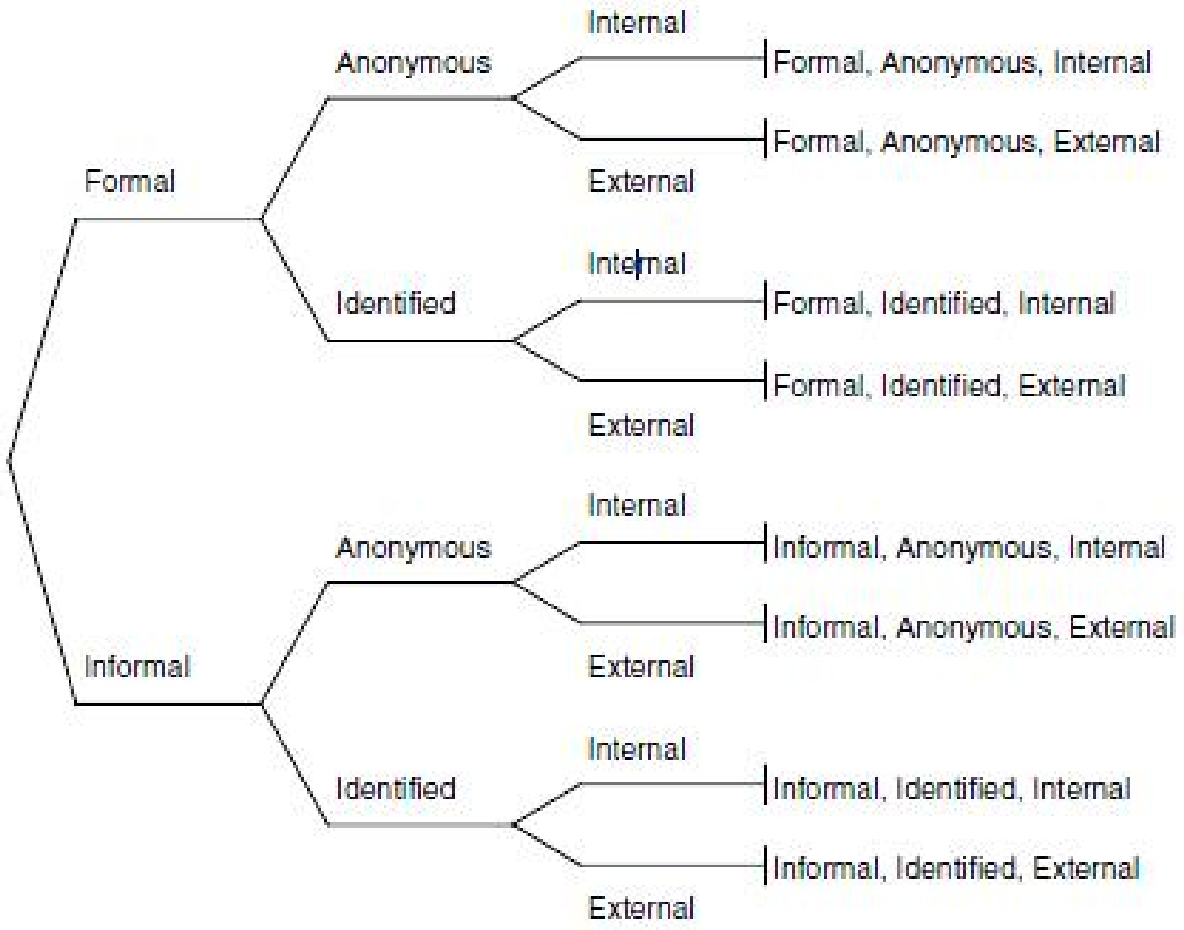
An assessment of the possible consequences is extremely important when deciding whether or not to whistle blow. In a yearlong discussion with a group of twelve whistleblowers it was ascertained that all but one of them lost his or her job and career, eight lost their homes, seven lost their families and many have suffered from alcoholism and depression at some point after blowing the whistle (Alford, 2001).

2.3 Types of Whistleblowing

As earlier stated after witnessing an inappropriate behavior, the employee might decide to remain silent or to report it within the organization or to report it outside the organization. Studies show that the classification of whistleblowing is mostly internal or external, but Park and some of his colleagues propose a different typology of whistleblowing which is based on three dimensions.

It includes not only the internal versus external approaches of whistleblowing like in the previous studies but also the identified versus anonymous approach and the formal versus informal approach. Under this approach each dimension represents a choice for the employee. In an organization where there is a formal protocol established for the reporting of misdeeds, the observer might choose to follow it or he/she may prefer to talk to someone outside the organization. also, the observer might choose to keep his or her real name or to report anonymously.

Figure 2



A Typology of Whistleblowing (park, et, al,2008)

Reporting a malpractice or wrongdoing inside the organization is what is referred to as internal whistleblowing. As previously stated, some ethicists such as De George and Bowe believe that using internal channels to whistle blow is moral, but, some others, such as Near and Miceli believe that whistleblowing is not simply informing; therefore, using internal channels cannot be seen as whistleblowing. However, many researchers are of the opinion that it is important for organizations to engage employees to use internal channels as this will protect the organization from losing face.

Reporting a malpractice outside the organization to an individual or entity that is believed to possess the power necessary to correct the wrongdoing is referred to as external whistleblowing. De George (2010), is of the view that external whistleblowing can be considered morally permissible if an organizations policy or products gives harm to employees or to the public, if employees first report their concerns to their immediate superiors and if nothing is done to address the employees→concerns.

Most internal whistleblowers eventually lay their concerns to external parties so internal and external whistleblowing can be said to be connected. According to Hoffman & Schwartz (2015), if an organization does not possess a documented antiretaliation policy against whistleblowing, the employees are not under any obligation to blow the whistle internally.

2.4 Theoretical Framework of the Research

1) The Moral Choice View:

Every whistleblower is confronted with the dilemma of choosing between conflicting organizational loyalty and integrity. Sissela Bok in 1980 was the first author to point out the predicament whistleblowers have to face regarding their moral choice. She argued that there

are three facets of their actions that need to be evaluated by whistleblowers in respect to their actions: the precision of judgement, the fissure of loyalty, and an accusation.

The first aspect relates to the accuracy of the employee's judgement about facts. The whistleblowing act is for the profit of the public so the whistleblowers are obligated to determine the nature of the benefit blowing the whistle will bring. They also have to consider the possible harm that could result from speaking out; this includes harm to persons, to institutions, and ultimately to the public itself.

Whistleblowers have the responsibility of assuring themselves of the exactness of their information, examining and re-examining the information prior to speaking out; postulate the amount to which there is candid misconduct, deliberate how impending the danger is, how serious the threat is and how closely connected they are to those suspected of negligence or abuse. Before public disclosure is made the evidence should require it.

After the facts have been established, the whistleblower has to then make sure that all the available possibilities for change have been considered and rejected before they violate their obligation of loyalty. The existing options can be rejected if they are simply unable to correct the impending problem or when there is no time to follow the routine networks, or in a situation where the organization is so crooked or intimidating that steps will be undergone to quite the whistleblower if he or she tries going through the regular channels first.

After all considerations of other alternatives have been rejected, the consideration of public safety for breaking the role obligations is imperative and no promise or oath of loyalty can be an excuse for involvement in covering up a wrongdoing or the destruction of public trust.

The third aspect involves possible accusation against the possibility of self-gain from the whistleblowing act or bias against persons. It is important for the whistleblower to ensure that he or she exercises fairness in judgement and guards against any personal motives that might influence disclosure. The whistleblowers motivation should be backed by public interest and so any personal motive that might skew the message such as the desire to seek revenge has to be considered.

According to Brenkert (2010), the moral choice view is fundamentally a problem of practical deliberation. The merit is less concerned with principles justification, instead, the merit is place on presenting a step by step guide for action and a blueprint for educational purposes.

This theory lacks depth because while it points out that it is the employee's judgement that decides what is in the public interest, there is little understanding on the notion of public interest. This arises because of vagueness, ambiguity and because of the fact that what is considered to be in the interest of the public is a rather subjective concept.

Consider for example an employee becoming aware of plans to use an unhealthy substance to make a consumable product that will likely affect only two percent of the population that consumes it. The employee could decide that blowing the whistle is in the public's best interest but another might decide not to since only a small number of people will be affected.

2). The standard theory.

Richard De George (1990, 2014) was one of the first to formulate a comprehensive account of whistleblowing which is now called the standard theory of whistleblowing in busy ethics. According to De George, employees should rarely be obligated to blow the whistle and no

demand should be put on them to be a hero. According to him, the organization is responsible for establishing channels of communication and disclosure.

In circumstances where employees have to disclose information outside the institutional channels, the employee is only morally obligated to do so if it is to prevent serious harm to others and if they can do so with little harm to themselves.

According to this theory, whistleblowing in permissible if;

I. The organization, through the products it produces or policies will cause grave and significant harm to the society, whether to the person who is the user of the product, or an innocent spectator or to the public.

II. After the employee identifies a grave threat to the consumer of a product or to the general populace, he or she should first report it to immediate supervisor and make their ethical concerns known.

III. If the supervisor does not take any immediate action regarding the grievance, the employee should exhaust the internal channels and possibilities within the firm. This involves taking the matter up the managerial ladder and if necessary- and possible - to the board of directors (De George 2014:327-29).

Whistleblowing is seen to be mandatory when in addition to the above three circumstances the following applies;

IV. The whistleblower is required to possess or have access to documented proof that is capable of convincing a rational and impartial party that one's perception of the situation is accurate and that the firm's products or practices poses a severe and likely threat to the public or consumer of the product.

V. The worker must have adequate reason to believe that through blowing the whistle, the required changes will be brought about. This suggests that the chance of being successful should be worth the risk one takes and the danger to which one is exposed.

However, this account has been criticized because of its demanding nature. According to Michael Hoffman and Mark Schwartz (2014), an evaluation of the gravity of the damage is much too challenging, burdensome or personal a condition. They are of the opinion that it is too hard for a worker to determine what could be real harm as a result of the absence of knowledge of all the possible repercussions of even minor wrongdoing or if the minor wrongdoing could actually signify the tip of a serious scandal or wrongdoing.

They suggest that the De George's explanation be expanded to declare whistleblowing ethically mandatory for any detected wrongdoing with any degree of impending damage leaving the recipient of the whistleblowing information to decide if the reported act is grave enough to render suitable action.

They also propose that the wrongdoer should be cautioned before commencing any disclosure however, they are also of the opinion that there should be a loosening on the requirement of documented evidence.

Rather, it should be replaced with the duty to provide believable evidence or conviction based on first-hand experience. Regarding the belief that the whistleblower should believe that the exposure will be making a change, they believe that this requirement should completely be removed.

3. **Complicity.**

The complicity account which was created by Michael Davis aims at shifting the attention from the avoidance of damage to the accountability of the wrongdoing. Here, it is believed that whistleblowing is mandatory when there is no other way to prevent the blame of being a participant to the unlawful activity. David Kline (2006) is of the opinion that the complicity account does not to take into consideration the public and Civic dimensions of whistleblowing.

He further argues that by highlighting on the participatory role of the whistleblower Davis does not consider the fact that an individual does not have to hear the responsibility of involvement to resolve to speak out. An employee can choose to whistle blow not because they wish to merely prevent personal participation, but whenever he or she becomes aware of a misconduct.

2.5 Whistleblowing in Schools.

Whistleblowing in schools→aid in the detection of fraud and misconduct which helps facilitate quick reaction. Whistleblowing is important in schools because it protects the students, staffs and also the institution's image and it should be encouraged.

In order to promote Whistleblowing in schools, staff and students must be informed of what protection, if any, is available for them when blowing the whistle, what concerns are classified as worthy of Whistleblowing and the different options available for reporting a concern.

Regular Whistleblowing training and enlightenment is also fundamental in raising awareness as well as increasing knowledge of Whistleblowing and its importance.

Though Whistleblowing is usually thought to involve large organizations or political structures and staffs, if mentioned in relation to education, the importance of understanding students→ perspective cannot be overstated.

This is because students in higher institutions are the individuals who will get hired into those large organizations. If already, students have a negative view of speaking our when they witness an unethical act (in this case, Examination Malpractice) then there is little to no hope in encouraging them to do so when they become individuals with more responsibilities in positions which are more important.

According to Pertiwi (2019) only a few universities continue to build a whistleblowing system (WBS) to acclimate students to whistleblowing. They include Brawaijaya University, Gajah Mada University and Bina Nusantara University.

2.6 Hindrances to Whistleblowing in Schools

1) Fear of retaliation: even if an individual decides that whistleblowing might be the right course of action for the good of the institution others may see it as a form of betrayal and resort to a form of retaliation. Students usually live within or round the university premises and this makes them vulnerable as there may be no safe place for them to run to.
2) Social stigma: whistleblowers often end up isolated and called terms such a ↑snitch↓ hence most individuals would rather avoid the negative tag.
3) Absence of policies and procedures: even if an individual decides whistle blow there is no existing procedure or protocol to aid him or her. There is also no clear framework which serves as guidance around the investigation of whistleblowing concerns.

4) Lack of information: this is manifested in the fact that not only are individuals unaware of the procedures to take to whistle blow they are also unaware of what should be reported.

2.7 Concept of Examination Malpractice

Education which is a process of learning is evaluated by through examinations as a source of feedback to the teacher in order to ascertain the degree of knowledge acquired and also to serve as a yardstick for measuring knowledge retention.

Examination is an organized assessment technique which presents individuals with a series of presents questions or tasks geared towards assessing the individual acquired knowledge and skills (Oduwaiye, 2014).

This means that any wrongdoing or irregularities contaminates this response mechanism and produces false outcome. Examination malpractice has led to a total loss of trust in the educational system, increase in job inefficiency, reduction in integrity of certain institutions etc.

Examination malpractice is the action taken by students take to try to attain good results by cutting corners. It can be seen as an act of improper manner of testing students which contradicts the set rules and regulations that guide the conduct of an examination.

In 1999, The examination malpractice act defined examination malpractice as any act of omission or commission by a person in anticipation of, before, during or after any exam that contravenes the rules and regulations governing examination.

The above definition explains that examination malpractice is not, as most people believe, limited to cheating only during an exam as it proves that it could occur both before and after an examination.

2.8 Forms of Examination Malpractice

1) Impersonation: This involves a candidate or hired individual who is not registered to take a particular exam sitting for the exam on behalf of another candidate.

2) Mass cheating: This happens when individuals sitting for the same examination decide to copy from one another.

3) Leakage of questions: This occurs when examination officials leak the examination materials to the students who intend to take the examination before the examination time.

4) Scientific malpractice or making use of mobile phones while writing an examination: These days, students employ the unauthorized use of scientific calculators, mobile phones etc. to take undue advantages during examinations.

5) Bribery: This form of malpractice is often referred to as sorting. It is common in both secondary and tertiary levels of education examination and includes the exchange of money or other incentives to get access to examination materials or better grades.

6) smuggling of materials: This might be the most common form of malpractice. This involves the introduction of unauthorized materials such as textbooks into the exam hall during the exam.

2.9 Causes of Examination Malpractice.

Examination malpractice has been attributed to different factors. Peter & Okon (2013) identify the following to be the causes;

1) **The fear of failure**: Students decision to engage in examination malpractice can be traced back to failure and lack of self-confidence. In this context, self-confidence can be seen as a situation where a student believes that he or she will be able to make it in an

organization without cheating. Most students who engage in examination malpractice do so because they are of the impression that they can¬t get an excellent result without some extra help. A good student who has studied properly for an examination has good faith in his or her ability.

2) **The Desire parents may have for their children to be enrolled in choice universities and fields of study**: Some parents force courses on their wards or children without giving consideration to the child¬s ability. They ignore the fact that people have different learning capabilities and that while it might be relatively quick and easy for some students to learn, some have special learning needs which the system doesn¬t provide for. Some parents do this because they are of the belief that certain courses are more prestigious than others and some others do this because it is a course they-the parents- are passionate about. When a student is forced to study a course he or she has no interest in they tend to cultivate a habit of cheating during exams.

Akaranga & Ongong (2013) suggest that the cause of Examination Malpractice is attributed majorly on parental upbringing. They are of the belief that because of economic ability and social status, most parents are easily convinced to bribe their way for the sake of the success of their children as well as for self-gratification.

George & Ukpong (2013) links the increasing rate if examination malpractice to the following;

1) **Poor Teaching**: There are some cases where lectures do not finish the topics in the course outline ment for an academic semester before giving examination to students. There are some instances where lectures might even give examination to students in area that were not covered in the classroom.

2) **Ineffective preparation by students**: Many students neglect to work hard by studying. These students resolve to cut corners thereby engaging in examination malpractice. There are a lot of students who devote their time and energy to social activities and having fun with lazy stuff like them and neglect their primary duty which is to study.
3) **Weak parental functions**: There are some situations where some parents do not perform their duties. Some parents even discourage their children to work hard in school because they don't truly believe in the importance of education in our nation. There are also some parents who do not or are unable to support their children financially. A student who is unable to afford the basic instruments such as textbooks that are needed for their study will most likely enter into the exam hall unprepared.

According to Jimoh (2009), "The disjunction between culturally acclaimed goals and the institutionalized means of achieving these goals coupled with the cultural context of great emphasis on success-goals without equivalent emphasis upon institutional means of attaining these goals have created an environment that predisposes some students, teacher, parents and others to examination malpractice".

Laziness, lack of preparation or inadequate preparation for examination, lack of self-confidence, sub-par school facilities, (lack of or inadequate examination hall) poor sitting arrangement, socio-economic factors, political-undertone, privatization and commercialization of education, poor invigilation, weak parental function etc. (Onyechere 2004; Awambor, 2004)

In 2010, the CWO voice linked examination malpractice to the following; rapid growth and development for education, lack of well-equipped teachers who do not have the necessary skills

to impart the contents to learners, poor teaching materials or equipment such as standard laboratories, libraries, etc.

Another cause of Examination Malpractice is the fact that the sole focus of students is no longer on learning and acquiring knowledge but on good grades. This is because the society only cares about success and place little or no relevance to the method through which the individual acquires the success. In Nigeria, a certificate is valued more than the skills to deliver and in most cases an individual is only respected if he or she has a certain certificate and not for their actual intellectual ability.

Poor prmotion as well as admission policies by schools could also be a cause of examination. This is because in a situation where admission and promotion are given to students because of sentiment and not based on merit. The said student will be incapable of withstanding the academic stress and will result to examination malpractice as a last resort.

2.10 The Effect of Examination Malpractice

1). Examination malpractice destroys the spirit of hard work and diligence in students as most of them now see examination malpractice as an easy way to attain the same and in some cases an even higher level of success than those who spent time studying. This eventually leads to reduced productivity as graduates get employed in places where they are not adequately skilled to be even with their excellent results.

2). A student caught partaking in examination malpractice could get suspended or expelled from the University which can lead to the termination of his or her academic career.

3). Examination malpractice destroys the academic reputation of a country. A graduate from a country with a high rate of examination malpractice will not be respected if he or she travels abroad.

4). A nation free of corruption cannot be achieved when examination malpractice is rampant in the school system. This is because the students who engaged in the academic fraud could end up in leadership positions in future.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

As the title suggests, this chapter gives insight into the researcher methodology applied in this study.it gives details into the research method, the data collection method and tools, sample selection, the research process, the data analysis method, the ethical consideration and the limitation of the study.

3.2Research method

For this research a qualitative research was carried out. Unlike quantitative research whose aim is to classify features, count them and construct statistical models, qualitative research is aimed at providing a complete and detailed description. According to Collins & Hussey, 2003, its basic advantage which also constitutes its basic difference with quantitative research is that it offers a complete description and analysis of research subject without limiting the scope of the research and the nature of participants→response.

Qualitative research method is useful in educational research because it addresses the ↑how" and "why" research questions and enables a deeper understanding of phenomena and context. It helps ask the questions that cannot be adequately expressed in figures.

A Qualitative approach was chosen for this research as it was considered more appropriate as it will enable the researcher gain a more depth and meaning based on the participants' individual experiences.

3.3Data collection method and tools

For this research in depth interviews were used. In depth interviews can be seen as personal and unstructured interviews whose aim is to identify participants→emotions, feeling and opinions regarding a research topic.

Simply put, an interview in a qualitative research is a conversation where questions, usually open ended, are asked to elicit the collection of information.

Kumar (2005) views interviews as the most suitable approach for studying complex and sensitive areas as the interviewer has the opportunity to prepare participants before asking sensitive questions.

The interview questions were open ended in nature which enabled the participants to elaborate as much as they wanted to. It also provided the opportunity for flexibility and range and therefore the ability to elicit more information from the participants.

For the data collection tools, a recording device was used and an interview schedule was prepared by the researcher to guide the interview towards the satisfaction of the research objectives.

3.4 Sample selection

In this research, the method of purposive sampling was used to develop the sample. Using this method, sample members are selected on the basis of their knowledge, relationship and expertise regarding a research topic (Freedman et al, 2007).

Within this context, the participants of this study were students from a University in Nigeria who had been students for at least two years as this guarantees that they will have sufficient knowledge of the research topic.

3.5 Research process

The interviews were carried out over a two-week period with a total of 35 participants. Each participant was informed beforehand by the interviewer to ensure they were willing to participate in the research. Some interviews were carried out face to face in the participants→ homes while some were done over the phone during which respondents were free to express their views. A total of 163 minutes was spent on the interviews with each interview lasting for an average of 5 minutes.

3.6 Data analysis

The first thing that was done was to analyze the data was a transcription of the interviews. This is because transcribing is vital in qualitative research as it helps the researcher become more immersed in the data they collected. It also makes data easier to analyze. During the transcription pseudonyms were used to ensure participants anonymity.

After this was done the data was analyzed using the thematic analysis method. Thematic analysis method is a qualitative data analysis method that involves reading through data in order to identify patterns and meaning across the data.

Thematic analysis is useful when trying to obtain information about people→s views, opinions, knowledge, experiences or values from a set of qualitative data.

The six-phase approach described by Braun and Clark (2006) was used to carry out this analysis. They are;

- Familiarization
- Coding the data
- Generating initial themes

- Reviewing the themes
- Naming and defining the themes
- Writing up the report

After the data had been transcribed the process of coding began. Coding involved applying keywords which were used to categorize and organize the information. The data was then analyzed and categorized into themes and then into sub-themes that emerged during the coding process. The next stage comprised of interpreting the data by identifying any reoccurring themes and then highlighting the similarities as well as the differences in the data.

3.7 Ethical consideration

Kumar (2005) states that it is unethical to accumulate information without the knowledge of participants, and their expressed willingness and informed consent. For this reason, the researcher made known to the participants that they could withdraw from the study at any time as well as the use of the data.

The researcher also ensured that the participants gave permission for the conversation to be recorded and were assure of confidentiality and anonymity throughout the process.

3.8 Limitation of the study

During this study, the researcher encountered some limitations. One of such limitations was student→s unwillingness to speak against fellow students as well as their institution. Another limitation refers to researcher bias which is a risk in any research study. Although this is a phenomenon that is impossible to eliminate completely, the researcher tried to be vigilant of research bias as much as possible.

3.9 Operationalization Table

Table 2

Variable label	operationalization	Indicative questions	measurement
Students perception to exam malpractice	What activities students consider to be examination malpractice How acceptable examination malpractice is in the minds of students	How would you define examination malpractice? What do you believe to be the reason students engage in examination malpractice?	Semi structured interviews with a series of open ended questions were used to carry out this study.
Barriers to whistleblowing in universities	Students response to examination malpractice. How often students witness the incidence of Examination Malpractice. Factors that encourage whistleblowing behavior among students. Factors that discourage whistleblowing behavior among students	Have you ever witnessed examination malpractice? Have you ever reported examination malpractice? What are your reasons for reporting or not reporting examination malpractice	
Students willingness to whistle blow	Level of aversion students have towards whistleblowing activities	Is there any situation where you would report examination malpractice?	

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the major themes and presents the findings gotten from the interview procedure and succeeding data analysis. A brief profile of the observers is presented which is then accompanied by the themes gotten from the data.

4.2 Participant Demographic

Table 3

Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Participants

Sample Characteristics		**n**	**%**
Gender			
	male	22	63
	female	13	37
Department			
	Business Administration	30	85
	Human Resource Management	**1**	3
	Banking and Finance	**1**	3
	Chemical Engineering	**1**	3
	Production Engineering	**1**	**3**
	Geography and Regional Planning	**1**	**3**

Note: N=35,

4.3 Perception of Examination Malpractice

4.3.1 Meaning of Examination Malpractice

All the participants had similar answers regarding the meaning of exam malpractice.

Participant 5 said:

> Simply put, it is any act, any form of behavior that goes against exam principles.

Similarly, participant 1 defined it as:

> Exam malpractice is basically just passing your exam, getting good grades, using external materials not allowed in the exam Hall.

Participant 7 in agreement with the above definition states:

> It can be an act or something you do as a student that is against the exam like using expos, using your phone, using wristwatches, etc.

Participant 3 stated:

> Exam malpractice is any action that can be done either by the lecturer or by the student during an examination.

The only exception was Participant 2 who along with giving a definition of examination malpractice went further to state what he considers to be an exception. He stated:

> Exam Malpractice is cheating in any form, be it is using materials like phones, papers or copying from others. Although I don't really believe copying is a form of exam malpractice, that's more like exam cooperation.

4.3.2 Causes of exam malpractice

Regarding the causes of exam malpractice, the following themes were identified.

4.3.2.1 Fear of failure

As identified by Peter and Okon (2013) the fear of failure is one of the major reasons students get involved in examination malpractice. Of the 35 participants, 15 had the words "fear of failure" or a slight variation of it as the answer to this question. This could be as a result of family and societal expectations.

Participants described the fear of failure as belonging to one of two categories

1) lack of confidence

According to participant 20, students do prepare for their exams but they lack confidence in their answers.

> I've noticed that a lot of people that have practiced exam malpractice in my class, it's not that they don't know anything at all. It's self confidence that they don't have that they need, let me say backup. They don't have that full confidence in themselves that they can do it perfectly without anyone's help. They feel they need backup

Participant 29 is of the same opinion. He stated

> they have no confidence in their ability. Maybe they need a back up

2)unretentive memory

Some participants believe that though students read, their fear of failure stems from lack of retentive memory.

Participant 12 who is of the opinion that this is the primary reason students get involved in exam malpractice stated;

> many of them are not really too sure about themselves. They don't believe that they will be able to remember what they've read. So, they see exam malpractice as a second choice or second option. Or alternative just in case they can't remember what they've read they can use that as an escape route to write their exam

participant 3 agrees saying;

> I think the major thing is this lack of self-confidence. They just feel they cannot, they don't really trust their answers. You know, most times, some persons may know the answers but they don't trust themselves, they just feel like, let me not go and make a mistake so they just tend to come into the exam Hall with extraneous things like electrical wristwatches to help them achieve their answers. I think what majorly makes people do expos are lack of confidence.

4.3.2.2 Under preparation

Of the 35 participants, 14 agree with George and Ukpong (2013) who was of the opinion that the increasing rate of examination malpractice was as a result of ineffective preparation by students. The participants believe that the reason students engage in exam malpractice is a lack of preparation for the exam.

According to participant 12

> the students don't read or they don't prepare for the exam. When you don't prepare for the exam he or she has no other choice that to fall back to using malpractice in the exam Hall.

Participant 5 agrees saying

> Lack of preparation gives room for desperation because you see students that are not prepared will definitely be desperate for ways to sort out that challenge for that Exam. They tend to look for the nearest short cut or what will aid the passing of that exam

He goes further to say

> People tend to procrastinate and when it's time to give back and you don't have anything to give back that's a factor. It falls into lack of preparation majorly in my opinion.

4.3.2.3 Adoption as the norm

4 participants were of the opinion that Examination malpractice has become a phenomenon that is so common in our society that it is seen by some as the norm.

According to participant 3;

> There are persons that do exam malpractice because they just feel it's one of those things. They ask, ←how can I write an exam without asking my neighbor?→. They are just used to it.

Participant 16 says;

> It's an old habit that they can't just stop. Even if they read they still feel like they have to.

Participant 35 agrees saying

> I actually think students engage in exam malpractice because they are used to it. It's not like they don't read it's just once they get there they feel like they should.

4.3.2.4 Laziness

A total of 6 participants were of the belief that laziness on the part of students was the main reason students engage in exam malpractice.

According to participant 1;

> Because they don't want to read anymore. Students of nowadays don't want to read. Everybody wants to pass without stress.

Participant 4 stated;

> Sometimes people tend to be too lazy to read

Participant 22 agrees saying;

> Because they don't want to work hard

4.3.2.5 *Refusal to study***.**

In addition to the afore mentioned causes of examination malpractice,3 participants were of the belief that some students who are involved intentionally choose not to study.

According to participants 35

I think another thing is because of the fact that people know that it's possible for you to get answers, they don't read. The fact that some people know that it is possible for you to take things into the hall and you might not get caught or it it's possible for you to just sit down close to somebody they just don't read

4.4 Perception of whistleblowing

out of the 35 participants in this study, 27 said they had in fact witnessed exam malpractice. Unsurprisingly, when asked if they had reported it they all said no.

Below are their reasons

4.4.1 Societal Orientation

This relates to the fact that there is a general belief in the society that one will be better off if they stay away from anything that doesn't directly involve them. Though good advice this mindset usually stands in the way of doing the right thing.

In fact, the phrase "mind my business" or a slight variation of it was said a total of 17 times in this study

Participant 24 stated

> I like to mind my business and remove myself from what doesn't concern me

Participant 7 agrees saying

> I like minding my business so I don't want to put my mouth in other people's business.

Participant 1 is of the same opinion. He says

> Well I have always believed it is good to mind your business.

It is also believed by some in the society that reporting wrong doing is a childish character, one that should be outgrown upon reaching maturity. This is probably why participant 24 says

> I don't think I can ever report anyone for malpractice. Does not really make sense to me. Being in the university, I think you're supposed to have a higher level of maturity, and reporting seems childish

4.4.2 fear

fear is probably the reason participant 3 said

> I just hope I don't get into any situation that will make me want to report any malpractice.

This can be divided into two sub categories

1)fear of being stigmatized

The fear of social stigma is present in individuals of all ages. It is more prevalent in the minds of youths. this is probably why participant 27 stated

> The only reason I have not reported exam malpractice is fear of being stigmatized

Participant 26 says

> Reporting them will make me look like a bad person. They will begin to see me as an enemy to them

Participant 1 agrees saying

> Because let's be honest, nobody likes a Whistleblower

2)fear of retaliation

The fear of retaliation or being attacked serves as a major barrier to whistleblowing of any form. It even bleeds into participants willingness to admit to witnessing exam malpractice. This can be seen in participant 8. Initially he stated that he had never witnessed exam malpractice but he then he said;

> You know, we live in a society that our lives are being threatened by one thing or another. I have seen

According to participant 10

> Because I'm not the one doing the malpractice and I don't want issues with anybody

Participant 35 agrees saying

> Because you might report someone and you don't know who that person is and I don't want that kind of problem.

4.4.3 Provision of proof

According to De George's theory of whistleblowing, a criterion for permissible whistleblowing is; ↑the whistleblower must have or have assessable evidence that will convince a reasonable, impartial observer that one's view of the situation is correct.↓

According to participant 15

> the person may deny it and I may not even know where the material is. There was a time the guy was sitting close to the window. Apart from that also, the fear of not being able to justify your claim as the way it's supposed to be.

4.4.4 Ethical dilemma

this is another barrier which exists when one considers the punishment the culprit will likely have to endure. This issue is what the Moral Choice View addresses where it suggests that an individual is obligated to consider not only the benefit but also the possible harm that could come from speaking out; whether harm to an individual, institution or to the general public.

according to participant 35

> Even though not speaking up is something we should have like a guilty conscience about it has been replaced with this belief that if you report this person, this person might fail so you will have that on your conscience that you are the reason somebody failed. I don't want to be the reason somebody has a carryover or be the reason somebody got rusticated

Participant 30 agrees saying;

> Say for instance a final year student that has a carryover. There is no way I will see a final year student maybe asking a neighbor a question and I will now report that student because he or she is scared of rewriting that exam again. So, I would not report such a case because I will not want that final year student to spill over or rewrite that course

Participant 21 is of the same opinion. He says

> Because exam malpractice may be wrong but if my friends are involved I wouldn't want to do anything to get them severely penalized

4.4.5 The question of responsibility

some participants were of the opinion that reporting exam malpractice is not their responsibility. they believe that bringing students who go against the rules of the exam is solely the role of the invigilators

participant 5 explains this saying;

> Because I think that is not my job. I haven't seen anywhere in the school prospectus where it says I should report malpractice

Participant 15 agrees saying

> the best way is just to allow the invigilators do their job. It's left for them so just do your part and leave the rest

also, participant 20 says

> Well, I feel that's the job of the invigilator. My job is to write my own exam.

4.4.6 Absence of awareness

a main barrier to whistleblowing in any form is the absence of information. Individual are usually unaware of what to report, who to report to and how to go about it

according to participant 35

> I feel like there is actually no way to report exam malpractice. I can't think of a way to.

4.5 Willingness to whistle blow

Despite their initial aversion to reporting exam malpractice, 17 out of the 27 participants did say they would be willing to report but only under some special circumstances.

Below are some of those circumstances

4.5.1 To avoid being implicated

13 participants said they would report exam malpractice if their failure to do so would get them implicated. This agrees with the Michael Davis→ Complicity account which suggests that whistleblowing is obligatory to prevent the blame of being a participant of the misconduct.

Participant 1 says

> If I am falsely accused of being involved in exam malpractice when I know who is actually responsible

Participant 4 who was of the same opinion says

> . In a situation whereby, I don't want to be implicated and the person is beside me and the person is doing it very well.

Participant 15 agrees stating

> If the persons or the person using it is sitting close to me and he gets caught. If he tries implicating me or even if he does not implicate me directly or during the process of interrogating him.

Participant 26 says

> In a situation that would make me report exam malpractice is when someone tries to involve me because of it and I become the scape goat

Also, according to participant 23

> If I'm put in a tight corner and I see that if I don't it's going to implicate me, I would

4.5.2 Under extreme cases

Despite the fact that there were some participant who said they would never report exam malpractice there was one participant, participant 3 who said:

If somebody goes to an extreme. I will not just sit quietly and watch things go wrong around me.

However, the problem with the above statement relates to one of the reasons the Moral Choice View was criticized. This is because the decision of an extreme case that will warrant her to speak up rests solely on her judgement.

When asked what she would consider an extreme case, she said

I think maybe when someone goes to the point of coming in with somebody to Impersonate them or maybe coming in with books.

4.5.3 Assured safety

considering the fact that fear is a main barrier to reporting exam malpractice, it is only logical that students will be willing to report if they know that they will be protected. 2 participants expressed willingness to whistle blow if they were assured of protection and anonymity.

According to participant 13

If I had a way to report without it getting back to me or if I can say it but people wouldn't know I was the one that said it, I will

Participant 27 agrees saying

If I am assured that I would be safe and justice will prevail, I will definitely report exam malpractice

An interesting factor from participant 27s answer is that it seems to corroborate with the De George's standard theory. The participants ←response suggests that an assurance of justice will influence the decision to blow the whistle.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction.

The main objective of this research was to examine students→ perception of examination malpractice, identify the barriers to whistleblowing in universities and the willingness of students to blow the whistle. This chapter is aimed at providing an interpretation of the research findings as well as to illustrate why the findings are relevant to the research and also to that of other researches carried out. The findings of this study are gotten from the interpretation and analysis of data gotten through semi-structured interviews of thirty-five participants who are undergraduate students.

5.2 Understanding the findings in relation to the research questions.

With regards to how students view examination malpractice, all the participants seemed to agree in their description. They were all of the opinion that Examination malpractice is an ethically wrong act that some students engage in to pass examinations. As the findings of this research highlights, students see examination malpractice as resulting from the fear of failure, under preparation, refusal to study and laziness.

Regarding the barriers to whistleblowing in universities, out of the 35 participants,27 stated that they had in fact witnessed examination malpractice. However, when asked if they had ever reported it, not a single one said they had. Their reasons included social orientation, provision of proof, ethical dilemma, the question of responsibility and the absence of awareness.

The absence of awareness barrier can be remedied by institutions setting up procedures and steps that can be used by students. It is preferable that the procedure makes provision for anonymity as this will also safeguard against the fear of retaliation and social stigmatization.

In a situation where anonymity will not suffice, there should be a whistleblower protection policy. A similar policy should be set up to inform students of the need to speak up when they are witnesses to examination malpractice.

The issue of ethical dilemma, however, is harder to remedy because the concept of ethically right and wrong is subjective in nature. Even if institutions were to point out specific acts that are considered to be economic fraud, the decision to whistle blow remains in the hands of the student.

Another major barrier is social orientation. In our current society, it is a common belief that one should worry about him or herself and ignore anyone else. Although living not worrying about others is a good philosophy to live by, it has also created a system where people pretend not to witness any wrongdoing if it does not directly affect them.

This belief is so ingrained in the minds of students that convincing them to do otherwise will prove to be a very difficult task.

Regarding students→willingness to whistle blow, 10 of the 27 participants who said they had witnessed examination malpractice stated that there was no circumstance where they would whistle blow. And of the 17 participants who said they would, 13 stated that the only reason they would ever speak up against examination malpractice was to avoid being implicated.

5.3 Comparison with previous research.

The findings of this research are in direct contrast with some previous researches on student→s perception to whistleblowing.

An example of this is a research carried out in January, 2020 which studied the whistleblowing intentions of some accounting students. The study made use of the survey method of research and data was gathered through the use of questioners.

The findings of the study showed that the sampled students had a greater intention to report wrongdoings when detected.

Similarly, in 2016, a study was carried out to examine the attitude of management students towards whistleblowing. A sample of 121 Masters students were used and the findings indicated that students had a positive attitude towards whistleblowing and whistleblowers.

The disagreement between the findings of this current study and that of the aforementioned papers could be attributed to the fact that while the previous papers study student→s willingness to blow the whistle if they were to witness a wrongdoing, this research studies a form of educational fraud students are likely to have witnessed.

5.4 Conclusion

This study was aimed at analyzing the willingness of Nigerian university students to whistle blow and their perception of examination malpractice. The results indicated that while students were against examination malpractice they were unwilling to take part in any whistleblowing act. The findings of this study can be applied by employers, bodies interested in whistleblowing activities and institutions interested in encouraging whistleblowing as a method of controlling examination malpractice.

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APPENDIX

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET.

You are being invited to participate in a research project. This study is part of an undergraduate student→s project at the University of Benin. Below is some information that can help to decide whether or not to take part in this study. If there is anything that is unclear to you or if you would like more information, do not hesitate to ask. Thank you for taking time to read this information.

Project Title

WHISTLEBLOWING: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF STUDENTS RESPONSE TO EXAMINATION MALPRCTICE

The purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigating the willingness of Nigerian university students to whistle blow as well as to ascertain students→view on examination malpractice.

Why you have been chosen to take part

You have been chosen to take part in this study because you are a study because you identify as a student of a higher institution of learning in Nigeria.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in the study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. You are not required to give a reason for your withdrawal and you will decide if the researcher can retain the data already collected.

What is involved in taking part in this study?

Your participation in this study will entail being involved in an interview where you will be asked a series of questions aimed at fulfilling the research purposes.

The disadvantages of taking part in this study

There are no risks association with participating in this study as the data collected will be kept confidential and your personal information will not be disclosed.

Benefits of taking part in this study

Although there may not be a direct personal benefit to your participation in this research, that is besides being involved in stimulating conversation, the information you provide will contribute to further researches.

Confidentiality of this study

While participating in this study your privacy will be maximized and your anonymity is guaranteed as all data will be kept confidential and used only for research purposes.

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

WHISTLEBLOWING: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF STUDENTS RESPONSE TO EXAMINATION MALPRCTICE

I confirm that I have read and examined the information concerning the above study carefully and have had the opportunity to ask questions about participating in this study which have been answered satisfactorily.

I also understand that participating is voluntary and that I can withdraw from this study at any time without having to give a reason.

I voluntarily agree to participate in the above research.

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Preamble: Exchange of pleasantries, reintroduction of the research work, reaffirmation of voluntary participation and request for permission to record

Section 1: Introduction

- Tell me about yourself
- What would you say is your most memorable exam experience?

Section 2: Perception of exam malpractice

- Have you ever experienced any form of exam malpractice?
- What in your opinion qualifies as exam malpractice
- What do you believe is the cause of exam malpractice?

Section 3: Perception of whistleblowing

- Have you ever reported exam malpractice?
- If no; what are your reasons

  Do you think there is any situation where you would report exam malpractice?
- If yes; what was the outcome

  Is there anything you wish you had done differently?

Section 4: Participants→→contribution

- Do you have any questions/ides/contributions besides all previous discussions?