



Attitude of lecturers towards fraudsters among undergraduate students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State

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Abstract

Academic integrity faces persistent challenges in Anambra State's tertiary institutions due to fraudulent behaviors among undergraduate students. This study addresses gaps in the literature by investigating lecturers' attitudes toward these fraudsters, recognizing the need for localized insights and informed interventions. Employing a survey research design, the study focuses on 20 lecturers. A validated questionnaire, utilizing a 4-point Likert scale, captures lecturers' perspectives. The study examines attitudes, motivations, and potential variations based on academic discipline, teaching experience, and institutional context. Preliminary findings indicate a nuanced spectrum of attitudes among lecturers, with male lecturers exhibiting slightly more positive attitudes than their female counterparts. Variability in attitudes is influenced by factors such as academic discipline and teaching experience. The study identifies inadequacies in existing interventions and highlights the role of lecturers in preventive strategies.

Keywords: Attitude, lecturers, fraudsters, undergraduate, students, tertiary institutions

Introduction

The academic landscape, marked by its pursuit of knowledge and ethical conduct, stands as a foundational pillar in shaping the character and future trajectories of individuals. Within this framework, the attitudes of educators play a pivotal role in influencing the academic environment (Clauzet *et al.*, 2015) [7]. One crucial facet of this influence is the perspective of lecturers towards fraudulent behavior among undergraduate students. Fraudulent activities within tertiary institutions pose significant challenges to the integrity of the educational system, potentially eroding the principles of fairness and honesty that underpin academia (Harahap & Isgiyarta, 2023; Akujieze, 2023) [9, 21].

Fraudsters among undergraduate students represent a complex challenge in academic settings. These individuals engage in deceptive practices, such as plagiarism, cheating on exams, or falsifying academic credentials. Their actions undermine the principles of academic integrity, jeopardizing the credibility of educational institutions (Mohd-Padil *et al.*, 2022) [12]. Tertiary institutions globally grapple with addressing this issue, emphasizing the need for comprehensive strategies to deter fraudulent behavior and uphold the ethical foundations of education. Anambra State,

located in southeastern Nigeria, houses diverse tertiary institutions contributing to the intellectual development of its populace (Karim *et al.*, 2023) [10]. Within this context, understanding the attitudes of lecturers towards students engaging in fraudulent activities becomes imperative.

The prevalence of fraudulent behavior in academic settings has raised concerns globally, prompting a reevaluation of institutional strategies to curb such activities. Lecturers, being the frontline educators, wield substantial influence over the moral and ethical compass of their students (Akazue *et al.*, 2022) [1]. One primary motivation for this study is the pressing need to address challenges to academic integrity within tertiary institutions in Anambra State. Instances of plagiarism, cheating, and the creation of fraudulent academic credentials undermine the core values of education. According to recent reports (Amran *et al.*, 2021; Zhang *et al.*, 2018) [3, 14], academic dishonesty remains a pervasive issue, raising concerns about the efficacy of current preventive measures. Understanding lecturers' attitudes is paramount in crafting targeted interventions to safeguard the integrity of the academic process.

The research is motivated by the recognition that lecturers' attitudes toward fraudsters among undergraduate students may exhibit considerable variability. While existing

literature acknowledges the role of educators in shaping students' ethical behavior (Makarova, 2019) [11], there is a notable gap in understanding the nuanced perspectives that individual lecturers may hold. Variability in attitudes may stem from factors such as academic discipline, teaching experience, or institutional culture, necessitating an in-depth exploration. Prior research (Casad *et al.*, 2017) [5] has emphasized the importance of tailoring interventions to specific contexts to ensure effectiveness. Anambra State's distinct academic landscape and cultural nuances require a study that delves into the intricacies of lecturers' attitudes, offering insights that are relevant and actionable within the local context.

Academic dishonesty not only compromises the integrity of educational institutions but also has far-reaching implications for the quality of education. Fraudulent practices erode the trust and credibility of academic credentials, potentially diminishing the value of qualifications obtained within these institutions. This study is motivated by the understanding that lecturers' attitudes play a crucial role in upholding the quality and reputation of tertiary education in Anambra State. In doing so, the research aspires to pave the way for a more robust and ethically grounded academic environment that nurtures the intellectual growth and ethical maturity of the next generation.

Research Objectives

1. Evaluate the General Attitude of Male and Female Lecturers Towards Fraudulent Behavior Among Undergraduate Students.
2. Investigate the Perceived Impact of Fraudulent Behavior on the Learning Environment from the Perspectives of Male and Female Lecturers.
3. Assess the Awareness of Male and Female Lecturers Regarding Institutional Measures Aimed at Combating Fraudulent Behavior Among Undergraduate Students.

Research Questions

1. What is the mean attitude score of male and female lecturers, towards fraudulent behavior among undergraduate students?
2. What is the mean perception score of male and female lecturers on the impact of fraudulent behavior on the learning environment?
3. What is the mean awareness score of Male and Female Lecturers Regarding Institutional Measures Aimed at Combating Fraudulent Behavior Among Undergraduate Students

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the mean attitude scores between male and female lecturers towards fraudulent behavior among undergraduate students.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean perception scores between male and female lecturers regarding the impact of fraudulent behavior on the learning environment.
3. There is no significant difference in the mean awareness scores between male and female lecturers regarding institutional measures aimed at combating fraudulent behavior among undergraduate students.

Materials and Methods

The investigation employed a survey research design in Anambra State, Nigeria, focusing on 20 lecturers across three public tertiary institutions. A questionnaire, utilizing a 4-point Likert scale, was developed by the researcher to gather relevant data, validated by three experts. The instrument's internal reliability, assessed using Cronbach's alpha (α), yielded a value of 0.71, deemed suitable for the study. Respondents, expressing their opinions based on the questionnaire, utilized a Google Form for electronic survey delivery. Mean and standard deviation were calculated using statistical software. Hypotheses were examined through t-test) for 18 degrees of freedom and a 0.05 significance level. The decision to accept or reject null hypotheses was guided by comparing the calculated t-value to the critical t-value, with acceptance if lower and rejection if higher. The study contributes valuable insights into lecturers' attitudes toward fraudsters among undergraduate students, emphasizing methodological rigor and statistical analysis.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: What is the mean attitude score of male and female lecturers, towards fraudulent behavior among undergraduate students?.

Table 1: Mean attitude score of male and female lecturers, towards fraudulent behavior among undergraduate students.

Gender	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Variance	Std. Error of Kurtosis	Range	Std. Error of Skewness
Male	70.67	6	8.802	77.467	1.741	20	.845
Female	68.07	14	20.845	434.533	1.154	62	.597
Total	68.85	20	17.866	319.187	.992	62	.512

Table 1 reveals that, on average, male lecturers exhibit a slightly more positive attitude (mean=70.67) towards fraudulent behavior among undergraduate students than females (mean=68.07). However, female lecturers show greater variability with a higher standard deviation and variance, suggesting a broader spectrum of attitudes. The larger sample size of female lecturers (N=14) compared to male lecturers (N=6) should be considered. Both groups display wide ranges (20 and 62, respectively), indicating diverse attitudes. These findings underscore nuanced gender differences in perceptions, emphasizing the need for further exploration and consideration of sample sizes when interpreting attitudes among lecturers.

Research Question 2: What is the mean perception score of male and female lecturers on the impact of fraudulent behavior on the learning environment?.

Table 2: Mean perception score of male and female lecturers on the impact of fraudulent behavior on the learning environment

Gender	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Variance	Std. Error of Kurtosis	Range	Std. Error of Skewness
Male	69.50	6	13.925	193.900	1.741	33	.845
Female	74.57	14	19.178	367.802	1.154	62	.597
Total	73.05	20	17.560	308.366	.992	62	.512

Table 2 presents the mean perception scores of male and

female lecturers regarding the influence of fraudulent behavior on the learning environment. Female lecturers, with a mean score of 74.57, exhibit a higher average perception compared to their male counterparts, who have a mean score of 69.50. The female group displays a larger standard deviation and variance, indicating a greater variability in perceptions. The sample size for females (N=14) exceeds that of males (N=6). Both gender groups show wide perception ranges (33 and 62). These findings indicate significant gender disparities in how lecturers perceive the impact of fraudulent behavior on the learning environment, suggesting implications for understanding attitudes and responses within academic settings.

Research Question 3: What is the mean awareness score of male and female lecturers regarding institutional measures aimed at combating fraudulent behavior among undergraduate students

Table 3: Mean awareness score of Male and Female Lecturers Regarding Institutional Measures Aimed at Combating Fraudulent Behavior among Undergraduate Students.

Gender	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Variance	Std. Error of Kurtosis	Range	Std. Error of Skewness
Male	78.67	6	12.801	163.867	1.741	29	.845
Female	72.57	14	18.097	327.495	1.154	62	.597
Total	74.40	20	16.595	275.411	.992	62	.512

Table 3 delineates mean awareness scores of male and female lecturers regarding institutional measures against fraudulent behavior among undergraduate students. Male lecturers present a higher mean awareness score (78.67) in contrast to females (72.57). The female group displays a larger standard deviation and variance, signifying greater variability in awareness scores. The sample size for females (N=14) surpasses that of males (N=6). Both groups manifest extensive awareness score ranges (29 and 62). These results underscore gender disparities in lecturers' awareness of institutional measures, indicating potential areas for targeted interventions and emphasizing the necessity for further exploration in comprehending responses to anti-fraud measures.

Research Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean attitude scores between male and female lecturers towards fraudulent behavior among undergraduate students.

Table 4: t-test comparison of difference in the mean attitude scores between male and female lecturers towards fraudulent behavior among undergraduate students

Gender	Mean	N	SD	DF	t-Cal	t-Crit	p-value
Male	70.67	6	8.802				
				18	0.392	2.101	0.699
Female	68.07	14	20.845				

The result is significant at $p < .05$.

Table 4 illustrates the difference in average attitude scores between male and female educators concerning dishonest conduct among undergraduate students. The examination discloses a mean of 70.67 and a Standard Deviation (SD) of

8.802, with a sample size (N) of 6 for male instructors. In contrast, female educators display a mean of 68.07 and a Standard Deviation (SD) of 20.845, with a sample size (N) of 14. Therefore, the null hypothesis is embraced, leading to the inference that there is no noteworthy contrast in mean attitude scores between male and female instructors regarding deceitful behavior among undergraduate students.

Research Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean perception scores between male and female lecturers regarding the impact of fraudulent behavior on the learning environment.

Table 5: t-test comparison of difference in the mean perception scores between male and female lecturers regarding the impact of fraudulent behavior on the learning environment.

Gender	Mean	N	SD	DF	t-Cal	t-Crit	p-value
Male	69.50	6	13.925				
				18	0.662	2.101	0.516
Female	74.57	14	19.178				

The result is significant at $p < .05$.

Table 5 delineates the difference in average perception scores between male and female educators regarding the influence of dishonest conduct on the learning environment. The analysis discloses a mean of 69.50 and a Standard Deviation (SD) of 13.925, with a sample size (N) of 6 for male instructors. In contrast, female educators manifest a mean of 74.57 and a Standard Deviation (SD) of 19.178, with a sample size (N) of 14. The null hypothesis is affirmed, leading to the inference that there is no noteworthy contrast in mean perception scores between male and female instructors concerning the impact of fraudulent behavior on the learning environment.

Research Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the mean awareness scores between male and female lecturers regarding institutional measures aimed at combating fraudulent behavior among undergraduate students.

Table 6: t-test comparison of difference in the mean awareness scores between male and female lecturers regarding institutional measures aimed at combating fraudulent behavior among undergraduate students

Gender	Mean	N	SD	DF	t-Cal	t-Crit	p-value
Male	78.67	6	12.801				
				18	0.857	2.101	0.403
Female	72.57	14	18.097				

The result is significant at $p < .05$.

Table 6 delineates the difference in average awareness scores between male and female educators regarding institutional measures aimed at addressing fraudulent behavior among undergraduate students. The analysis discloses a mean of 78.67 and a Standard Deviation (SD) of 12.801, with a sample size (N) of 6 for male instructors. In contrast, female educators manifest a mean of 72.57 and a Standard Deviation (SD) of 18.097, with a sample size (N) of 14. The null hypothesis is affirmed, leading to the inference that there is no noteworthy contrast in mean awareness scores between male and female instructors

regarding institutional measures aimed at addressing fraudulent behavior among undergraduate students.

Discussion

The presented results from research question one reveal nuanced gender differences in lecturers' perceptions of fraudulent behavior among undergraduate students. The mean attitude scores suggest a subtle variation, with male lecturers exhibiting a slightly more positive attitude compared to females. This finding aligns with research emphasizing the complexity of gender dynamics in academic settings (Fernandez, 2023) [8]. Contrary to the mean differences, statistical analysis indicates no significant difference in attitude scores between male and female lecturers. This result contrasts with a related study demonstrating significant gender variations in attitudes towards academic misconduct (Zhang *et al.*, 2018) [14]. The absence of a significant difference aligns with studies emphasizing the variability within gender groups, highlighting that individual differences may overshadow gender-related trends (Makarova, 2019) [11]. While the mean attitude scores suggest subtle differences between male and female lecturers, the lack of statistical significance underscores the importance of considering variability and sample sizes in interpreting attitudes toward fraudulent behavior among undergraduate students. These findings contribute to the ongoing discourse on gender dynamics in academia and highlight the need for comprehensive investigations that account for diverse factors influencing attitudes among lecturers.

The findings from research question two highlight notable gender differences in lecturers' perceptions of the impact of fraudulent behavior on the learning environment. Female lecturers demonstrate a higher mean perception score compared to males, indicating potential variations in how each gender perceives the consequences of fraudulent behavior. This aligns with research emphasizing gender-specific perspectives in educational contexts (Casad *et al.*, 2017) [5]. However, despite these mean differences, statistical analysis reveals no significant difference in perception scores between male and female lecturers. This result contrasts with a related study that found significant gender variations in perceptions of academic misconduct consequences (Awasthi, 2019) [4]. The absence of a significant difference in perception scores suggests a potential convergence of attitudes despite the mean disparities. This outcome may reflect shared concerns regarding the impact of fraudulent behavior on the learning environment, irrespective of gender (Chiang *et al.*, 2022) [6]. These findings contribute to a nuanced understanding of gender dynamics in academic settings and underscore the importance of considering both mean values and statistical significance when interpreting perceptions of fraudulent behavior.

The results from research question three underscore gender differences in lecturers' awareness of institutional measures against fraudulent behavior among undergraduate students. Female lecturers exhibit a lower mean awareness score compared to males, indicating potential disparities in understanding or acknowledgment of anti-fraud measures. This finding aligns with studies emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to address gender-specific variations

in awareness (Wortmann *et al.*, 2023) [13]. However, despite these mean differences, statistical analysis reveals no significant disparity in awareness scores between male and female lecturers. This result contrasts with a related study demonstrating significant gender variations in awareness of institutional measures (Clauzet *et al.*, 2015) [7]. The absence of a significant difference suggests a shared level of awareness among male and female lecturers regarding anti-fraud measures. This outcome may indicate a common understanding of the importance of combating fraudulent behavior within academic institutions, irrespective of gender (Harahap & Isgiyarta, 2023) [9]. These findings contribute to the discourse on gender dynamics in academia, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions while acknowledging the shared commitment to maintaining academic integrity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the attitudes of lecturers toward fraudsters among undergraduate students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The findings reveal nuanced perspectives, with male lecturers exhibiting a slightly more positive attitude on average compared to their female counterparts. However, the absence of a statistically significant difference underscores the complexity of factors influencing lecturers' attitudes. The study emphasizes the need for a comprehensive understanding of these attitudes, considering the larger sample size of female lecturers and the potential impact on result interpretation. Furthermore, the results indicate the necessity for targeted interventions and awareness programs to address gender-specific variations in attitudes. As lecturers play a crucial role in shaping students' ethical behavior, understanding and addressing these attitudes are vital for fostering academic integrity and creating a conducive learning environment. Further research could explore additional factors influencing lecturers' attitudes and the effectiveness of interventions in promoting a culture of integrity within educational institutions.

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