

Esmeranda Manful¹
Department of Sociology and Social Work,
Kwame Nkrumah University of Science
and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana.

Fred Yao Gbagbo,
Department of Health
Administration & Education,
University of Education,
Winneba
fygbagbo@uew.edu.gh

Percival Delali Agorhoh¹
Department of Nutrition and
Dietetics, University of Health and
Allied Sciences, Ho.

**UNIVERSITY OF HEALTH
AND ALLIED SCIENCES**
— Health for Development —

Lisa Kearns²
Division of Medical Ethics,
Dept. of Population Health,
NYU Grossman School of
Medicine

Barbara K. Redman³
Division of Medical Ethics, NYU
Grossman School of Medicine

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

**Ghanaian Academics' Views about Research
Misconduct in a Public University in Ghana**

8th World Conference on Research Integrity
Oral Presentation 16.1 Tuesday, Jun 4, 2024
10:30 AM - 12:00 PM. MC3 Hall, Athens, Greece.
Presenter: Dr. Fred Yao Gbagbo

RESULTS

Findings 1: RM is more of plagiarism than FFM!

100% Plagiarism is research misconduct

40% Fabrication, Falsification, Manipulation & Plagiarism

60% Fabrication, Falsification, & Plagiarism

BACKGROUND - WHY WAS STUDY WAS NECESSARY?

- The scientific community increasingly demands high quality research conducted with the greatest research integrity possible⁽¹⁾
- Research misconduct is on the rise in recent time⁽²⁾
- Yet, the available evidence is unfortunately skewed in favor of developed countries compared to Sub Saharan Africa⁽³⁾. The reasons are varied^(2,3,4)
- In Ghana, preliminary papers (mostly anecdotal evidence) suggest that the practice may be prevalent among both students and faculty of universities^(4,5). Yet this is unconfirmed.
- The pervasiveness of RM (among university researchers & authors) has the potential to hurt not just researchers and scientists, but also society at large^(6,9)

RESULTS - Perception of RM

RM is more of plagiarism than FFP!

“... they (fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism) are all forms of research misconduct, but plagiarism is more common and damaging. Now there are ways that people can beat the plagiarism checker ...”

“...stealing others ideas without proper reference, and manipulation of results...”

Lecturer, PhD, 11 years in academia]

[Lecturer, PhD; 7 years in academia]

STUDY AIM

To **provide empirical evidence** that may inform a bigger research project to inform policy and programme interventions, that may chart an ethical research path within the academia in Ghana.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

A. **Research Misconduct:** means fabrication, falsification, Manipulation or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results⁽⁶⁾.

- **Fabrication** - making up data, results, recordings and reporting them.
- **Falsification** - manipulating research materials, equipment, processes, changing or omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record.
- **Manipulation** - adjusting data to make it organized (i.e adjusting, inserting, modifying)
- **Plagiarism** - the appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit.

B. **Research Integrity:** means conducting research in such a way that allows others to have confidence and trust in the methods and the findings of the research⁽⁷⁾.

NB: Research misconduct does not include honest error or differences of opinion.

FINDINGS - Perception of the prevalence of RM

All respondents believe that RM exists in academic institutions, though it occurs covertly!

“... I have not heard much about research misconduct in [this university] ... , but I am sure there are such things happening...”

“...you can't fault researcher for certain misconducts because this is [a] human institution...but aside that, the contributing factors could be so many. For example, in this institution, you are required to have a number of publications before you are promoted. So regardless of your field experience you won't be promoted if you don't have the numbers, we usually say you publish or perish...”

Senior Lecturer, PhD/Postdoc; 6 years in academia

Professor, PhD; 9 years in academia

FINDINGS - Perceived causes of RM

Institutional Enablers

- ✓ Lack of punitive measures
- ✓ Inadequate training support and scrutiny
- ✓ Inadequately distributed/poorly communicated research policies

Institutional Inhibitors

- ✗ (In)ability to detect RM
- ✗ Research funding/Support
- ✗ Ethical climate [The role of the IRBs in RM]

IMPLICATIONS

1. Need for a **national level** research misconduct framework
2. Institutional level to enactment/enforcement of robust RM policy and processes are in place
3. Strengthening Responsible conduct of research training [tailored to the Ghanaian /African context if possible]
4. Strengthening a **local** research agenda in RM – further research needed.

CONCLUSIONS

- We presented one of the earliest evidence that academics in public universities in Ghana hold a perception that research misconduct is widespread in the Ghanaian academic space.
- Our study highlights significant gaps in the institutional environment that may be hindering institutional measures against research misconduct.
- More comprehensive research is imperative to explore the drivers and (de)motivations of the role of the institutional environment plays in RM among academics; particularly deconstruct the public-or-perish phenomenon and its effects on RM.
- Need for funding and collaboration for explore RM in academia nation wide

METHODS

Study design
Rapid Exploratory-descriptive case study design with a qualitative approach

Instrument/ Data collection
* A pretested researcher developed interview guide
* Trained RAs collected data
* Audio recordings → transcription

Data Analysis
Thematic analysis approach using the ATLAS.ti 8

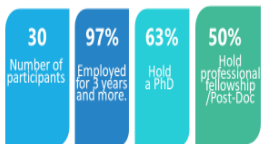
Ethics and approvals
* Received IRB approval
* Obtained formal permission from Office of the Registrar of Institution (named withheld for anonymity)
* Acquired informed consent from participants

Study Setting/ Population
* A purposefully selected public university in Ghana
* Academics (faculty members and research fellows)

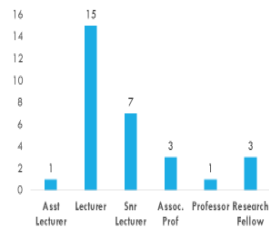
Inclusion/Exclusion criteria
* Completed probation (+/-)
* Full time employee (+/-)

RESULTS

Summary of participants' background



Distribution of academic ranks in the sample



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

1. NYU-UG Research Integrity Fellowship Program & Faculty
2. Professor Amos Laar,
3. Dr. Kyle Ferguson
4. The university used and the study participants.

FUNDING: NYU-UG Research Integrity Fellowship.