



PERCEPTIONAL EVALUATION OF THE CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE AMONG COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDENTS IN DELTA STATE

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ABSTRACT

College of education students' perception on examination malpractice was examined. The participants for the study were taken from College of Education, Agbor, Delta State. Relevant research questions and hypothesis were developed for this study. The study revealed that the most common causes of examination malpractice are moral decadence and high enrollment of students among other factors. Moral decadence has its roots in corruption which has eaten deep into almost every area of our life in Nigeria. Such corruption has given rise to wrong notion and orientation in terms of preparing for and writing examinations. Lack of trust and credibility for certificates issued from our institutions of learning was identified as the major effect of examination malpractice on the Nigerian educational system. The study also revealed that gender, age, religion and students' academic ability were not significant factors in student involvement with examination malpractice. In finding solutions to the problem of examination malpractice, counseling interventions in the forms of seminars, workshops, lectures, group and individual counseling were identified as ways of correcting and equipping students with the right notion and skills for preparing and writing examinations.

Keywords: Examination, Malpractice, Corruption, Education, Counselling, Nigeria.

1. INTRODUCTION

The issue of examination malpractice is a continuous recurrent issue in the Nigeria educational discourse. The scourge of examination malpractice has become so complicated that most stakeholders are at a loss as to the right way to proceed that will generate useful results on the matter. It has been observed that 9 out of every 10 students indulge in one form of examination malpractice or another. This is a frightening observation which requires urgent attention, even if several efforts have been made in the past. The situation becomes more worrisome when we notice parents, guardians and teachers who should be custodians of moral code of conduct abating and aiding their wards in this terrible and shameful practice.

Examination malpractice has been defined as an illegal or unethical behaviour by someone taking an examination with the intention of obtaining good results in the said examination. It is a form of disruptive behaviour exhibited by an individual taking an examination or by someone charged with the conduct of an examination before, during or after the said examination.

Examination malpractice has also been seen as a form of corruption which has crept into the Nigerian educational system. It is a form of misconduct or unacceptable behaviour with a view to obtaining good grades in a fraudulent manner (Olujuwon, 2007). It is an unacceptable way of behaviour either before, during, or after the actual process of writing an examination, which contravenes known laws which govern the process of taking the examination.

Examination malpractice has been identified by researchers as an unacceptable psychological/educational behaviour that is gradually destroying the educational system in Nigeria and beyond. The effects are so negative to the extent that it is producing a labour force that is mentally and morally defective. The growing menace of examination malpractice in our schools is becoming worrisome and disturbing by the day. The problem is not peculiar to a particular level of education. Rather, it pervades all educational facets in Nigeria. Of all educational problems in Nigeria, none poses a greater threat than the issue of examination malpractice in schools. The most disturbing aspect is the participation or involvement of school administrators, parents/Guardians, and examination personnel in examination malpractice. The rampant private and special centres for external examination like JAMB, West African Examination Council (WAEC) are part of non schools administrator involvement, which has further compounded the problem of examination malpractice (Olushola, 2007).

The phenomenon of examination malpractice can be traced to the colonial period during which formal education was introduced into the country. This dates back to the early part of the 19th century. Olujuwon (2007) mentions that the first major incidence of examination malpractices was in 1914, when the Senior Cambridge local examinations leaked. This leakage led to an upsurge in 1963. From this time onward, there have been reported cases of examination malpractice almost on yearly bases. A major incidence of examination malpractice was reported in 1977. That year became known as “Expo 77”. The magnitude of the leakage was so great that market women had access to the actual question paper. Since then examination malpractice has continued to assume different forms with its devastating effects on the quality and the goal of education. The above leakages made the Federal Government to promulgate Decree 27 of 1973, and miscellaneous decree 20 of 1984 to check the increasing incidences of examination malpractices. There was also a corresponding 21 years jail term for offenders. All of these efforts by the government was to curb the spread of this evil in the educational system. Unfortunately, that effort by the Government has yielded little or no results as examination malpractice has continued developing with varying degrees of sophistication. A lot of factors have been identified as being the causes of examination malpractice. These factors have been categorized as a student based factors, school based factors and society based factors.

- (a) *Student Based Factors:* The student based factors include psychological stress, laxity on the part of the students, ignorance of good and effective study habits and technique for answering examination questions (Egbule, 2005, Tete, 2004). Other factors include individual differences that are manifested in different IQs and levels of abilities.
- (b) *School Based Factors:* These include inadequate staffing and provision of learning resources which makes students unprepared for examinations, overemphasis on certificate, examination conscious education system, limited number of invigilators and consequently poor invigilation, overcrowding in schools, unqualified teachers, poor teaching, non completion of scheme of work before examinations, absence of counselors at schools, repeated closure of schools during strike actions, etc (Bunza, 1993, Gbenedio, 1993). Teachers' lack of motivation and devotion to their work is also another factor that may have contributed to increases in cases of examination malpractice.

(c) *Society Based Factors:* These include the prevailing levels of immorality in the country, high level of corruption in the country. This corruption is noticeable in every sphere of life in the community. There are various forms of examination malpractice. These forms are either student based or school/teacher based.

- *Student Based Forms:* The Academic Regulation of Senate of the Delta State University, Abraka reported in 2002 identified the following practices as forms of examination malpractice observed during examinations. They include impersonation, copying from other students' scripts, unauthorized sources such as lecture notes, handouts, textbooks, leakage of examination questions, forging and altering medical reports to defer examinations, lobbying for good grades, assault on examination agents by students, unauthorized activities within and outside the examination hall by students, etc.
- *School Based/Teacher Forms:* School based/teacher forms of malpractice include altering of grades by lecturers in exchange for gratification, supply of answer materials into examination halls, abating leakage of examination materials, victimizing of students in the forms of reduction of grades, etc.

The consequences of examination malpractices include lack of recognition of academic qualification in Nigeria, frequent cancellation and suspension of results, unproductive labour force, lack of confidence in the educational system, molestation and harassment of students by lecturers and vice versa, etc.

Examination malpractice is an unacceptable behaviour that is continually destroying the Nigerian educational system. Despite all the efforts that have been made in the past to curb the spread of this problem, its prevalence and devastating effects continue to be visible in the nations educational system. The effect of this problem is that the Nigerian educational system has gradually lost its credibility within and outside the country. The certificates that are issued seem like mere sheets of paper. The study, therefore seeks to further investigate the problem of examination malpractice with a view to suggesting ways in which it can be curbed.

1.1 Research Hypotheses and Research Questions

The hypotheses of the study are:

- There is no significant difference between male and female students' involvement in examination malpractice.
- There is no significant difference between students' involvement in examination malpractice.
- There is no significant difference between students' involvement in examination malpractice based on religion.
- There is no significant difference in students' involvement in examination malpractice based on academic ability.

The research questions are:

- What are the most common causes of examination malpractice?
- What is the greatest effect of examination malpractice?

2. MATERIALS AND METHOD

A sample of 214 students was drawn from students of the College of Education, Agbor, Delta State. The sample stratified random sampling technique was used in generating the sample

size of this study. A 24 item questionnaire titled “Student Perception on Examination Malpractice Questionnaire” (SPEM) was administered to the respondents. The ranking order was used to analyse research questions. The t-test was used to analyse hypothesis 1, while ANOVA was use to analyse hypotheses 2 to 4.

3. EMPIRICAL RESULTS

Research Question 1: What are the most common causes of examination malpractice?

Table 1: Mean scores of the most common factors responsible for examination malpractice

	<i>Causes</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Rating</i>
1.	Inadequate facilities	2.65	S (3 rd)
2.	Poverty level of staff	2.51	S (5 th)
3.	Lack of control in admission quota	2.78	S (1 st)
4.	Fraternity or Cultism	2.62	S (4 th)
5.	Moral decadence in the society	2.77	S (2 nd)

Note: .05 level of significance

The data presented above indicated that the five causes stated above are among the most common causes of examination malpractice. Of the five most common causes, lack of control of admission quota was observed the most common factor. This was followed by moral decadence in the society.

Research Question 2: What is the greatest effect of examination malpractice?

Table 2: Mean score rating of the effects of examination malpractice among students

	<i>Causes</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Rating</i>
1.	Total loss of trust in the educational system	3.40	S (1 st)
2.	Lack of recognition of academic qualification	3.27	S (2 nd)
3.	Enrolment of students	3.26	S (3 rd)
4.	False impression of student capability	3.21	S (4 th)
5.	Unproductive labour force	2.02	S (6 th)
6.	Frequent cancellation of results	2.72	S (5 th)

Note: .05 level of significance

The table above shows that the mean score for the rating of the effects of mean scores for six factors are 3.40, 3.27, 3.26, 3.21, 2.02, 2.72 for a total loss of trust in the educational system, lack of recognition of academic qualification, enrollment of students, a false impression of students' capabilities, unproductive labour force and frequent cancellation of the results.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between male and female students' involvement in examination malpractice.

Table 3: T-test comparison between male and female students' involvement in examination malpractice

Group	N	X	SD	DF	T-calculated	T- critical	Sig.
Male	59	52.76	7.96	211	711	1.96	.05
Female	154	52.02	6.35				

Note: .05 level of significance

The calculated t score of .711 is less than the critical t of 1.96. The implication is that the calculated t is not significant. The hypothesis is therefore accepted. The conclusion therefore is that there is no significant difference between male and female students' involvement in examination malpractice.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between students of different age group's involvement in examination malpractice.

Table 4: Summary table of variance among the various age categories and their involvement in examination malpractice

Sources of Variance	Df	SS	MS	Calculated	Critical F
Among	3	325.66	108.55	2.38	2.65
Within	209	9539.52	45.64		
Total	212	9865.18			

Note: .05 level of significance

From the analysis of data above, the F calculated of 2.38, is lesser than the table value of 2.65. This is not significant at the .05. The hypothesis is therefore accepted. The implication then is that there is no significant difference between students of different age group's involvement in examination malpractice.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference between students' involvement in examination malpractice based on religion.

Table 5: Summary table of the variances in students' involvement in examination malpractice based on religious affiliation

Sources of Variance	Df	SS	MS	Calculated	Critical F
Among	2	32.91	41.46	.89	2.65
Within	210	97865.18	46.58		
Total	212	97865.18			

Note: .05 level of significance

From the analysis of data above, the F calculated of .89, is less than the critical F of 2.65. This is not significant at .05 level. The hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant difference in students' involvement in examination malpractice based on academic ability.

Table 6: Summary table of the variances in the involvement of students in examination malpractice based on academic ability

Sources of Variance	Df	SS	MS	Calculated	Critical F
Among	2	11.34	5.67	.121	2.65
Within	210	4853.84	46.92		
Total	212	97865.18			

Note: .05 level of Significance

From the analysis of data in the above table, the calculated F value of .121 is less than the critical F value of 2.65. This is not significant at .05 level. The hypothesis is therefore accepted. The conclusion therefore is that there is no significant difference in students' involvement in examination malpractice based on academic ability.

4. DISCUSSIONS

From the analysis of data generated for this study, it was observed that the most common causes of examination malpractice are moral decadence in the society and high rate of enrollment of students. This implies that the observable corruption in the society where people do anything to get what they want has also crept into the school system where students are ready to do anything to get good results. This is not surprising because the students are products of the society and their environment.

Another cause of examination malpractice identified by this study include inadequate learning facilities, poverty level of staff, lack of control on admission quota, and fraternity of cultism, are among other factors that continue to give rise to examination malpractice. Still more this study observed admission racketeering, high enrollment of students, the unpreparedness of students for examinations, and poor teaching methods as causes of examination malpractice. These findings are not surprising because examination malpractice has continued to remain a major threat to the credibility of our educational system despite all the measures that has been put in place by the major stakeholders.

The findings of this study are consistent with an earlier study by Gbedio (1993). He agreed that lack of motivation of teachers which may be due to so many reasons, and lack of control over admission quota which often leads to overcrowded classrooms are among the main causes that leads to examination malpractice. These factors give rise to another sub factors like lack of proper invigilation, teachers who are not properly prepared and as such do not teach well, and consequently such students may not be well prepared for examinations. The presence of these factors will continue to give rise to examination malpractice in our schools. This situation as this study had earlier identified is very worrisome and needs to be attended to urgently.

In examining the consequences of examination malpractice, analysis of data generated for this study revealed that the most common observable effect is the total lack of trust in the educational system. What may have led to this is the over emphasis on paper qualification and certificates. Students are desperate in wanting to get this certificate. In their desperation, they are prepared to do anything in their desire to qualify for such certificates. The studies of Bunza, (1993) and Gbedio (1993) supports this finding.

The four hypotheses that were tested in this study were accepted at .05 level of significance. The result of hypothesis 1 one indicated that there is no significant difference between male and female students' level of involvement in examination malpractice. The implication here is that gender is not a significant factor in the involvement of students in examination malpractice. Both male and female students participate in examination malpractice. Both sexes engage in examination malpractice because they equally need the certificates which are a means of getting placement in terms of job acquisition in our society today.

The age of the students was also another factor that was considered by this study. The result indicated that there is no significant difference between students of different age in their involvement in examination malpractice. Age therefore is not a major factor in examination malpractice. This observation is worrisome because it is indicative of the degree of harm that this scourge has caused in our society. The conclusion is that both young and old, students participate in examination malpractice.

Religious affiliation defines a person to a large extent. It expresses a person's value based on the object and the content of faith of such individuals. The result of this study indicated that religious affiliation is not a significant factor in the involvement of students in examination malpractice. The conclusion here is that students of all religious groups participate in examination malpractice. The question that arises here is: "what are the different religious groups doing in helping to solve the problem of examination malpractice"?

Academic ability has to do with intellectual capability of a student. The more a student's IQ is high, one would expect that such a student should be able to avoid examination malpractice. However, the findings of this study indicated that students' academic ability is not a significant factor in students' involvement in examination malpractice. Students of various academic abilities are involved in examination malpractice. These findings are consistent with the findings of Egbule (2005).

5. CONCLUSION

The study observed that examination malpractice among students of tertiary institutions in Delta State continues to be a problem. The major cause include moral decadence in the society, inadequate learning facilities, poverty level of staff, high enrollment rate, poor teaching methods, overcrowded classrooms, etc. A major consequence of this scourge is lack of trust in our educational system. There is therefore the need for serious measures to be taken to address this problem. The goal of education is the total development of the individual. If education is failing in this respect, then the entire nation is in trouble.

Furthermore, it was observed that gender, age, religious affiliation and academic ability are not significant factors in students' involvement in examination malpractice. The observation here is that examination malpractice continues to be a problem which is getting worse by the day. Variables of religion and academic ability of students, which should influence the involvement of students are no longer significant. This shows that our educational system is in a gradual process of decay. Urgent steps should be taken to address the problem if we are to have any meaningful sustainable development.

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING

The Nigerian educational system is continuously suffering a decline in terms of integrity and value of certificates that are issued from the school system. The most obvious reason for this is the depending effects of examination malpractice in the educational system. If the educational system is to be functional and relevant in meeting up with the challenges of globalization, then the issues around examination malpractice must be addressed with an urgency that should yield positive results. All the relevant stakeholders must come to a roundtable talk to find a lasting remedy for this anomaly. The counseling profession and counseling services will be relevant in this endeavour.

The primary causes of examination malpractice are revealed by this study are moral decadence in the society and high rate of student enrollment in schools and examinations. The issue of moral decadence is an age long one which has continued to plague the Nigerian society. That decadence has crept into every facet of both public and private lives of Nigerians. This observed moral laxity has equally affected students' notion of discipline and right conduct for preparing and writing examinations.

Students' wrong notion of examination ethic translates into students expecting teachers to help them in the process of writing examinations and parents supporting such behaviour of teachers by some form of gratifications (Alutu and Aluede, 2006). It also includes principals and proprietors of schools arranging special centres or rooms where exams are written for students or answer materials are supplied. This wrong notion leads to lack of preparation for writing examinations which consequently manifest itself in examination malpractice.

The guidance counsellor, therefore may help such students by exposing them to proper study habits that will include preparing for and writing examinations in ways that will be beneficial to the students. They should be told that there are dignity and honesty in writing exams without the aid of any form of external help. The counselor may organize seminars and talk shows during the days immediately preceding the examinations. During such encounters, he/she should generate ideas around good examination conduct. There should be opportunities for interaction that will facilitate the students being convinced of the need to avoid examination malpractice.

In the area of the high rate of student enrollment in schools and examinations, it has been observed that not all students are cut out for the rigorous academic work of the school

system. There are other useful and relevant vocations that may not exist within the four walls of formal educational institutions. The guidance counselor should help to create this awareness to parents, guardians, government officials in the policy making departments to encourage people who are not cut out for academic work to pursue other vocations in life. This can be done through workshops, seminars, and lectures where all the stakeholders will meet to discuss how they can help this category of people. Jingles may be used to communicate useful information and ideas on the issue to the general public.

The counsellor may also organize group counseling sessions where he or she will encounter students in smaller groups. This will afford the students and the counselor an opportunity to share information at close quarters. It is believed that such group counseling will help to convince the students on the negative effects of examination malpractice.

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