

Research Article

Perceived Causes and Possible Solution to Examination Malpractice among Public Secondary School Students in Adamawa State, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study investigated the perceived causes and possible solutions of examination malpractice among public secondary school students in Adamawa State, Nigeria. The study determined the perceived causes of examination malpractice, identified the devices used in examination malpractice, examined the effects of examination malpractice and investigated the measures to curb examination malpractice among secondary school students in Adamawa State. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and the population consisted of all public secondary schools in Adamawa State. Three hundred and sixty respondents were selected using stratified random sampling technique. The self developed instrument titled 'Perceived Causes and Possible Solutions to Examination Malpractice Questionnaire' was validated by an expert in Guidance and Counselling from the Department of Science Education. The reliability value was calculated using Kuder Richardson formula (KR-21) which yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.89. Data were collected by the researcher and two research assistants. The collected data were analyzed using mean and t-test analysis. The study established that the perceived causes of examination malpractice among others are encouragement by invigilators, fear of being labelled a failure. The study also revealed that the devices used in examination malpractice include mobile phones, projector, ceiling fan, whiteboard, earpiece, printer, scanner and camcorder. The study revealed that the effects of examination malpractice include failure in expected job performance, closing down of examination centres and corruption. The study also revealed that the measures to curb examination malpractice include prison sentence, rustication, suspension, mandatory counselling and psychological evaluation, reduction of undue emphasis on certificates, orientation of parents and use of customized answer booklets. It was recommended that each educational institution should have a functional guidance and counselling unit through which information services can be rendered to the students and the emphasis placed on certificates and grades should be deemphasized.

Keywords: Examination malpractice; causes, irregular behaviour; social problem and possible solution.

INTRODUCTION

Examination as an assessment intended to measure knowledge, skill, attitude, physical fitness or classification in many other topics such as beliefs. Examination could also be seen as one of the most objective techniques used in the measurement of learning outcomes at all levels of education in Nigeria and the world over (Kpangban, Ajaja & Umedhe, 2008). Examination may be administered orally, on paper, on computer or in a confined area that requires an examinee to physically perform a set of skills. However, despite the importance of examination in teaching and learning situations, a number of factors affect the credibility of examination scores. One of such practices that may affect the reliability of examination scores is examination malpractice (Zakka, 2014).

Nnam and Inah (2015) notes that examination is a yardstick against which students or candidates' competence and progress are formally measured and appraised in the education sector. According to Emaikwu (2012), examination as part of evaluation in education is aimed at determining a learner's level of skill acquisition or intellectual competence and understanding after a given training. Evaluation usually enables the teacher to be effectively ready for further teaching as this forms a feedback. George and Ukpogon (2013) opines that examination is the most common tool around which the entire system of education revolves, it is the instrument used to decide who is permitted to move to the next academic level. Akaranga and Ongong (2013) observed that examination is not only a process of assessing the progress of students but,

Quick Response Code



Journal homepage:

<http://www.easpublisher.com/easjehl/>

Article History

Received: 15.07.2018

Accepted: 28.07.2019

Published: 14.08.2019

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it also motivates and helps them to know their academic strengths and weaknesses apart from providing teachers with opportunities to try new methods of teaching.

In an increasing competitive world, education is the most powerful instrument for developing and empowering the citizens to master their social and natural environments. To all intent and purposes, examination remains the best known yardstick against which, knowledge, skills and competence are formally tested, measured and positioned for proper placement both in the government and private corporations. However, it is widely acknowledged that the standard of education in contemporary Nigeria has plummeted owing largely to examination malpractice (Nnam & Otu, 2015). Examination malpractice is any illegal act committed by a student single handedly or in collaboration with others; like fellow students, parents, teachers, supervisors, invigilators, printers and anybody or group of people before, during or after examination in order to obtain undeserved marks or grades (Wilayat, 2009).

Adeyemi (2010) defined examination malpractice as any irregular behaviour exhibited by candidates or officials charged with the responsibility of conducting examination, in or outside the examination hall, before, during or after such examination. It involves various methods employed by candidates to cheat during examinations. Examinations in Nigerian schools dated back to the advent of formal education in the country in the 1800s and it was patterned after the British system, and since then gradually phased out the traditional method of examination of student performances (Adeyemi, 2010). The current system of formal education is measured on certificates. Whenever there is examination irregularity or malpractice, the validity and resulting outcome is questionable.

The common belief on certificates as the only yardstick to measure ones qualification has led many Nigerians into buying educational certificates to prove their academic worth. Certificate is not a full proof of knowledge retention. Before certificate is awarded, the students have to be assessed or examined in the field they have been trained (Onyibe, Uma & Ibina, 2015). However, when examination is not properly conducted, the expected feedback may not result. Hence, the result of such evaluation leads to wrong decision and judgment which affect the teacher, the learner, the entire education industry, as well as the society (Ojonemi, Enejoh, Enejoh, & Olatunmibi, 2013).

Examination malpractice in Nigeria is as old as the country herself. According to Anzene (2014), examination malpractice was first reported in Nigeria in the year 1914, when the question papers of the Senior Cambridge Local Examinations were reportedly seen by candidates before the scheduled date of the examination. The Examination Malpractice Act (1999)

explains examination malpractice as any act of omission or commission by a person who in anticipation of, before, during or after any examination fraudulently secure any unfair advantage for himself or any other person in such a manner that contravenes the rules and regulations to the extent of undermining the validity, reliability, authenticity of the examination and ultimately the integrity of the certificates issued.

Examination malpractice is commonly defined as a deliberate wrong doing contrary to official examination rules designed to place a candidate at an unfair advantage or disadvantage, (Wilayat, 2009; Akaranga & Ongong, 2013). Alutu & Aluede (2006) and Jimoh (2009) remarked that examination malpractice is any irregular behaviour exhibited by a candidate or anybody charged with the conduct of examination before, during or after the examination that contravenes the rules and regulations governing such examination. Onuka and Amusan (2008) and Onuka and Durowoju (2013) defined examination malpractice as any dishonest or unauthorized action or deed committed by a student on his own or in collaboration with others like fellow students, guardians, parents, teachers, head teacher, examination officials, supervisors, invigilators, security officers and anybody or group of people before, during or after examination in order to obtain undeserved marks or grades.

This study will therefore investigate the perceived causes and solutions to examination malpractice among public secondary schools in Adamawa State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Examination malpractice is one social problem that is disturbing the Nigerian education sector and it requires a prompt remedy. The more the government, school authorities and other well-meaning individuals try to find solutions to the problem, the more the perpetrators also device ways to frustrate such efforts. The problem is becoming more scientific by the day; it is metamorphosing from the era of candidates copying from fellow candidates to using sophisticated electronic gadgets such as cell phones and concealed ear pieces. The problem of examination malpractice has reduced certificates issued in Nigeria into a worthless paper, such that a number of candidates with outstanding results cannot defend their certificates. The performances of such candidates are not commensurate to the quality of their certificates. Most disheartening is the situation students are subjected to dehumanizing treatment because of suspicion on the authenticity of their certificates. Hence, a need to assess the perceived causes and possible of examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Adamawa State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to assess the perceived causes and possible solutions of examination malpractice among public secondary school students in Adamawa State. The specific objectives are to:

- Determine the perceived causes of examination malpractices in secondary schools in Adamawa State.
- Identify devices used in examination malpractices in secondary schools in Adamawa State.
- Examine the effects of examination malpractice among secondary school students.
- Investigate the measures used to curb examination malpractice in secondary schools of Adamawa State.

Research Questions

- What are the perceived causes of examination malpractices in secondary schools in Adamawa State?
- What are the identified devices used in examination malpractices in secondary schools in Adamawa State?
- What are the effects of examination malpractice among secondary school students?
- What are the measures to curb examination malpractice?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses will be tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between male and female teachers' perception on causes of examination malpractice.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between rural and urban school teachers' perception on the measures to curb examination malpractice among secondary school students in Adamawa State

Research Design

Descriptive research design was used for this study. This design was founded to be appropriate because Jen (2002) defined survey as a process of documenting the nature, scope, relationship, dimensions and directions of events, behaviour, attitudes and interests about a person or things. It is designed to find out the causes and possible solutions to examination

malpractice among public secondary schools in Adamawa State, Nigeria.

Population and Sample

The population of the study consists of all 758 public secondary school students in all the educational zones of Adamawa State. The total number of schools in all the educational zone of the states is 758 secondary schools. The sample size of 360 students was chosen from six secondary schools around the three senatorial districts of Adamawa State by stratified sampling technique using class, sex and locality as strata.

Research Instrument

The instrument for data collection was a self developed questionnaire titled "Perceived Causes and Possible Solutions to Examination Malpractice Questionnaire" (PCPSEMQ). It was structured after a four point modified Likert rating scale. The instrument comprised of 46 items divided into 5 sections. Section A contained the demographic characteristics of the respondents which constituted age, sex, gender, course of study, name of institution and course of study. Section B contained 15 items that assessed perceived causes of examination malpractice. Section C contained 10 items which identified the devices used in examination malpractice. Section D contained 5 items which assessed the effects of examination malpractice while Section E contained 10 items which investigated measures to curb examination malpractice.

Validity and Reliability of Instrument

The face and content validity of the instrument was established by an expert in Counselling Psychology in the Department of Science Education, Adamawa State University, Mubi. The reliability of the instrument was carried out in Government Technical College, Mubi using test-retest reliability method. First test was administered on 30 teachers, while the second test was administered on the same set of teachers after two weeks. The reliability coefficient of 0.89 was obtained.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher and two research assistants administered the questionnaires and collected them on the spot. The collected data were analyzed using mean to answer research questions, while t-test was used to test all the hypotheses formulated at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: Wat are the perceived causes of examination malpractice in secondary schools in Adamawa State?

Table 1: Perceived causes of examination malpractice in secondary schools

S/N	ITEMS	N	Mean	Remarks
1.	Inadequate preparations for examination	334	1.56	Rejected
2.	Laziness	334	1.67	Rejected
3.	Peer pressure	334	1.97	Rejected
4.	Habitual inclination	331	2.64	Accepted
5.	Encouragement by invigilators	334	2.65	Accepted
6.	Fear of being labelled a failure	334	2.58	Accepted
7.	Parental pressure	334	2.58	Accepted
8.	Overcrowded classrooms	334	1.94	Rejected
9.	Leakage of examination questions	334	2.83	Accepted
10.	Substance abuse	334	2.55	Accepted
11.	Poor attendance of lectures	334	2.61	Accepted
12.	Unstable school calendar	334	2.56	Accepted
13.	Poor assimilation of concepts taught	334	2.86	Accepted
14.	Lack of belief in fairness in the educational sector	334	2.55	Accepted
15.	Poor remuneration for teachers	334	2.86	Accepted

Accepted (\bar{x} is 2.5 and above) Rejected (\bar{x} is less than 2.5)

Table 1 shows the perceived causes of examination malpractice in secondary schools in Adamawa State. The table revealed that respondents perceived that habitual inclination ($\bar{x} = 2.64$), encouragement by invigilators ($\bar{x} = 2.65$), fear of being labelled a failure ($\bar{x} = 2.58$), parental pressure ($\bar{x} = 2.58$), leakage of examination questions ($\bar{x} = 2.83$), substance abuse ($\bar{x} = 2.55$), poor

attendance of lectures ($\bar{x} = 2.61$), unstable school calendar ($\bar{x} = 2.56$), poor assimilation of concepts taught ($\bar{x} = 2.86$), lack of belief in fairness in the educational sector ($\bar{x} = 2.55$) and poor remuneration for teachers ($\bar{x} = 2.86$) as causes of examination malpractice in Adamawa State.

Research Question 2: What are the identified devices used in examination malpractices in secondary schools in Adamawa State?

Table 2: Devices used in examination malpractice

S/N	ITEMS	N	Mean	Remark
1.	Mobile phone	334	2.66	Accepted
2.	Tablets	334	1.57	Rejected
3.	Projector	334	2.78	Accepted
4.	Ceiling fan	334	2.56	Accepted
5.	Whiteboard	334	2.79	Accepted
6.	Earpiece	334	2.80	Accepted
7.	Printer	331	2.63	Accepted
8.	Scanner	334	2.65	Accepted
9.	Light pen	334	1.47	Rejected
10.	Camcorder	334	2.74	Accepted

Accepted (\bar{x} is 2.5 and above) Rejected (\bar{x} is less than 2.5)

Table 2 shows the responses on devices used in examination malpractice. Respondents identified mobile phones ($\bar{x} = 2.66$), projector ($\bar{x} = 2.78$), ceiling fan ($\bar{x} = 2.56$), whiteboard ($\bar{x} = 2.79$),

earpiece ($\bar{x} = 2.80$), printer ($\bar{x} = 2.63$), scanner ($\bar{x} = 2.65$) and camcorder ($\bar{x} = 2.74$) as devices employed by students in carrying out examination malpractice.

Research Question 3: What are the effects of examination malpractice among secondary school students?

Table 3: Effects of examination malpractice among secondary school students

S/N	ITEMS	N	Mean	Remarks
1.	Loss of credibility of certificates	334	1.74	Rejected
2.	Failure in expected job performance	334	2.80	Accepted
3.	Cancellation of results	334	1.90	Rejected
4.	Closing down of examination centers	334	2.73	Accepted
5.	Corruption	334	2.50	Accepted

Accepted (\bar{x} is 2.5 and above) Rejected (\bar{x} is less than 2.5)

Table 3 shows data on effects of examination malpractice among secondary school students. Responses shows that examination malpractice can cause failure in expected job performance ($\bar{x} = 2.80$).

closing down of examination centres ($\bar{x} = 2.73$), and corruption($\bar{x} = 2.50$).

Research Question 4: What are the measures to curb examination malpractice

Table 4: Responses on measures to curbing examination malpractice

S/N	ITEMS	N	Mean	Remarks
1.	Prison sentence	334	2.53	Accepted
2.	Rustication	334	2.71	Accepted
3.	Substantial increase in marks	331	1.47	Rejected
4.	Suspension	334	2.61	Accepted
5.	Mandatory counselling and psychological evaluation	331	2.53	Accepted
6.	Reduction of undue emphasis on certificates	334	2.58	Accepted
7.	Orientation of parents	334	2.60	Accepted
8.	Use of customized answer booklets	334	2.62	Accepted
9.	Use of biometric verification before access to examination hall is allowed	334	1.91	Rejected
10.	Adequate funding of the education sector	334	1.89	Rejected

Accepted (\bar{x} is 2.5 and above) Rejected (\bar{x} is less than 2.5)

Table 4 shows data on measures to curb examination malpractice. Responses to the suggested statements by the respondents shows that they agree to prison sentence ($\bar{x} = 2.53$), rustication ($\bar{x} = 2.71$), suspension ($\bar{x} = 2.61$), mandatory counselling and

psychological evaluation ($\bar{x} = 2.53$), reduction of undue emphasis on certificates ($\bar{x} = 2.58$), orientation of parents ($\bar{x} = 2.60$) and use of customized answer booklets ($\bar{x} = 2.62$).

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between male and female teachers' perception on causes of examination malpractice

Table 5: Male and female teachers' perception on causes of examination malpractice

	Gender	N	\bar{x}	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Perception on causes of examination malpractice	Male	138	18.016	3.217	343	49.32	1.21	Rejected
	Female	198	21.504	3.230				

*Significant: (P<0.05)

From Table 5, showed that the t-cal of 49.32 was obtained which is higher than the critical t-critical of 1.21 at P<0.05 level of significance. This shows that there is a difference in the male and female teachers'

perception on causes of examination malpractice. Therefore, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected and the alternative accepted.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between rural and urban school teachers' perception on the measures to curb examination malpractice among secondary school students in Adamawa State**Table 6: Rural and urban school teachers' perception on the measures to curb examination malpractice**

	Location	N	\bar{x}	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Perception on causes of examination malpractice	Urban	158	18.016	3.217	343	59.73	1.57	Rejected
	Rural	178	21.504	3.230				

*Significant: (P<0.05)

From Table 5, showed that the t-cal of 198.148 was obtained which is higher than the critical t-critical of 1.57 at P<0.05 level of significance. This shows that there is a difference between the rural and urban school teachers' perception on the measures to curb examination malpractice among secondary school students. Therefore, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected and the alternative accepted.

Discussion of Findings

As indicated in the findings, many reasons have been adduced to be the cause of the prevalent cases of examination malpractice which include The table revealed that respondents perceived that habitual inclination, encouragement by invigilators, fear of being labelled a failure, parental pressure, leakage of examination questions, substance abuse, poor attendance of lectures, unstable school calendar, poor assimilation of concepts taught, lack of belief in fairness in the educational sector. This is in consonance with Petters and Okon (2013) who identifies the causes to include fear of failure, craze for certificate, desire of parents to have their children in choice professions and university, pressure on students to pursue courses which they have no aptitude, pressure on teachers who want to gain favour of student and overcrowded sitting arrangement.

Parents have also been identified to be in the forefront of cases of examination malpractice. This finding conforms with Akaranga and Ongong's (2013) views which is that the cause of examination malpractice to parental upbringing. They opined that because of social status and economic ability, most parents are easily persuaded to bribe their way through for the sole success of their children and self-gratification. According to Ejimogu (2001) cited in Nsisong (2011), general moral decadence and the high premium placed on achievement and certificates by Nigerians has in recent times spawned examination fraud. The overdependence on educational certificates as a measure of one's knowledge and competence has led to a mad rush by most people for educational certificates through unethical means.

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,

teachers, parents and others to examination malpractice, (Jimoh, 2009). The Nigerian society today is characterized by a heavy emphasis on success and wealth without a corresponding emphasis on legitimate means and avenues to be used in achieving the success. The country has become a commercial venture and no longer a place for selfless service.

Massive application of ICT in Nigeria has added new dimensions to the forms of examination malpractice. The rapid growth of digital technologies and their integration in education have given many students new tools to facilitate cheating at all levels. The following are some of the ICT devices used in perpetrating examination malpractice: Mobile phones, projector, ceiling fan, whiteboard, earpiece, printer, scanner, and camcorder. This finding is in consonance with Baker (2006) and Nnachi (2006).

In a society that examination malpractice is predominant, its impact is visibly seen in the type of human resources the education system has produced. Again, educational system strives to inculcate high level of discipline, diligence, moral love for others; to the recipients where the examination is fraught with malpractice, all the important feedback mechanism becomes defaulted and the educational system becomes distorted, (CWO Voice, 2010).

The study tends to agree with the findings of Adeyemi (2010) and Orji, Mandu and Ajaegbo (2017) that examination malpractice has grave consequences on the individuals and institutions of learning, communities and the country at large. Dismissal, termination, loss of position, and lack of self-confidence are effects and have caused a lot of embarrassment and suffering to individuals, families and the nation. The guilty ones who were not caught and punished cannot defend the certificates procured not to talk of delivering at their duty posts.

The prevalent rate of bank failures, collapse of buildings, economic sabotage, vandalism, kidnapping/hostage taking for ransom, drug trafficking, fake drug manufacturing and sales are practical effects of moral decadence, emanating from examination malpractice. Effects of examination fraud are displayed in the filling stations, churches, homes, hospitals, markets and everywhere. The fight against corruption cannot be realized if examination malpractice continues to be rampant in our educational system. As future

leaders who have been equipped through a school system characterized by academic fraud and dishonesty, will certainly manifest this fraudulent behaviour in any organization they may found themselves. Those that cheated to pass examination will cheat to get employed, have spouse, and even to win election through electoral violence or other sharp malpractices.

It is undoubtedly ideal to imagine that all forms of examination malpractices can be curbed. Respondents identified measures are punitive, preventive or deterrent in nature. These involve prison sentence, rustication, substantial increase in marks, suspension, mandatory counselling and psychological evaluation, reduction of undue emphasis on certificates, orientation, and use of customized answer booklet. There is also the educational aspect of the measures. Mass awareness and education campaigns are effective in that when for instance pupils know the dangers and consequences, they are more likely to resist peer pressure. Corrupt education officials, teachers and other people from outside will most likely refrain from indulging in examination malpractices when they are well enlightened concerning the consequences (Zakka, 2014; Adeyemi, 2010; Orji, Mando & Ajaegbo, 2017).

The other category of equal importance is to do with up-lifting the standards in the schools generally i.e. infrastructure such as class rooms, laboratories, sports facilities, libraries etc. both in terms of capacity and quality. There is also the availability and quality of learning materials such as books, laboratory equipment, and computers. In a well-organized learning environment, with adequate facilities, qualified teachers and sound management the pupils feel encouraged to learn. Finally, there are measures that enhance efficient and secure means of handling and transporting of examination materials. This may call for more government support in form of logistics and personnel i.e. air-lifting of materials and staff personnel where necessary to ensure timely delivery and collection from various examination centers, no matter how remote (Zakka, 2014; Adeyemi, 2010; Orji, Mando & Ajaegbo, 2017).

The findings of the study showed that there is a significant difference between male and female teachers' perception on causes of examination malpractice. This is in line with previous studies (Yusuf, Yinusa & Bamgbose, 2015; Athanasou & Olasehinde, 2002; Shaw, 2003 and Adeyemi, 2010) which also found out that that there was a significant difference between male and female teachers perception on causes of examination malpractices. This implied that the perception of male teachers on causes for examination malpractices is significantly differed from that of their female counterpart. This finding may be due to the fact that female are always afraid to get involve in any illegal acts than their male counterparts.

Lastly, the findings of the study revealed there is also a significant difference between rural and urban school teachers' perception on the measures to curb examination malpractice among secondary school students. This finding is in consonance with Adeyemi's (2010) finding on teachers' perception indicating a higher rate of examination malpractices in rural schools than in urban schools was contrary to those of some researchers (Onipede, 2003 & Baiyelo, 2004). The finding was however consistent with the findings made in (Glasner, 2002). Nonetheless, the fact that examination malpractices were perceived to be higher in rural schools than in urban schools is an indication that over-emphasis has been placed by the Nigerian government on paper qualifications through the issuance of certificates which have perhaps made many students to be involved in examination malpractices. This suggests that examination malpractice in Nigerian schools is a function of academic dishonesty. There is no significant difference between rural and urban school teachers' perception on the measures to curb examination malpractice among secondary school students in Adamawa State.

CONCLUSION

Examination malpractice has become a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabric of the educational system in Nigeria. Examination malpractice is a social problems that has wrecked unimaginable havoc to the entire fabric of Nigeria. It is a hydra headed problem that require a multi-dimensional approach to its resolution. Examination malpractice not only promotes breakdown of moral and ethical standard in our society but it also prevents achievement of meaningful and sustainable development for example. The teachers, if determined to stamp out examination malpractices, there will be no trace of malpractice in all schools. The teachers remains the pivot of curbing examination malpractice if lessons are effectively and efficiently delivered, the students are adequately prepared for the examination.

Recommendations

The following are recommended based on the findings of this study;

- The emphasis placed on certificate and grades should be deemphasised such that admission and employment should be based on aptitude tests, interviews and ability to perform as against godfatherism or given opportunities to card bearers that can neither deliver nor perform.
- The school environment should be made student-friendly, well equipped and staff well remunerated. This would encourage the teachers to deliver the goods and in fact cover their syllabuses.
- Apart from teaching students examination ethics, examination malpractice laws should be

re-enforced. Appropriate sanctions should be enforced on the culprits irrespective of status.

- Parents, guardians, teachers, examination officers and invigilators in addition to school authorities should not only see themselves as character or image-makers, but also role models to their wards/offsprings.
- Formation of examination malpractice and related offences committees in all institutions of learning can go a long way in combating the menace of examination leakages and other irregularities associated with malpractices.

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