

## Psychosocial Factors as Determinant of Examination Malpractice among Secondary School Students in Ondo State

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**ABSTRACT:** This study investigates psychosocial factors as determinant of examination malpractice among secondary schools' students in Ondo State. The study adopted descriptive research design of the survey method. A total of 200 respondents were selected from 5 secondary schools using simple random sampling technique for the study. Four hypotheses were generated. The major instrument utilized for collection of data was a self-constructed questionnaire titled "Students Psychosocial factors on examination malpractice (SPFEM). Chi-square statistics was used to analyze the data collected. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that there was a significant relationship between psychosocial factors (that environment, self-efficacy, anxiety and parental pressure) and examination malpractice. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that guidance programme be organized on study habits and preparation for examination for students in secondary schools.

**KEYWORDS:** Psycho-Social Factors, Examination Malpractice, Academic Cheating, Anxiety, self-efficacy, environment, intelligence, parental pressure.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Examination is the main source through which the knowledge and skills acquired is determined in the school. It is organized in order to evaluate, assess and test the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of the learners.

In the past examination were strictly and ethically conducted, but these days there are lapses in the system resulting into examination malpractice among students. Evidence abounds of increasing incident of cheating in examination by students at schools, colleges, which conflict with the core purpose of education (Murdock, Hale and Weber, 2001).

Examination malpractice has been defined by various researchers. According to Fasasi (2008), examination malpractice is any wrong doing before, during or after any examination. Salami (1994) defines examination malpractice as an improper and dishonest act associated with examination with the view of obtaining an unmerited advantage. Omotosho (1990) sees examination malpractice as a dishonest use of position of trust for personal gain. The Centre for Academic Integrity (CAI, 2007) defines examination malpractice as dishonest behavior related to academic achievements that include any form of advantage by one student over the others. Oloruntoba (2002) refers to examination malpractice as all forms of cheating during an examination, which covers the leakage of question papers, provision of answer during an examination and so on.

The issue of examination malpractice has been of most concern to educators, psychologist, parents, government and other agencies that are concern with education in Nigeria. The rate of There is an alarming rate of cheating in examinations of which some psychosocial factors are determinant of this unethical behavior.

The foregoing indicates that examination malpractice is a deliberate act of wrong doing or an unethical behavior employed by an individual to undermine the integrity of an examination and the examination body.

## PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS

Psychosocial refers to one's psychological development in an interaction with a social environment. Psychosocial factors are psychological and social factors that can influence behaviors. Some of such factors are, anxiety, attitude of learners, environment, low self-efficacy of students, self-concept, peer group influence, parental pressure, the society, the teachers and the government. These factors can influence students' decisions.

Ezezobor, (2003) and Adekale, (2003) ascertained that cheating has perpetrated through the primary to secondary schools and to higher institutions of learning. Adelusi (2008) lamented that examination malpractice is a social menace that has become one of the contemporary issues in all the institutions of learning in the country. Salami (1994) observed that this menace exists in primary, secondary, as well as tertiary institutions.

## FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE

Many factors had been advanced for the wide spread of examination malpractice in Nigeria. Some of these factors include: lack of self-confidence by students, improper preparation of students for examination by teachers, lack of mastering skills by teachers, overcrowding of the examination hall, encouragement to cheat by parents (Daniel,1998), poor handling of examination materials, and poor supervision.

Others are self-efficacy (Bandura,1986, 1994, 1997), poor study habit, anxiety, lack of motivation and low academic ability (Adeyemi, 2010), interaction with peer who have inclination for cheating, lack of essential facilities in schools such as furniture, and equipment for the conduct of smooth examination thereby giving room for examination malpractice. The fact remains that, Nigeria orientation on education is on high grade intensiveness. Hence, students, parents, school management by all means want to secure employment, while others prefer to manipulate scores to get admitted into higher institution of learning (Oduwaiye, 2004).

## PARENT FACTORS

Ojerinde (2002) listed among some causes of examination malpractices to include parental problems, improper home training, defective supervision, inadequate provision of necessary materials for learning which affect the students self-confidence, leading to low level of commitment to study. Thus, the only way for such a student to pass is to cheat during examination in order to satisfy the ambition of their parents, however, resulting into examination malpractice. Many parents want their children to pass out of school with very high grades by all means. Some parents are ready to offer money to the school authority to assist their children during examination. Therefore, pressures from parents have been known to be a cause of cheating by students.

Ijaya (2001) argued that divorce has been a growing menace in the society; the effect of which has serious degenerate children mental development. When parent separate, most of the children will end up being drop-out and become truant. This can cause social menace in the society among the students and their peers. Eventually, most of them would not be able to study well and through this involve in all sort of examination malpractices in school.

## STUDENT FACTORS

It is obvious that many students who cheat in examination do so because they lack the ability to achieve their desired goal through their own ability personal efforts. Where certificates serve as the index of educational attainment and examination is the only means of obtaining certificates, the students tends to see examination as a war of survival and cheating as an effective means of winning the war. Olaewe (2003) viewed cheating to be motivated by factors such as pressure to obtain high grades, needs to avoid failure, un-conducive school environment, insufficient time spent in school work and non-condemnatory attitude towards cheating from parents.

A number of empirical studies have shown that there were motives behind examination malpractice among students in schools. McCabe as cited in Olaleye (2006) noted that to get good grades was a primary motive for cheating among students. McCabe and Trevino (1993) found that over 80% students in his sample admitted that the desire to get a good grade is the most frequent reason for this unethical behavior. From a motivational perspective, some students cheat because students perceive from their teachers and parents and other external sources that to get good grade and to do well in school are determinant factors of engaging in cheating behavior Oduwaiye, (2004).

Adeyemi (2010) investigated the relationship between achievement motivation and academic cheating behaviour of some undergraduate students in a Nigeria University. Findings revealed that academic cheating behavior index had significant negative relationship with achievement motivation and all its components. This indicates that students who are high on achievement motivation are less likely to cheat in their academic work because they are high on achievement behavior, whereas, subjects with low achievement motivation are more likely to cheat as they are not willing to strive hard because of their un-willingness to face challenges.

McCabe, Trevino and Butterfly (2001) noted that when students perceive that the ultimate goal of learning is to get good grades, they are more likely to see cheating as an acceptable justifiable behavior. Bandura (1986; 1994; 1997) also outline low self-efficacy as a determinant of examination malpractice. Self- efficacy refers to the knowledge of one's own ability to successfully accomplish a particular task with no need for comparisons with others' ability.

According to Bandura, self-efficacy is a social cognitive theory which states that human achievement depends on interactions between one's behavior, personal factors and environmental conditions.

Thus, academic self- efficacy refers to an individual's belief (conviction) that he can successfully achieve at a designated level on an academic task or attain a specific academic goal is demonstrating high self-efficacy.

Students with higher levels of self-efficacy are more confident in their abilities to achieve their goals and persist more in the face of difficulty; nevertheless, students with low self-efficacy are less confident (Pajares, 1996). Cheating is more likely among students with low academic self- efficacy. Low self-efficacy which is psychological in nature is related to low academic motivation such as lower levels of confidence resulting in poor performance of student (Hale and Weber (2001). Duyilemi (2003) opined that anxiety, lack of confidence and fear of failure contributed to the increasing rate of cheating by students during examination in Nigerian schools.

#### **TEACHERS FACTOR**

In his own contribution, Ojerinde (2002) viewed some causes of examination malpractices to include poor teaching methods, teacher lacking subject matter, inadequate teachers textbook, unqualified teachers and teachers inability to cover up the stipulated syllabus for the period been stated before an internal or external examination thereby encouraging examination malpractice. This indicates that the success or failure of any educational programme hinges largely on the adequate availability of well qualified, competent and dedicated teachers.

A teacher is a very significant figure in the school environment where he works and so his attitude to work tends to have significant implications which cannot be dismissed if academic excellence is to be achieved in our educational institutions. It is very clear that teachers' way of thinking and beliefs, guide his/her behavior in decision making in or outside the classroom.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL FACTOR**

This is another factor that basically led students to examination malpractice and misconduct. According to Oluyeba and Daramola (1993), the environmental factor include the crowded nature of the classroom as well as examination halls with few invigilators during examination, poor sitting arrangement, especially where students are sandwiched together in the examination hall, resulting to mass cheating. Location of examination centers in remote areas where accessibility for thorough supervision is poor. Therefore, this study is aimed at determining factors influencing examination malpractice in Ondo State.

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

The study is a descriptive design of the survey type. Questionnaires were administered to collect data from the students on psychosocial factors determinant on examination malpractice among secondary schools' students. The sample for the study consisted of 200 (two hundred) students selected from 5 (five) secondary schools. 40 (forty) students were selected from each of the schools using simple random sampling technique. A self- constructed questionnaire titled "Students Psychological factors and examination malpractices Scale (SPFEMS)" was used to collect data for the study. The instrument was divided into two sections A and B. Section A consists of items that measured the demographic data of the respondents such as name of the school, class, sex, and age. Section B consisted of 25 items which focused on psycho-social factors of examination malpractice. The instrument was subjected to both face and content validity. A pilot testing was carried out on the instrument. The questionnaire was administered on 20 students out of the study sample and outside the area of study. Data collected were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha and a coefficient value of 0.62 was established. The reliability coefficient

of 0.76 was obtained through test-retest method. The items of the instrument were responded to by ticking agree (A) or disagree (D). The psychosocial factors of determinant under this study include students' factors, parents' factors, teachers' factors and environmental factors. Chi-square statistics was employed to analyze the data and hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance.

### RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Ho1: There is no significant influence of students' factors as a determinant of secondary school student's examination malpractice.

Ho2: There is no significant association between the opinion of students on the influence of teachers factors on examination malpractice.

Ho3: Parental factors have no significant influence in the involvement of secondary school students' examination malpractice.

Ho4: Environmental factors have no significant impact on examination malpractice among secondary school students.

### METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

Questionnaires were administered on the 200 students selected for the study. The questionnaires were collected and subjected to statistical analysis.

### DATA ANALYSIS

Chi-square was used to analysis the data collected and to determine the significance of the generated hypotheses. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

## 3 RESULTS

Ho1: There is no significant influence of students' factors as a determinant of secondary school student's examination malpractice.

**Table 1: Chi-square analysis of the influence of students' factors on examination malpractice of secondary school students.**

Variable	No	Df	x2cal	X2crit	P
Student Factors	200	3	15.66	7.81	0.05

Table 1 shows that the calculated value of 15.66 is greater than the critical value of 7.81 at  $df = 3$ ,  $P > 0.05$ . Therefore, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between students' factors and examination malpractice is hereby rejected. This indicates that students' factors are determinant of examination malpractices.

Ho2: There is no significant association between the opinion of students on the influence of teachers factors on examination malpractice.

**Table 2: Chi-square analysis of the influence of teachers' factors on examination malpractice among secondary school students.**

Variable	No	Df	X2cal	X2crit	P
Teachers factors	200	3	21,12	7.81	0.05

Table 2 shows that the result is significant at 0.05 level  $df = 3$  with calculated value of 21.12 which is greater than critical value of 7.81. Since the t-cal is greater than t-crit, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between teachers factors and examination malpractice among students is hereby rejected. This indicates that teachers encourage their children to cheat during an examination.

Ho3: Parent factors have no significant influence in the involvement of secondary school students' examination malpractice.

**Table 3: Analysis of parental factors on examination malpractices of secondary school students.**

Variable	No	Df	X2cal	X2crit	P
Parental Factors	200	3	12.76	7.81	0.05

The calculated value of 12.76 is greater than the table value of 7.81 at  $df = 3$ . This implies that the result is significant at 0.05 level. Therefore, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between parents' factors and examination malpractice is rejected. This indicates that parents encourage their children to cheat during examination.

Ho4: Environmental factors have no significant impact on examination malpractice among secondary school students.

**Table 4: Analysis of impact of environmental factor on examination malpractices of secondary school students.**

Variable	No	df	X2cal	X2crit	P
Environmental Factors	200	3	12.62	7.81	0.05

Table 4 indicates that there is significant relationship between environment and examination malpractice at  $t\text{-cal} = 12.62$ ,  $t\text{-critical} = 7.81$  at  $df = 3$  ( $P < 0.05$ ). Since the  $t$ -calculated is greater than  $t$ -critical, the hypotheses of no significant relationship between environment and examination malpractice is hereby rejected. This indicates that a crowded examination hall enables students to be involved in mass cheating.

#### **4 DISCUSSION**

The results have established various determinants of examination malpractice among secondary school students in Ondo State. The results established that most students exhibit cheating in examinations to avoid failure while desperate to obtain educational certificates.

Hypothesis one was rejected. This result indicates that student factors have significant influence on examination malpractice. The findings of the study indicates that students' factors such as low cognitive ability, low self-efficacy, lack of motivation, anxiety, attitude to study, poor study habit, peer influence, and other psychological and social factors influence examination malpractice. The study further revealed that improper preparation for examination and fear of failure force students to indulge in cheating during examination. This could happen as a result of negative attitude of students towards learning. This is in agreement with Duyilemi (2003) who affirmed that anxiety, lack of confidence, fear of failure and attitude to learning contribute immensely to the increasing rate of cheating during examination in Nigerian schools. Students engage in one form of examination malpractices or the other because they do not prepare enough to face the demands of examination.

Hypothesis two was rejected. The result revealed that teachers are determinant of examination malpractice. The National Policy on Education (2004) stipulated that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Thus, the success of any programme depends greatly on the quality of the teachers. A teacher is a very significant figure in the school environment where he works and so his attitude to work tends to have significant implications which cannot be dismissed if academic excellence is to be achieved in our educational institutions. It is very clear that teachers' way of thinking and beliefs guide his/her behavior in decision making in or outside the classroom. The major forms of examination malpractice are exchange of answer scripts, collusion in the examination hall to copy, mass organized cheating involving assistance from teachers and other officials. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Ojerinde (2002) who asserted that the success or failure of any educational programme hinges largely on the adequate availability of well qualified, competent and dedicated teachers.

Table 3 of the study indicated that many students indulge themselves in cheating in an examination because most parents believed that only students that cheat during an examination have high scores, therefore, encourage their children in cheating. Thus, hypothesis three was also rejected. This finding is in consonant with the early finding of Olaleye (2006), Hale and Weber (2001) and Olaewe (2003) that affirmed that parental pressure is a major determinant of examination malpractice.

Hypothesis four was rejected due to the fact that the results on table 4 ascertained the significant relationship that exists between environmental factor and examination malpractices among secondary school students. This result corroborates the finding of Okpala (2006) and Afe, (2001) who affirmed that the important media of realizing the educational objectives is the appropriate teaching\learning environment.

## **5 CONCLUSION**

This study focused on the psycho-social factors as determinant of student examination malpractice. Psychologically, many students who cheat during examinations do so because they lack the ability to achieve their desired goal through their personal efforts.

Based on the results of the finding, examination malpractices are being practice in schools due to some problems facing the students which are: lack of proper preparation for examinations, attitude to study, poor study habits, anxiety, parental pressure, low achievement motivation, and so on. No educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers. . For high quality education, a high level of educated teachers become very important if academic excellence is to be achieved in our educational institutions.

The result has indicated that tendency to cheat during examinations is influenced by psychological factors that are either related to the society, nature of the child, or ambition of the parents. Therefore, the study has established that teachers, parents, students and the environment are factors leading to examination malpractice among secondary school students in Ondo State.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The hope and aspirations of Nigeria in building up a virile, prosperous, self-reliant and stable nation may be utterly negated if cases of examination malpractices are allowed to continue. The following recommendations are suggested at curbing cases of examination malpractices among secondary school students. Final examinations as a means of measuring students' achievement should be stopped, rather, more emphases should be given to the adoption of properly conducted continuous assessment which will discourage the use of a single final test to decide the future of the students.

Parents and communities should train –up their children to imbibe the traditional values of honesty, hard-work, and unrighteousness at home and in schools.

There is need for the provision of Guidance and Counseling service in the schools. Students should be counsel to go into the professions they have abilities for. The counselor should help the students to develop their self-concept, to enable them view themselves as achieves and not as failures. Counsellors should provide adequate guidance to the students mainly on how to prepare and write examinations.

In order to ensure good performance of students, instructional content must be well selected, relevant material must be used and good method must be adopted. Teachers should prepare the students for the examination by teaching all topics and covering the syllabus as much as possible. Teachers, parents, counselors and the government should try as much as possible to motivate students to learn.

Student should develop more positive attitude towards their studies by making sure they attend classes regularly, be punctual at lessons, manage their time appropriately and work hard to achieve success at the expiration of their educational career. Students must have confidence in their abilities to pass through hard work. While choosing career, students should choose subjects they are capable of coping with and stop being influence by peers.

Finally, students need to be remained regularly the consequences of examination malpractice.

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