

**PREVALENCE OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE AMONG
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN DELTA CENTRAL
SENATORIAL DISTRICT: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING**

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Abstract

This study examined the prevalence of examination malpractice among secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial District. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the comprised 19,555 secondary school students, with a sample size of 363 students. A questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection. Mean, standard deviation and independent samples t-test were used to analyze the data. The results revealed that the prevalence of examination malpractice among secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial District is high. The factors sustaining examination malpractice include parental influence, lack of adequate learning facilities and lack of adequate learning facilities, and that students who are more likely to indulge in examination malpractice include male students, students from broken homes and urban students. The study also revealed a significant difference between male and female students, urban and rural students and between students from intact homes and students from broken homes. Based on these findings, it was suggested that counsellors should organise counselling services to reform students and prevent them from indulging in examination malpractice.

Keywords: Examination Malpractice, Secondary School, Students, Counselling.

Introduction

Over the years, the conduct of examinations in Nigeria has been trailed with complaints of examination malpractices and various organizational, administrative

and bureaucratic irregularities. Although it is a global problem, the case of Nigeria is peculiar due to the nation's over-emphasis on paper certification as against skill acquisition. Examination malpractice is defined as deliberate wrongdoing contrary to official examination rules designed to place a candidate at an unfair advantage or disadvantage (Onyibe, Uma & Ibina, 2015). Akinrefon, Ikpah, and Bamigbala (2016) defined it as an unethical act because it encourages mediocrity in students. This is because those who succeed through such unorthodox methods may be rated equal to those who struggle on their own to excel.

Examination malpractice takes place in different context, places and stages. It occurs before, during and after examinations. According to Animasahun (2013), the context which examination malpractice takes include negotiation between parents and teachers, students and teachers and between candidates and school managements, with a view of providing assistance for exchange of cash and/or sex; test pre-knowledge, where most teachers show their prepared questions to their loved ones prior to the examination; searching for and procuring leaked questions by students, parents and teachers; test item harvesting and marketing by website owners. These forms of examination malpractice occur before the examination. During examinations, the use of prepared answers, copying from others, the use of contract agents to sneak answers into examination halls, proxy testing, and dictation of answers by teachers are some of the forms of examination malpractice often observed during examination. Animasahun (2013) further identified forms of examination malpractice after examination to include giving students undue extra time than specified to continue to write the examinations, replacement of answer sheets with another more accurate answer sheet, secretly rewriting already written examination and score alteration against established guideline.

As shown above, examination malpractice takes several forms before, during and after examinations. As a social problem, examination malpractice is man-made, meaning that it is societal-driven. It is sustained by several factors resident in students, family, teachers, schools, government, law enforcement agents the society and religion (Animasahun, 2013). This means that all the nucleus of the society is possible agents of examination malpractice. According to Ivowi (1997), lack of confidence as a result of inadequate preparation, peer influence, societal influence, parental support and poor facilities in schools are some of the factors responsible for examination malpractices. Writing in the same vein, Badmus (2006), Awanbor (2005), Nwadiani (2005), Okafor (2006), Ayua (2006), Azare (2006) and Aminu (2006) identified

school programmes, teaching-learning environment, the teacher, the student, overvalue of certificates, decadence in the Nigerian society and parental support as some factors responsible for examination malpractice in the Nigerian educational system.

Who are those more likely to indulge in examination malpractice? McCabe (1993) argued that “peers’ behaviour had, by far, the strongest influence on academic dishonesty”. Some students who belong to clubs, fraternities and other groups learn the strategies, motivations, values, beliefs, rationalizations and behaviour of their peers (Anderman & Murdock, 2007). Students model peer behaviour under some social conditions. Gender may also influence students into indulging in examination malpractice. Calabrese and Cochran (1990) maintained that girls are as likely to engage in malpractice as boys when the intention is to help a friend. Hughes and McCabe (2006) however indicate that male students engage in examination malpractice more than female students.

The implications of examination malpractice on students, the educational system and the larger society is enormous. These include students’ dismissal, termination, loss of position and self- confidence, irreversible loss of credibility on the education system and the proliferation of fake professionals in the society (Anzene, 2014). Malpractice leads to irreversible loss of credibility. A country that becomes noted for examination malpractice loses international credibility. The implication is that documents emanating from such country will be treated with suspicion. Consequently, certificates awarded by such country’s educational institutions are disbelieved. Such a country’s educational institutions are as good as dead as far as international cooperation in education is concerned (Jimoh, 2009).

The fight against corruption cannot succeed if examination malpractice continues to be endemic in the educational system. As leaders of tomorrow who have gone through a school system characterized by academic fraud and dishonesty, the youths of the country will cultivate and nurture this fraudulent behaviour in any organization they find themselves. They will be destined to a life of crime, fraud and corrupt practices. Studies have been carried out with a view to providing a lasting solution to the problem of examination malpractice in Nigeria. such studies focused on the factors sustaining examination malpractice (Animasahun, 2013; Jimoh, 2009; Onyibe, Uma, & Ibina, 2015; Udoh, 2011), incidence of examination malpractice (Akinrefon, Ikpah, & Bamigbala, 2016; Anzene, 2014; Ede, 2017), effect of examination malpractice (Adewale, 2004; Petters & Okon, 2014). These studies were

conducted outside Delta State, particularly Delta Central Senatorial District. There is, therefore, the need to investigate the prevalence, factors sustaining and the categories of students more likely to indulge in examination malpractice, with a view to suggesting counselling diagnostic and reformatory strategies that can be used to arrest the educational monster called examination malpractice. It is on this basis of the research gap that the present study investigated the prevalence of examination malpractice as well as the factors sustaining examination malpractice among secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial District.

Statement of the Problem

The issue of examination malpractice has become a major problem in the education system of Nigeria. Students have become so lazy that they no longer study their books. They believe in one way or the other, help will come to them. Agents of examination malpractice oftentimes, include students, parents, teachers, and school administrators. In fact, anyone that has a stake in the education of a child or in the outcome of any examination is likely to support or indulge in examination malpractice. Examination malpractice has come to be seen as a reflection of the gradual decline in the quality of Nigeria's educational system. It has attained a frightening, sophisticated proportion and has become so widespread that there is virtually no examination anywhere at all levels within and outside the formal school system that has not experienced one form of malpractice or the other. The implication of examination malpractice is enormous. The actualization of the goals of education will continue to be a mirage if the scourge of examination malpractice is not eradicated from the system. The country will end up producing graduates who lack the knowledge, skill, and competence to exploit the resources of the nation. Besides, the graduates will lack the right type of values and attitude needed for survival in a globalized economy. Amid the glaring implications of examination malpractice, how prevalent is examination malpractice among secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial District? What are the sustaining factors and what categories of students are more likely to indulge in examination malpractice? This is the crux of the study.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the prevalence of examination malpractice among male and female secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial District?

2. What are the factors sustaining examination malpractice among secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial District?
3. What categories of secondary school students are more likely to indulge in examination malpractice in Delta Central Senatorial District?

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

1. To ascertain the prevalence of examination malpractice among secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial District,
2. To determine the factors that sustains examination malpractice among urban and rural secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial District, and
3. To establish the categories of school students who are more likely to engage in examination malpractice in Delta Central Senatorial District.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at .05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the prevalence of examination malpractice among male and female secondary school students
2. There is no significant difference in the prevalence of examination malpractice among urban and rural secondary school students
3. There is no significant difference in the prevalence of examination malpractice among secondary school students from intact homes and those from broken homes

Methods

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. According to Nworgu (2015), descriptive survey design is one in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analysing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. This research design was chosen because it is based on the views and opinions of the respondents and it uses a wide variety of research methods to investigate one or more variables.

Population and Sample

The population of the study comprised all public senior secondary school 2 (SSS 2) students in Delta Central Senatorial District. There are 179 public secondary schools and a total of 19,555 SS 2 students in the eight local government areas of Delta Central Senatorial District. (Source: Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, Asaba, 2017)

A total of 363 students were sampled from all the schools across the eight local government areas of Delta Central Senatorial District. The choice of the sample size was based on the recommendation of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) that when a population is between 15,000 and 19,999 the sample size should be 363. A multistage sampling procedure was used. The researcher divided the population into groups/smaller units by selecting four local government areas from the eight Local Government Areas of the Delta Central Senatorial District, 18 schools from the four selected local government, 20 students from each school, with an additional randomly-picked 3 students to give a total of 363 students, with a total of 10 female and 8 male students selected from each school. This was done by a simple random sampling technique, a purposive sampling technique and a simple and stratified sampling. Table 1 shows the sample distribution of the selected students:

Table 1: Sample distribution of selected students

Category of Students		N	%
Gender			
Male Students		133	36.64
Female Students		230	63.36
Location			
Urban Students		168	46.28
Rural Students		195	53.72
Type of Home			
Students from Broken Homes	143		39.39
Students from Intact Homes	220		60.61

Research Instruments

A questionnaire was used for data collection in this study. The questionnaire is titled Questionnaire on Prevalence and Factor Sustaining Examination Malpractice (QPFSEM). It contains 2 sections. Section A contains respondent demographics such as sex, location and type of home (Intact or Broken); while Section B contains Prevalence of Examination Malpractice Rating Scale and Factors Sustaining Examination Malpractice Rating Scale. Items in section B were structured on a 4-point scale, ranging from 1 for strongly disagree to 4 for strongly agree. The validity of the instruments was established by experts in Guidance and Counselling Department and Measurement and Evaluation. These experts assessed the instruments for appropriateness and suitability to the objective of the study, and their suggestions were effected.

In order to establish the reliability of the instruments, 30 copies of the instruments were distributed and administered to senior secondary school students in Emevor, in Delta South Senatorial District. The data generated were analysed with Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient to determine whether the instruments have internal consistency. The coefficient of 0.78 and 0.83 was obtained for Prevalence of Examination Rating Scale and Factors Sustaining Examination Malpractice Rating Scale respectively.

Procedure

The questionnaire was administered directly to the respondents by the researcher with the help of 3 research assistants. In the first instance, the researcher went to the schools to obtain permission from the principal of the schools and to familiarise herself with the students. On the day of testing, she was on the ground throughout the period. The questionnaire was retrieved immediately.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while inferential statistics of independent samples t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at .05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the prevalence of examination malpractice among secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial District?

Table 2: Mean rating of the prevalence of examination malpractice among secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial District

S/N	Statement	Mean	SD
1.	Loitering around the examination hall	3.63	0.68
2.	Destruction of documents or resisting apprehension by invigilators.	3.39	0.67
3.	Mutilation of answer scripts	2.93	0.99
4.	Copying other students' work during examinations	2.89	0.97
5.	Examination leakages	3.05	0.85
6.	Use of calculator cover for jottings	3.10	0.83
7.	Hiring other people to write the examinations through impersonation	3.02	0.91
8.	Presentation of fake identification documents.	2.85	0.86
9.	Bringing prepared answers to examination halls	3.02	0.83
10.	School authorities colluding with examination officials and invigilators to assist students	3.04	0.88
11.	Invigilators conniving with students to cheat in examination halls	2.97	0.92
12.	Sending of prepared answers by teachers to students during examinations	3.13	0.81
13.	Copying answers directly from modules or textbooks during examinations	3.63	0.68
14.	Replacing old answer scripts with a new one after examinations	3.39	0.67
Average Mean		3.15	0.82
Criterion Mean = 2.50			

Table 2 shows the mean rating of the prevalence of examination malpractice among secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial District. The table indicates that all the items had a mean rating greater than the criterion mean of 2.50. The average mean is also greater than 2.50. This implies that there is a high prevalence of examination malpractice among secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial District.

Research Question 2: What are the factors sustaining examination malpractice among secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial District?

Table 3: Mean rating of the factors sustaining examination malpractice among secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial District

S/N	Statement	Mean	SD
1.	Parental influence to a choice career for me	3.66	0.58
2.	Lack of adequate learning facilities	3.44	0.72
3.	Wish to conform to peer pressure	3.10	0.83
4.	Laziness to work hard	3.10	0.87
5.	Poor invigilation	3.05	0.85
6.	Incompetent teachers	3.02	0.91
7.	Inadequate preparation for examination	2.99	0.78
8.	Lack of good study habits	2.98	0.93
9.	Societal preference for certificates (paper qualification)	2.96	0.87
10.	The poor state of the nation's economy	2.93	0.99
11.	Lack of positive self-concept	2.92	0.89
12.	The high cost of examination fees	2.89	0.97
13.	Over congested classrooms for exams	2.85	0.86
14.	Uncompleted syllabus	2.83	1.08
15.	Lack of appropriate punishment measures for students involved in examination malpractice	2.75	1.10
Average Mean		3.03	0.88
Criterion Mean = 2.50			

Table 3 shows the mean rating of the factors sustaining examination malpractice among secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial District, arranged in descending order. The table indicates that all the items had a mean rating greater than the criterion mean of 2.50. The average mean is also greater than 2.50. This implies that there all the items were accepted as factors sustaining examination malpractice among secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial District.

Research Question 3: What categories of secondary school students are more likely to indulge in examination malpractice in Delta Central Senatorial District?

Table 4: Mean ranking of the categories of secondary school students who are more likely to indulge in examination malpractice in Delta Central Senatorial District

Category of Students	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Rank
Male Students	133	3.12	0.39	1
Students from Broken Homes	143	3.12	0.38	2
Urban Students	168	3.09	0.39	3
Female Students	230	2.93	0.75	4
Rural Students	195	2.92	0.80	5
Students from Intact Homes	220	2.92	0.77	6

Criterion Mean = 2.50

Table 4 shows a mean ranking of the categories of secondary school students who are more likely to indulge in examination malpractice in Delta Central Senatorial District, arranged in descending order and ranked according to severity. The result shows that male students ($n = 133$) are more likely to indulge in examination malpractice while students from intact homes ($n = 220$) are less likely to indulge in examination malpractice.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the prevalence of examination malpractice among male and female secondary school students

Table 5:t-test comparison of the prevalence of examination malpractice among male and female secondary school students

Gender	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>	Remark
Male	133	3.12	0.39					
Female	230	2.93	0.75	361	3.23	.001	0.03	Significant

$\alpha = .05$

Table 5 shows a t-test comparison of the prevalence of examination malpractice among male and female secondary school students. The result shows that $t(361) = 3.23$, $p < .05$ level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected, which means that a significant difference exists in the prevalence of examination malpractice between male and female secondary school students. However, the effect size is 0.03, which indicate a small effect size.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the prevalence of examination malpractice among urban and rural secondary school students

Table 6: t-test comparison of the prevalence of examination malpractice urban and rural secondary school students

Location	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>	Remark
Urban	168	3.09	0.39					
Rural	195	2.92	0.80	361	2.71	.007	0.02	Significant

$\alpha = .05$

Table 6 shows a t-test comparison of the prevalence of examination malpractice among urban and rural secondary school students. The result shows that $t(361) = 2.71$, $p < .05$ level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected, which means that a significant difference exists in the prevalence of examination malpractice between urban and rural secondary school students. However, the effect size is 0.02, which indicate a small effect size.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the prevalence of examination malpractice among secondary school students from intact homes and those from broken homes

Table 7: t-test comparison of the prevalence of examination malpractice among students from intact homes and those from broken homes

Type of Home		<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>D</i>	Remark
Students from Intact Homes		220	2.92	0.77					
Students from Broken Homes		143	3.12	0.38					
					361	3.18	.002	0.03	Significant

$\alpha = .05$

Table 7 shows a t-test comparison of the prevalence of examination malpractice among students from intact homes and those from broken homes. The result shows that $t(361) = 3.18$, $p < .05$ level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected, which means that a significant difference exists in the prevalence of examination malpractice among students from intact homes and those from broken homes. However, the effect size is 0.03, which indicate a small effect size.

Discussion

The aim of the present study is to investigate the prevalence of examination malpractice as well as the factors sustaining and the categories of students more likely to indulge in examination malpractice in Delta Central Senatorial District. The result revealed that the prevalence of examination malpractice is high in Delta Central Senatorial District. The finding of research question 1 shows that majority of the students reported having indulged in behaviours that constitute examination malpractice. This finding is in line with the result of previous studies (Akinrefon, et al., 2016; Anzene, 2014; Ede, 2017), which revealed a high prevalence of examination malpractice among secondary school students in Nigeria.

The study also revealed that of all the factors that sustain examination malpractice among secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial District, parental influence to a choice of career ranked the highest. This is followed by a lack of adequate learning facilities, c and laziness to work hard. Others in the order of hierarchy include poor invigilation, incompetent teachers, inadequate preparation for the examination, lack of good study habits and societal preference for certificates (paper qualification). Lack of appropriate punishment measures for students involved in examination malpractice ranked lowest. This finding confirms the earlier view of Animasahun(2013) that the factors sustaining examination malpractice are resident in the students, family, teachers, schools, government, law enforcement agents the society and religion.

The finding further revealed that the categories of students who are more likely to indulge in examination malpractice in order of hierarchy include male students, students from broken homes and urban students. Students who are less likely to indulge in examination malpractice include female students, rural students and students from intact homes. This finding is further supported by the corresponding hypotheses, which shows that a significant difference exists between male and female

students, urban and rural students and between students from intact homes and students from broken homes, in favour of male students, urban students and students from broken homes, respectively. This finding is in support of Hughes and McCabe (2006), whose finding revealed that male students engage in examination malpractice more than female students. It, however, contradicts the finding of Calabrese and Cochran (1990) that girls are as likely to engage in malpractice as boys when the intention is to help a friend.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that there is a high rate of examination malpractice among secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial District. Various factors are likely to sustain examination malpractice among the students; and students who are more likely to indulge in examination malpractice include male students, urban students and students from broken homes.

Implications for Counselling Practice

The findings of the study are a wakeup call to the practice of professional counselling. This is because, no doubt, examination malpractice is an educational monster whose wings need to be broken, before it lands the educational system into a dungeon. If examination malpractice, which has eaten deep into the ambit of the educational system, is left unchecked, the achievement of the goals of education in Nigeria will be a mirage. This is because, examination malpractice is a major threat to the validity of test scores, such that evidence no longer support inferences. For example, when cheating students are judged to perform excellently well in their performance as against honest students in the classroom, the former will lose an opportunity for remediation.

It is therefore expected that Counsellors, who are the doctors of human behaviours, to brainstorm on strategies that will permanently put a stop to the incidence of examination malpractice.

Recommendations

In line with the findings of the study, it is recommended that:

1. Trained guidance counsellors should be recruited and posted to secondary schools where there are no guidance counsellors.

2. Counsellors should organise counselling services to reform students and prevent them from indulging in examination malpractice. Such seminars and workshops should include teachers, school administrators and parents of the students so that they will understand their individual role in the fight against examination malpractice.
3. Furthermore, students should be taught to imbibe good study habits before, during and after examinations
4. Also, the government should pay less attention to Paper qualification and give credence to entrepreneurial skills as well as sound morals.
5. In conclusion, using behavioural therapy, counsellors should teach students to think better of themselves and do better without necessarily depending on external sources to pass their examinations.

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