

Secondary School Students Perception of Examination Malpractice in Selected Local Government Areas in Ogun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined the secondary school students' perception of the causes, forms and prevention of examination malpractice in Ogun State Nigeria. Two hundred students constituted the sample for the study. One instrument "Students Perception of Examination Malpractice Question (SPEMQ) was used to generate data for the study. Three Research questions were answered using simple percentage and t-test statistics to analyse the data. The result among others indicated that there is no significant difference in the perception of male and female students on causes, forms and prevention of examination malpractice, and no significant difference in students' perception of examination malpractice based on age. Based on the findings, therefore, the paper recommended that adequate counseling should be given to all students, thorough screening be done before entering into the examination halls and there should be massive campaign against cheating in examination by all.

Keywords: Secondary School Students, Perception, Examination Malpractice.

Introduction

The widespread of examination malpractices in both public and private examinations, written and even oral interviews have been a source of major concern to all and sundry due to the adverse consequences the malpractice is having on all sections of national life and the image of the nation that is being projected negatively. Fatuburin (2001) observed that the consequence of examination malpractice constitute one of the greatest social problems facing the school system and it is assuming dangerous proportion in our society. Examination malpractice involves the act of wrong doing that goes contrary to the laid down rules guiding the conduct, grading and certification of examinations.

Examination is a way through which students are evaluated to find out the quality and quantity of knowledge acquired within a qualified period (Oladimeji & Onabanjo, 2008).

Adesemowo, (2000) defined examination as ascertaining how much of a subject matter in a field of study the candidate has mastered.

Onabamiro, (2011) also noted that examination is used to evaluate the students understanding of materials taught and how well what has been mastered can be applied. Students go through examination to get promoted to the next level, to gain admission, to acquire certificate and for many other reasons. Students who have not prepared very well, and want to pass at all cost may look for other means to get what they want, so they engage in examination malpractice.

Onabamiro (2008) explained examination malpractice as an abnormal way of getting through in an examination. Students in primary, secondary and tertiary go in search of examination question papers in advance and they want this by all means.

Onaolapo, (2010) noted that examination malpractice is another dangerous disease that has inflicted so many wounds to all levels of education system in Nigeria certificate may be rendered worthless if the rate at which examination malpractice is being perpetrated is not

checked, because examination malpractice has become so institutionalized in the educational institutions to the extent that no level of education is left out of it. Abosede, (2008) averred that the problem has affected the entire education system negatively. Examination malpractice in Nigeria is not new, the first major incidence of examination malpractice occurred in 1914 when the Cambridge local examination leaked. Since then, causes of examination paper leakage and cheating have been reported in first school leaving certificate, West African Examination Senior Secondary School leaving examination (WAEC and NECO) and has received public attention.

In the maiden edition of senior school certificate conducted by NECO in 2000, it was reported that forty-one thousand and thirty (41,030) results were cancelled for various forms of examination malpractices. By 2002, a total of one hundred and thirty-seven thousand, three hundred and twenty-six (137,326) were sanctioned for examination malpractices (Fuandai, 2006).

Abosede, (2008) reported that in 2005, the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board, (JAMB) cancelled ninety-five thousand (95,000) university matriculation examination students' result. This large scale irregularities and malpractices were reported in national dailies. This is rather unhealthy for education sector and national image.

Students engage in examination malpractices for various reasons: The belief that failure can endanger their future, hence the need to pass by all means, is a reason for engaging in examination malpractice. Another reason is the unseriousness and inadequate preparation by student, and unprofessional activities of some teachers, societal influence is another reason-students see no reason to be morally upright when the society is engulfed with terrible corruption. But the effects of examination malpractices are bad. The effects include the following: fall in standard of education. Emphasis is placed on paper certificate instead of marketable skills. It increases drop-out rate, students found guilty of examination malpractice are often suspended or rusticated from school, this may mean termination of schooling.

Another effect is that all forms of examination malpractice are being used to invalidate the status and worth of certificates awarded at different levels of education.

Nnachi, (2006) identified different forms of examination malpractices as follows: impersonation, question paper leakage, collusion with the examiner and invigilator to cheat during examination, use of unauthorized materials in the examination hall, 'giraffing', spying, intimidation of examiners by candidates, paying examination money to influence grades, use of handset (call phones), calculators, organizers to get answers to questions, etc. Other forms of examination malpractices include certificate forgery, smuggling of answer scripts into examination hall and swapping of scripts in the examination hall (Bello, 2006).

The rate of cancellation of results due to examination malpractices has indeed increased over the years. For WAEC the malpractice rate rose from 13.83% in 1994 to 19.19% in 1996. It was 5.08% in year 2001 and rose again to 10.5% in year 2002.

The Nigerian society frowns at individuals who employ dubious ways of achieving their aims that is why punishment is meted out to examination malpractice culprits. The federal government of Nigeria promulgated decree 27 of 1973 and miscellaneous decree 20 of 1984 which prescribed a 21-year jail term for examination malpractice offenders to ensure a stoppage or to at least curb the menace of examination malpractices. Examination bodies and other education stakeholders have at different times intensified efforts to stop this problem that is already becoming a national embarrassment, through, enlightenment campaign, blacklisting of schools, supervisors and invigilators involved and organizing seminars and workshops for the supervisors, invigilators and security agents for the examination.

In spite of the efforts of all stakeholders, there are unrepentant cheats who in an attempt to perpetuate their nefarious act, arrange for special centres in rural areas where it is believed that external supervisors would not be able to get to and therefore will be able to cheat and engage in

examination malpractice as they would want. Onaolapo (2010) lamented that the society is faced with the problem of producing incompetent, unskilled and unproductive teachers into the labour force and our certificates are gradually losing international recognition.

This study, therefore, investigates the perception of secondary school students on examination malpractice, forms and prevention of examination malpractice.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in the study.

1. What is the general perception of secondary students on examination malpractice?
2. Is there any significant difference in the perception of male and female secondary school students on examination malpractice?
3. What is the perception of secondary school students on examination malpractice based on age?

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey method with the questionnaire used to generate data on students' perception on the forms of examination malpractice and prevention.

Population

The population for the study comprised all secondary school students in Ogun State Nigeria.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Stratified random sampling technique was used to select two hundred (200) JSS 3 and SSS students from five secondary schools as sample for the study.

Research Instrument

The only instrument used for this study was a questionnaire entitled 'Students Perception of Examination Malpractice Questionnaire' (SPEMQ).

The instrument is a 20-item questionnaire constructed by the researcher to elicit response on the perception of the students on the causes, forms and prevention of examination malpractice. The Questionnaire was assessed by experts to ensure its face and content validity. The questionnaire has a response anchor ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (4). The scale has a cronbach alpha value of 0.67. Some of the items in the questionnaire include: Students' unseriousness can cause examination malpractice, societal influence is a causative factor of examination malpractice; examination malpractice can cause increase in drop out rate, examination malpractice can be prevented by blacklisting supervisors and invigilators involved.

Method of Data Analysis

Data were analysed using the simple-percentage and T-test statistic. The simple percentage statistics was used to determine the general perception of students on examination malpractice while the t-test statistic was used to analyse the differences in the perception of male and female students and the perception of the students based on their age.

Results

The results are presented as they related to the research questions.

Research Question 1: What is the general perception of secondary school students on examination malpractices?

Table I: Simple percentage showing the general perception of secondary school students on examination malpractice.

S/N	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%
1.	46	23	28	14	66	33	60	30
2.	80	40	88	44	16	08	16	08
3.	58	29	62	31	46	23	34	17
4.	68	34	66	33	44	22	22	11
5.	68	34	64	32	32	16	36	18
6.	48	24	60	30	46	23	38	19
7.	42	21	82	41	38	19	38	19
8.	88	44	48	24	38	19	26	13
9.	38	19	72	36	52	26	38	19
10.	62	31	42	21	68	34	28	14
11.	70	35	66	33	26	13	38	19
12.	72	36	72	36	22	11	34	17
13.	60	30	88	44	42	21	10	05
14.	58	29	52	26	42	21	48	24
15.	46	23	72	36	58	29	24	12
16.	64	32	74	37	44	22	18	09
17.	72	36	56	28	32	16	40	20
18.	68	34	54	27	46	23	32	16
19.	104	52	58	29	20	10	18	109

From Table I above, all the items except item I have higher percentage for SA and A combined, that is, $23\% + 14 = 37\%$ with others between 52% and 84%. This implies that majority of the students agreed that the statements on examination malpractice as stated in the instrument can either cause or prevent examination malpractice.

Research Question 2: Is there any significant difference in the perception of male and female secondary school students on examination malpractice?

Table 2: Test comparison in the perception of male and female students on examination malpractice.

Sex	No	X	SD	DF	t	sign	Remarks
Male	112	44.57	6.40	198	1.136	0.257	Not significant
Female	88	43.52	6.58				

The Table 2 above indicates a t-value, 1.136 which is not significant at 0.05 ($P > 0.05$). This implies that there is no significant difference in the perception of male and female respondents on causes of and prevention of examination malpractice.

Research Question 3: What is the perception of secondary school students on examination malpractice based on age?

Table 3: T-test comparison in the perception of students on examination malpractices based on age.

Age	No	X	SD	DF	t	sign	Remarks
10-15	65	44.09	6.61	198	0.027	0.98	Not significant
16-20	135	44.12	6.45				

From the Table 3 above, the t-value (0.027) is not significant at 0.05 ($P > 0.05$). This implies that there is no significant difference in the perception of respondents on examination malpractices based on age.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from the result of the research question 1 showed that majority of the students agree that examination malpractice has causes and can be prevented. The result is in line with Onaolapo (2010) who noted that examination malpractices have some causes and that a number of precautions and measures will help put an end to the problem. Adequate guidance and counselling facilities will help students and the society as a whole in examining the causes and how they can be prevented.

The result of the research question 1 has also revealed the need to encourage students to imbibe good study habits and stress the evil effects of cheating in examination from time to time.

From research Question 2, the result indicates that there is no significant difference in the perception of male and female respondents on causes of and prevention of examination malpractices. The result corroborates Abosede (2008) who found that the causes of examination malpractice are not being perceived differently by both males and females. Mogboro (2006) found no significant difference between male and female perception of selection process into tertiary institutions as a factor/cause of examination malpractice among students. Students irrespective of the sex and class are aware of examination malpractice which has its relative connection with the sex, age, social class, and environmental effects.

From the research question 3, it is revealed that there is no significant difference in the perception of the respondents based on the age. The result supports Abosede (2008) who expressed that students at different levels and ages are aware or fully understand how their fellow students behave in the examination halls and the various forms of examination malpractice they exhibit. All students perceive examination malpractice same way. Corresponding punitive measures in the examination acts should be meted on any student caught cheating.

From the results, it is evident that male and female student perceive examination malpractice in the same way and that there is no significant difference in the perception of students on examination. There should be compulsory orientation and reorientation programme for students on ethics guiding the conduct of examination.

Implication of the Findings

This study has established that students have the same perception on the causes, forms and prevention of examination malpractices. The implication of the findings are as follows:

- Students should be given adequate counselling on the evil effects of counselling.
- Since many of the students who engage in examination are lazy, they should be encouraged to study hard and teachers should be encouraged to improve in the delivery of their lessons.
- There is no difference in the perception of students on the causes, forms and prevention of examination malpractices based on their age; therefore, students from school age should be made aware of the consequence of cheating in examination and the need to desist from it.

Recommendations

The findings of this study has established the causes, forms and prevention of examination malpractices as perceived by secondary school students, and that both males and females perceive examination malpractice same way. It is therefore, recommended as follows, based on the result of the study.

- (a) Adequate counselling is necessary for all students, examination supervisors and invigilators.
- (b) Students of all ages should be encouraged to imbibe good study habits and shun any form of examination malpractice.
- (c) Decisive measures should be taken by the government and all stakeholders to fight and stop examination malpractice.
- (d) Students should be adequately instructed and be thoroughly screened before they enter into examination centres.

Parents and guardians should not encourage their children to cheat by arranging special centres for them during examinations.

There should be massive campaign against cheating and examination malpractice by all.

Conclusion

Examination malpractice is an abnormal way of getting through in an examination. It involves the improper means devised by students during examination to ensure success. This has been attributed to unseriousness of students, unprofessional activities of some teachers and societal influence. The effect of examination malpractice include: fall in the standard of education, increase in drop out rate and rendering useless the certificates from the examinations.

This study having established that students perceive the causes, forms and prevention of examination malpractice in the same way, students are aware of this social ill and efforts should be geared towards purging out the social ill from the society. Psychological approaches such as prompting, shaping, stimulus control and punishment, should be employed to combat every form of examination malpractice.

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