

**STUDENTS' FACTORS AND EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN PUBLIC
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SOUTH-WEST NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR
POLICY AND PRACTICE**

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Abstract

This study investigated the combined and relative effects of six students' factors (age, gender, peer influence, attitude to examination, attitude to learning and time management) on examination malpractice in public secondary schools in South-West, Nigeria. The participants were two hundred and fifty SSS2 students randomly selected from twelve secondary schools in Southwestern zone of Nigeria. Their ages ranged between 14 and 18years (\bar{x} = 14.04 and SD = 1.78. Of the sample selected, one hundred and thirty five were boys (135) and one hundred and fifteen were girls (115). A validated instrument, Student Factors Questionnaire (SFQ) was used to collect data for the study using multiple regression for analysis. There was a significant correlation among the six student variables and the dependent variable – examination malpractice ($R=0.424$; $p>0.05$). The six variables accounted for the 14.2% of the total variance in the depended measure ($R^2=0.142$) Peer influence ($\beta=0.321$; $t=3.186$; $p<0.05$), attitude to examination ($\beta=-0.191$; $t=2.343$; $p<0.05$), time management ($\beta=-0.195$; $t=2.162$; $p<0.05$) and attitude to learning ($\beta=-0.086$; $t=2.162$; $p<0.05$) could be used to predict examination malpractice. Results show that examination malpractice cut across age and gender. The result also shows that students' attitude to peers, examination, learning and time management are the most potent predictors of examination malpractice. Based on the implication of the findings, parents and teachers should help students to develop positive attitude to learning

and writing examination through re-orientation of values and reconstruction of students' attitude to hard work.

Background to the Study

The incidence of examination malpractice which started as a minor misdemeanor several decades has become a permanent feature of Nigerian educational system. Efforts by government, examining bodies, and concerned groups to stem the tide have not yielded meaningful results. This problem has affected the quality of products from our educational institutions, and their poor contribution to societal development is obvious to all. Examination malpractice presently poses a great threat to the validity of examination, reliability of examination results and credibility of certificates. Currently, every examination witnesses new and ingenious ways of cheating (Jimoh, 2009). Students' cheating in examinations has become so widespread that Croucher (1997) describes it as "epidemic" and asks for outright ban on all aids. Various reasons have been given by people as to the incidences of examination malpractice. Among these are school factors, examination environment factors, societal factors and pupil related factors. Examination officials are equally being accused of leakage of information through opening of examination papers ahead of time and release of information to teachers who further release them to the students is one of the widespread allegations made against examination personnel. Eckstein (2003) admitted that "teachers bend and break the rules in national examinations because of relentless efforts to produce good results. There is paucity of research findings with emphasis on the efforts of individual students as a major cause of examination malpractice in Nigeria.

Students' attitudinal disposition towards examination plays a significant role in shaping their involvement in examination malpractice. Reviewed literature shows that the personality and attitudinal characteristics of the students go a long way to influence their continuous involvement in examination malpractice (Oshin, 2008). According to Ajzen (2002), the attitude of a learner towards malpractice will determine the measure of the learners' attractiveness or repulsiveness towards involvement in examination malpractice.

Ajzen (1991:182) identified two major factors as contributors to the level of relationship found in an attitude and a particular behaviour.

One, only behavioural intention assessed shortly before an action or attitude would show strong relationship with the behaviour in question, which means "intention is antecedent to action". Two, behavioural intention are influenced by attitudes, social support and other contextual factors. Attitude contributes substantially to the difficulties encountered by students in passing examination. McCabe (2006) interviewed more than 4,500 students nationwide in America high school, and found that over 70 percent have cheated on a written assignment. While this fact is disturbing in itself, it might be understandable because, given ever-mounting pressures to succeed; students fear failure and at times adopt unethical means to avoid it. Previous researchers in a slightly similar study found out that the attitude of a child is often a predictor of his performance in school. This manifest in form of pressure to achieve good grades at all cost in examination and compulsive quest to pass difficult subjects (Adeyemi and Akindele, 2002).

Students' negative attitude to examination manifests in various forms such as ill preparedness for examination, (Oshin, 2008), fear of failure (Ojeikere, 2004), and poor self efficacy (Ajzen, 2002). Previous findings show that negative attitude to learning is associated with high failure rates and examination malpractice (Abayeh, 1996). In his study on analytical factors influencing examination in post primary schools, he found out that 50% believed it was necessary to have certificate but not the education. Examination malpractice is seen as a way out; only 10% of the respondents believed that hard work is a pathway to success in life. Yara (2008) asserts that without interest and personal effort in learning by students, they can hardly perform well in examination. To some of the students, examination is a necessary evil. Attitude to examination that is characterized by poor self esteem and low confidence on the day of examination inhibits good success Ivowi (1996).

Measures of students' progress have indicated increased reading ability, greater skill in organizing work, better use of educational facilities and more satisfactory personal and social adjustment. In schoolwork, it is essential to have a plan of action. By far, the most common difficulty in study according to Olushola (2006) is failure to get down to regular concentrated work in a non-responsive learning environment. Effective study depends very much on the

characteristic pattern which individual follows in learning. This requires a lot of time. Students who work with a study timetable will never fail to attain the standard expected of them by examiners. The attainment of good academic performance depends upon programmed progress sustained throughout the term from beginning to end. This agrees with the assertion of Mark and James (1996) that examination success is a by-product of controlled study. Students with good or effective study habit will face examination with courage void of malpractice tendencies. Thus corroborating the findings of Babalola in Eyarefe (2002) that students who engage in 'deep' or 'less' surface learning have better academic performance.

Peer group influence has been linked with students' involvement in examination malpractice (Abayeh, 1996; Adeyemi and Akindede, 2002; Ijaiya, 2009). Thus, the degree of closeness to students who are apt in examination malpractices seems to influence others to engage in the act. Grijalva, Nowell, Kerkvliet (2006) carried out a study in order to test if the attributes of college students who cheat in online classes is similar to the attributes of college students who admit to examination malpractice in the traditional classroom setting. Grijalva et. al. (2003) used the random response data from this online study to correlate student and classroom characteristics to cheating behavior. Using a logistic regression model to estimate the probability of cheating and explain cheating behavior, they find that being aware of others cheating in the course is positively related to the likelihood of cheating. These findings are consistent with similar studies of cheating behavior of college students in the traditional classroom. Whitley and Kost (1999) asserts in another study that students who associate with other students known to be deeply involved in examination malpractice are more likely to engage in examination malpractice than those who do not. Peer influence owing to belonging to a particular social organization like cultism has been reported to make students to be deeply involved in examination malpractice (Storch and Storch, 2002; Whitley, 1998; Yann and Ogunsanya, 1999). It is against this background that this study investigated students' factors as correlates of examination malpractice in public secondary schools in South-West, Nigeria.

Research Questions

This study provided answers to the following questions:

1. What is the composite effect of students' factors (gender, age, peer influence, attitude to examination, attitude to learning and time management) on examination malpractice in public secondary schools in South-West Nigeria?
2. What are the relative contributions of student factors (gender, age, peer influence, attitude to examination, attitude to learning and time management) on examination malpractice in public secondary schools in south-west Nigeria?
3. Which of the student factors (gender, age, peer influence, attitude to examination, attitude to learning and time management) predicts examination malpractice in public secondary schools in south-west Nigeria?

Purpose of the Study

This study investigated the contribution of students' factors (gender, age, peer influence, attitude to examination and attitude to learning) to examination malpractice in public secondary schools in south-west Nigeria.

Scope of the Study

The study covered all senior secondary school 2 students in public secondary schools in the South-West geopolitical zones of Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

Examination period is always a trying period for students especially when such examination is terminal and it is tied to the candidates' progress in life. Several factors have contributed to the rapid spread of examination malpractice in our educational system and these include student-home related factors and examination environment. In order to ensure appreciable improvement in the quality of students' input into examination, the result of the findings of the students' factors (Gender, age, peer influence, attitude to learning, attitude to examination and time management) would inspire students with a desire for self-improvement and achievement for excellence.

Methodology

This study was conducted **ex-post facto** using the survey research design. This was due to the fact that the researcher had no control over the independent variables as they have manifested already. The study population covered all public secondary schools in the South-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria. In all, 250 senior secondary school 2 students were used in the study.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

A simple random sampling technique was used for this study. The participants were two hundred and fifty students that were randomly selected from twelve secondary schools in South-West Nigeria. An arm of intact classes of SSS 2 students were used for the study. Of the sample selected, one hundred and thirty five were boys (135) and one hundred and fifteen were girls.

Instrument

A validated instrument, Students' Factors Questionnaire (SFQ) was used to collect data for the study. This was developed by the researcher by adapting Animasahun (2007). It consists of Section A which is made up of 10 questions dealing with students' name of school, state, local government area, gender, and age.

Section B: This instrument measures students factors such as (i) Peer group influence (items 1-10) and (ii) attitude to learning (items 11-20) and (iii) time management (items 21-30) and (iv) attitude to examination (items 31-40) and examination malpractice (items 41-50) with the options SA, A, D, SD are contained in the questionnaire. The responses to the students' factors was scored using 4,3,2,1 "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree" for positive attitudinal statements, while the response "Strongly Disagree", "Disagree", "Agree", "Strongly Agree" was scored using 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively for negative attitudinal statements.

This instrument was trial tested on 100 SS11 students in some schools in Ibadan metropolis and the cronbach alpha coefficient was calculated. The coefficient alpha values obtained were as follows: Time management inventory (0.74), Peer group influence inventory (0.67), Attitude to learning inventory (0.74), Attitude to examination inventory (0.63) and examination malpractice inventory (0.76). Copies of these

instruments were given to some experts in educational measurement and evaluation for expert review to ascertain the content and construct validity.

The research instruments were administered through the vice principals and senior teachers in the schools. The student based variable questionnaire (SBVQ) was administered to SSII students.

The data collected were analyzed using Multiple Regression analysis (backward procedure). This was used to provide information on the composite and relative contributions of the six predictor variables of students' factors of examination malpractice in order to answer the three research questions. Multiple regression analysis is a multivariate statistical technique used in examining or determining the effects of more than one independent variable on one dependent variable. It uses the principle of regression and correlation in achieving the objective. In other words, a set of independent variables are used in explaining or predicting a dependent variable such that all calculations are done in a manner to give the best prediction possible, given all the correlations among all the variables. Result from a multiple regression analysis and calculations provides necessary information as to how 'good' the prediction is and approximately how much of the variance is accounted for (Explained or predicted) by their linear combination of the independent variables (Kerlinger 2000).

Findings:

This section is discussed under the research questions.

Research Question One

What is the composite effect of students' factors (Gender, age, peer influence, time management, attitude to learning, and attitude to examination) on incidence of examination malpractice in Nigeria?

Table 1: Regression Summary of Composite Effects of Students' factors on Examination Malpractices

Multiple R	= 0.424				
R square	= 0.180				
Adjusted R square	= 0.142				
Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	1174.728	17	146.841	4.733	0.000*
Residual	5366.992	1288	31.023		
Total	6541.720	1305			

* = Significant at P < 0.05

An examination of Table 1 shows that the multiple regression correlation coefficients (R) indicating the relationship between the independent variables of Student factors (gender, age, peer influence, time management, attitude to learning and attitude to examination) and examination malpractice is 0.424 (Table 7). Further verification using Regression ANOVA produced F_(17, 1288) value of 4.733 which is significant at 0.05 level of confidence. This implies that there is significant composite effect of students' factors on examination malpractice of the student.

Research Question Two

What are the relative contributions of students' factors (gender, age, peer influence, time management, attitude to learning and attitude to examination) on incidence of examination malpractice in Nigeria?

Table 2: Estimate of the Relative Contribution of Students' Factors on Incidence of Examination Malpractices

<i>Independent Variables</i>	<i>Unstandardized Coefficients</i>		<i>Standardized Coefficients</i>		
	B	Standard error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	31.378	5.585		5.618	0.000*
Peer influence	-321	0.101	0.225	3.186	0.002*
Attitude to Examination.	-191	0.081	-0.181	-2.343	0.020*
Time Mgt	-195	0.090	-0.152	-2.162	0.032*
Attitude to learning.	-086	-042	-0.141	-2.034	0.044*
Gender	-085	0.082	-0.074	-	0.301
Age	0.404	0.874	0.034	1.037	0.645
				0.462	

*** = Significant at 0.05 alpha level**

The result presented in Table 2 gives the summaries of the degree of relative contributions of the students' factors to the prediction of the incidence of examination malpractice in senior secondary school examination in Nigeria. It is a presentation of the individual contribution of each independent variable, relative to all other variables. Peer influence contributed most ($\beta = 0.225$; $t = 3.186$; $P < 0.05$); next to peer influence is Attitude to examination ($\beta = -0.181$; $t = -2.343$; $P < 0.05$); followed by time management ($\beta = -0.152$; $t = -2.162$; $P < 0.05$) and attitude to learning ($\beta = -0.141$; $t = -2.034$; $P < 0.05$). The fifth, and sixth contribution in order of decreasing magnitude are Gender ($\beta = -0.074$; $t = -1.037$; and age ($\beta = 0.034$; $t = 0.462$; $P > 0.05$). This showed that the relative influence of gender and age cannot be reckoned with on incidence of examination malpractice because they are not significant as shown in Table 2.

Research Question Three

Which of the student factors' (Gender, age, peer influence, time management, attitude to learning and attitude to examination) predicts the incidence of examination malpractice in South-West Nigeria?

An examination of Table 2 revealed the strength of students' factors in predicting examination malpractice as shown below. The predictive strength of peer influence on examination malpractice is indicated by unstandardized coefficient Beta of 0.321; $t = 3.186$ and it is significant at 0.05 level of confidence. Next is attitude to examination with coefficient Beta of -0.191; $t = -2.343$; and it is significant at 0.05 level of confidence. This is followed by time management with coefficient Beta of -0.195; $t = -2.162$ and it is significant at 0.05. This is followed by attitude to learning with coefficient Beta of -0.086; $t = -2.034$ and is also significant at 0.05. Lastly Gender ($B = -0.085$; $t = -1.037$; and age ($B = 0.404$; $t = 0.462$; $P > 0.05$).

$$X_1 = \text{Gender} (\beta_1 = .404)$$

$$X_2 = \text{Age} (\beta_2 = -.301)$$

$$X_3 = \text{Peer Influence} (\beta_3 = .321)$$

$$X_4 = \text{Time Management} (\beta_4 = -.195)$$

$$X_5 = \text{Attitude to learning} (\beta_5 = -.086)$$

$$X_6 = \text{Attitude to examination} (\beta_6 = -.191)$$

$$\text{Constant } = \beta_0 = 31.378$$

Hence, predictive model of examination malpractice becomes

$$\hat{\gamma} = 31.378 + 0.404 X_1 - 0.301 X_2 + 0.321 X_3 - 0.195 X_4 - 0.086 X_5 - 0.191 X_6$$

Discussion of Findings

The composite effect of student factors (gender, age, peer influence, time management, attitude to learning and attitude to examination) on incidence of examination malpractice in Nigeria shows the Multiple R is 0.424 with an estimated R square (0.180) and adjusted R square (0.142). The result of this finding implies that student factors compositely accounted for 14.2 percent variance in examination malpractice and that the value of multiple R = 0.424 obtained in the

study was not due to chance. Further, Regression ANOVA produced $F_{(8,1173)}$ value of 4.733 which is significant at 0.05 level of confidence. This is in agreement with the assertion of previous researchers that examination malpractice is as a result of pupils' related factor (Ojerinde (2004).

The findings also showed that 22.5% of the incidence of examination malpractice was due to peer influence and could be attributed to the influence of it ($P < 0.05$). Peer influence relative contribution to incidence of examination malpractice is 22.5%. This corroborates with the findings of (Ivowi 1997; Whitley, 1998; Ogunsanya, 1999; Whitley and Kost, 1999; Storch and Storch, 2002; Ojerinde, 2004, 2006). Ojerinde (2006) reported that peer influence significantly gave rise to examination malpractice especially in the live of students who lack sound moral background to stand firm in what they believe.

Similar to this was the influence of student attitude to examination, which is 18.1%. This means that 18.1% account for the reason why student involves in examination malpractice is their negative attitude to examination. Student negative attitude to examination manifests in various forms such as ill preparedness for examination according to (Oshin, 2008), fear of failure according to (Abayeh, 1996; Ojeikere, 2004) and poor self efficacy according to Ajzen (2002). It was a reflection that most candidates that cheated depended on their own will, and this corroborates the assertion of Oshin (2008)

In this study, the incidence of examination practice in Nigeria was also influenced by factor such as time management. Time management has 15.2% influences on increase cases of student involvement in examination malpractice, which means unprofitable usage of time which negatively influences adequate preparation for examination. This could be attributed to the fact that most students lacks the habit of proper management at home and most parents do not see to the proper use of time of the wards while at home. Most students in this age of internet, computer games, GSM and other technological advancement pay much attention to this exciting but distracting development than dedication to study through proper management of time. Previous studies have shown that lack of proper time management has contributed to the poor performance of most

students in a slight similar or close related study (Trueman and Hartley, 1996; Babalola, 2000 cited in Eyarefe, 2001).

The finding of this study also revealed that attitude to learning has 14.1% influence on incidence of students' involvement in examination malpractice. This means that 14.1% incidence is due to attitude to learning which could be characterized by deviant behaviour such as truancy and poor study habit.

Also, in the finding of this present study, it can be deduced that the relative influence of gender and age cannot be reckoned with on incidence of examination malpractice as they were not significant ($P > 0.05$) in this study. This is an indication that student involvement in examination malpractice cut across sex or age group.

Conclusion

The incidence of examination malpractice with respect to the frequency indicates that it has become a common feature in secondary schools and it cut across age and gender. The students' characteristics which play important roles in their involvement in examination malpractice include attitude to learning, attitude to examination, peer influence and time management. Attitude contributes significantly to the difficulties students encountered in examination situation. The implication of these is gross unseriousness and laziness which cannot promote effective learning and thorough preparation for examination. Their attitude to schooling was largely negative; this can be attributed to the internalized societal values which are highly materialistic. The materialistic societal value in turn was characterized by "cutting corner syndrome, settlement syndrome and get-rich –quick syndrome". In order to ensure appreciable improvement in the quality of student input into examination, attitude to learning must change positively with a desire for self-improvement and achievement for excellence.

The implication of negative attitude to examination is the psychological fear of failure and a misunderstanding of the purpose of examination that prompt unethical behaviour in candidates. There were those that employed mercenaries to write examination for them, or collude with friends during examination. The objective of secondary education is gradually being destroyed, when our educational system no longer raise a generation of students who can think for themselves and who have respect for dignity of labour. This calls for re-orientation

of values through inculcation of examination ethics, value education and moral instructions in the school curriculum so as to turn out students that are academically and morally sound. Parents and teachers should help students to develop positive attitude to learning and writing examination through a re-orientation of values and reconstruction of students' attitude to hard work. Parents should not force students to read courses they are not interested in nor courses they do not have ability or talent to cope with.

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