

EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE AS CORRELATE TO SELF ESTEEM AND ACADEMIC BEHAVIOR AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN SOUTH EASTERN STATES OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study was on examination malpractice as correlate to self esteem and academic behavior among secondary school students in south eastern states of Nigeria. The correlation survey design was used to carry out the study. Three research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. The population of the study was all the (SS1) senior secondary school students, in public secondary schools during the 2022/2023 academic year totaling 36,240 students. The sampling size consists of 2500 students drawn through multi stage sampling technique. The reliability of the instrument was established using split half method and was found to be (0.69). The research instrument was developed by the researcher and it consists of three clusters that sought to determine relationship that exists between examination malpractice, academic behavior (academic goal and social goal) and self esteem of secondary school students from south eastern state of Nigeria. The data collected was analyzed using Pearson's product moment of correlations to answer research questions 1, 2 and 3 while hypothesis (1) and (2) were tested using -t- test for correlation. The result revealed that a strong positive relationship of 0.79, 0.76, 0.78 exists between examination malpractice and self esteem and academic behavior (academic goal and social goal) of students respectively. The hypothesis which tested for significance of relationship revealed that a significant relationship exists between examination malpractice conduct of urban and rural adolescents as well as their academic behavior.

The following recommendations among others were proffered; students passing through challenges of self esteem and academic behavior will have a need of a Counsellor, remedial classes are to be organized for students having academic behavior challenges.

Keywords: Examination malpractice, self esteem, academic behavior, Secondary School Students, Southeast Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Examination malpractice in recent time is topical in most literatures. This is because it has been seen as a canker worm which has eaten deep into the fibrous of our academic system. It has become an “a la monde” a trade every dick and Harry ply, encouraged by institutions, supported by parents and practiced by students. It has so made education and learning very cheap and at the verge of losing its impact to the society.

The examination malpractice act issued in 1999 stated that examination malpractice is any act of omission or illegal conduct by an individual who in collaboration of before, during or after any examination fraudulently secures any unfair advantage for himself or any other individual in such a manner that contravenes the rules and regulations to the extent of undermining the reliability, validity, authenticity and the integrity of the certificate issued. (Agunbiode & Ajayi, 2018).

According to Ekeh and Oladayo (2016), examination malpractice is defined as an illegal attempt or action of an individual or group of individuals to benefit self or others through evil means which violates the regulation governing the conduct of examination. Supporting this view, Ifeakor and Ukozor (2016) defined it as practices of wrong doing, misconduct or dishonesty associated with examination for personal gain or violation of rules and regulations governing examination conduct. Furthermore, Examination malpractice is also viewed as any dishonest or unauthorized action or misconduct committed by the student or any significant agent of socialization such as teachers, parents, guardians, examination supervisors or the institution itself during examination in order to obtain an undeserved grade.

Based on the above definitions, examination malpractice is any fraudulent act committed by a student singly, in collaboration with fellow students or any principal member of the agencies responsible for socialization either through copying or other nefarious activities in order to obtain cheap and unmerited grade. Onyibe et al (2015) noted the following as ways students can cheat during examination and they include, impersonification, giraffing, leakage of question papers, copying from fellow students' solution, use of mobile phones, copying into the hall, smuggling answers into the hall, sorting of teachers etc.

Literature has proffered a lot of reasons which can cause examination malpractices and they include, truancy, craze for certificate, choice occupation by parents, fear of failure, trend in the society, lack of facilities including qualified teachers, laziness, personality disposition, and psychological distress in self esteem and academic behavior (Peters and Ukpung, 2013).

According to Sharp and Theiler (2018), students who experiences severe psychological distress have a reduced capacity and potential for study and achievement, since elevated level

of distress leads to greater disability. Supporting this view, Sharif and Armitage (2014) noted that prevalence of psychological distress could hinder healthy self esteem.

Orth et al (2014) views self esteem as the feeling of being competent to cope with the basic challenges of life and being worthy of happiness. It affects every aspect of life including academic achievement (Sharif and Hermitage, 2014). Self esteem is a psychological trait that expresses an individual's competence, worth and ability to overcome existential challenges. Malekina and Abedi (2012) noted that self esteem is a significant psychological element related to wellness, quality of life and achievement. This view was supported by Magro et al (2018) who maintained that self esteem is a feeling of sense of capability, sense of acceptance, sense of worth, ability to surmount life obstacles etc.

Akam (2017) defined it as a stable sense of personal worth and ones view about oneself. In simpler term, it is the worth and view an individual held of oneself. It is fundamentally influenced by the following, namely your independence and ability to stand on your own, your achievements, your strength and weakness.

Apart from the above, academic behavior according to Obi and Okoye (2019) can be seen basically as actions that help a student to perform better or poorly in the school. Okudo and Obumse (2022) noted that it involves ways students react to a course of learning, and drilling taking place in the school environment. Obi and Okoye noted that academic behavior could be grouped into two namely, academic goals and social goals. According to Okudo and Obumse (2022), Obi and Okoye (2019), academic goals is affirmed by literature as the attainment of cognitive goals which aids learning. It includes making good grades, acquiring quality education, development of good academic self worth, acquiring intellectual skills, acquisition of academic abilities, development of verbal expression/abilities, having good study habits, ability to read text and easy comprehension, ability to memorize etc.

On the other hand, social goals involve the development of relational qualities which could support learning (Okudo, 2013). Examples of social goals include ability to organize activities, good interaction with peers, sense of cooperation, concern and interest about the future, development of good self confidence, good perception of self, setting high goals etc. the following are qualities expected to be achieved through academic behavior. Literatures has affirmed that the achievement of students is highly dependent on the above qualities and where these attitudes are lacking or not developed, it could lead to defeatist attitudes such as examination malpractice (Gustaffson. J.J, K, Y and Rosen, M, 2011, Ifejiolor A. P, 2019).

Based on the above, students whose academic behavior development is poor could most likely engage in cheating behaviors such as examination malpractice in order to compensate for their inefficiency. In a similar manner, students who experience psychological distress (self esteem) have reduced capacity and potential for study and achievement which could lead to examination malpractice. Furthermore, the prevalence of examination malpractices has made it common in the urban and rural set up and among genders (male and female). All have been found to engage actively in malpractices even though it can vary based on factors such as dispositions, nurturance, personality traits and academic concerns and interests. In a similar manner, self esteem and academic behavior can also be influenced by location. Rural students has been shown to exhibit higher degree of timidity more than urban students who are

exposed to the trend of the time and consequently has the potential to indulge more in malpractices. Consequently, the motivation for this study is to determine how malpractice is correlated to self esteem and academic behavior (social goals and academic goals) of students from south eastern states of Nigeria.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The educational sector is besieged with multiple value deterioration which many stakeholders raise voices against. Such value deteriorations are visibly seen in the various under achievement which characterizes the teaching and learning environment of our time. Significant among them is examination malpractice and the associated evils. Examination malpractice is the act of seeking to obtain unmerited grades through false means. So many causes have been advanced as factors causal to these ills rampant in the academic sector. Among them is the psychological state of the individual. Reduced psychological state of an individual which can cause under achievement has been predicated to an individual self esteem.

The individual's academic behavior is another factor which could lead to acts of malpractices. Non serious students tend to supplement their poor academic goals and social goals through malpractices. Based on the above it could be seen that examination malpractices have factors which predispose the cheaters towards it. Among these are self esteem and academic behavior. Consequently, the problem of this study could be summarily put in a question format as, How does self esteem and academic behavior of students correlate with examination malpractices.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study is to determine how self esteem and academic behavior (social goal and academic goal) correlates with malpractices among secondary school students in south eastern states of Nigeria. The states are: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. Specially the study seek to establish what relationship exist between

- (i) Malpractices and self esteem of students
- (ii) Malpractices and the academic goals of students
- (iii) Malpractices and the social goals of students.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided the study:

- (a) What relationship exists between examination malpractice and the self esteem of secondary school students from south eastern states of Nigeria?
- (b) What relationship exists between examination malpractice and the social goals of secondary school students from south eastern states of Nigeria?
- (c) What relationship exists between examination malpractices and the academic goals of secondary school students from south eastern state of Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis

- (i) There is no significant relationship existing between urban and rural students rating on involvement in examination malpractices based on their self esteem.
- (ii) There is no significant relationship between urban and rural students rating on involvement in malpractices based on their academic goals.

METHOD OF STUDY

The design was correlation survey design. The area of study was south eastern states of Nigeria. The population of study was all the public senior secondary schools (SS 1) in south eastern states of Nigeria during the 2022/23 academic year totaling 36,240 students. The sample size consisted of 2500 students drawn through proportionate sampling technique. The reliability of the study was established using split half method and Pearson's product moment of correlation was used to analyze the result and was found to be $r = 0.71$. The researcher developed instrument was used which comprises three clusters. The questionnaire was distributed through 15 briefed assistants that worked under the supervision of the researcher. All the distributed questionnaires were retrieved. The data collected were analyzed using Pearson product moment of correlation to answer research questions 1, 2 and 3 while the hypotheses were tested using -t- test for correlations.

RESULTS

The data obtained were analyzed and presented in a table form as follows

Research Question One: What relationship exists between examination malpractices and the self esteem of students from south eastern states of Nigeria?

Table one: Pearson on students rating of the relationship between examination malpractices and students self esteem.

Source of variation	N	Self-esteem of students	Examination malpractices
Self esteem	2500	1.00	0.79
Examination malpractices		0.79	1.00

The result in table one revealed a very high positive relationship of (0.79) existing between self esteem of the students and engagement in malpractices.

Research Question Two: What relationship exists between examination malpractices and social goal development of secondary school students from south eastern states of Nigeria?

Table two: Pearson on students rating of the relationship existing between examination malpractice and social goal development of the students.

Source of variation	N	Social goals	Examination malpractices
Social goals	2500	1.00	0.76
Examination malpractices		0.76	1.00

The result from table two revealed that a high positive relationship of 0.76 exists between social goal development and indulgence in examination malpractices among secondary school students from south eastern states of Nigeria.

Research Question Three: What relationship exists between examination malpractices and academic goal development of secondary school students from south eastern state of Nigeria?

Table three: Parson on students' rating of the relationship between examination malpractice and academic goals of secondary school students from south eastern states of Nigeria.

Source of variation	N	Academic goals	Examination malpractices
Academic goals	2500	1.00	0.78
Examination malpractices		0.78	1.00

The result from the table above revealed the students rating of the relationship between examination malpractice and academic goals. The study indicated that a high positive relationship of 0.78 existed between them.

HYPOTHESIS I

There is no significant relationship existing between urban and rural student's involvement in examination malpractices based on their self esteem.

Table four: -t- test of correlations between urban and rural students involvement in examination malpractices based on their self esteem.

N	r	Df	cal -t-	crit -t-	≥ 0.05
2500	0.79	2498	2.69	17.89	5

The table above reveals that at 0.05 level of significance and a differential freedom of 2498 df, the calculate -t- (2.69) was less than the critical -t- (17.89) hence, therefore there is a significant relationship existing between the urban and rural adolescents rating of their involvement in examination malpractices based on their self esteem.

HYPOTHESIS II

There is no significant relationship existing between urban and rural students involvement in examination malpractices based on their academic goals.

Table five: -t- test of correlations between the urban and rural students rating of their involvement in examination malpractices based on the academic goal.

N	r	df	cal -t-	crit -t-	≥ 0.05
2500	0.78	2498	1.69	13.47	5

The table five above revealed that at 0 .05 level of significance and a differential freedom of 2498 the calculated -t- (1.69) was less than the critical -t- (13.47) hence there was a significant relationship between the urban and rural students rating of their involvement in examination malpractices based on their academic goal.

DISCUSSION

The discussion of findings was carried out under the themes in line with the main purpose of study which sought to determine how examination malpractice correlates with students self esteem and academic behavior. The discussion was presented under the following major headings namely.

- (i) What relationship exists between examination malpractice and self esteem of students?
- (ii) What relationship exists between examination malpractice and academic behavior (academic goals and social goals) of students?

Concerning the relationship existing between malpractice and self esteem of secondary school students from south eastern state of Nigeria, the result in table one revealed that a high positive relationship of (0.79) exists between student's engagement in malpractice and their self esteem. Furthermore, the students assessed their self esteem using the following, break rules and regulations (2.90), try to cut corners (3.06), were afraid of failures (3.49), loses confidence in examination hall (3.42), do not accept challenges (3.06), are not realistic over issues (2.96), cannot trust their decisions (2.89), are not positive about their self worth (2.92), do not believe in themselves (3.10), have reduced capacity to study (3.42). furthermore, the hypothesis which tested for significance of relationship between the urban and rural students involvement in malpractices based on their self esteem revealed that at 0.05 level of significance, the calculated -t- (2.69) was less than the critical -t- (17.89) therefore rejecting the null hypothesis and affirming that a significant relationship exists between the urban and rural students involvement in malpractice based on the self esteem.

In view of the above, Sharp and Theiler (2018), Peters and Ukpong (2013) all noted that students who experiences severe psychological problems have reduced capacity to study consequently they break rules and regulations. This view was supported by Shariff and Hermitage (2014), Magro and Akram (2017) who opined that distressed self esteem is a psychological problem that could lead to cheating, corner cutting and similar acts such as examination malpractices.

Again, the hypothesis which tested for significance of relationships between urban and rural students involvement in malpractices based on their self esteem revealed a significant relationship between both indicating that self esteem is a factor in student's engagement in malpractices.

Concerning the relationship existing between student's engagement in malpractice and their academic behavior, research questions two and three which sought to find out how examination malpractices correlates with academic behavior (social goals and academic goals) reveal a high positive relationship of 0.76 and 0.78 respectively. Equally the hypothesis two which tested for significance of relationship between examination malpractice involvement between urban and rural adolescents based on the academic goal revealed that 0.05 level of significance, that the calculated -t- (1.69) was less that the critical -t- (13.49) therefore rejecting the null hypothesis but affirming that a significant relationship exists between the urban and rural student's engagement in malpractice based on their academic behavior.

It is also important to note that the students used the following items to assess their academic behavior (academic goal and social goal) with respect to their academic goals, the students

looked at the following items namely, ability to participate in group discussion (2.04), reading ahead of teachers (2.00), asking questions in the class (2.32), punctuality (2.35), carrying out assignments (2.26) paying attention in the class (2.25), being regular to class (2.09), good study habit (2.25), ability to memorize easily (2.39), easy comprehension of test (2.42).

In the similar manner, the social goals items used by students to access themselves include; concern about the failure (2.39), interaction with teachers (2.35) initiation of dialogue (2.29), setting high goals (2.42), and interest on other people (2.45), develop good sense of self respect (2.30) etc.

Interestingly all the items that the students used to access the academic behavior (social goals and academic goals) did not meet the acceptable mean mark of 2.50 implying that their academic behavior was poor and this was translated in class achievement. However in order to evade failure, recourse was made to malpractice. According to Obi and Okoye (2019), academic behavior is measured through academic goals and social goals and these are factors that determine whether a child will perform well or poorly in schools. It involves ways to which a student reacts to skills. According to Robnolt, Valeria, Rhodes and Joan (2014), they noted that academic behavior enables students acquire learning skills that help them organize learning and take in new information, retaining information and dealing with assessment. Morlan (2016), Straith (2015) and Conrad (2017) all maintained that it determines whether a student will perform highly or poorly in school. Students whose academic behavior were poor look for ways to substitute and in the words of Therler (2018), Peters and Ukpung (2013), such students end up cheating, cutting corners which includes acts such as examination malpractices.

CONCLUSION

Concluding this study, it has been established that examination malpractice correlates with students self esteem and academic behavior. When the above mentioned two factors are not properly adapted, it leads to defeatist attitude, corner cutting and examination malpractices. Furthermore, the hypothesis which tested for significant of relation revealed that a significant relationship exists between urban and rural students involvement in examination malpractice based on their academic goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) Malpractices should not be encouraged in secondary schools
- (ii) Students passing through challenges of self esteem and academic behavior will have a need of a counsellor
- (iii) Remedial classes are to be organized for students having academic challenges
- (iv) Examinations must be written under very strict control.

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