

Impact of Examination Malpractice on Behaviour of Secondary School Students in North-Central Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the impact of examination malpractice on behaviour of secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria. Research questions and hypotheses were raised to guide the study. The study design is survey. The sample was 380 senior secondary school students; randomly selected from three states in North-Central Nigeria. Impact of Examination Malpractice on Behaviour (IEMOB) questionnaire was used to collect data. The data was analysed using mean, standard deviation, t-test and ANOVA. The results revealed that examination malpractice impacted negatively on behaviour of secondary school students. It impacted negatively on behaviour of male and female students; it did impact negatively on public and private school students as well as students in rural and urban settings. It was recommended that value orientation and enlightenment about impact of examination malpractice be given on continuous basis to secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria.

Keywords: Examination, Examination-Malpractice, Behaviour

INTRODUCTION

Enrolment in schools has been on the increase in the recent decades at all levels of schooling from nursery to tertiary. This is a very welcome development as all nations of the world are doing their best to see that their citizens are educated. Whether this has in turn resulted to the right behaviours in those educated or those being educated remained a question. Certificates are awarded supposedly based on attainment of learning and behaviour. Behaviour moulding was a major component in the training of a wholesome student. Certificates which were awarded based on competence in learning and character has been eluded. The quality and quantity of teaching and learning that is being reported as taken place in schools are mostly inaccurate.

Education is the process of imparting knowledge and skills to students to the effect that their behaviour is changed for the better. Education will not be said to have taken place if the right behaviours have not been acquired. Inculcating the right behaviour is a sine quo non in education. Consequent on that, education reaches not only to the cognitive domain but to the Psychomotor and affective domains. In the course of education, individual potential is enhanced. Each student

learns and develops as much as possible the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains.

Examination sets the stage for selection, promotion or otherwise and certification. Examination is a tool for testing the extent of learning that has taken place among learners at any given time. It is a tool for evaluating the level of knowledge, skills and behaviours that have been learned by students after a period of teaching and learning. It is a means of assessing competence after a period of training to ascertain areas of strength and weakness, depth of knowledge and misplacement of knowledge.

Although examination is a very useful tool for assessing both the teacher and the student, it has been fraught with all manners of irregularities. These irregularities were brought about by activities and inactivity of students, teachers, school authorities, parents and invigilators, (NECO, 2017, Wilayat, 2012). Okoroafor (2019) reported that examination malpractice was prevalent in Nigeria. He stated that it was found in both urban and rural schools.

Examination malpractice might have affected the behaviour of secondary school students in and out of school. It can affect their confidence in school and school programmes. Students can afford to behave anyhow because there are ways to get around success in school.

Examination malpractice has become a monster in North-Central Nigeria, impacting on behaviour of secondary school students. Students no longer commit themselves to studying, hard work was seen as not paying and cutting corners to gain result is becoming more acceptable. Right study habits had been set aside; so academic performance is on the decline. The question is “how does examination malpractice impact on behaviours of secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria?”

Students’ behaviour affects their academic performance. Positive students’ behaviour affects their academic performance positively and negative students’ behaviour affects their academic performance negatively. Some positive behaviour of students is found in their interest in school. Students who are interested in school show it in their punctuality to school, attentiveness in class, promptness in doing schoolwork and assignments, acquisition of school needs or materials, care for school materials and personal school items, inquisitiveness, love for their teachers, studiousness and general love for school and school related activities. They are intrinsically motivated and have strong drive for learning and achieving. They are hard-working and face academic challenges with zeal. They do not give up with hard conditions or difficult questions.

Bracing up to a challenge is a norm since they have an internal locus of control. Those students, who are not tenacious with school demands, achieve less. Students who were given to social vices like truancy, smoking and attending club were associated with low academic performance (Tadese, Yeshaneh & Mulu, 2022).

Personality and emotional intelligence were brought to bear as a factor in academic performance of students in the works of Noemy, Rodigo, Izquierdo and Ajenjo, (2017). They maintained that when students feel good, they perform better. Care should be taken to make school climate clement to students. Things should be put in place not just for the convenience of the teachers and school management but for the comfort and convenience of the generality of the school community. This is because the whole psychological atmosphere joined in the variables affecting the academic performance of students. School managements should take into consideration both the physical and emotional needs of students for a better academic performance.

These are some of the rules that students must have at their fingertips when preparing for any examinations:

- I. You must present yourself for any examinations you registered for
- II. You must not bring in any case and item not authorised for any examination
- III. You must not take any plain paper with you into an examination
- IV. You should take in all the items allowed for in an examination
- V. You must enter an examination room in silence
- VI. You must not disturb other candidates
- VII. You must not communicate in any form with other candidates in an examination room
- VIII. You must do all your rough work in your answer booklet
- IX. You must not leave the examination room until your answer booklet has be submitted
- X. You must not take out of an examination room any item that you are not allowed to take
- XI. You must not write exams for anybody
- XII. Once you are in an examination, you are on your own
- XIII. If you have need to talk, speak only to the invigilators

(Adapted from University of Liverpool 2018/2019 Code of Practice on Assessment

These are the fundamental duties and obligations of every professional teacher:

- I. the foremost duty is advancing the learning of students
- II. develop oneself continuously

- III. treat students fairly, justly and equally
- IV. assess, mark and grade students honestly
- V. invigilate examinations appropriately as scheduled
- VI. motivate and promote proper behaviour of students
- VII. respect students
- VIII. do not take advantage of any student
- IX. respect colleagues and other members of staff
- X. work as a team where necessary for better results and advancement of the institution into which one is employed
- XI. promote efficiency for all members of the school community
- XII. be a positive influence and model to students and colleagues
- XIII. obey school authorities.

(Adapted from Oulu University 2018/2019 Session, Ethics of Teaching and Learning)

Foremost among the responsibilities of school authorities are:

- I. provision of peaceful and adequate teaching and learning atmosphere
- II. provision and bargaining of adequate work packages for staff
- III. promotion of teaching and learning
- IV. organising examinations
- V. production, keeping and delivery of examination results
- VI. maintaining discipline in school
- VII. provision of educational resources
- VIII. being positive and appropriate model for staff and students
- IV. maximising educational provisions and opportunities for the school community.

(Adapted from Oulu University 2018/2019 Session, Ethics of Teaching and Learning)

Ivan Pavlov's Behavioural Learning theory termed classical conditioning used a dog and applied different stimuli to get the dog's response. The stimulus in the dog's case is the bell and the response was the salivation by the dog. This action of salivation was reinforced by the food that was brought in to the dog each time the bell was rung. The dog associated these until they no longer go together.

It established that behaviour is caused or provoked by at least a stimulus. Any behaviour not

wanted can be stopped or regulated. The unfavourable behaviour of students' indulgence in examination malpractice can be modified for the better when the educational processes are re-conditioned. Also, the academic performance as both are conditions stemming from the environment in which students are groomed and taught.

Consequent on this, behaviour can be learned or unlearned. The case of examination malpractice which has become like a canker worm or worse still a cancer eating into the fabrics of the nation's educational system and questioning vehemently the validity of students' performance and results as well as the quality of students can be apprehended. This can be made possible by sanitising the academic and examination environments of the physical, psychological or cultural elements that are responsible for the examination malpractices that had infested the behaviour of students. The environment, both physical and otherwise had made them indulge in examination malpractice; the same can be reconditioned to get them off the habit of indulging in examination malpractice. Students' results and performance will truly be said to be theirs when the environment in which they learn and write their examinations are serene and are not inducing them to indulge in any form of examination malpractice.

Okafor, (2021) researched on the causes and consequences of examination malpractice among senior secondary school students in Eti-Osa L.G.A of Lagos state, Nigeria They found that the major consequence of examination malpractice was that innocent students were deprived opportunities for admission into schools.

Akinrefon, Ikpah, Bamigbala and Adeniyi (2016) studied examination malpractice in Nigerian Universities: factor analysis definition. Among the findings was that indulgence in examination malpractice led to grave behaviour misconduct.

Petters and Okon (2014) carried out research on students' perception of causes and effects of examination malpractice in the educational system, the way forward for quality education. Its findings were that causes of examination malpractice ranged from preference of paper qualification, lack of positive self-concept, ineffective study, inadequate preparation for examinations and laziness. Its effect was that it discouraged hard work among students; undeserving students gain admission and reverse is the case for deserving students, underachievement at work and reduction of quality of education.

Fasasi (2008), worked on the topic "quality assurance; a practical solution to examination

malpractice in Nigerian secondary schools” The finding indicated that examination malpractice had negative consequences on students as well as the educational system.

Azuka, Alihu and Oyaziwo (2006) researched on secondary school students’ perception of examination malpractice and examination ethics. The finding of that study revealed that examination malpractice impacted negatively on students’ behaviour and value system.

METHODOLOGY

The research design employed for this study was the survey research design. Survey is appropriate for this study because it sought and gathered a large volume of data from a large population using a small representative sample. Survey research design has evolved over the years as a method of conducting research that are non-experimental in nature. Being descriptive in nature, it tried to describe the distribution, frequency and incidence of the characteristics of a chosen sample, study population and the target population. The subjects were selected using a variety of probability sampling (McMillan, 2000; Araoye, 2003; Anikweze & Danladi, 2023).

All the secondary school students in North-central Nigeria were used. It comprised six states and the FCT. The states were: Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau and the Federal capital territory (FCT). The population of secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria was 574,782. The target population is students in senior secondary school. They have experienced a great deal of students’ life as far as life in secondary school is concerned. They have interacted with the system and one another enough to be able to state what is obtainable in their lives and schools.

Stratified sampling technique was employed. Stratified sampling was used for the selection of states, schools, school type (public or private) and for school location (urban and rural schools). Using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for determining sample size for research activities, a sample of 380 was derived as the appropriate sample size and used. Three states were sampled out of the six states and The Federal Capital Territory which made up North-Central Nigeria. The three states are Kogi, Nasarawa and Plateau. A total of 12 schools were sampled, four schools from each of the three states. For every state, data was collected in both urban and rural schools. Two schools in each urban setting of a state and two schools in each rural setting of the states were used. For every setting used, data was collected from one private school and one public school.

Impact of Examination Malpractice on Behaviour (IEMOB) questionnaire was used to carry out

the study. IEMOB questionnaire is an instrument designed by the researcher which elicited data from students about the impact of examination malpractice on their behaviour. It has sections A and B containing 13 items. Section A elicited data on demographic variables while section B elicited data on impact of examination malpractice on behaviour of students.

The reliability was derived using the Spearman-Brown formula. With the odd-even correlation of 0.6 substituted into the formula, the correlation coefficient of 0.75 was obtained indicating an internal consistency.

Questionnaire was administered to a class of SSII in the selected schools by the researchers after instructions on how to fill the questionnaire were given. The students filled the IEMOB questionnaire on their own, of their own accord. There was 95% retrieval of the questionnaires.

The data collected for this research was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Mean, standard deviation, t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used. The hypotheses were tested at a confidence level of 95%. The p-value was at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

How does examination malpractice impact the behaviour of secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria?

Table 1: Impact of Examination Malpractice on Behaviour of Secondary School Students in North-Central Nigeria
N = 380

S/N	Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
5	Students lose confidence in themselves	3.28	.91	Agree
6	Lack of moral values in students	3.16	.86	Agree
7	It makes for a feeling of inferiority complex	3.05	.88	Agree
8	Show of unseriousness in learning	3.23	.90	Agree
9	Students see cheating as a lifestyle	3.08	1.01	Agree
10	It makes students bully other students	2.91	1.00	Agree
11	Students doubt their competence	3.05	.94	Agree
12	It breeds laziness among students	3.27	.91	Agree
13	It discourages students who are hard working	3.13	.99	Agree
Sectional Mean		3.13	0.93	

Table 1 showed the mean score of impact of examination malpractice on behaviour of secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria. The sectional mean score of respondents for impact of examination malpractice on behaviour of students was 3.13 which depicted strong agreement that

examination malpractice had impact on students' behaviours. Students' loss of confidence in themselves ranked highest with a mean of 3.28; followed by it breeds laziness with a mean of 3.27. The lowest was it makes students bully other students with a mean of 2.9. The result showed that the negative impact of examination malpractice on behaviour of secondary school students was high.

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the impact of examination malpractice on behaviour of female and male secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria.

Table 2: t-test on the Difference in the Impact of Examination Malpractice on Behaviour of Female and Male Secondary School Students in North-Central Nigeria

Gender	Number	Mean	S. D	t-value	df	Sig(2-tailed)	Decision
Male	171	3.13	.55982	.004	378	.997	Accepted
Female	209	3.13	.60916				

The analysis in table 2 was carried out to test the difference in the impact of examination malpractice on behaviour of male and female secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria. With the significant value of 0.99 (greater than the 0.05 level of significance), the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the impact of examination malpractice on behaviour of male and female secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria was therefore accepted and concluded that male and female secondary school students did not differ significantly in the impact of examination malpractice in their behaviours.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the impact of examination malpractice on behaviour of private and public secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria.

Table 3: t-test on the Difference in the Impact of Examination Malpractice on Behaviour of Private and Public Secondary School Students in North-Central Nigeria

School	Number	Mean	S. D	t-value	df	Sig(2-tailed)	Decision
Public	190	3.18	.56580	1.624	378	.105	Accepted
Private	190	3.08	.60445				

The analysis in table 3 was carried out to test the difference in the impact of examination malpractice on behaviour of private and public secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria. With the significant value of 0.10 (greater than the 0.05 level of significance), the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the impact of examination malpractice on

behaviour of private and public secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria was therefore accepted and concluded that public and private secondary school students did not differ significantly on the impact of examination malpractice on behaviour of secondary school students.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the impact of examination malpractice on behaviour of urban and rural secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria

Table 4: t-test on the Difference in the Impact of Examination Malpractice on Behaviour of Urban and Rural Secondary School Students in North-Central Nigeria

Location	Number	Mean	S. D	t-value	df	Sig(2-tailed)	Decision
Urban	187	3.27	.55487	4.751	378	.000	Rejected
Rural	193	2.99	.58560				

The analysis in table 4 was carried out to test the difference in the impact of examination malpractice on behaviour of urban and rural secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria. With the value of 0.00 (less than the 0.05 level of significance), the hypothesis that there is no significant difference between urban and rural schools in the impact of examination malpractice on behaviour of students in secondary schools in North-Central Nigeria was therefore rejected and concluded that urban and rural secondary school students differ significantly in the impact of examination malpractice on their behaviour.

H₀₄: There is no significant difference in the impact of examination malpractice on behaviour of secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria on the basis of state.

Table 5: ANOVA for the Difference in the Impact of Examination Malpractice on Behavior of Secondary School Students in North-Central Nigeria based on State

School States	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	2.148	2	1.074	3.156	.044	Rejected
Within Groups	128.312	377	.340			
Total	130.461	379				

The analysis in table 5 was carried out to test the difference in the impact of examination malpractice on behaviour of secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria on the basis of state. With a value of 0.044 (less than the 0.05 level of significance), the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the impact of examination malpractice on behaviour of secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria based on state was therefore rejected and concluded that

states differ significantly in the impact of examination malpractice on behaviour of secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria.

DISCUSSION

This study found that examination malpractice impacted negatively on behaviour of secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria, no significant difference was found in the impact of examination malpractice on the behaviour of male and female secondary school students, no significant difference was found between the impact of examination malpractice on the behaviour of private and public secondary school students but there was a significant difference found between the impact of examination malpractice on behaviour of rural and urban secondary school students. Further, the study found that the states differ significantly in the impact of examination malpractice on behaviour of secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria. It impacted negatively on them as the mean score showed that the students agreed in strong terms to the negative impact of examination malpractice on their behaviour. The highest impact was on the loss of self-confidence, followed by it breeds laziness, unseriousness, loss of moral values and discouraged hard work among students. There is a general loss of interest in school and school related activities. They do not show much tenacity to academic work; this is worsened by loss of self-confidence. A downward behaviour and academic achievement become inevitable.

The findings are in congruence with that of Petters and Okon (2014) who carried out research on students' perception of causes and effects of examination malpractice in the educational system, the way forward for quality education. They found that examination malpractice impacted negatively on the behaviour of students affecting lack of positive self-concept, breeds laziness, discourages hard work and made effective study difficult among other things that they found which the scope of this study did not cover. The findings also agreed with the findings of Petter and Okon (2014) that students do not want to study or do not prepare adequately for examinations but want to pass their examinations.

This finding is also in agreement with that of Okafor (2021), Azuka and Oyaziwo (2006), both found that examination malpractice impacted negatively on the behaviour of students. The finding of this study is also in concord with that of Akinrefon, Ikpah, Bamigbala and Adeniyi (2016). They studied examination malpractice in Nigerian Universities: factor analysis definition. Their finding

also established that examination malpractice had grave impact on students' behaviour.

This behaviour patterns do not have anything positive to contribute to a student's life. It means that a lot needs to be done to get the right behaviour inculcated into students' lives. Otherwise, it might lead to more grave behaviour trajectory if it continues unchecked. Thus, the fabrics of integrity, virtue and good character is weakened stealthily and steadily.

This concern should be pursued vigorously as it impedes on quality of education got by students and the general output in education and invariably the nation. The issues at stake here are quality education, personal development for academic growth and development as well as good behaviour for quality living and academic achievement.

CONCLUSION

From the findings of the study, great damage has been done to students' behaviour as regards examinations but there are ways to redeem it, especially through proactive value orientation and communication of the grave impact of examination malpractice on students' behaviour.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The negative impacts of examination malpractice should be communicated to students to help them desist from the act of examination malpractice. There should be constant value orientation for students on quality, character building especially on integrity.

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