

# Examination Malpractice and Control in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State, Nigeria: Implications for the Counsellor

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## Abstract

This study set out to investigate examination malpractice and control among secondary school students in Anambra state, Nigeria. One thousand, five hundred (1,500) respondents were drawn from the population of staff and students using a multi-stage sampling procedure. Three research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. A 36 item structured questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. Data were analysed using mean and 't' test statistics. The result shows that both teachers and students have knowledge of what examination malpractice is all about and possible ways of curbing it. Counsellors should internalize the results of this study and use them meaningfully for counselling on issues related to examination malpractice

**Key words:** Examination, Malpractice, Control, Secondary School

## Introduction

Examination is the process of assessing learning outcomes. Through this means, teachers evaluate the extent to which the students have followed and understood learning experiences to which they have been exposed. Examination malpractice refers to actions and behaviours that negate the orderly conduct and procedures of examination and gives a candidate undue advantage over others. Such actions include getting advance information of examination questions before the examination, cheating to get undeserved grades or smuggling pre-prepared answer into the examination hall or collaborating with others during the examination. Damen and Datong (2006) define examination malpractice as taking undue and unfair advantage to pass an examination by circumventing laid down procedures. Lukden (2006) sees it as unethical practices performed before the examination date, during the conduct of the examination or after the examination for any purpose to the aid of the beneficiary. In some of our secondary schools today, rich students pay their brilliant counterparts for undeserved assistance during examinations. Some buy question papers with their bodies if they are female and beautiful while others buy with money if they are rich and ambitious. The sellers could be Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB)/West African Examination Council (WAEC)/National Examinations Council (NECO) officials and their examination supervisors or teachers and typists who type the questions, in case of internal examinations (Ekpu, 2008).

Examination malpractices in all its various forms, have become the cankerworm of Nigeria educational system. Students do all sorts of things to get undeserved scores. In some cases, the female students seduce their teachers while the males use money or threat. To these groups, what is important is to pass the examination by whatever means. A former minister of education, Mrs. Oby Ezekwesili pointed out that examination malpractice is a major problem in both internal and external examinations. She remarked that each year, post-primary exit examination bodies in Nigeria cancel hundreds of thousands of result on account of examination malpractice and billions of Naira are wasted (Vanguard, 2008). It is no longer news on the pages of newspapers because hardly any external examination is written with out cancellation of results by WAEC, NECO or JAMB due to examination malpractice. A number of researchers (Longdet and Manguwat, 2006 and Mgbodile 2010) have written on this to show the burden of this evil in many hearts. The present study is to build on the works of previous researchers because the problem is yet to be solved.

The incidence of examination malpractice has been blamed on lack of seriousness of students in their studies, poor teaching and learning, poor invigilation and over-emphasis placed on paper qualification by employers of labour (Mgbodile, 2006). Some other observers point to indiscriminate teachers' strikes. According to these observers, each time the schools are forcibly closed down, course work is condensed and students become panicky and start to explore other means to pass their examinations (Igbinovia, 2005).

It is known that the government of Nigeria and Anambra state in particular have instituted a number of measures to curb this menace. Among others are panels to probe those involved. Those found guilty were often dismissed and sometimes legal actions are taken against them. There is a legal provision of 21 years imprisonment for offenders, but it has become clear that all these measures have not deterred the students and all other culprits and collaborators from engaging in their unholy practices (Ekpu, 2008). Similarly, the national examination bodies (WAEC, NECO and JAMB) have meted out punishment to candidates and centres in an

effort to control this evil. There is the use of identity cards to ensure that the person writing the examination is the person registered. In addition, there is appearance of passports on certificates (Chukwu, 2008). Regardless of what the institutions are doing, students are becoming more sophisticated in perfecting the act of cheating (Ekere, 2009). Evidence of examination malpractice still manifest in our secondary schools in Anambra State.

The broad purpose of this study is to identify and establish ways of controlling examination malpractice in our secondary schools and the implications for the guidance counsellor. Examination malpractice make nonsense of educational qualifications and discredit examination bodies and the nation as a whole.

### Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was to establish factors causing examination malpractice in Anambra State of Nigeria and measures to put it under control.

### Research Questions

1. What behaviours of students in examination constitute examination malpractice?
2. What are the factors responsible for examination malpractice in secondary schools?
3. What measures are capable of controlling examination malpractice among students in secondary schools?

### Hypothesis

One hypothesis guided the study and will be tested at 0.05 level of significance

**Ho:** There is no significant difference in the mean rating of teachers and students on measures capable of controlling examination malpractice.

### Research Method

Survey research design was adopted for the study. Osuala (2001) stated that when a study centres on individuals and their opinions, belief, attitude, motivation, behaviour, the survey research is most appropriate. The area of study was Anambra state of Nigeria. The population comprised all teachers of senior secondary classes and all SS2 students. The sample was 1,500 respondents consisting of 300 teachers and 1,200 SS2 students drawn through a multi-stage sampling procedure with each stage resting on simple random sampling technique. Questionnaire was used for collecting data. The questionnaire had two sections. Section one is on demographic variables while section two required the respondents to respond to items relevant to the research questions raised in the study. A four point response scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1) was adopted. The face validity of the instrument was determined by giving the draft copies of the instrument to 3 experts, one each of Measurement and Evaluation, Educational Planning & Administration and Guidance & Counselling in the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The reliability of the instrument was determined in a preliminary survey of the instrument in a trial testing among teachers and students in Enugu State. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of the clusters. The average was 0.76. Copies of the instrument were distributed to the respondents with the aid of 5 research assistants. Mean was used for analyzing the data to answer the research questions. Acceptance point of the item was 2.50 and above. t-test statistics tested the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

### Results

**RQ1:** What behaviours of students in examination constitute examination malpractice?

**Table 1:** Mean ratings of students and teachers on behaviours constituting exam malpractice

S/N	Items	XG	SD	Remarks
1	Paying supervisors/invigilators to get undeserved help	3.94	0.79	Accepted
2	Smuggling in prepared answers	3.54	0.18	Accepted
3	Copying in the exam hall	3.55	0.11	Accepted
4	Body writing (cotton)	3.64	0.21	Accepted
5	Using Casio calculators/handsets to transmit answers to the candidate	3.68	0.52	Accepted
6	Writing on clothes, under skirts, handkerchiefs in use in the examination hall.	3.56	0.21	Accepted
7	Straining necks to copy from other candidates (giraffe)	3.04	0.56	Accepted
8	Hiring someone to write an exam (impersonation).	3.96	0.12	Accepted
9	Talking in the exam hall	2.64	0.97	Accepted
10	Collusion among candidates	3.00	1.08	Accepted
11	Smuggling in text book.	3.85	0.32	Accepted
12	Assault	3.98	0.02	Accepted

Table 1 shows that the mean ratings of staff and students in Anambra secondary schools ranged from 2.64 – 3.98. This shows that all the means are above the cut off point of 2.50 indicating that the respondents accepted that all the items are behaviours that constitute exam malpractice. The standard deviation of each item from the mean ranged from 0.02 – 1.08, showing that the respondents were not too far from the mean and from one another in their responses. This gives further credence to the validity of the mean

**RQ2:** What are the factors responsible for examination malpractice in our secondary schools?

**Table 2:** Mean ratings of students and teachers on factors responsible for examination malpractice in our secondary schools

S/N	Items	XG	SD	Remarks
1	Lack of seriousness on the part of students in their studies	2.96	1.05	Accepted
2	Some parents pay supervisors/invigilators for undeserved help of their wards.	3.02	0.56	Accepted
3	Recruitment of unqualified teachers by the government.	3.21	0.16	Accepted
4	Lack of seriousness on the part of some teachers in their work	3.56	0.18	Accepted
5	Poor teaching	2.84	0.96	Accepted
6	Teachers' strike	2.65	1.01	Accepted
7	Students' riot	2.72	1.06	Accepted
8	Poor invigilation during examination	3.02	0.56	Accepted
9	Overemphasis on paper qualification by employers	3.88	0.21	Accepted
10	Peer influence	3.24	0.12	Accepted
11	Inadequate examination hall	2.92	0.15	Accepted
12	Inadequate equipment in schools	2.68	0.55	Accepted

Table 2 shows that the mean responses of staff and students in Anambra state secondary schools ranged from 2.65 – 3.88. This also shows that all the means are above the cut off point of 2.50, indicating that the respondents accepted that all the items are factors causing examination malpractice in the state. The standard deviation of each item from the mean ranged from 0.12 – 1.06 showing that the respondents were not too far from the mean and from one another in their responses, adding further validity to the mean.

**Research Question 3 and Hypothesis:**

There is no significant difference in the mean rating of teachers and students on measures that can control exam malpractice among students in secondary schools.

Table 3 reveals that the mean ratings of measures capable of controlling examination malpractice ranged from 2.88 – 3.96. This indicates that all the means are above the cut off point of 2.50, showing that the respondents accepted that all the items are measures capable of controlling examination malpractice in our secondary schools. The SD of each item from the mean ranged from 0.16 – 1.55 indicating that the respondents were not too far from the mean and from one another in their responses, adding further validity to the mean.

The t-cal is less than t-table of 1.06 for the 12 items. At  $P < .05$ , the hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean rating of teachers and students on measure capable of controlling examination malpractice are accepted for all the twelve items.

**Discussion**

The findings of this study in table 1 established 12 behaviours of students in examination that constitute examination malpractice. This include assault of invigilators or security agents, hiring of someone to write an examination, collusion among candidates, writing on clothes, undershirts and use of calculators/handsets to transmit answers to candidates. This is consistent with the findings of Igbinovia (2005) and Mgbodile (2006) who classified exam malpractice to include among others those listed above.

The findings of table 2 established twelve factors causing examination malpractice in our secondary schools. This includes over emphasis on paper qualification by employers of labour, peer influence, recruitment of unqualified teachers, poor teaching, lack of seriousness on the part of students in their studies, sponsorship of exam malpractice by some parents, teachers strikes and students riots. The finding above agrees with Ekpu (2008) and Igbinovia (2005). Ekpu maintains that insistence on paper qualification by employers of labour makes examination a do or die affair. Igbunovia pointed out that strikes and students' riots lead to crash programmed and cause students to explore means like exam malpractice to pass their exams.

The findings in table 3 identified 12 ways of controlling examination malpractice. The findings include less emphasis on paper qualification, adequate equipment of schools, recruitment of qualified teachers, functional counselling, expulsion of erring students and instituting legal action on the culprits. Again, the

findings are consistent with Mgbodile (2006) and Ekpu (2008). The best secondary schools in Nigeria by WAEC results are federal government colleges and university secondary schools. They are also the least involved in examination malpractice. This is mainly because of proper equipment and adequate staffing. Employers of labour in Nigeria should adopt the styles of developed countries in the employment of labour by giving more emphasis on performance than paper qualifications.

**Table 3:** *Mean ratings and t-test analysis of teachers and students on measures capable of controlling exam malpractice among students in secondary schools.*

S/N	Items	XG	SD	t-cal	t-tab	Remarks	N=1,500 HO
1	Less emphasis on paper qualification in favour of actual performance.	3.96	0.21	0.74	1.96	Accepted	NS
2	Adequate equipment of schools	3.05	0.56	0.44	1.96	Accepted	NS
3	Insisting on recruitment of qualified teachers	3.55	0.28	0.35	1.96	Accepted	NS
4	Paying teachers adequately	3.64	0.21	0.58	1.96	Accepted	NS
5	Good coverage of school syllabus	3.02	1.05	0.29	1.96	Accepted	NS
6	Placing students suitably in accordance with their potential	3.85	0.22	0.26	1.96	Accepted	NS
7	Functional counselling services in secondary schools.	3.66	1.06	0.55	1.96	Accepted	NS
8	Expulsion of erring students as lessons to others.	3.24	1.55	0.45	1.96	Accepted	NS
9	Legal action against erring teachers and students as stipulated in the law.	3.55	1.25	0.89	1.96	Accepted	NS
10	Value reorientation of the society.	2.88	0.16	0.86	1.96	Accepted	NS
11	Reducing strikes through improved school administration	2.96	1.12	0.66	1.96	Accepted	NS
12	Involving parents in seminars and workshops on exam malpractice and its consequences.	3.25	0.54	0.88	1.96	Accepted	NS

### Counselling Implications

This study revealed that both teachers and their students have knowledge of what exam malpractice is all about. They are aware of the causes and measures that can be applied to control them. Counsellors should internalize the results of this study and put great emphasis on the consequences of examination malpractice to the individuals and the society as they counsel students against malpractice. Counsellors should also intensify their educational counselling especially in the areas of placement, study habits, use of learning strengths and recall techniques, self-confidence boosting, desensitization of examination fears and related issues.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study:

1. Employers of labour are advised to integrate practical performance with paper qualifications in their considerations for appointment.
2. Only qualified teachers who will be well remunerated should be appointed in secondary schools.
3. Functional counselling services must be maintained for proper placement and educational counselling of students.

### Conclusion

This paper defined examination and examination malpractice. The paper identified examination malpractice as a catastrophe in Nigerian education system. It explored various ways of controlling it, one of which was that employers of labour should deemphasize paper qualification and emphasize more of performance. Counselors were advised to internalize the findings and use them meaningfully on issues bordering on examination malpractice.

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