

## DETERMINANTS OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ABOH MBAISE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF IMO STATE.

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### ABSTRACT

*The study investigated the determinants of examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Aboh Mbaise Local Government Area of Imo State. Three research questions were formulated to guide the study. The research design used in the study was the survey research design. The population of the study consisted of all the public secondary school students in the local government area (2,830) while the sample for the study consisted of four hundred and eighty-two (482) drawn through cluster sampling procedure. Self-structured questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection and the research questions were answered using mean. Results of findings revealed that Moral laxity, lack of facilities and undue pressure from parent were determinants of examination malpractice among students from the area. Based on these findings, it was recommended that Government and communities should collaboratively provide facilities for schools to ensure that teaching and learning is not only interesting but effective.*

**Keywords:** Determinants, Examination malpractice, Public secondary schools, Aboh Mbaise

### INTRODUCTION

An examination is a set of tasks designed to test the knowledge or ability of a person. The set of tasks may be oral, written or practical. Examinations are oral when the answers are spoken; practical when persons involved are expected to carry out some physical tasks, and written when they are expected to write the answers or responds to questions or tasks on paper (Omieibi-Davids, 2017). In other words, examination could be defined as the assessment of an examinees level of achievement or performance when confronted with a series of questions, problems or tasks. It could also be seen within the content of ascertaining the amount of knowledge the examinee has acquired, the extent to which he is able to utilize it or the quality and effectiveness of the skills developed (Nwogu 2019). In relation to the Nigeria context, Examination system is so certificate oriented that what goes into the training process is overlooked (Igolima 2020). Hence the emphasis of the student has shifted from a thorough preparation for examinations but to them is how examination paper can be procured before examination hall in possession of materials to be illegally used. Our educational system is fast

experiencing depreciating standards as a result of the incidents of examination malpractices, which has attracted national attention. It is imperative to note that the first examination malpractice in Nigeria was first reported in 1914 when the senior Cambridge local examination leaked (Maduka 2016; Sorgwe, 1997). Consequently, the West African Examination council (WAEC) experienced the first examination malpractices in 1963; this trend has subsisted till date. As rightly observed, the causes of examination malpractice in secondary schools in Imo State include overcrowded examination halls, time table problems, shortage of examination materials, shortage of invigilators, poor student identification and poor security and the massive scale of the leakage of examination question papers. This eventually leads to the cancellation of entire results or the postponement of the examination in issue.

In Imo State, examination malpractices have not only become common features in secondary schools rather assumed a wider dimension which ranges from obtaining question papers from supervisors and invigilators before they are being shared in the examination hall and employment of examination machineries usually students of institutions of higher learning and even teachers of those schools in which the examinations are being written. Examination malpractices have maimed the ability of students to identify and develop their potentials, it has eroded students' confidence and dependence on hard work as a means of success.

The trend of examination malpractice in secondary schools in Aboh Mbaise Local Government Area of Imo State has often contributed to the falling standard of education. In Nigeria generally, more emphasis is laid on paper qualification rather than acquired knowledge owing to the important role it plays in employment and attainment of a higher socio-economic status quo. Pursuant to these educational decorations, there have been many fraudulent practices such as examination malpractices (Igolima, 2020). Consequently, these examination malpractices have taken the highest position in secondary schools. The solution can only come about when the entire society shows a high degree of honesty, integrity, discipline and uprightness. Some people are condoning, hiding and supporting examination fraud. We should oppose it, expose it and prosecute offenders. Imo State and Nigeria at large need a pragmatic and effective implementation of legislation on examination malpractices to curtail its prevalence.

Students regard rigorous academic work as a thing of the past and really unnecessary punishment. However, the implications of this orientation have been very negative to the educational system. Most of these examination cheats turn out to be dropouts' gangsters and criminals, thereby, becoming a menace to the society generally. It is also pathetic that parents, teachers, supervisors and invigilators aid and abate these fraudulent practices that menace the educational system. It is imperative to note that if this trend is not curbed, it would not only be against the interest of the present generation, who stand the risk of being subjected to distorted values. In other words, the students could be liabilities rather than assets to the society, which may be contributory to moral decadence and developmental inadequacies. It is against these problems that this research was carried out to investigate the causes of examination malpractice in secondary schools in Aboh Mbaise Local Government Area in Imo State. This study investigated the determinants of examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Aboh

Mbaise Local Government Area of Imo State and its implications on academic standards. This study addressed the following research objectives;

1. How moral laxity cause examination malpractice in Aboh Mbaise Local Government Area of Imo State.
2. Find out how lack of adequate school facilities cause examination malpractice in Aboh Mbaise Local Government Area of Imo State.
3. Find out how pressure of parents on the wards cause examination in Aboh Mbaise Local Government Area of Imo State.

### **Research Questions/Hypotheses**

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study;

1. How does moral laxity in the society cause examination malpractice in Aboh Mbaise Local Government Area of Imo State?
2. How does lack of adequate school facilities cause examination malpractice in Aboh Mbaise Local Government Area of Imo State?
3. How does parental pressure on their wards cause examination malpractice Aboh Mbaise Local Government Area of Imo State?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Concept of Examination**

An examination is a set of task designed to test the knowledge or ability of a person. The set of tasks can be oral, written or practical. Examinations are oral when the answers are spoken, practical when persons involved are expected to carry out some physical tasks and written when they are expected to write the answers or responses to questions or tasks on paper. Examination could be defined as the assessment of an examinee's level of achievement or performance when confronted with a series of questions, problems or tasks. It could also be seen within the context of ascertaining the amount of knowledge the examined has acquired, the extent to which he is able to utilize it or the quality and effectiveness of the skills developed (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1962). According to Okoye (2020) examination is an organized assessment technique which presents the individual with a series of questions or tasks geared towards asserting the individual's acquired skills and knowledge content and ability to utilize this knowledge and required skills effectively. Ojerinde in examination Ethics Handbook enunciated that "examination can be defined as a formal test of somebody's knowledge, skills or ability in a particular subject especially by means of written questions or practical exercises." In other words, examinations can be perceived in a broader sense as an assessment of students to ascertain to what extent they have benefited from the teachings of their teachers in a given subject. Also Akaninwor (2018) writes "examinations are primarily administered in order to ascertain the level of knowledge of the students about what they are taught".

Examinations can be broadly divided into two: Internal examinations and External examinations or public examinations. While internal examination are wholly the responsibility of a school for the purpose of promotion to the next class, external or public examinations are conducted by the examining bodies established for that purpose for the certification of students. Some of the external or public examinations conducted in Nigeria are:

- National common entrance examinations conducted by National Board for Educational Measurement or State common entrance examination conducted by Ministries of Education for the Primary school;
- Junior Secondary Certificate (JSS3) examination conducted by State Ministries of Education;
- General Certificate of Examination (GCE) and Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) conducted by the WASC and the National Examination Council (NECO).
- Matriculation Examinations for the Universities, Polytechnics and colleges of education conducted by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB).
- Certificate Examinations, conducted by the National Business and Technical Examination Board (NABTEB) including the Advanced National Technical Certificate (ANTC).

The importance of such examinations in any education process cannot be over emphasized. It is an important mechanism used to determine whether the educational system is achieving the intended objectives.

### **Concept of Examination Malpractice**

The prefix "MAL" is derived from a Latin abbreviation meaning bad. Examination malpractice therefore literarily means bad practice applied in an examination in order to make the examination earn an unmerited grade. It may be defined as an illegal act by the examinee or examiner or his agents before, during or after the examination with the intent to make the examinee have an undue advantage or earn an unmerited grade (Asuru, 2015, 2020). Examination malpractice is an evil or improper practice applied by examinees in order to be declared successful in the examination. Onyechere (2019) stated that examination malpractice is any action done or omitted which makes it impossible to use an examination in determining the level of competence of a candidate in absorbing, reducing and where appropriate, applying knowledge. The definition has proved that examination malpractice makes ineffective, the only parameter used in measuring and validating learning, which affects the validity and reliability of testing. Igwe (2018) described examination malpractice as "cheating in examination or any act intended to benefit or give undue advantage to oneself or by deceit or fraud, before, during and after an examination.

Therefore, for proper conduct of candidates in any examination there should be rules governing candidates' behaviour, before and during the examination. These rules are usually jettisoned, when candidates are involved in examination cheating. In agreement with this definition, Alhed opined that any act of wrong during or neglect that contravenes the rules of acceptable practice before, during and after an examination by anybody in any way is tantamount to malpractice. Similarly, Shonekan maintained that "malpractice is irregularity which are premeditated and perpetuated by candidates or their agents with the intention of gaining undue advantage in the examination" for any examination to be classified as just and fair, the rules must be strictly adhered to by all examinees. Today, examination malpractice has become sophisticated, complex and multidimensional with its ever-increasing perpetrators daily devising new methods. It has assumed an alarming and embarrassing dimension, eating fast and deep into the body fabric of our educational system.

### **Determinants of Examination Malpractice**

Examinations provoke some anxiety in examinees. This is part of the threat syndrome associated with evaluation. The extent direction or nature of the anxiety varies from one individual to another and also depends on the examination question. Public examinations mostly pose the highest anxiety to students. The Nigerian society has been aptly described as a nation of paradoxes, climax and anticlimax (Wokocha, 2015). To some citizens, morality, honesty, patience, hard work societal ethics, integrity and the totality of virtue are true to the dogs. The school is a microcosm or a mirror of the larger Nigerian society. Examination malpractice is a reflection of the degenerating moral bankruptcy in our society a form of social protest and a manifestation of a warped national psyche. As Ditimiya (1999) observed, the root causes of this unholy act have been necessitated by government too much reliance on paper qualification, corruption by members of examination bodies and finally lazy students who are not prepared to 'work hard, but only depend on almighty "expo" to achieve their aims and objectives.

In addition our education is certificate and examination driven instead of being for the acquisition of real knowledge for Nigeria development. Consequently, Liman (1996) asserted that "corruption and lack of seriousness could play a significant role in bringing about behaviour tantamount to malpractice during and after examination. He blamed it on the quest for materialism and the "get quick syndrome" in the society which has weakened the Moral and leg forces. Candidates want to pass their examinations with little or no effort. They embark on measures to subvert the laid down rules and regulations. In support, Udokwu (2019) asserts that the causes of examination malpractice are as a result of "inadequate provision of educational facilities like classroom furniture, science laboratory equipment, as well as under staffing of educational institutions". This view is quite incisive, because on a visit to any of our educational institutions, at all levels, these problems are noticeable. For instance, a classroom meant for only forty students for appropriate spacing during examination, ends up with over a hundred candidates. This situation incapacitates the invigilator in effectively controlling cheating. Also, most schools have turned into "examination centres" where they register more

candidates for external examinations, more than required. This issue is made clearer by Onyechere (2019) who observed that continuous assessment scores are forged for external candidates who are not bonafide school candidates. Some times more candidates than available facilities can accommodate are registered and in centres which are usually located in areas of difficult terrain regarded as safe havens for examination malpractice.

Parents and guardians in no small way aid and abet examination malpractices. According to Obagah (2016), parents play a greater part in helping students to cheat. This include personally writing the examinations for them, hiring mercenaries, buying examination question papers for them and examination officials so that original scores could be converted to much higher scores. It is unfortunate that parents who are expected to teach their children the parts of honour, honesty and hard work have debased their time honoured role and chosen the part of shame and irresponsibility. This is not spurring as it is the same parents and older members of society who indulge in corner cutting, electoral fraud, financial crimes, politically motivated killing, maiming, murder and cultism. In addition to the above role of parents in examination malpractice, some parents or guardians compel their children and wards to study certain subjects which they do not have the ability, aptitude and interest. Others go into such subjects because of the premium placed on them by society, or because of peer group influence etc. such subjects as physics, biology, chemistry, mathematics, and English language attract more attention from parents or guardians. This creates anxiety and stress on the students. So in a bid to satisfy parental expectations, they resort to examination malpractice in order to pass and get on with the programmes parents intends them to study.

In addition to this ugly situation, some private schools where teachers' promotions are tied to the performance of their students in public examinations, individual teachers take it as a point of duty to aid their students so that they will come out in flying colours in such examinations. Also, some private schools in a bid to remain top in the locality and present the school as very sound academically and thus attract more students officially aid and abet examination malpractice.

Another factor identified as been responsible for the high rate of examination malpractice is the nonchalant attitude of teachers. The problem of teachers in our public institutions as observed by Oko and Adie (2016) is not much of a problem of their academic qualification, but more of a problem of poor attitude and low morale. He explained further that over the years, because of the low placement of teachers in the pecking order as a result of the new societal emphasis on money, their attitude to work and morale have seriously dwindled. Most of them feel rejected, rejected and suffer from inferiority complex, even in the midst of their students. This negatively affected the teaching profession as it was erroneously regarded as one for charlatans, the poor and unfortunate members of the society.



## **Implications of Examination Malpractice on Academic Standard**

The implications of examination malpractice will be discussed under implications for educational practice (for the school and learning in the classroom) and implication for the individual and the larger society.

### **For the school and learning in the classroom**

- Contributes to the falling standard of Education
- Discrediting of Certificates from Nigeria
- Distortions in Assessment by the Teacher
- Teacher Absenteeism and Nonchalant Attitude
- Lack of Respect for Teachers
- Psychological Marginalization
- Reduction in Regular School Attendance

### **For the Individual and the Larger Society**

- Degeneration in Moral Standards
- Increase on Examination Mercenaries
- Wastages
- Low Productivity and under Development

## **Theoretical Framework**

**Deterrence Theory:** This theory was propounded by Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham in 1764. The theory argues that individuals are less likely to engage in deviant or criminal behavior when the costs (i.e., punishments) outweigh the benefits. Deterrence theory emphasized that crime prevention could be achieved through appropriate punishment. In the context of examination malpractice, this theory supports the idea that students and staff are less likely to engage in dishonest practices if they know that severe and certain punishments (such as expulsion, suspension, or legal action) will follow. By enhancing the enforcement of penalties and creating awareness of the consequences, examination malpractice can be reduced. In other words, by integrating Deterrence Theory, this study can better analyze how well-designed examination policies and clear consequences could prevent malpractice, ultimately supporting the development of a strategy that leverages the certainty, swiftness, and severity of consequences to maintain examination integrity in tertiary institutions.

Complimenting the above theory, Robert K. Merton's (1938) Strain Theory provided a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing examination malpractice. The theory highlights how societal expectations create strain, leading individuals to resort to

unethical behaviors when conventional methods fail. Strain Theory posits that individuals may resort to deviant behaviors, such as examination malpractice, when they face significant pressure to achieve societal goals but lack legitimate means to do so. This insight helps explain why students may cheat under intense academic pressure and a perceived lack of effective means to succeed, guiding the development of targeted interventions to alleviate these pressures and improve the educational system.

### **Empirical Studies**

Keter (2021) studied on policy related strategies to curb examination malpractices among undergraduate students in Kenyan Universities. The sample size comprised of 450 participants (Lecturers, Dean of students affairs, Heads of Departments, Examination Officers and undergraduate students from the selected universities in Kenya). Mixed methods design was employed and data was collected using questionnaires, interview schedules, focused group discussions and document analysis. Data was analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative statistics and results interpreted using frequencies, standard deviations, means and percentages. The findings of the study revealed that policies related to examination malpractices among undergraduate students include; overcrowded examination rooms, low lecturer/student ratio and lack of proper students' records make students to lie. The study thereby recommended that universities should adopt good policies that can curb examination malpractices.

Oguche, Ahmadu and Usman (2023) study on forms, factors, consequences and control of examination malpractices among Senior Secondary School Students in Kogi State: An implication for Guidance was conducted using a descriptive research design. The population of the study comprised of 2,573 Senior Secondary School students spread across the six educational zone of Kogi State from which sample of 257 students was selected through a multi-stage sampling procedure. The questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection while percentages, frequency counts and mean were used to analyze data to answer research questions while t-test was employed in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that leakage of question paper, inadequate exams preparation, poor examination management and sex for mark among others are the major forms of examination malpractices among secondary school students; about major factors responsible for examination malpractices, student's quests for certificate instead of knowledge was found; on control measures of examination malpractices, general change in societal value system and prohibition of cell phones in the examination hall were revealed. The study concluded that the menace of examination malpractices among students can be addressed.

Ayodele (2023) investigated the effective strategies for curbing examination malpractice before, during and after examination in public secondary school in Delta State. Descriptive survey research design was adopted on a population of 465 principals. The questionnaire was used to collect data which were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The findings of the study revealed that the effective strategies to curb with the examination malpractice include: appropriate allocation of examination invigilators, corruption within the school and lack of



strict penalties for malpractice. The study recommended that all levels of education should be involved in getting to the root of examination malpractice in the country.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted survey design as it aimed at collecting and analyzing the views, opinions and feelings of students on the subject matter of examination malpractice. The relevance of this design is its clarity and brevity in dealing with the subject matter of the study. This study was conducted in public secondary schools in Aboh Mbaire LGA, Imo State. The population of this study consisted of two thousand, eight hundred and thirty (2,830) senior secondary school three (SS3) students. Cluster sampling procedure was adopted and a sample of four hundred and eighty two (482) students was selected. The instrument for data collection was the “Examination Malpractice in Public Secondary Schools Questionnaire (EMPSSQ)” The questionnaire has three parts. Part A dealt with the Bio data of respondents while part B dealt with introduction of the objective or purpose of the questionnaire. The instrument was validated by 2 research experts from Educational Measurement and Evaluation in Imo State University, Owerri while the test re-test method was used in determining the reliability of the instrument which gave a reliability coefficient of 0.78 that confirmed the instrument reliable for the study. The instrument was administered by the researcher with the help of trained research assistants to ensure their optimal performance. The research questions were answered using mean (X) and a four point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (4 points), Agree (3 points), Disagree (2 points) and Strongly Disagree (1 point). The mean of these responses were set on 2.5. therefore, any item whose mean (X) response is up to or greater than 2.5 is accepted while any item with mean (X) response less than 3 is rejected.

## RESULTS

**Research Question One:** How does moral laxity in the society cause examination malpractice in Aboh Mbaire Local Government Area of Imo State?

**Table 1: Moral Laxity and Examination Malpractice**

S/N	Items	Mean (X)	SD	Critical Mean	Result Accepted
1.	Examination malpractice is against the rules and regulations of examination.	3.85	0.61	2.5	Accepted
2.	Examination malpractice is a violation of morality	2.61	0.39	2.5	Accepted
3.	Examination malpractice negates the law of natural justice	3.74	0.53	2.5	Accepted

4.	Examination malpractice is an offshoot of the moral decadence and general discipline prevalent in the society.	2.93	0.45	2.5	Accepted
5.	Examination malpractice supports the maxim that the end justified the means.	2.93	0.45	2.5	Accepted
6.	Those who engage in examination malpractice throw honesty and integrity to the wind.	3.54	0.51	2.5	Accepted

From table 1 above, the six items were accepted indicating that moral laxity in the society influence examination malpractice among students in Aboh Mbaize Local Government Area of Imo State. However, item seven was rejected as one of the moral problems that influence examination malpractice in the area.

**Research Question Two:** How does lack of adequate school facilities cause examination malpractice in Aboh Mbaize Local Government Area of Imo State?

**Table 2: Lack of facilities and Examination Malpractice**

S/N	Items	Mean (X)	SD	Critical Mean	Result Accepted
7.	In most secondary schools, there are no equipped laboratories	3.53	0.36	2.5	Accepted
8.	Classrooms are generally compacted, sturdy and poorly ventilated making it difficult for effective learning to take place.	3.92	0.72	2.5	Accepted
9.	There are no equipped libraries in secondary schools.	2.83	0.43	2.5	Accepted
10.	Public conveniences one not provided for students.	2.89	0.32	2.5	Accepted
11.	Most secondary schools are not equipped with desk encourages examination malpractice.	2.89	0.32	2.5	Accepted
12.	Most secondary schools are housed by dilapidated buildings	3.42	0.58	2.5	Accepted

Table 2 above, indicated that all the factors listed were all accepted. The item with highest mean was item eight which have a mean of 3.92. This is an indication the lack of facilities in public secondary schools in Imo State is responsible for the high rate of examination malpractice noticed during internal and external examinations in the area.

**Research Questions Three:** How does parental pressure on their wards cause examination malpractice Aboh Mbaire Local Government Area of Imo State

**Table 3: Pressure from Parents and Examination Malpractice.**

S/N	Items	Mean (X)	SD	Critical Mean	Result Accepted
13.	Undue pressure from parents on their children is responsible for examination malpractice.	2.82	0.14	2.5	Accepted
14.	Examination malpractice results from parents forcing their children to choose subjects which they don't have interest in	3.73	0.31	2.5	Accepted
15.	Parent's inability to provide learning materials for their children results in examination malpractice.	3.52	0.43	2.5	Accepted
16.	Parent's high expectation of thee academic ability of their children results on examination malpractice.	3.92	0.85	2.5	Accepted
17.	Parent's inability to provide conducive environment for effective learning at home.	2.72	0.22	2.5	Accepted
18.	Parent's laissez-faire attitude to the education of their children is also responsible for examination malpractice.	2.53	0.12	2.5	Accepted
19.	Parent's involvement in examination malpractice helps the practice thrive.	3.46	0.62	2.5	Accepted

Table 3 indicated that all the items were accepted as reasons examination malpractice thrive. The item with the highest mean is item 16 with a mean of 3.92 while the item with the lowest mean is item 18 which have a mean of 2.53. It should be noted that when parents have a laissez-faire or negative attitude to the education of their children may amount unnecessary pressure of their children that could be responsible for examination malpractice.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Students' responses to research question one showed that moral laxity in the society is a determinant of examination malpractice. The finding is supported by Wokocha (2015) who explained that Nigerian society is a nation of paradoxes where morality, honesty, patience, hardwork, societal ethics, integrity and the totality of virtue are thrown to the dogs. Examination malpractice is therefore a reflection of the degenerating moral bankruptcy in the society and a manifestation of a warped national Psyche. Limen (1996) in agreement with Wokocha also blamed examination malpractice on the quest for materialism and the 'get quick syndrome' in the society which has weakened the moral and legal forces.

Students' responses to research question two showed that facilities provided for teaching and learning are inadequate and this is also a determinant of examination malpractice. This finding is in line with that of Udokwu (2019) who explained that examination malpractice is as a result of inadequate provision of educational facilities such as classroom, furniture, science laboratory equipment, library materials etc. Asuru (2015) agreeably explained that as a result of inadequate learning materials, teaching learning and even examinations take place in despicable and dilapidated places in some schools while in others, the facilities do not just exist.

Students' responses to research question three showed that parents pressure on their children to do well academically pressurize these children to indulge in examination malpractice. This finding is similar to Obagah (2016) who established that parents play a greater part in helping students to cheat and this include personally writing the examination question papers for them and paying examination officials so that original scores could be converted to much higher scores. It is therefore unfortunate that parents who are expected to teach their children the part of honour and honesty and hard work have Debased their time honoured role and choosing the part of shame and irresponsibility.

### Limitation of the Study

The researcher had financial constraints which retards movement to most of the interior secondary schools which were bad and were not motorable as such had the problem of administering the research instrument and its retrieval at the right time.

### Conclusion

Moral laxity, lack of facilities and undue pressure from parents are determinants of examination malpractice and that all these affects academic standards in public secondary schools in Aboh Mbaise Local Government Area in Imo State.

### Recommendations

- Awareness of the dangers of examination malpractice should be carried out through radio jingles. Bill boards, symposium and workshops.

- Parents should set good examples for their children to emulate and motivate their wards by providing learning materials and provide conducive atmosphere for learning at home.
- Government and communities should collaboratively provide facilities for schools to ensure that teaching and learning is not only interesting but effective.

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