

Pupils' Perceived Causes of Examination Malpractice, Anxiety and their Involvement In Examination Malpractice in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Olofu, Martin. A.¹ & Ogodo, F. A.²

¹Department of Curriculum and Teaching,

²Department of Educational Foundation

Faculty of Education

University of Calabar

Calabar, Nigeria.

ABSTRACT

The study examined the influence of anxiety on examination malpractice and the ranking of factors associated examination malpractice as perceived by primary school pupils in Cross River. Expost facto research design was used to guide the study. One research question and a hypothesis were formulated. The sample was made up of 1251 respondents selected from 30 primary schools. The instruments for data collection were a researcher designed questionnaire. Data obtained were analysed using mean, chi square and Pearson product moment correlation statistical techniques. The results revealed a ranking of factors associated with cheating in the following order parental pressure, inadequate preparation, culprits not punished, many are doing it, poor supervision, etc; anxiety significantly influence cheating and there is positive correlation between exam anxiety and cheating strategies such as bringing in notebook, writing on pieces of paper, communicating vital information with others, writing on palms and desk. Based on these findings it was recommended that counseling is needed, appropriate punishment should be implemented to serve as deterrent, parents should encourage rather than pressurise pupils to pass examination, etc.

Keywords and Phrases; Pupils, Causes, Examination Malpractice, Anxiety Involvement Cross River State & Nigeria.

CISDI Journal Reference Format

Olofu, Martin. A. & Ogodo, F. A. (2016): Pupils' Perceived Causes of Examination Malpractice, Anxiety and their Involvement In Examination Malpractice in Cross River State, Nigeria. *Computing, Information Systems, Development Informatics & Allied Research Journal*. Vol 7 No 2. Pp 83-90. Available online at www.cisdijournal.net

1. INTRODUCTION

Examinations are used in diverse areas of human endeavours for the purpose of determining ability. In schools, military, commercial and even traditional setting examinations are used as a basis for arriving at a number of important decisions. In the work place, examination is a useful tool for determining who qualifies for a particular job during recruitment. It is sometimes used to assess staff for placement in particular tasks or for promotion based on certain criteria. Apart from pupils and students who are already in school, examination is written as a precondition for entry into school from which qualified candidates are selected based on predetermined criteria. At the end of an academic programme, learners are assessed for the award of certificates. The grade of certificate obtained ideally has bearing with the chances of obtaining a job in the labour market, opportunities for scholarship to pursue higher education, etc.

As important as this exercise is, what characterized the administration and participation in examination in Nigeria today in some cases fall short of the expectations of the public and other stakeholders in the educational system. Olayinka (1993) conceives examination malpractice as misconduct or improper practice in any examination with a view to obtaining good results through fraudulent actions. In Nigeria, the challenge of curbing examination malpractice is a national issue. In 2006, examination malpractice made serious wave in both electronic and print media. Three hundred and twenty four (324) secondary schools were black listed and banned by the Federal Government of Nigeria from registering for or serving as venue for examination conducted by any of the following examination bodies - West African School Certificate, National Examination Commission, National Teacher Institute, the then Joint Admission and Matriculation Board, National Board for Technical Education Board, from 2007-2010. Out of the 324 schools, 116 schools were in south-south geopolitical zone and out of this 116, 14 schools were in Cross River State, (Federal Ministry of Education, 2007).

Exam Ethics Report (2012) revealed the following de-recognition of schools in different states due to cases of examination malpractice :Bayelsa State (13), Delta (12), Ondo (eight), Kaduna seven), Cross River (seven), Imo (seven), Plateau (six), Rivers (six) Kogi (five) Lagos (five) Nasarawa (five), Sokoto (four) and Anambra (four) (Nairaland Forum, 2013) p2. Uchechukwu (2017) quoted onyechere as saying that “education (in Nigeria) is seriously being challenged by examination malpractice and academic dishonesty.” And “that examination malpractice has gone beyond indiscretion by students but has metamorphosed into serious organised and almost risk free crime, lucrative enterprise which is facilitated by criminals for purpose of making money”p1.

Cross River State, the study area has been championing the fight against exam malpractice. This is what shows great improvement from the rating in 2004 and 2005 in which the same examination ethics ranked the state first in exam malpractice. Despite this improvement, the state government has not rested on her effort to stamp out this menace from the education system, so also, is the effort of researchers to unravel the factors associated with this hydra headed evil. It is not just the records as presented here that creates worries in the minds of concerned individuals, agencies, institutions or government but also the overall consequences of examination malpractice on the students involved and the entire society. The quality of education acquired and the certificates obtained are questionable; the integrity of the candidates, the examination bodies, officials and institutions that are involved in the conduct of these examinations and the nation at large is questionable. Of great concern also is the impact these have on the quality of school products and the subsequent impact on job performance as well as the moral tone of the society.

Some factors have been identified as encouraging the persistence of cheating behaviours in examinations. One pertinent factor is the inability of relevant authority to enforce the available laws to punish offenders and absence of serious deterrents against offenders (Onyechere, 2005). While punishment in some situations may deter cheating, some research findings do show that punishment has in some situations not deterred people from engaging in examination malpractice. Sheriff and Manopriya (2002) citing Cockayne and Samuelsson, reported that in ancient times, the Chinese locked their rising scholars and civil service examinees in individual cells to prevent copying. They added that even when capital punishment by death was imposed on cheating in examination, it never deterred people from cheating. Bunn, Caudill and Gropper (1992) note that why some students cheat irrespective of the punishment enforced is that they don't believe that they will be caught in the process or when they weighed the punishment against the benefit, the benefit outweighs the punishment. In Nigeria, examination racketeering has become a business to many people. Since enforcement of relevant laws against examination malpractice, for now is lax, they take advantage of this and go at length to execute their acts without fear (Adenipekun, 2004).

Over emphasis on grades or certificates has also featured prominently as a basis for the unabated academic fraud. In and outside the school, emphasis is highly placed on the nature of grade acquired as criterion for placement, promotion, admission and employment. And since the quality of grade translates to the quality of certificate, in a competitive world, some people device any means at their disposal to attain their goals (Agubueem, 2004). Closely related to the certificate oriented nature of the educational system, is the high expectation and pressure on learners by parents, teachers, and the examination system. Godfrey (2002) noted that parents usually blame examination malpractice on the excessive pressure examination bodies place on students. The parents, therefore, saw cheating as a symptomatic of a system under formidable strain. Newberger (2003) saw the teacher factor as a possible cause of cheating in examination. Newberger noted with regret that in the time past, teachers could afford without risk to judge each case of cheating on its merits, meting out either punishment or exemption. These days, however, teachers are often judged on the overall performance of their classes, compared, when feasible, to standards set on a statewide or nationwide basis. Teachers thus often collude with students to cheat in order to make it appear that the teachers have been successful in raising class performance to an acceptable level.

The society has been blamed for the current high rate of examination malpractice that has permeated every level of education in Nigeria. The general tone of corruption in the society is considered by Onyechere (2005) as a major determinant of academic dishonesty among students. The writer sees a direct relationship between examination malpractice in educational institutions and corruption in the wider society. School children observe, hear and copy what goes on in the larger society. Since corruption is the order of the day, children may not see anything wrong in academic fraud. Neils' (1996) study of some Americans identified three common responses that are often given for cheating by both the young and adult in the educational system and the society in general. The author stressed that a vast majority of young people and adult believe that cheating is wrong, yet in nearly every poll, most young people cheat at least once in their high school career. It is thought provoking therefore, to find out the inconsistency between the behaviour and state of the belief of respondents. The three most common reasons advanced include: everybody does it; there is an unrealistic demand for academic achievement by state education boards; and expediency or the easy way out.

From the literature so far, there is need to subject these theoretical opinions to empirical test especially through the pupils themselves who sometimes engage in this negative act. The primary school is the foundation of the entire educational system. A search for answers to educational problems should begin there. The study sought to address the following research question and hypothesis:

1.1 Research question

What is pupils' perceived ranking of the factors associated with examination malpractice as identified by the researcher?

1.2 Hypothesis

- There is no significant relationship between pupils' examination anxiety and
- (a) their involvement in examination malpractice
 - (b) cheating strategies

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research design adopted for this study is the expost facto. The population of the study consisted of all final year pupils in public primary schools in Cross River State. Two methods of sampling were adopted namely stratified and simple random sampling techniques. The study area was stratified first based on the education zone in which two out of the three zones were randomly selected through simple random sampling. Further stratification was on Local Government Areas in the sampled zones in which three Local Government Areas in each zone were sampled. In selecting schools from the Local Government Areas, table of random number was used to randomly select a total of 30 schools from which 1251 pupils were drawn.

The instruments used for gathering data for this study was the questionnaire tagged "Pupils' examination cheating and other related behaviour questionnaire" (PECORBQ) constructed by the researcher. Eight statements of probable strategies that can be adopted in cheating by pupils were structured in 4 points scale of very often, often, not often and not very often, to determine the extent to which each subject adopts the said approaches. The instrument also has 6 items measuring pupils' examination anxiety. In ranking, 14 probable factors that may influence cheating were identified by the researcher. Pupils were requested to rank as they consider appropriate to their view any six factor from 1st to 6th in the order the most common factor to the least that may influence their cheating behaviours.

3. RESULTS

Research question: What is pupils' perceived ranking of the factors associated with examination malpractice as identified by the researcher? To answer this question, 14 possible causes of examination malpractice were identified by the researcher and pupils were required to rate any six among them according to their strengths with respect to their perceived association with examination malpractice. To arrive at a conclusion on the ranking, any factor that is rated 1st by the respondents was assigned 6 points, 2nd was assigned 5 points, 3rd (4 points), 4th (3 points), 5th (2 points) and 6th was assigned 1 point. The frequency of each rank was then multiplied by the corresponding points. The total score for each factor was divided by 6. The result is presented in Table 1

Table 1: ranking of pupils' perception of factors associated with examination malpractice

s/n	factors	rating	ranking
1	Parental pressure	741.16	1 st
2	Inadequate preparation	560.50	2 nd
3	Culprits not punished	382.33	3 rd
4	Many do it	352.16	4 th
5	Poor supervision	338.33	5 th
6	Difficult questions	318.00	6 th
7	Just feel like copying	303.33	7 th
8	Congested class	235.83	8 th
9	Poor teaching	232.16	9 th
10	No enough time	223.50	10 th
11	It is part of life	201.33	11 th
12	Questions outside what is taught	176.83	12 th
13	Easy way out	170.66	13 th
14	Impromptu test	132.33	14 th

From Table 1, pressure from parents to pass examination was ranked as the strongest factor associated with examination malpractice. This is followed by inadequate preparation by pupils for examination and thirdly by inability of relevant authorities to punish culprits of examination malpractice, etc. From the table the least factor is administration of impromptu test on pupils by teachers.

Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between pupils' examination anxiety and

- (a) their involvement in examination malpractice
- (b) cheating strategies

This hypothesis was subjected to chi-square and Pearson Product Moment correlation respectively. Results are presented in Tables 2 and 3

Table 2 :Chi-square test analysis of anxiety levels and pupils' involvement in examination malpractice.

Exam malpractice	Anxiety						total	X ²
	low	moderate		high				
	O	E	O	E	O	E		
Non involvement	192	184.7	121	125.6	186	188.7	499	7.83*
Involvement	271	278.3	194	189.4	287	284.3	752	
Total	463		315		473		1251	

*sig atb.05,df=2, critical X²=5.99

The data on Table 2 showed a calculated X² value of .83 which is greater than the critical value of 5.99 at alpha level of .05. Thus the null hypothesis is rejected. It thus, implies that pupils differ significantly in their involvement in examination malpractice on the basis of their examination anxiety levels.

Pupils were further tested to determine if there is any significant relationship between their examination anxiety and cheating strategies. The result is presented in Table 3

Table 3: Pearson product moment correlation of pupils' anxiety and their cheating strategies

variables	X	SD	r
Pupils' anxiety (X)	5.29	2.17	
Cheating strategies (Y)			
Bringing in notebook	2.13	1.14	.08*
Writing on pieces of papers	2.23	1.11	.16*
Communicating vital information	2.67	1.11	.16*
Asking classmate	2.53	1.22	.05
Writing on palm of hand	1.79	1.11	.11*
Writing on the desk	1.59	1.03	.07*
Going out to find answer	1.55	1.03	.08*

- sig at .05, df=1249

The results as shown in Table 3 shows that there is significant positive relationship between pupils' examination anxiety and all the cheating strategies adopted except asking classmate for answers. The positive correlation implies that increase in anxiety will lead to increase in the tendencies to adopt these cheating strategies.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings in respect of the research question that sought to find the ranking of identify factors that are associated with examination malpractice among primary school pupils revealed that pressure from parents to succeed was the most common factor to explain pupils' involvement in examination malpractice. This finding is consisted with the view of Whitley (1998) who observed that parents should be held accountable for their children's behaviour. Lakoju (1997) also noted that the over emphasis on certificate acquisition in the Nigerian educational system and the manner in which parents and teachers have come to lead pupils towards success have given them the wrong perspective to success in school. It is also identified that pupils' lack of preparation adequately for examinations predispose them to cheating. This agrees with a study by Agbo (2005) who found students reported that one of the factors responsible for their mass involvement in examination malpractice is lack of seriousness towards preparation on their part for examinations. This finding is not surprising as pupils today are distracted by a lot of issues. Many children would prefer watching football matches, films, and other forms of entertainment to preparing adequately for their examination. Again, the prevalent examination malpractice gives some children the assurance that whether they prepare for the examination or not, they will ultimately make it. With this kind of mindset, they may engage in examination malpractice.

The third factor identified by this study was absence of proper punishment for those caught cheating. This finding agrees with the opinion of Onyechere (2005) who regrets that candidates at public examinations now regard the various laws prohibiting examination malpractice as unenforceable. Bunn, Candill, and Gropper (1992) noted that why some students cheat irrespective of the punishment enforced is that they don't believe that they will be caught in the process, and when they weighed the punishment against the benefit, the benefit outweighed the punishment.

The study revealed a significant influence of examination anxiety on pupils' involvement in examination malpractice. When pupils were tested on their cheating strategies, it was found that except for cheating through seeking for assistance from classmates, they were positive correlation between pupils' examination anxiety and cheating in examination through all the strategies. These findings agree with the previous studies by Calabrese and Cochran (1991), Denga (1993), and Gardner (1996) who found correlation between anxiety and cheating in examination. These authorities identified anxiety arising from children from affluent home to stay afloat in their status (Calabrese and Cochran, 1990), fear of failure and parents demanding good grades (Schab, 1991), attempt to meeting the pressure and expectation of parents and peers (Denga, 1993), and high anxiety due to competitive nature of academic activities (Niels, 1996) to positively with cheating in examination. There are some other learners who develop anxiety of test of irrelevance. They are not just worried about failure, but also about teachers feeling about their appearance, their hand writing etc. All these could cause a child to cheat in examination to impress his teacher through good performance. On the other hand, pupils who have low or moderate anxiety require this to challenge them that there is a task ahead of them. This will help them to work hard to succeed. These variations in pupils' dispositions on basis of their anxiety levels may account for the differences among pupils in their involvement and cheating strategies they adopt during examinations.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations are made.

- (1) To fight examination malpractice in Cross River State in particular and Nigeria in general, parents should relax unnecessary pressure on their children to accomplish academic tasks through illegitimate means or beyond their ward's ability. Rather, pupils should be guided to pay more attention to their studies through teaching them good study habits. Parents should be properly educated on the dangers their children may confront when they set unattainable targets for them to meet. The current fight against examination malpractice should incorporate public fora where stakeholders can share opinions on how to tackle the problem. Findings such as revealed in this study should be shared among stakeholders in such fora.
- (2) School heads, teachers and all that are involved in the administration and supervision of examination have to sit up to their responsibilities. Proper examination supervision by teachers should be emphasized. Where the population of pupils is too large for a single teacher to adequately supervise, team supervision may be introduced. School heads should also check teachers during examinations in order to curtail laxity on the part of some teachers who may demonstrate non-challant attitude to examination supervision. It would be necessary to keep pupils from communicating with one another since collaborative effort in cheating is a common practice in examination as is evident in the two strategies singled out by pupils namely, communicating vital information to friends and asking classmates for answers to examination questions, especially among the female primary school pupils. While proper and strict supervision is recommended generally, supervisors and invigilators should keep their eyes more on the males as they are more vulnerable to cheating in examination.

REFERENCES

1. Adenipekun, O. (2004). Exam fraud comes in at least 33 ways says Onyechere, examination ethics boss. Vanguard Newspaper Retrieved March 24, 2008 from <http://www.ekwamfon.kabissa.rg.newscollection.html>
2. Agbo, F. (2005). An investigation into the forces behind examination malpractice. A challenge for secondary school education in the 21st century. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 10 (2), 344-347.
3. Bunn, D. N., Candill, S. B. & Gropper, D. M. (1992). Crime in the classroom: an economic analysis of undergraduate students cheating behaviours. *The Journal of Economic Education*, 23 (3), 205-207.
4. Calabrese, R. L. & Cochran, J. J. (1990). The relationship of alienations to cheating among a sample of America adolescents. *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, 23 (2), 65-68.
5. Cockayne, T. N. & Samuelsson, C. O. (1983). The crime and punishment of cheating in medical school. Proceeding of the 22nd annual conference on research in medical education, Association of American Medical College, Washington D. C, May 17.
6. Denga, D. I. (1993). Educational malpractice and cultism in Nigeria. Calabar: Rapid Educational Publishers.
7. Federal Ministry of Education (2007). Examination malpractice black list: schools derecognize as centres for public examinations 2007-2010. Abuja: Federal Ministry of Education.
8. Gardner, R. (1996). Give me Harvard or give me death. *New York magazine*, 18 March, 33.
9. Godfrey, J. R. (2002). Academic dishonesty in schools: The intermediate certificate policies of the board of secondary schools studies 1937-1957. *Issues in Educational Research*. Retrieved June 4, 2009 from <http://edu.curtin.edu.au/tier12/godfrey.html>
10. Lakoju, T. (1997). Of ethics and examinations in Nigerian: The dialectics of universal dilemmas. *West African Journal of Educational Research*, 1 (1&2), 2-35.
11. Nairaland Forum (2013). Bayelsa Has The Worst **Exam** Malpractice Record In Nigeria <http://www.nairaland.com/1289101/bayelsa-worst-exam-malpractice-record>. Retrieved 04/4/2017 2017
12. Neils, G. J. (1996). Academic practices, school culture and cheating behaviours. Retrieved April 7, 2008 from.
13. Newberger, E. H. (2003). Attitude toward cheating. The men they will become: the nature and nurture of the male characters. Retrieved August 12, 2008 from [www.schoolforchampions.com/character Newbergercheating3.html](http://www.schoolforchampions.com/character/Newbergercheating3.html).
14. Olayinka, P. (1993). Dealing with examination malpractice in Nigerian schools. Ibadan: Macmillan.
15. Onyechere, I. (2005). Exam ethics project: Annual report on examination malpractice rating of states and geo-political zones. Abuja: Ethics Resource Centre.
16. Schab, F. (1991). Schooling without learning: 30 years of cheating in high school. *Adolescence*, 26 (104), 840-842.
17. Smothers, R. (2006). Exam authority find rise in mobile phone cheat. *Education Editor*, March 27, 11.
18. Uchechukwu, I. (2017). Examination malpractice has destroyed Nigeria's educational fabric – Onyechere. <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/03/> Retrieved March, 22 2017
19. Whitley, B. E. (1998). Factors associated with cheating among college students: A Review Research in Higher Education, 39 (3), 235-274.

APPENDIX 1

Four years Trend of exam malpractice rating of states (2002-2005) i.e the extent of involvement in exam malpractice

S/N	State	2002		2003		2004		2005	
		EMI	Rating	EMI	Rating	EMI	Rating	EMI	Rating
1	Abia	14.71	8 th	42.88	2 nd	29.28	5 th	7.59	11 th
2	Abuja	1.72	32 nd	0.09	37 th	1.96	26 th	0.43	37 th
3	Adamawa	3.51	23 rd	0.82	36 th	10.15	24 th	2.16	30 th
4	Akwa-Ibom	11.76	10 th	13.14	14 th	46.79	4 th	4.77	21 st
5	Anambra	3.39	25 th	1.72	35 th	6.93	32 nd	8.11	10 th
6	Bauchi	4.03	22 nd	18.19	20 th	9.09	26 th	4.90	20 th
7	Bayelsa	20.59	4 th	9.38	18 th	22.60	10 th	3.94	23 rd
8	Benue	14.49	9 th	19.65	7 th	18.34	13 th	18.87	1 st
9	Borno	0.64	35 th	21.24	5 th	13.34	19 th	18.93	6 th
10	Cross River	10.20	11 th	18.28	8 th	41.32	2 nd	16.57	2 nd
11	Delta	6.40	19 th	1.89	33 rd	18.18	15 th	3.66	27 th
12	Ebonyi	22.10	3 rd	16.26	10 th	18.37	13 th	10.36	5 th
13	Edo	3.50	24 th	13.84	13 th	26.13	6 th	10.62	4 th
14	Ekiti	5.70	19 th	7.95	21 st	11.14	21 st	5.35	17 th
15	Enugu	15.46	7 th	14.85	12 th	24.19	7 th	13.47	3 rd
16	Gombe	0.29	37 th	3.91	31 st	7.17	31 st	6.65	12 th
17	Imo	17.88	6 th	16.36	9 th	24.04	8 th	6.46	14 th
18	Jigawa	8.91	13 th	4.57	26 th	18.31	14 th	0.61	36 th
19	Kaduna	5.03	20 th	15.02	11 th	11.08	22 nd	4.69	22 nd
20	Kano	1.15	34 th	7.24	22 nd	10.02	25 th	3.863	24 th
21	Kastina	1.94	30 th	4.52	28 th	4.99	33 rd	2.77	29 th
22	Kebbi	4.05	21 st	10.99	17 th	51.29	1 st	1.28	34 th
23	Kogi	44.89	1 st	27.91	4 th	29.36	3 rd	3.64	28 th
24	Kwara	35.47	2 nd	20.95	6 th	17.01	16 th	1.03	38 th
25	Lagos	8.82	14 th	4.13	29 th	8.78	27 th	5.64	16 th
26	Nasarawa	1.74	31 st	8.79	19 th	11.78	20 th	1.57	33 rd
27	Niger	2.25	28 th	4.81	25 th	16.52	17 th	3.860	25 th
28	Ogun	8.15	16 th	11.76	16 th	10.02	23 rd	8.203	8 th
29	Ondo	8.50	15 th	5.17	24 th	23.42	9 th	8.200	9 th
30	Osun	9.87	12 th	4.56	27 th	8.61	28 th	6.63	13 th
31	Oyo	2.06	29 th	1.78	34 th	4.55	35 th	5.56	15 th
32	Plateau	2.37	27 th	2.25	32 nd	7.56	30 th	1.59	32 nd
33	Rivers	18.64	5 th	40.14	3 rd	21.59	11 th	8.75	7 th
34	Sokoto	6.46	17 th	4.06	30 th	14.23	18 th	18 th	26 th
35	Taraba	3.08	26 th	5.23	23 rd	8.02	29 th	5.45	17 th
36	Yobe	1.37	33 rd	11.76	16 th	1.69	37 th	4.99	19 th
37	Zamfara	0.46	36 th	47.89	1 st	4.87	34 th	2.08	31 st

Source: Adapted from Ike Onyechere (2005) Exam Ethics Project

4-year Trend of exam Ethics Ranking of States in south-south zone of Nigeria (2002-2005) i.e extent of adherence to exam ethics

S/N	State	2002	2003	2004	2005
1	Akwa Ibom	4 th	2 nd	5 th	3 rd
2	Bayelsa	6 th	3 rd	3 rd	2 nd
3	Cross River	3 rd	5 th	6 th	6 th
4	Delta	2 nd	1 st	1 st	1 st
5	Edo	1 st	4 th	4 th	5 th
6	Rivers	5 th	6 th	2 nd	4 th

Source: Adapted from Ike Onyechere (2005) Exam Ethics Project