



Research Paper

Psycho –Social Approaches For Curbing Examination Malpractice in Nigerian Education System

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ABSTRACT

This research work centered on psycho –social approaches for curbing examination malpractice in Nigeria education system. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study, using a descriptive survey research design with random sampling techniques. The population of the study was made up of all the 560 teachers and the 263 principals of the public secondary schools in the 17 local government areas that constitute the three educational Zones of Abia state. A sample size of 269 respondents was drawn and used across the education zones, using Taro-Yamene’s formular. Instrument for data collection was a researcher-made questionnaire duly validated and the reliability of the instrument was 0.83 established using Cronbach alpha. The researcher and 5 research assistants administered and retrieved the questionnaire and 99% return rate was achieved. Mean and standard deviations was used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The analyzed data identified teachers’ related approaches for curbing examination malpractice and governmental related approaches for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Abia state. The study recommended among others that there should be a functional students’ Examination Ethics Club that will help in decisively monitor and enforce examination ethics principles among students.

KEYWORDS: *Psychosocial, examination malpractice, curbing, school system*

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I. INTRODUCTION

In Nigerian educational system and the world over, the examination process makes the difference in the actualization of the goals of education. Examination does not only serves as a feedback for the trainer to ascertain the level of knowledge acquisition but also serves as a measure of knowledge retention by the trainee. It remains one of the major means of assessing and evaluating students’ skills, knowledge and attitude in both general and specific areas of studies. Olatunbosun (2011) noted that “till date, examinations still remain the best tool for an objective assessment and evaluation of what learners have achieved after a period of schooling”. The goals of national educational systems and indeed national development become like a mirage if examination ethics is not encouraged and instituted (Nwadiani, 2013). Therefore, any action that undermines examinations poses a great threat to the validity and reliability of examination certification and further distorts the feedback mechanism of the learning process/.

Unfortunately, the process of examination in Nigerian secondary schools has become a “contemporary shame, according to Nwadiani (2013). This of course is due to the phenomenon of examination malpractice that has become endemic in the educational system. Examination malpractice is an act of omission or commission by a person who in anticipation of before, during or after any examination fraudulently secures any unfair advantage for himself or any other person in such a manner that contravenes the rules and regulations to the extent of undermining the validity, reliability, authenticity of the examination and ultimately the integrity of the certificates issued. Onah (2010) defined examination malpractice as anything done by an examination candidate that is likely to render the assessment useless. Operationally, examination malpractice is any action done or committed which makes it impossible to use an examination in determining the level of competence of a candidate in absorbing, reproducing, and where appropriate, apply the knowledge. This means that any act of

wrong doing or neglect that contravenes the rule or acceptable practice before, during and after examination by any body in any way is examination malpractice.

It must be noted that in the recent past, the incidence of examination malpractice was not limited to final examinations conducted by public examination bodies alone. It occurs in school assessment, and this is carried over to external examinations especially the ones conducted for certificates or for admission purposes. The incidences of examination malpractice are common and every examination season witnesses the emergence of new and ingenious ways of cheating. The alarming rate of examination malpractice in secondary schools is witnessed in public examinations such as the Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE). Thus, Oneychere (2014) noted that it is almost a routine for students to cheat in both internal and external examinations. Examination malpractice in secondary schools also cuts across schools in all the geo-political zones of the country. In 2006, the Federal Ministry of education blacklisted and derecognized 324 secondary schools across the nation as centres for conducting public examinations from 2007 to 2010, due to their involvement in examination malpractice.

From the aforementioned, it is clear that examination malpractice is not limited to the time and the place of examination. In fact, it occurs either before, during or after examination. Anzene (2014) reported that one of the commonest forms of pre examination malpractice is the registration of non-school candidates for school examination by principals in spite of clear regulations against such practice. This explains why secondary schools located in rural areas with no access road or difficult terrains that hinder external monitoring or supervision witness influx of candidates during SSCE examinations. Such “miracle centres” are established for pure economic gains and not to impart knowledge to students. More so, the introduction of Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) in the country has revolutionized examination malpractice in all tiers of our school system., hence a lot of academic information is now stored in these electronic gadgets for direct use in examination halls or for onward transfer via short message service (sms) to other students in any other parts of the country. Post examination malpractices include such unwholesome activities occurring after the examination, for instance, candidates tracing their answer booklets to the marking centres. During SSCE examinations (WASSCE, NECO, & NABTEB), some candidates use pencil to write their telephone numbers, urging the marker (examiner) to contact them for price negotiation. Some female candidates also attach their semi-nude photographs in the answer booklets praying for a sexual promiscuous male to mark their answer booklets. Such photographs bear telephone numbers for contact. In the tertiary institutions, sorting and sexual gratification is a major form of post examination malpractice. Continuous assessment scores and even examination scores are altered by the unscrupulous lecturers to give undue advantage to their cohorts.

However, many psycho social factors have been adduced to the cause of the prevalent cases of examination malpractice. Psychosocial factors encompass a wide range of factors relating to an individual's psychological state or social environment and potentially have either positive and negative consequences for health and behavioral outcomes. Petters & Okon (2013) identifies the psycho social variables causing examination malpractice to include fear of failure, craze for certificate, desire of parents to have their children in choice professions and university, pressure on students to pursue courses which they have no aptitude, pressure on teachers who want to gain favour of students and overcrowded sitting arrangement. George & Ukpong (2013) links the increasing rate of examination malpractice to poor teaching, ineffective preparation by students, ill-equipped library facilities, and dubious admission policy. Akaranga & Ongong (2013) attributed the cause of examination malpractice to parental upbringing. They opined that because of social status and economic ability, most parents are easily persuaded to bribe their way through for the sole success of their children and self gratification. According to Nsiong (2011), general moral decadence and the high premium placed on achievement and certificates by Nigerians has in recent times spawned examination fraud. The overdependence on educational certificates as a measure of ones knowledge and competence has led to a mad rush by most people for education certificates through unethical means. The disjunction between culturally acclaimed goals and the institutionalized means of achieving these goals coupled with the cultural context of great emphasis on success-goals without equivalent emphasis upon institutional means of attaining these goals have created an environment that predisposes some students, teachers, parents and others to examination malpractice (Jimoh, 2009). The Nigerian society today is characterized by a heavy emphasis on success and wealth without a corresponding emphasis on legitimate means and avenues to be used in achieving the success. The country has become a commercial venture and no longer a place for selfless service. Operationally, examination malpractice can further be link to the following factors: rapid growth and demand for education in Nigeria, poor teaching and learning environment, lack of well equipped teachers who do not have the necessary pedagogy to impart the contents to the learners, lack of viable teaching materials/ equipment like standard laboratories, libraries and other things.

Conclusively, the fight against corruption cannot be realized if examination malpractice continues to be rampant in our educational system. As future leaders who have been equipped through a school system characterized by academic fraud and dishonesty, they will certainly manifest this fraudulent behaviour in any

organization they may find themselves. Those that cheated to pass examination will cheat to get employed, have spouse, and even to win election through electoral violence or other sharp malpractices; hence there is need therefore to identified psycho –social approaches that can be used to curb examination malpractice in Nigeria education system.

Statement of the problem

The alarming rate of the increase in the incidence of Examination malpractices in Nigeria calls for urgent attention of all well meaning and patriotic citizens. The nation can not longer pretend that all is well with our educational programme in this country. In fact, the whole nation is resting comfortably on a keg of gun-powder and time-bomb that may explode suddenly. For a long time, particularly in the last two decades examination malpractices have made it impossible for examinations at any level in the secondary schools in Nigeria to be a true test of students knowledge.

Many have graduated with very good results but could neither construct a simple sentence letter nor express themselves effectively. A good number have acquired little or no skills taught at that level. The government and the citizens who were educated before this new trend find it very worrisome. If the situation is not arrested, Nigeria will definitely retrogress educationally and technologically while the rest of the world progress steadily. This will spell doom for the younger generation. The researcher therefore thinks it timely to identify the approaches that can be used to curb examination malpractices in secondary schools in Nigeria.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to determine psycho –social approaches for curbing examination malpractice in Nigeria education system, using Abia state as a case study.

Specifically, the purpose of the study were to identify;

- i. teachers' related psychosocial approaches for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Abia state
- ii. governmental related psychosocial approaches for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Abia state

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study;

- i. What are the teachers' related psychosocial approaches for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Abia state?
- ii. What are the governmental related psychosocial approaches for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Abia state?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance

HO₁: There is no significant difference in the mean response of school principal and teachers on the teachers' related psychosocial approaches for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Abia state

HO₂: There is no significant difference in the mean response of school principal and teachers on the governmental related psychosocial approaches for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Abia state

II. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted survey research design. This design was considered suitable because the opinion of a representative sample of respondents was sought using questionnaire and the finding was generalized on the entire population. The population of the study drawn using stratified random sampling technique, consisting of all the 560 teachers and 263 principals of the public secondary schools in the 17 local government areas that constitute the three educational Zones of Abia state. A sample size of 269 respondents was used, using Taro-Yamene's formular to draw from the population across the education zones. Instrument for data collection was a researcher-made questionnaire, titled: Psychosocial Approaches For Curbing Examination Mal practices; duly validated and the reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach alpha, which yielded a coefficient index of 0.83. The questionnaire had a four-point response scale of strongly agreed (SA), Agreed(A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly disagreed (SD) with corresponding values of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively.

The instrument was face validated by three lecturers; two from Psychology / Counselling Department and one from Measurement and Evaluation unit, all from Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike, Abia state. Their corrections and suggestions were utilized to improve the initial copies of the questionnaire to produce the final copies. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions. Any mean

response of 2.50 and above was considered as agreed while any item with mean response below 2.50 was considered as disagreed. For hypothesis testing, t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis for any item was not rejected where the p-value was greater than the alpha value of .05 but was rejected where the p-value was less than the alpha value of .05.

III. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Research Question 1

What are the teachers’ related psycho social approaches for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Abia state?

Data for answering research question 1 are presented in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Mean and standard deviation on the teachers’ related psycho social approaches for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools (N=269)

S/N	Item statement	\bar{X}_p	S_p	\bar{X}_t	S_t	Dec.
1	Covering of the scheme of work by teachers , before examinations	3.48	.56	3.31	.70	Agreed
2	Teachers ensuring that the total number of answer scripts tallied with the total number of examinees	3.55	.50	3.24	.75	Agreed
3	Always making sure there is adequate number of teachers and invigilators in the examination hall, during internal and external exams respectively	3.29	.75	3.31	.71	Agreed
4	Teachers/ Examiners creating adequate space between candidates during internal and external exams respectively	3.55	.50	3.24	.74	Agreed
5	Teachers/ Examiners endeavoring to search the students properly before they enter the examination hall	3.15	.68	3.39	.72	Agreed
6	Teachers/ Examiners should endeavor to allow students to identify cards before admission into examination hall	3.18	.69	3.32	.66	Agreed
7	Teachers/ Examiners monitoring the students closely in the examination hall	3.15	.79	3.31	.73	Agreed
8	Students should be counseled by teachers to have faith in their own ability during examination	3.14	.79	3.30	.73	Agreed
9	Teachers/ Examiners resisting stoutly students wanting to bribe them so that they can aid them in cheating during examinations.	3.14	.78	3.30	.72	Agreed
10	Adequate functional and use of continuous Assessment and immediate feedback by teachers	3.12	.79	3.29	.73	Agreed

\bar{X}_p = Mean of the principals, \bar{X}_t = Mean of the teachers, S_p = Standard Deviation of the principal and S_t = Standard Deviation of the teachers

Data in Table 1.1 revealed that all the 10 items had their mean rating ranged from 3.14 to 3.55 and were above the cut-off point of 2.50. This indicated that the principals and teachers agreed that all the 10 items identified were the teachers’ related psycho social approaches for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Abia state. The standard deviation of all the 10 items ranged from .50 to .79, which showed that the respondents were not too far from the mean and opinion of one another in their responses on the teachers’ related psycho social approaches for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Abia state.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the mean response of school principal and teachers on the teachers’ related psycho social approaches for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Abia state

Data for testing hypothesis 1 are presented in Table 1.2

Table 4.1.2: t-Table Analysis on teachers’ related psycho social approaches for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools

S/N	Item statement	\bar{X}_p	S_p	\bar{X}_t	S_t	p-value.	Rmk
1	Covering of the scheme of work by teachers , before examinations	3.48	.56	3.31	.70	.55	NS
2	Teachers ensuring that the total number of answer scripts tallied with the total number of examinees	3.55	.50	3.24	.75	.39	NS
3	Always making sure there is adequate number of teachers and invigilators in the examination hall, during internal and external exams respectively	3.29	.75	3.31	.71	.06	NS
4	Teachers/ Examiners creating adequate space between candidates						

5	during internal and external exams respectively	3.55	.50	3.24	.74	.52	NS
	Teachers/ Examiners endeavoring to search the students properly before they enter the examination hall	3.15	.68	3.39	.72	.99	NS
6	Teachers/ Examiners should endeavor to allow students to identity cards before admission into examination hall	3.18	.69	3.32	.66	.77	NS
7	Teachers/ Examiners monitoring the students closely in the examination hall	3.15	.79	3.31	.73	.92	NS
8	Students should be counseled by teachers to have faith in their own ability during examination	3.14	.79	3.30	.73	.99	NS
9	Teachers/ Examiners resisting stoutly students wanting to bribe them so that they can aid them in cheating during examinations.	3.14	.78	3.30	.72	.99	NS
10	Adequate functional and use of continuous Assessment and immediate feedback by teachers	3.12	.79	3.29	.73	.97	NS

\bar{X}_p = Mean of the principals, \bar{X}_t = Mean of the teachers, S_p = Standard Deviation of the principal and S_t = Standard Deviation of the teachers, p-value = Significant value = $P \geq 0.05$, S = Significant, NS= Not significant and Rmk = Remark

Data in Table 1.2 revealed that all the 10 items had their p-values ranged from .06 to .99 and were greater than the alpha-value of 0.05. This implied that there was no significant difference between the mean responses of teachers and the principals on the teachers' related psycho social approaches for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Abia state. Therefore, the hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean responses of the two groups of respondents on the teachers' related psycho social approaches for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools was not rejected.

Research Question 2

What are the governmental related psychosocial approaches for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Abia state?

Data for answering research question 1 are presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Mean and standard deviation on the governmental related psychosocial approaches for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools (N=269)

S/N	Item statement	\bar{X}_p	S_p	\bar{X}_t	S_t	Dec.
1	Government ensuring establishment of effective counseling services in schools to assist students acquire effective study habits.	3.29	.76	3.32	.71	Agreed
2	Government out rightly cancelling candidates results and close down of the special centers where monumental frauds takes place	3.48	.57	3.32	.71	Agreed
3	Carrying out public workshop on societal re-engineering and re-orientation to revamp moral values	3.55	.50	3.24	.75	Agreed
4	Establishing functional Examination Ethics Committee in all schools, so as to decisively monitor and enforce examination ethics principles among students.	3.29	.75	3.31	.71	Agreed
5	Appropriate allocation of examination officers to various examination centers	3.15	.68	3.39	.72	Agreed
6	Appropriate recognition and remuneration of teachers/ examination officials	3.19	.69	3.33	.66	Agreed
7	Engaging into adequate motivation and reward of excellence students return to schools	3.15	.79	3.31	.73	Agreed

\bar{X}_p = Mean of the principals, \bar{X}_t = Mean of the teachers, S_p = Standard Deviation of the principal and S_t = Standard Deviation of the teachers

Data in Table 2.1 revealed that all the 7 items had their mean rating ranged from 3.15 to 3.55 and were above the cut-off point of 2.50. This indicated that the principals and teachers agreed that all the 10 items identified were the governmental related psychosocial approaches for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Abia state. The standard deviation of all the 7 items ranged from .50 to .79, which showed that the respondents were not too far from the mean and opinion of one another in their responses on governmental related psychosocial approaches for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Abia state.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the mean response of school principal and teachers on the governmental related psychosocial approaches for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Abia state

Data for testing hypothesis 1 are presented in Table 2.2

Table 2.2: t-Table Analysis on governmental related psychosocial approaches for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools

S/N	Item statement	\bar{X}_p	S_p	\bar{X}_t	S_t	p-value	Rmk
1	Government ensuring establishment of effective counseling services in schools to assist students acquire effective study habits.	3.29	.76	3.32	.71	.55	NS
2	Government out rightly cancelling candidates results and close down of the special centers where monumental frauds takes place	3.48	.57	3.32	.71	.06	NS
3	Carrying out public workshop on societal re-engineering and re-orientation to revamp moral values	3.55	.50	3.24	.75	.07	NS
4	Establishing functional Examination Ethics Committee in all schools, so as to decisively monitor and enforce examination ethics principles among students.	3.29	.75	3.31	.71	.52	NS
5	Appropriate allocation of examination officers to various examination centers	3.15	.68	3.39	.72	.06	NS
6	Appropriate recognition and remuneration of teachers/ examination officials	3.19	.69	3.33	.66	.77	NS
7	Engaging into adequate motivation and reward of excellence students return to schools	3.15	.79	3.31	.73	.92	NS

\bar{X}_p = Mean of the principals, \bar{X}_t = Mean of the teachers, S_p = Standard Deviation of the principal and S_t = Standard Deviation of the teachers, p-value= Significant value = $P \geq 0.05$, S = Significant, NS= Not significant and Rmk = Remark

Data in Table 2.2 revealed that all the 7 items had their p-values ranged from .06 to .92 and were greater than the alpha-value of 0.05. This implied that there was no significant difference between the mean responses of teachers and the principals on the governmental related psychosocial approaches for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Abia state. Therefore, the hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean responses of the two groups of respondents on the governmental related psychosocial approaches for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools was not rejected.

IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The table 1 showed that the school principal and teachers are in agreement with the identified teachers' related psychosocial approaches for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Abia state. However, the identified teachers' related approaches are as follows; covering of the scheme of work by teachers , before examinations, teachers ensuring that the total number of answer scripts tallied with the total number of examinees, always making sure there is adequate number of teachers and invigilators in the examination hall, during internal and external exams respectively, teachers/ examiners creating adequate space between candidates during internal and external exams respectively, teachers/ examiners should endeavor to allow students to identify cards before admission into examination hall, teachers/ Examiners monitoring the students closely in the examination hall, students should be counseled by teachers to have faith in their own ability during examination, teachers/ examiners resisting stoutly students wanting to bribe them so that they can aid them in cheating during examinations and adequate functional and use of continuous Assessment and immediate feedback by teachers. This finding is supported by the view of Jimoh (2009) who posits that teachers should be equipped for the technological-driven world, so as to provide experience and activities that guide students' progress towards understanding of ideas if they themselves do not know what these ideas are; neither can they provide experiences that challenge students if they themselves share in the same misunderstandings. More so, Oyebamiji (2011) observes that teachers have great responsibilities to transform the raw materials of the young ones into leadership materials with the right skills, attitudes, learning and character. According to him, it is the responsibility of teachers to plant the seed of positive ideas in the minds of these students, which allows them to develop critical thinking and become useful citizens in the society. Therefore, teachers should live up to expectation as nation builders saddled to build the future leaders of this nation.

In Table 2, the result revealed that the school principal and teachers are in agreement with the identified governmental related psychosocial approaches for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Abia state. However, the identified governmental related psychosocial approaches are; government ensuring establishment of effective counseling services in schools to assist students acquire effective study habits, government out rightly cancelling candidates results and close down of the special centers where monumental frauds takes place, carrying out public workshop on societal re-engineering and re-orientation to revamp moral values, establishing functional Examination Ethics Committee in all schools, so as to decisively monitor and enforce examination ethics principles among students, appropriate allocation of examination officers to various examination center, appropriate recognition and remuneration of teachers/ examination officials and engaging

into adequate motivation and reward of excellence students return to schools. This outcome is in line with Animasahun (2011) who recorded that the government has great roles to play in the prevention of examination malpractices. Functional religious and moral teachings should return to school. Let this begin with the recruitment of teachers. Recruitment of teachers should no longer be politicized but based on merit. Only qualified, competent, interested, disciplined and morally upright teachers should be employed in adequate proportion for all schools. Adequate facilities and incentives should be provided on regular basis for teachers to function properly. Adequate funding of schools and provision of physical and infrastructural materials should be made paramount to make schools run smoothly and comfortably. Admission policy into secondary schools should not be made automatic but competitive, and the issue of automatic/mass promotion should be abolished.

V. CONCLUSION

Nigeria will remain what it is and the situation will be worst in the nearest future if an urgent decisive action is not taken against the menace of examination malpractices. Since education is the bedrock of every society, any factor or vice that tarnishes the outcome of the learning process must be fought standstill by all stakeholders and well meaning Nigerians. Hence, all hands must be on deck to wage war against the monster. Finally, it is strongly believed that the above approaches for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools identified by the study will bring about effective attitudinal re-orientation of students towards Examination malpractices in public secondary schools in Abia state and more so a right step in the right direction in winning this war.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from the study, the following recommendations are put forward;

- There should be adequate establishment of functional Examination Ethics Committee in all schools, so as to decisively monitor and enforce examination ethics principles among students
- Trained teachers should be deployed to handle subjects only in their field of specialization in secondary schools in Abia state
- Students caught cheating in examination should be expelled and blacklisted for some reasonable years
- Teachers/ Examiners should always endeavor to search the students properly before they enter the examination hall
- Government should ensure adequate establishment of effective counseling services in schools to assist students acquire effective study habits.

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