
ISSN:

Print - 2277 - 078X

Online - 2315 - 747X

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Journal of
Humanities, Social
Sciences and Creative
Arts

PERCEPTION OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICES AMONG STUDENTS IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ABEOKUTA NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this study was to examine secondary school students' perception of examination malpractice in Abeokuta North Local Government Area (LGA), Ogun State, Nigeria. In order to achieve the set objectives of this study, a multistage sampling procedure was used to select one hundred (100) students from three randomly selected secondary schools in the LGA using a structured questionnaire to elicit information from the respondents about their knowledge in awareness and engagement, causes, factors and control measures of examination malpractices. Data obtained were analysed using descriptive (frequency counts, percentages and mean) and inferential (Chi-square) statistics. All (100.0%) of the sampled students were aware of examination malpractices, while half (50.0%) had engaged in examination malpractice before. All (100.0%) of the sampled students perceived that examination malpractice was caused by students' academic laziness, fear of failure; corrupt invigilators (95.0%), congested sitting arrangements during examination (92.0%), lack of qualified and dedicated teachers (87.0%), and a quest for good results/certificates (85.0%) were other causes of examination malpractices perceived by the respondents. About (93.0%) perceived that examination malpractice has a negative effect on the educational system, (96.0%) suggested that examination malpractice could be controlled through safe keeping of examination questions and answer scripts; severe punishment of all parties involved in examination malpractice (90.0%). 78.0% mentioned reorientation of invigilators and (82.0%) mentioned teachers and adequate spacing of students during examinations. Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that exam malpractice is common among secondary school students and it has negative effects on their academic performance. It is therefore recommended that the government and school authorities should constantly organize trainings, workshops and seminars for all stakeholders on the consequences of examination malpractices; anyone involved in any examination malpractice should be punished severely to serve as deterrent to others; over-population should be discouraged in schools to avoid congested sitting arrangements during examinations. The government should ensure regular payment of teachers' salaries and other incentives promptly, to make teachers more comfortable economically.

Keywords: Academic success, Control measures, Examination malpractice, Students' perception, Secondary schools

DOI:

INTRODUCTION

Globally, students are assessed in order to measure the accomplishment of the educational objectives. Such assessments vary by

country but are mostly in the form of continuous assessment tests (CAT) just before the middle of a term, and a terminal examination at the end of the term. The CAT

could include assignments, practical exercises, marking of students' notes, and even attendance in school, depending on the school policy. Examination is a formal test of someone's knowledge, skills or ability in particular subjects, especially by means of oral, written or practical exercise (Onyechere, 2010). It is a measure of students' achievement in formal education settings across different levels (Nnam & Inah, 2015). In the Nigerian educational system, especially in the primary and secondary schools, an academic session is made of three terms with each term running for about 13 weeks (National Policy on Education, 2004). Examinations are conducted at the end of a term after which students and teachers embark on holidays. Students are promoted to the next class level depending on their academic performance at the end of the session, which is a cumulative average of the three terms of academic achievement. Those who do not meet the pass mark are required to repeat the class. However, some students' desire to pass to the next class level even without adequate preparation and so, they tend to engage in examination malpractices.

Concept of Examination Malpractices

Examination malpractice has been defined by different scholars in different ways with the meaning pointing at one thing. Akpama et al (2009) viewed examination malpractice as an unlawful behavior or activity engaged by school children at whatever level of education, to have personal advantage in examination over their mates who are competing in the same examination. Joshua (2008) opined that examination malpractice is any unauthorized or unapproved action, inaction, activity, behavior or practice that is associated with the preparation, conduct and processing of examination and other

forms of assessment and carried out by any person involved in preparing for, giving, taking, and processing that examination malpractice refers to some forms of cheating which directly or indirectly falsify the ability of students. The definition above is an "unwholesome behavior which helps the doer to perform better than he/she would ordinary do if not for the act". Similarly, WAEC (2005) posited that examination malpractices as an abdication of examination ethics as those values which constitute free and fair examination standard.

Oluyeba and Daramola (1992) saw examination malpractice as any irregular behavior exhibited by a candidate or anybody charged with conduct of examination in or outside the examination hall, before, during or after such examination. They include: paper leakage, cheating, impersonation, swooping of scripts in examination administration.

Nweze (2009) identified some causes of cheating in examination by secondary students. He based his study on the six assumptions mention here:

- Students do not work hard
- They cheat in order to pass
- They lack the techniques of examination
- Those who get away with cheating get a sense of pride achievement
- What they study is not related to what they aspire to be in life
- Those who indulge in examination malpractices are of bad character

Among the causes of examination malpractices, he identified are: poor staffing and inefficiency of some principals while Jimoh (2009) in his research identified some of the causes of examination malpractice mostly in

secondary schools as:

1. The student: the students are non-challant over studying because examination malpractice discourages hard working students
2. Peer group influence: the peer group affects students seriously, because they encourage their fellow students to engage in examination malpractice
3. Parents: parental indiscipline and abuse of wealth sustain the phenomenon of examination malpractices because they sponsor them in monetary incentive to procure live question papers or to pay for external candidate to write the examination for their children.
4. The school principal / teachers: Principal lack of proper supervision and teacher's lack of using instructional materials to teach leads to ineffective teaching and learning.
5. The supervisors/invigilators: supervisors enjoy gratification of all sorts ranging from cash, sex and other favor like snacks, drinks and variety of other gifts items.
6. Lack of conducive learning environment: some examinations halls are small and cannot contain the students, as such, as they are packed and the next option is to teach.
7. Lack of teacher's motivation: Teacher's salary seems very small compared with teachers in the developed world, even at that, they were not paid on time.
8. Emphasis on certificate: There is emphasis on certificate in the labour market than ability.

Onuka and Durowoju (2013) defined examination malpractice as unfair practices, infringement or irregularities during the conduct of an examination. According to him, examination malpractices have become a

threat to the integrity of the nation. Joshua (2008), as quoted by Amadi & Opuiyo (2018a) defined examination malpractice as any unauthorised or unapproved action, inaction, activity, habits, or practice connected to the preparation, conduct, and processing of an examination that is carried out by any person involved in those processes at any level. It is a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabric of the education system. Jega (2006) described examination malpractice as non-adherence to the rules and regulations guiding the conduct of an examination. He explained further that it refers to any wrongdoing, misconduct, dishonesty or improper practice for personal gains, or violation of set rules during the conduct of examinations (Jega, 2006, cited in Ekpoudo et al (2020).

Students exhibit malpractices in both internal and external examinations like West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), National Examination Council (NECO), General Certificate Education (GCE) or their equivalents (Amadi and Opuiyo, 2018b). Unfortunately, parents, teachers, school proprietors and even school administrators often encourage examination malpractices among students especially during external examinations. It is now a common practice in the education parlance as schools want to be known for academic excellence without preparing their students adequately for examinations. Parents now enroll their wards in 'special centers' where answers are dictated for students, and students are allowed to copy from others. Impersonation is another common form of examination malpractice in external examinations (Petters & Okon, 2014).

Examination malpractice in one way or the other has become culture of secondary schools with its attendant consequences. Ac-

According to Amadi and Opuiyo (2018a), examination malpractice is fast eroding the culture of hard work, honesty, decency and academic excellence among children and youths across the different levels of education in the Nigerian society. These consequences include a lack of confidence in the results obtained from schools to the extent that students are unable to cope with academic activities at the tertiary level of education. Results of some secondary schools in external examinations in some subjects have been canceled many times due to suspected cases of examination malpractice.

Despite knowing that examination malpractices have dire consequences on the Nigerian education system, it remains a common practice because different people perceive the act differently, with many people defending why it is impossible for students to pass examinations without engaging in examination malpractices. For instance, according to Omemu (2015), the government is the major cause of examination malpractice citing underpayment of teachers as part of the reasons teachers now consider aiding examination malpractice while the nonchalant attitude of the students to their academics can also be a big reason for engaging in examination malpractices. This paper focuses on students' perception of examination malpractices in selected secondary schools in Abeokuta North Local Government Area of Ogun State.

Objectives of the study

The broad objective of the study was to assess the perception of secondary school students' of examination malpractices in Abeokuta North Local Government Area of Ogun State. The specific objectives are to:

i. describe the personal characteristics of

secondary school students

- ii. ascertain students' awareness and engagement in examination malpractices
- iii. identify the causes of examination malpractices among secondary school students
- iv. determine the perceived effects of examination malpractices on the academic performance of the Students
- v. ascertain the control measures for minimizing examination malpractice.

Research Questions

- i. What are the personal characteristics of the respondents?
- ii. To what extent are the respondents aware and engage in examination malpractices?
- iii. What are the causes of examination malpractices among secondary school students?
- iv. What are the perceived effects of examination malpractices on the academic performance of the respondents?
- v. What are the control measures for minimizing examination malpractice in the study area?

Hypothesis of this study

The hypothesis of this study, is that:

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between the causes of examination malpractice and students' perception of examination malpractice in the study area.

Significance of the study

Education remains a primary means of providing and improving the social, economic, political and technical development of Nigeria (Chijioke & Amadi, 2019). Examination malpractice has the potential of polluting the educational system, and hence undermines the educational objectives of the nation. An understanding of students' percep-

tion of examination malpractice will offer means of preventing all forms of examination malpractices thereby, improving the quality and restoring confidence in the standards of certificates awarded in examinations. The outcome of this study will be beneficial to all stakeholders in education including the teachers, parents/guardians, school administrators/education authorities, and the government which will eventually make everyone to play their roles in eradicating examination malpractices.

The study would play essential roles in the standard of education and in the task of economic growth and development. The significance of this study is to reveal the depth into which examination malpractice has plunged in secondary schools, most especially in Abeokuta North Local Government Area, of Ogun State and proffer solutions to the problems.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design

The descriptive cross-sectional survey re-

search design was adopted in this study.

Study area

This study was conducted in Abeokuta North Local Government Area (LGA) of Ogun State. The LGA has its headquarters situated at Akomoje, Abeokuta. It has an area of 808km² and a population of 201,329 (National Population Commission - NPC, 2006). The people are predominantly farmers, most of whom engage in the cultivation of arable crops, livestock rearing, quarry business, artisan works, civil service jobs, and handicrafts like pottery and tie and dye. The major food crops in the LGA include cassava, cocoyam, plantain, maize and vegetables, while the major cash crops produced are oil palm and cocoa. There are sizeable number of public and private primary and secondary schools in the study area.

Population

The population consists of secondary school students in Abeokuta North Local Government Area, Ogun State.

Table 1: Sampling Frame and Sample Size

S/N	Name of Selected Schools	Population of JSS1	Sample selected	Population of SS1	Sample selected
1.	Unity High School	75	11	92	22
2.	Imala Comm. Gramm. School	71	11	96	22
3.	Ikija High School	84	12	82	22
		230	34	270	66

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Sampling technique, Frame and Sample Size

A multistage sampling procedure was

adopted in this study. Stage 1 involved the random selection of three (Unity High School, Ago-Ika, Imala Community Gram-

mar School, and Ikija High School) out of fourteen public secondary schools in the LGA.

Stage 2 involved random selection of two class levels (JSS1 and SS1) in the selected schools. In stage 3, a proportionate sampling of 20 percent of the selected class population of 500 students was randomly selected to give a total of 100 students which served as the sample size for the study.

Data collection procedure

Primary data were collected in this study with the aid of a pre-tested questionnaire tested in another school which was not part of the researched area designed to cover all the specific objectives of the study. The researcher visited the selected schools to discuss the research purpose with the school

Principal or his/her representatives in order to seek approval for the research to be conducted on their students. A copy of the research instrument was shown to them during the meetings. A day was scheduled for the data to be collected in each of the schools after approval was granted. Selected students were gathered in a classroom and the contents of the questionnaire were discussed with the students. The students then completed and immediately returned the questionnaire to the researcher.

Method of data analysis

The collected data were cleaned, coded, and put into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 21.0. The data were subjected to descriptive (frequency counts, percentage and mean), inferential (Chi-square) and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: What are the personal Characteristics of the Respondents?

Personal characteristics of secondary school students

Half (50.0%) of the students were males while 50.0% were female implying that there is gender balance in secondary schools in Abeokuta North LGA (Table 2). Most (66.0%) of the respondents were within the age of 14-17 years and senior secondary school students. 34.0% were within the age range of 10-13 years, while 66.0% were 14-17 years; 34.0% and 66.0% of the students were in Junior Secondary School one (JSS1) and Senior Secondary School one (SS1) classes, respectively. This means that most

of the sampled students must have been involved in many internal examinations and external examinations like Common Entrance Examination and Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) therefore, the possibility that they had been involved in examination malpractices or even witness their colleagues being involved in the act cannot be ruled out.

It was further revealed that the majority (76.0%) of the students practiced Christianity, 55.0% of the students' parents were civil servants and 68.0% were graduates (Table2).

Table 2: Distribution of secondary school students by personal characteristics (n = 100)

Personal characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	50	50.0
Female	50	50.0
Age (years)		
10-13	34	34.0
14-17	66	66.0
Level of education		
Junior school	34	34.0
Secondary education	66	66.0
Religion		
Christianity	76	76.0
Islam	24	24.0
Parental occupation		
Business	45	45.0
Civil service	55	55.0
Parental education		
O' Level	21	21.0
Graduate	68	68.0
No formal education	11	11.0

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Research Question 2

Table 3: Distribution of students by awareness and engagement in examination malpractice (n = 100)

S/N	Awareness and engagement in examination malpractice	Frequency	Percentage
1	Awareness of examination malpractice	100	100.0
2	Examination malpractice is an antisocial behavior	93	93.0
3	Examination malpractice is part of the system for passing examination	80	80.0
4	Examination malpractice is a wrong act	76	76.0
5	Engagement in examination malpractice	50	50.0

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Students' awareness and engagement in examination malpractice

All (100.0%) of the students were aware of examination malpractice (Table 3). Majority (93.0%) of the respondents viewed examination malpractice as an antisocial behavior, 80.0% considered it as part of the system for passing examination while 76.0% saw it as a wrong act.

Half (50.0%) of the students had engaged in examination malpractice before (Table 3).

The findings imply that despite the students' awareness of examination malpractice and the belief that it constitutes antisocial behavior and wrong act, some still engage in it because they see it as already part of the system without which they cannot pass examinations. This result is in line with Jega (2006) description of Examination Malpractice as any wrongdoing, misconduct, dishonesty or improper practice for personal gains, or violation of set rules during the conduct of examinations.

Research Question 3: What are the causes of Examination Malpractice?**Table 4: Distribution of students by perceived causes of examination malpractice (n = 100)**

S/N	Causes of examination malpractice	Frequency	Percentage
1	Academic laziness of students	100	100.0
2	Lack of qualified and dedicated teachers	87	87.0
3	The quest for good result/certificate	85	85.0
4	Congested sitting arrangements during examination	92	92.0
5	Corrupt invigilators	95	95.0
6	Parents' quest for examination success of their children	53	53.0
7	Teachers' inability to teach well and cover the scheme emphasis on paper qualification	66	66.0
8	Fear of examination failure	100	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Causes of examination malpractice among the respondents

All (100.0%) of the sampled students perceived that examination malpractice was caused by students' laziness and fear of failure respectively (Table 4). Major causes of examination malpractices identified by the students were corrupt invigilators (95.0%), congested sitting arrangements (92.0%); lack of qualified and dedicated teachers (87.0%) and quest for good results and/ certificates (85.0%) (Table 4). The results indicated that examination malpractices are primarily caused by students, parental-related, school and teachers related factors. Petters & Okon (2014) also reported that societal preference for paper qualification, over-congested classrooms for examinations, uncompleted syllabus, laziness, incompetent teachers, and poor invigilation are some of the perceived causes of examination malpractices among university students in Nigeria. George & Ukpong (2013) also linked the alarming rate of examination malpractice to poor teaching which consti-

tutes non-completion of the scheme of work, and use of poor teaching methods by teachers. Alhassan & Anya (2017) grouped the causal factors of examination malpractice into society, institutional, teacher, learner and group-related factors.

Perceived effect of examination malpractice on the academic performance

Majority (93.0%) of the respondents perceived that examination malpractice has negative influence on their academic performance thereby affecting the educational system (Figure 1). This implies that substantial proportion of the students knew that examination malpractice has no benefit to the education system. Amadi & Opuiyo (2018a) stated that examination malpractice destroys the academic reputation of the country, spirit of hard work among students, and can terminate students' academic career. In addition, they reported that ill-prepared graduates as a result of examination malpractice have become substantial proportion of the nation's work force leading to increas-

ing low job performance, corruption, economic sabotage, vandalism, kidnapping, and drug trafficking. Alhassan & Anya (2017) added that examination malpractice retards national development.

Research Question 4: What are the perceived effects of Examination Malpractice on the Academic Performance of the Student?

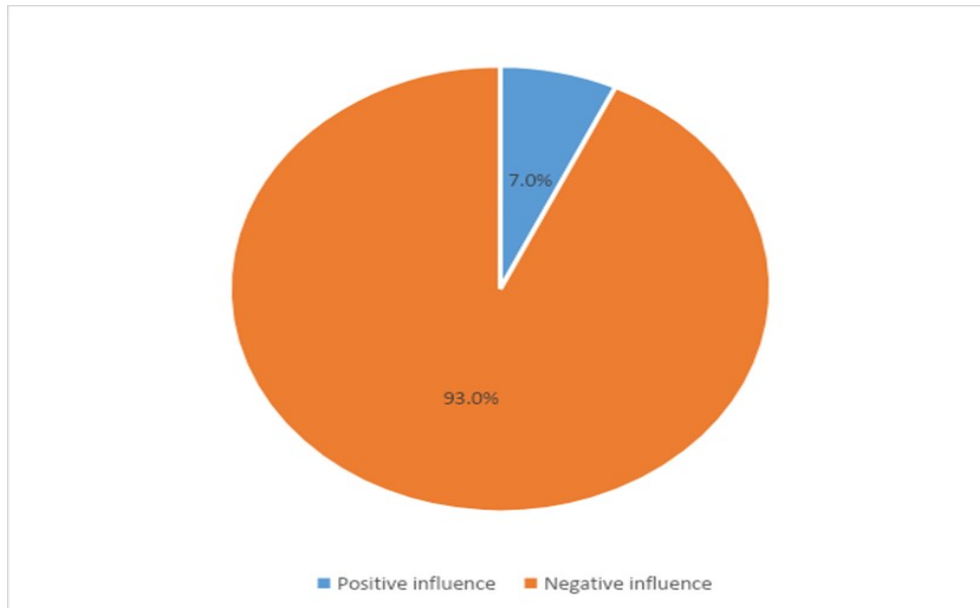


Figure 1: Distribution of students by perceived effects of examination malpractice on the academic performance of the students

Research Question 5: What are the control measures to minimize Examination Malpractice?

Table 5: Control measures for minimizing examination malpractice as suggested by the students (n = 100)

S/N	Control measures	Frequency	Percentage
1	Safe keeping of examination questions and answered scripts	96	96.0
2	Adequate spacing of students during examination	78	78.0
3	Reorientation of invigilators and teachers on examination	82	82.0
4	Students should desire to acquire knowledge instead of being overzealous for certification	69	69.0
5	Adequate check of entry requirements and qualification into secondary schools	60	60.0
6	Regular payment of teacher salary	53	53.0
7	Adequate funding of schools in all ramifications	44	44.0
8	Severe punishment of all parties (students, teachers and invigilators) involved in examination malpractice	90	90.0

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Control measures for minimizing examination malpractice in secondary schools

The control measures to minimize examination malpractices as suggested by the respondents were safe keeping of examination questions and answer scripts (96.0%), severe punishment of all parties involved in examination malpractice (90.0%), reorientation of invigilators and teachers (82.0%), sufficient student spacing during exams (78.0%) (Table 5). This implies that curbing examination malpractice is the collective responsibility of all stakeholders, just as all stakeholders, including the government are contributing factors. This agrees with Suleman (2015) who described examination malpractice as a cancer of the society that can be cured only through the collaborative effort of all stakeholders (Ministry of Edu-

cation officials, institutional authorities, teachers, examination bodies, parents, and students) in the education system. It is worthy of note that (53.0%) of the respondents indicated that regular payment of teachers' salaries is another control measure to minimize examination malpractices in the study area (Table 5). This implies that if these control measures are not taken into consideration to curb exam malpractices, the Nation's educational system may be jeopardise with bad reputation and non-acceptance in the labour market.

Testing of Hypotheses

H₀₁ which states that: There is no significant association between the causes of examination malpractice and students' perception of examination malpractice in the study area was tested using Chi-square statistical tool.

Table 6: Chi-square results on the association between perceived causes of

Perceived causes	Chi-square (χ ²) value	Df	p-value
Lack of qualified and dedicated teachers	14.943	1	0.001**
Quest for good results/certificate	14.943	1	0.001**
Congested sitting arrangement	8.696	1	0.003**
Parents' quest for examination success of their children	17.704	1	0.001**
Teachers' inability to teach well and cover the scheme	2.853	1	0.091
Corrupt invigilators	2.567	1	0.113

**correlation is significant at 0.01 levels of significance

Students' perception of examination malpractice was significantly (p<0.01) associated with lack of qualified and dedicated teachers (χ² = 14.943), quest for good results and certificate (χ² = 14.943), congested sitting arrangements (χ² = 8.696) and parents' quest for examination success of their wards (χ² = 17.704). This implies that students' perception of lack of qualified teach-

ers, quest for good results, parental quest for children success, and congested sitting arrangement as the major causes of examination malpractices in the study area (Table 6). The result corroborates the a study carried out by Mgboro (2006), he affirmed that parents are involved in examination malpractice, students and teachers even the education authorities because the society is cor-

rapt. This perception on causes of examination malpractice will directly or indirectly have negative effects on the education system. H₀₂ states that: examination malpractice has no significant influence on the academic performance of the respondents in the study area.

Table 7: Test of significance of how examination malpractices influence the academic performance of the respondents in the study area

Variables	X ² value	D.F	Significant level	decision
Examination malpractices could mar the objective of secondary education	63.934	1	0.000	S
Examination malpractices discourage good students from studying harder	14. 943	1	0.00	S
Examination frauds could lead to cancellation of examination	14. 943	1	0.00	S
Poor performance of secondary school graduates	14. 943	1	0.00	S
De-recognition of examination results of secondary school students	14. 943	1	0.00	S
Employer lose confidence in the education system	26. 582	2	0.00	S
Inability to prove the worth of the certification	26. 582	2	0.00	S

Field survey, 2019

*correlation is significant at 0.00-0.05

The result, chi-square(X²) analysis determined at 0.00-0.05 level of significance (Table 7) shows that, examination malpractices had influence on the academic performance of respondents in the study area. H₀₃ states that there is no significant association between respondents' personal characteristics and causes of examination malpractice in the study area.

Table 8: Test of significance between respondents' personal characteristics and causes of examination malpractice

Variable	X ²	D.F	Significant Level	Decision
Sex	14.943 ^a	1	0.000	S
Age	27.750	6	0.000	S
Education status	4.480	1	0.0034	S
Religion	16.268	1	0.000	S
Parent Occupational status	7.115	1	0.008	NS
Parental educational status	11.873	2	0.003	S

Field survey, 2019

*Correlation is significant between 0.00 and 0.05

The result of the chi square (X²) analysis determined at 0.00-0.05 level of significance (Table 8) shows that, there is significant relationship between respondents' socio-economic characteristics that is, their sex, age, educational status, religion and parental educational status and causes of examination malpractice.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this paper show that, there have been incidences of examination malpractice in the researched area and this research work was able to bring to light the major causes, the effects and some control measures of the menace using student's perception because, solutions on examination malpractice devoid of students' perception to a certain level may not succeed because they know why students engage in the act and hence stand a better position to help provide solutions to curb the malpractice during examination. This agrees with the findings of Kpangban et al (2008) as cited in Dusu et al (2016).

The result of the study shows that the students indicated a 100% awareness of examination malpractice. Majority of the them viewed examination malpractice as an antisocial behavior, some considered it as part of the system for passing examination while some saw it as a wrong act.

The students' response also stated that the major causes of exam malpractice as students' academic laziness, corrupt invigilators, congested sitting arrangements during examination, lack of qualified and dedicated teachers and parents' quest for good result/certificates.

The major findings based on the students' response revealed that substantial proportion of the students knew that examination malpractice has no benefit to the nation's education system and suggested safe keeping of examination questions and answer scripts, severe punishment of all parties involved in examination malpractice, reorientation of invigilators and teachers and sufficient stu-

dent spacing during exams as some of the control measures to curb the act.

It also revealed that examination malpractices had influence on the academic performance of respondents in the study area and there is significant relationship between respondents' socio-economic characteristics that is, their sex, age, educational status, religion and parental educational status and causes of examination malpractices.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that examination malpractice is common among secondary school students and has negative consequences on the academic performance of the selected students which can lead to de-recognition of such results, down-grading of education system and could also lead to loss of confidence in oneself. Therefore, examination malpractice should be seen as the enemy of the society and should be discouraged.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is therefore recommended that the government and school authorities should constantly organize trainings, workshops and seminars for all stakeholders on the consequences of examination malpractices.
2. Anyone involved in examination malpractices should be punished severely to serve as deterrent to others
3. Over population should be discouraged in schools to decongest sitting arrangements during examinations.
4. Staff in all educational institutions should be adequately remunerated and hard-working and commitments to duties should be rewarded.
5. Qualified workers and adequate facilities should be provided to assist in genuine transmission of knowledge and skills.

6. The emphases on paper qualification should be discouraged in the society. Admissions and employments should be on merit, transparent with proven integrity.

7. Discipline should be instilled in every member of the Nigerian society to have a sense of belonging and be a loyal citizen.

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(Manuscript received: 21st June, 2023; accepted: 8th December, 2023)