

**PREVALENCE OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE AMONG STUDENTS IN
DISTANT-LEARNING, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA.**

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Abstract

The study investigated the prevalence of examination malpractice behaviour in distant-learning university, public and private Nigerian universities to identify where examination malpractice is more. A total of 342 (male=211 (61.7%) and females=131(38.3%) students sampled from three universities in Benue State responded to the questionnaire. Their ages ranged between 17 and 50 years, with mean age of 23.9 years and standard deviation of 4.80. The categories of universities were varied as public university and private university and, and their students responded to Perceived Reasons for Academic Cheating Behavior Inventory (PRACBI). ANOVA result showed a statistically significant difference of prevalence at $P<.05$ level in exam malpractice among private universities, public universities and distant-learning universities in Nigeria [$F(2, 339)=8.13, P=000$]. The research findings and implications were discussed and recommendations made.

Key words: Examination malpractice, Nigerian universities.

Introduction

In Nigeria, the educational system and other systems are crisis-ridden. Maduemezia (1998) traced the first case of exam malpractice in Nigeria to 1914 during the Senior Cambridge Local Examination papers which were leaked before the scheduled date of examination. This was the year the Southern and Northern protectorates were merged to form the entity called Nigeria today. Most students obtain/pass their senior secondary school certificate through gross examination malpractices and these crops of students scaling through examinations fraudulently transit into tertiary institutions with the same pattern (Eba & Emaikwu, 2007). These person(s), when they at all finally graduate find it very difficult to defend their grades since they never studied hard enough to have such grades, making Nigeria to be mentioned among nations topping the chart for academic corruption (Daily Trust, 2012). Paul, Enejoh, Enejoh, and Omisere (2013) defines examination malpractice as any irregular behaviour exhibited by a candidate or anybody charged with the conduct of examination before, during or after the examination that contravenes the

rules and regulations governing the conduct of such examination. In the understanding of Onah (2010), it is anything done by the examination candidate that is likely to render the assessment useless. To Usman (2005), it is cheating in the examination or any intention to benefit or give undue advantage to oneself or another by deceit or fraud, before, during and after examination. These definitions are not far from the views of Wilayat (2009) Nuraini (2008).

Examination malpractice is already a culture in Nigerian educational scene because it is been condoned by most parents, students, teachers and lecturers (Ojerinde, 2010). At risk are invigilators and question papers, hence Nigerian educational system is gravely threatened. The frequency of occurrence of examination malpractice indicates a state of hopelessness and helplessness. Genuineness of examination process has been trivialized due to gross malpractices, thereby reducing Nigerian educational institutions as centers for grooming hoodlums (Emaikwu, 2012). Following the clampdowns on cultists in Nigerian universities, students used cash payments

and other overtures to appeal to the lecturers and invigilators. The incidence of examination malpractice has become so endemic that the penalty hitherto meted out to its perpetrators is almost having no statistical significant effects on them (Sule, 2009). There is an astronomical increase in the number of people and institutions involved in this social malaise. As a result of frequent cases of examination malpractice, the society is losing confidence in the certificates awarded by some institutions and examination bodies (Eba & Emaikwu, 2007; Ogum, 2007).

Cheating in examination has become so *internalized and legitimized* that some people now regard it as a normal process of passing examination in Nigeria. Owing to malpractices in universities, examination results tend to give a false picture of the state of affairs, hence a good number of school graduates cannot defend the grades obtained in examinations (Ada, 2004). It has led to the questioning of the validity and reliability of the examinations as well as the authenticity of the results and certificates obtained. A widespread examination malpractice in tertiary institutions in

Nigeria has led to a situation where the use of formal examination as basis for determining the level of candidates' proficiency at absorbing, reproducing and applying knowledge has become impossible. Since academic credentials are the only acceptable indices of educational attainment, students see passing examination as '*a do or die affair*' in Nigeria. As a result of examination malpractice, some Nigerian graduates cannot even write comprehensive letters, let alone read and understand newspapers articles. Some university graduates who are products of examination malpractice form majority of those unemployed (Duze, 2011).

On highlighting reasons why people engage in exam malpractice, Emaikwu (2012) listed some in the subscale (causes of examination malpractice) formulated to measure exam malpractices in Nigerian Universities. They are: undue paper qualification, fear of failure, inadequate preparation, lack of resources for teaching, teacher related-factors and societal related-factors. Also, Ifeagwazi (2010) in a validation of an inventory for measuring the

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perceived reasons for academic cheating: anxiety and grade pressure factors, social situational factors, institutional related factors, and teaching/learning related factors were identified as been responsible for the prevalence of examination malpractices. Over the years, students have been coming up with new dimensions of examination malpractices. Many authors (Olaniran, 2002; Asuru, 1996) have attempted to extensively enumerate and discuss the different facets, categories and varying dimensions of examination malpractice or irregularities in Nigeria.

Okorodudu (2013) found that examination malpractice is one of the greatest problems undermining the foundation of educational practice in Nigeria. The study further stated that the magnitude of the problem and the dangers of the phenomenon have been identified by stake holders as national malady that required drastic solution. For many years we have resigned to fate and allowed it to take a firm hold on our school system, and we managed to continue to produce graduates at different academic levels although half-baked. The virtue of hard work and diligence as emphasised in

the National policy on education, which is respect for dignity of labour as means of achieving success has been eroded totally. It will require supernatural intervention to restore back to normalcy. There are sufficient empirical reports that decry the alarming prevalence of examination malpractice in all the three levels of academic learning in Nigeria, ranging from primary and secondary (Anzene, 2014), up to those in tertiary educational institutions which is the focus of this paper are highlighted here. This demonstrates heavily the extent to which academic corruption has destroyed the Nigerian academic system like pests destroy farm produces in stores.

The study by Chaminuka and Ndudzo (2014) assessed University students and staff on examination malpractice and fraud in higher education institutions. The study used the qualitative research methodology. Participants were drawn from four (4) higher educational institutions. The researcher used a structured questionnaire and group interviews for data generation. The study revealed that examination malpractice and fraud is caused by fear of failure and inadequate preparation for

examinations, shortage of learning and teaching resources among other factors. Similar findings were recorded for students in Lagos universities (Badejo & Gandonu, 2010) and for College of Education (Okoh, 2014).

Alutu and Alutu (2003), in a study undertaken at the University of Benin investigated the attitude of university undergraduates toward examination malpractice, with the view to synthesizing the implications of the findings for academic advising. The study found that 51% of students were positively disposed to cheating in examinations, while 49% were not. Adeniyi and Taiwo (2011) found a higher 70% indication of students' involvement in cheating behaviour at least, once during the last academic session out of 1,388 respondents. These results are similar to the findings of Jimoh (2009).

Emaikwu (2012) assessed impact of examination malpractice, involving a sample of 300 students and 100 lecturers randomly selected from four universities in North Central Nigeria. The result indicates that lecturers and students indulge in

examination malpractice in Nigeria. It is affirmed that examination malpractice is caused by undue emphasis on paper qualification, fear of failure and inadequate preparation among other factors. The result also shows that the major types of examination malpractice are possession of 'foreign materials' during examination, collusion by students to cheat in examination and continuous assessment malpractice. The article maintains that the evil of examination malpractice is not just the havoc it wrecks in our educational system but the gradual indoctrination of youths into the practice of fraud. Results (Olasehinde-Williams, Abdullah, & Owolabi, 2003) showed that 76.5% of the students manifested cheating behavior and in every course not less than 66% of the students were involved in cheating. Also, Bruno and Obidigbo (2012) opinion on this matter does not differ.

Having recognized examination as an educational malady which is later transferred into other social life transaction (Paul, Enejoh, Enejoh, & Omisore, 2013), the goal of this study is to determine and establish the differences that exist between

the three main types of universities operational in Nigeria. The researcher therefore hypothesize that there will be no statistically significant difference on incidence of exam malpractices of the students from the three types of universities spotlighted. This prediction is backed by the enormous evidences of exam malpractice in all Nigerian educational institutions, including primary schools (Cornelius-Ukpepi & Enufoha, 2012).

Method

Participants

A total of 342 persons took part in this study; there were 211(61.7%) males and 131(38.3%) females. Their age ranged from 17years to 50year, with mean age of 23.9 and standard deviation of 4.80. They were drawn from the Makurdi centre of National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), Benue State University (BSU) Makurdi, University of Agriculture Makurdi (UAM) and University of Mkar (UniMkar) Gboko, all in Benue State of Nigeria.

Instrument

Perceived Reasons for Academic Cheating

Behaviour Inventory (PRACBI) developed and validated by Ifeagwazi (2010) with Nigerian sample, and used to elicit response on reasons for exam malpractice was employed. It has 25 item with 3-points response dimensions (a very good reason; a good reason; and not a good reason). The reliability coefficient of the instrument was 0.87 Cronbach alpha. The instrument requested respondents of their ages in years, gender (male or female) and tertiary institution type (unconventional, public conventional or private conventional university). Some of the items in the instrument can be mentioned for the purpose of better understanding and acquit reader with the contents of the instrument.

Procedure

In distributing the questionnaires, the researcher approached the students found in their lecture halls or relaxation parks, made introductions and the purpose of coming to them after permissions were obtained from the concerned authorities. Only those who felt dispose at that moment completed the questionnaires. Each respondent was allowed a maximum time of twenty minutes to complete the inventories. From the total

of 350 questionnaires printed and distributed, 100 copies by Open university students, 100 copies at University of Mkar, 71 at University of Agriculture Makurdi and the remaining 71 at Benue State University. At the end of the distribution, three papers were not returned, another three had double markings on some items and two were returned with incomplete responses. From the four sampled centres, 342 well

completed inventories were collected for collation and analysis.

Design / Statistics

The study employed cross-sectional survey design and convenience sampling method were employed for data collection. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to analyse the data for inferences.

Results

Table 1: Mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) of University types on Exam malpractice prevalence

Variables	Mean	SD	N
Distant-learning University (NOUN)	47.32	9.09	114
Public University (UAM & BSU)	49.43	8.83	114
Private University (UniMkar)	44.73	8.55	114

Table 1 show the mean score difference of students in the types of universities; those in distant-learning University have M=47.32(SD= 9.09), those in Public

University have M=49.43(SD=8.83), while those in private University have M=44.73(SD=8.55).

TABLE 2: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Summary of University type on Exam malpractice prevalence

Source	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F
University types;				
Between Groups	1264.66	2	632.33	8.13*
Within Groups	26381.50	339	77.82	
Total	27646.16	341		

*: p<.05

Table 2 revealed significant difference of prevalence at $P < .05$ level in exam malpractice among private universities, public universities and distant-learning universities in Nigeria [$F(2, 339) = 8.13$, $P = 0.000$].

Discussion

The hypothesis of this study which states that there will be no statistically significant difference in exam malpractices among students of Nigerian universities was refuted and disconfirmed. The mean scores difference in this study therefore indicated a statistically significant difference, which is in tandem with other research findings (e.g., Alutu & Alutu, 2003; Adeniyi & Taiwo, 2011; Emaikwu, 2012 etc) which has sufficiently confirmed the high prevalence of academic misconduct among students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The result from the samples also indicates that public university had the highest mean score, followed by the distant-learning university, with the private university coming last on the rank.

The practical implication of this study on our academic universities system borders

on the managements' strategies in driving home all rules, regulations, policies and recommendations available at their disposal in checking incidences of examination malpractices under their noses. It has been widely acknowledged that students have made little or no effort to shunning this bad practice simply because managements and staff of some of Nigerians universities do not do due-diligence to checkmate / monitor, apprehend and adequately serve the culprits with dire punishments (Onyibe, Uma & Ibina, 2015). This inaction has largely stood as the motivating factor that gave rise to this ugly prevalent trend bedeviling our national higher institutions (Sule, 2009). No wonder Nigeria was named number one on exam malpractices in the world (Daily Trust, 2012). This trend has made some products of our universities to be seen as half-baked, both in character and in learning despite the grades they passed out with.

It is true that exam malpractice behaviour is learnt from the primary and secondary schools before these students enter the universities, and to ensure that only the intellectually capable applicants are admitted into programs of choice. Some of

the modalities are the introduction of post Joint Admission Matriculation Board (Post-JAMB) in the 2005/2006 academic session (Hundu, 2011), computer based JAMB examination in 2012, biometric WAEC registration for clearance of candidates into exam hall for each subject to be written in 2013, WAEC introduced computer based exam format from 2015 etc. In fact, in most universities some tests and examinations are computer based.

It is the researcher's opinion therefore, that the difference that exist in the incidences of examination malpractices among public conventional, private conventional and unconventional universities in Nigeria is caused by how much (very poor) stringent measures, emphasis and actions made by these universities authorities towards orienting the students against this vice of exam malpractices and the implications of indulging in any act that may constitute exam malpractices. Therefore, adequate modalities for conduct, invigilation and supervision of exams and meting out the most appropriate punishments to apprehended culprits to serve as deterrent to others who may intended to involve in any

act of exam malpractice (Badejo & Gandonu, 2010). When one is caught in such an act, he/she is not been forwarded to the appropriate body for prosecution and punishment. These culprits are either merely given new answer sheet to begin afresh, sent out of the exam immediately they were caught with their scripts accepted for grading, invigilator signing the culprit's script with points deduction inscription or their script torn in piece. A vast majority of exam malpractice cases are forgiven for humanitarian sakes (sheer pity). When cases are eventually reported to examination and ethics and a panel is set-up, the panel simply squashes it since witnesses may fail to appear and testify to give the panel moral evidences and standing for appropriate recommendations, thereby discourage other invigilating staff from handing over subsequent culprit to the men of security. In cases where the panel investigates the incidence and make recommendations, these recommendations are not sincerely followed. This could be the reason for no reliable records of exam malpractice offenders and their punishments in Nigeria universities and yet this crime of exam malpractice is

ubiquitous in Nigerian universities or tertiary institutions generally.

discuss their academic policy with their students at the course, departmental, faculty / college and school levels.

Recommendations

As captured by Emaikwu (2012), provisions should be made for adequate teaching resources, entrenching the inculcation of moral values and instructions, not over emphasizing on paper qualification, intensive guidance and counseling services be established and sustained, all the relevant available laws enacted to forestall exam malpractices be judiciously implemented to make deterrent impression. It is the researcher's point of view that most very important exams be made computer based or well-paid and motivated invigilators in a ratio of one invigilator to thirty-five candidates in a well-spaced sitting arrangement. Universities should strongly prohibit the use of senior students to invigilate the junior ones since these student invigilators are very easily compromised. Periodic orientation of new students, reorientation of all students and workshops be mounted for both students and lecturers on the importance of academic integrity and that, lecturers should take necessary time to

Finally, the researcher suggests that universities be mandated to document all incidences of exams malpractices, listing the names of those involved (whether staff or student), the forms of malpractices and their resultant punishments. This document must be forwarded to the Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC) to be published quarterly or annually and in the national dailies. This approach will certainly checkmate the rising trend, restore academic integrity and reliability of the nation's university graduates. It will also help evaluate the viability of existing policies to know when a review is required.

Conclusions

The current study has reviewed pertinent literatures on exam malpractices which have sufficiently supplied evidences to enable the strong assertion that examination malpractice is domicile in our Nigerian educational system and profound among the universities. The result of the study established that exam malpractice is highest

in public conventional universities, moderate in unconventional or distant learning universities and least among private conventional universities. This doesn't mean that teaching and learning is utmost in the private conventional universities but because the managements' policies on exam malpractices are adhered to in its strictest sense. And to have been able to reduce it significantly, apart from the teaching and learning, students are not allowed to engage in too many social activities that eat up useful study time. The exam halls conditions in private universities are not as porous as it could be in public conventional universities.

In unconventional university like the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), examinations for first and second year students are electronic (computer based) and from third year up to the post-graduate levels take hand written (Pen-On-Paper) exams. The use of electronic exams method must have been responsible for the relatively lowered level of exam malpractice. Another factor is that at all study centers students are adequately searched before entering the exam hall by

staff and at times by security personnel. In both private conventional universities and unconventional one(s) where the students' population for each exam is not too many for the staff strength to handle has shown lower prevalence of exam malpractices.

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