



**A SOCIOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE CAUSES, EFFECTS AND SOLUTIONS
TO THE PROBLEM OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE: THE OPINIONS OF THE
CRAWFORD UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract: *With 90 students sampled from Crawford University in Nigeria, this research article investigated the causes, effects and solutions to the problems of examination malpractice in Nigeria. Undue emphasis on certificates, fear of failure in examinations, inadequate preparation for examination, teachers' related factors and societal factor of corruption were identified as the causes of examination malpractice. Discouragement of the hard working life style, turning out half –baked graduates, denial of innocent students the opportunities to be admitted into tertiary institution, decrease in job efficiency and lowering of the standard of education were the effects cited by the participants. The participants were of the opinions that de-emphasizing paper and certificate qualifications, proper funding of the educational system and helping the students to gain self –confidence would go a long way in putting an end to the menace of examination malpractice in Nigeria. Based on their opinions, it is recommended that government should set up a committee that would see to the emphasis on skills, competence and intellect of the individuals as a way of rating them, rather than on certificates alone. 70% for skills, competence and intellect and 30% for certificates in rating was advocated. Proper funding of the educational system by the government and well- to-do people in the society and proper guidance and counseling of the students were also part of the recommendation made in the efforts to sanitize the educational system in Nigeria from the problem of examination malpractice, which has eaten deep into the bone marrow of Nigerian educational system.*

Keywords: *Examination Malpractice; Paper Qualification; Students; Educational Sector and Schools.*

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INTRODUCTION

The social problem of examination malpractices has become a giant evil which is very difficult to combat in Nigerian education sector. It is a problem which has eaten deep into to the bone marrow of Nigerian educational system from the primary school level to the tertiary institutions of learning. It is a problem which has created a serious headache for the concerned educational stakeholders in the society. The government, corporate examination bodies, right thinking parents, law abiding students and honest citizens are alarmingly concerned with the problem as a result of the evils inherent in the problem of examination malpractices.

The problem of examination malpractices needs constant examination and re-examination. More causative factors, the forms it takes, its effects and the suggested solutions are being added every time to the ones that had been discovered in the past.

This paper investigated the causes, effects and solutions to the problem of examination malpractices with a focus on the survey conducted among the undergraduate students in Crawford University, Igbesa Ogun State, Nigeria. More causes, effects and solutions were discovered which were discussed in this paper

LITERATURE REVIEW

The problem of examination malpractice has become a widespread social phenomenon to the extent that there is no examination anywhere at all levels and outside the formal school system which does not exhibit any one form of sharp practice or the other (Jimoh, 2009). When examinations are set, rules and the code of conduct, which candidates are expected to follow in that examination, are provided for by the body of the examination concerned. The candidates are not expected to do or engage in any activity that would make the essence of the evaluation to be defeated. The candidates are not expected to take into examination hall any material considered to be of advantage. They are not allowed to solicit for any form of information from a colleague (Asinya, 2012).

Every examination season, however, witnesses new and ingenious methods of cheating. The examination process has been endangered to the extent that certification has lost its credibility in the country. Though examination malpractice is neither a recent phenomenon nor is it peculiar to Nigeria or Africa, the alarming rate of increase is a global issue (Jimoh, 2009).



Examination malpractice can be defined as any behaviour by any candidate or anybody saddled with the responsibility of the conduct of examination, before during or after the examination, that goes against the rules and regulation governing the conduct of such examination (Jimoh, 2009). It is an improper or dishonest act that has to do with examination with an attempt to secure unmerited advantage. It is a massive and unprecedented abuse of rules and regulation pertaining to internal and public examination, starting from the construction of such examination, through the taking of the examination, their marking and grading, to the release of the results and the issuance of certificates (Ifeakor and Anekw, 2010). Examination malpractice can also be viewed as any dishonest or unauthorized action or deed committed by a student on his own or in collaboration with others (Onuka and Durowoju, 2013). It is any unfair act that is intended to enable an examinee score more marks than what is natural ability and honest efforts would enable him (Okendy, 2012). The problem of examination malpractice has become so prevalent that it has, in recent times, become an annual ritual both in internal and external examinations (Ifeakor and Anekwe, 2010)

Many people have been identified as agents of examination malpractice in our society: teachers, parents, examination supervisors and invigilators, security men, guardians, students, schools managements and their staff and examination officers (Onuka and Durowoju, 2013).

There are many notable reasons why the social problem of examination malpractice is very rampant in our society. Aderogba (2011) identified poor economy, the urge for credentials rather than education, system error, loopholes, teachers' status, upbringing of the children, parents and family history, poverty, frustration, pride, quest for paper qualification and desire to be in business by proprietors of private schools and colleges as the prime factors which cause the problem of examination malpractice.

Jekayinfa et al (2011) argued that there is an increase in moral problems in the Nigerian society, and as a result of this moral laxity, some individuals and institutions with moral problems are known to have aided and abetted frauds during the public examinations and the private ones. Moreover, the craze to obtain certificates from institutions of higher learning is another factor which generally makes students to be involved in examination dishonesty.



In more comprehensive way Jimoh (2009) explained that breakdown in the value system in Nigeria is a primary cause of examination malpractice. According to him, Nigerian value system has broken down completely, and so adults and youths alike act without moral scruples. Jimoh (2009) argued further that anomie situation in Nigeria is another factor which has necessitated the problem of examination malpractice. The societal emphasis on success-goals, irrespective of the means employed in achieving these goals, has pressurized some participants in the education industry to strain toward anomie by resorting to the use of illegitimate procedures in achieving success in examinations.

Closely related to the problem of moral laxity, as a cause of examination malpractice, is the greed for money. The monetary rewards accruing to participants of examination malpractice is enormous and unimaginable (Jimoh, 2009), Oduwaiye (2005) pin-pointed lack of adequate preparation for examination, poor school facilities, poor seating arrangements, socio-economic factors, certificate syndrome, political undertone, proliferation of private schools, poor invigilation procedure, supervisory role of school administrators and non-application of examination laws as the causative factors of the problem of examination practice in Nigeria. Asinya (2012) argued that the causes of examination malpractice are borne out of the attempt to avoid failure and consolidate one's excellent performances, and the financial greed on the part of school and examination boards' officials.

Finally, Ojo and Fadugba (2011) identified a parental factor as a cause of examination malpractice. The authors argued that parents may persuade their children or wards to indulge in examination misconduct which can be linked to warm and supportive relationships between them and their parents. Mothers, according to Ojo and Fadugba (2011), may easily influence their children based on a solid relationship between them. The parents may provide their children money for mercenaries, purchase of leaked papers and payment of fees for special centres, where leakages of papers are expected.

One may ask; which forms do examination malpractices take? Many forms of examination malpractice have been identified and more are still been discovered as new means or ways (especially technologically) emerge.

Onuka and Durowoju (2013) identified lateness of invigilators and supervisor to exam hall, lateness of students to exam hall, undue favouritism from invigilators to students, leakage of question papers in the process of setting, printing, packaging, storing and distribution,



impersonation, disclosing candidate's identity on answer booklets and bribing or influencing staff invigilators and examiners, allotment of choice examination centres, supervisors demanding for particular centres, leaking information about question papers, using of mobile phone during examination, smuggling of answer books in or outside the examination centre, tearing of examination questions, tearing of examination answer sheet, writing of answers on the chalk board during examination and dictating answers during examination, as forms of examination malpractice.

Okendu (2012) also argued that some teachers and invigilators apply the negative type of malpractice by throwing away the scripts of hated students, deflating the scores of such students. Oduwaiye (2005) in her article listed stealing, impersonation, disorderliness, cheating, conspiracy and aiding, forgery of result slip, giraffe, lap topping, machinery, microchip and smuggling of answer scripts into examination venues, as the forms which examination malpractice takes.

Finally, there is a form called "Sexually Transmitted Degrees" where we have multitudes of bankers, engineers, lawyers, accountants, economists to mention but a few who flaunt diplomas and degree certificates that were priced and bought (probably with sex) rather than earned through hard work (Asinya, 2012).

There are many monumental effects of examination malpractice on the individuals, government, examination bodies and the entire society at large. Aderogba (2011) argued that most critical effects of the miscreant behaviours of examination, malpractice are: hooliganism, forgery, thugery, cheating and abetting, stealing and burglary, corruption, unsustainable education, unsustainable community and nation, waste of resources and others.

Jekayinfa et al (2011) were of the opinion that examination malpractice erodes the basis of certification, which is both in learning and character, and falsely confers honour on those that are not due for such honours. On his own, Jimoh (2009) explained that examination malpractice would lead to waste of resources by the examination bodies concerned, render the goals of education invalid, lead to irreversible loss of credibility for the country both nationally and internationally. Finally, the youths, who achieved their ambition via by academic fraud and dishonesty will sow and nurture this fraudulent behaviour in any organization they find themselves.



Ifeakor and Anekwe (2010) have identified: loss of self-confidence on the part of the students, loss of honesty and integrity by students, loss of trust in the examination system; obtaining underserved qualification and increase in cost of conducting examination, as the devastating effects of the examination malpractice.

Onuka and Durowoju (2013) observed perpetual condemnation of the students consciences, possibility of unfulfilled dreams and vision (if the students are rusticated from school or have their appointments terminated at the working place), the tendency to become more criminally hardened in the future, lost of ability to study or work hard in their studies and irreparable damage done to the image of the parents as well as the family, as the destructive effects of the examination malpractice. Furthermore, the graduates produced through examination malpractices will lack the knowledge, skill and technical – know – how to explore and develop all the resources of the nation (Onuka and Durowoju, 2013).

Asinya (2012) contented that the effect of examination malpractice is poor character molding, which is a total departure from the culture of the school, world over. Moreover, students who engaged in examination malpractice have passed through the school but the school has not passed through them.

Many literatures have proffered solutions to the problem of examination malpractice. However, it is very imperative, as part of this work, to examine some of them, provided by the educationists, lecturers and researches that have written extensively on the issue.

Jekayinfa et al (2011) anchored the solution to the problem of examination malpractice on revitalization of the social moral values in the society. They argued that moral values must be taught to the students. Students must be taught honesty, fairness, self-discipline, compassion, prudence and the democratic values which are procedural values in the society.

Onuka and Durowoju (2012) argued that to solve the problem of examination malpractice, the government must introduce effective and comprehensive legislation, providing for stringent penalties against the use of unfair means in examination. Moreover, they advocated that examination bodies should assist in building large examination halls in the society. Onuka Durowoju (2013) also argued that teachers and lectures must be well remunerated, well equipped in their works and that the teachers/lecturer must work for their consciences.



Finally, Jimoh (2009) identified the following as the solutions to the problem of examination malpractice:

1. Sincere implementation of legislation, by government and other agencies.
2. Empowerment of teachers.
3. Less emphasis on certificates and paper qualification.
4. Improved funding of the education sector.
5. Campaigns and seminars on the dangers of examination malpractice
6. Special welfare package for examination officials.

METHODOLOGY APPLIED

1. Research Design: This research employed survey research because it involved the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to question (Schutt, 2004). Questionnaire was the only instrument used to collect data from the respondents. The questionnaire forms an integral whole and the questions were weaved together so that they flow smoothly (Neuman,2003)
2. The population and the sample size: There were 1,030 students in the entire university by the time this research was carried out. However, out of the over one thousand students, only 96 students formed the sample size.
3. Sampling Technique: A Non-probability sampling technique was used to select the 90 students who eventually participated in the study. Under this non-probability sampling technique, accidental sampling method or convenience sampling method was made use. They (the samples) were cases that were convenient for the researcher. They were available subjects or group of people that were readily accessible to, and therefore convenient for the researcher (Adler and Clark 1999; Neuman 2003).
4. Technique of Analysis: 5 point Linkert scale was used for most of the questions in the questionnaire. For the technique of analysis, simple percentage was used. In doing this cell frequencies were converted into percentages (Schutt, 2004). Moreover, the hypothesis that was tested was done using Chi- Square Test
5. Hypothesis : The Hypothesis below was tested:
Ho: There is no significant relationship between examination malpractice and the turnout of incompetent University Graduates.



The above is a tentative statement about empirical reality involving a relationship between two or more variables (Schutt, 2004)

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The data analyses and interpretations were based on the information and the data supplied by the 90 students who filled the questionnaires administered.

The table below shows the data presentations and analyses of some variables in the questionnaire:

Table 1 table on the socio-bio data of the respondents:

	Variables	Frequencies	Percentages
1	Sex Male Female Total	 54 36 90	 60.00 40.00 100.00
2	Age 14-18 19-24 25-28 29 above Total	 21 60 9 - 90	 23.30 66.70 10.00 - 100
3	Marital Status Single Married Total	 86 4 90	 95.60 4.40 100.00
4	Religion Christianity Islam Total	 81 9 90	 90.00 10.00 100.0

Source: Researcher Survey 2013

The table above shows the socio-bio data of the respondents. A cursory look at the table shows that under the sex variable 54 respondents (60%) were male while 36 respondents (40%) were female. Age was the next variable examined. The data clearly shows that 21 respondents (23.3%) were within the age range of 14-18 years, 60 respondents (66.7%) were within the age range of 19-24 years, 9 respondents (10%) were within the age range of 25 -28 years and no respondent was 29 years and above. The age distributions reflected the educational policy in Nigeria, regarding the age of admission into Nigerian tertiary institutions of learning. The majority between 19-24 years and those between 14-18 years shows that most of the students in Nigerian Universities especially the private universities



were young ones who were at their prime age as obtainable in some other countries of the world.

Marital status was another variable examined in the research. The marital status distribution shows that 86 respondents (95.6%) were single while 4 respondents (4.4%) were married. The majority who were single shows that those in the university have not matured to take up the marital responsibilities. Although, they may be mature physically but were not economically. The students were not mature economically to cope with the economic demands of the marriage. Most of them were still under parental care or tutelage.

Lastly, the religion variable was examined. The breakdown shows that 81 respondents (90%) were Christians and 9 respondents (10%) were Muslims. The reason for this was that this private University is a Christian faith university. Many adherents of other religions may not favour sending their children or wards to a Christian faith based universities on the ground that such children or wards may be converted to Christianity. Hence most of the students were Christians.

The research also took into consideration the program of studies of the students sampled to take part in the research: the break down shows that 11 students (12.2%) were reading Accounting, 9 students (10%) Banking and Finance, 2 students (2.2%) were reading Biochemistry, 8 students (8.9%) Business Administration, 9 students (10%) Computer Science, 15 students (19.7%) were reading Economics, 4 students (4.4%) Geology and Mineral Sciences, 7 Students (7.8%) were reading Industrial Relation and personnel Management, 3 students (3.3%) were in Information and Communication Technology, 2 students (2.2%) were in Microbiology, 7 students (7.8%) were in Marketing, 1 student (1.1%) was reading Physics and Electronics, 5 students (5.6%) were in Political Science and International Relation and finally 7 students (7.8%) were reading Sociology as a course of study.

The research investigated from the respondents the causes of the problem of examination malpractice in Nigerian Society. Emphasis on paper qualification was the first cause examined. From their responses, 11 students (12.2%) strongly agreed that emphasis on qualification causes examination malpractice. 46 students (51.1%) agreed, 10 students (11.1%) disagreed while 18 students (20%) were undecided. The majority who strongly



agreed and agreed all together 57 students (63.3%) is a strong indication that undue emphasis on paper qualification can cause examination malpractice.

Fear of failure is another cause of examination malpractice examined. 27 students (30%) strongly agreed that the fear of failure accounts for some students' involvement in examination malpractice. 39 students (43.3%) also agreed with the statement. However, 8 students (8.9%) strongly disagreed, 11 students (11.2%) disagreed while 6 students (6.67%) were undecided. The majority who strongly agreed and agreed, 66 students (73.3%) clearly shows that majority of the students subscribed to the belief that fear of failure may necessitate the involvement of students in examination malpractice.

Inadequate preparation is another cause of examination malpractice examined. 27 students (30%) strongly agreed that if the students fail to prepare for examination it may lead to the problem of examination malpractice. 39 students (43.3%) also agreed with this statement. However, 6 students (6.7%) strongly disagreed and 16 students (17.8%) disagreed. 2 students (2.2%) were undecided. Putting the data together, 66 students (73.3%) strongly agreed and agreed and they formed the majority of the entire data. It can be inferred, therefore, that inadequate preparation would engineer the problem of examination malpractice.

Teacher related factors like poor teaching skills, laziness of the teachers, unfriendliness etc was also considered. 17 students (18.9%) strongly agreed that those factors mentioned would encourage examination malpractice. 32 students (35.6%) also agreed with those mentioned factors. 10 students (11.1%), however, strongly disagreed, while 22 students (24.4%) disagreed. Finally 9 students (10%) were undecided. We discovered that 49 students (54.5%) strongly agreed /agreed. The students formed the majority and this confirmed that teacher related factors mentioned earlier on can lead to the problem of examination malpractice.

Finally, societal related factor of endemic corruption was also examined. 20 students (22.3%) strongly agreed that corruption in the Nigeria society really assisted in causing the problem of examination malpractice. 26 students (28.9%) also agreed with the statement. However, 7 students (7.8) strongly disagreed and 23 (25.6%) disagreed. Finally, 14 students (15.6%) were undecided. A critical look at the data shows that majority of the respondents



subscribed to the agreement (46 students: 51.2%) and may be inferred that the corruption in the Nigerian society has really fueled the problem of examination malpractice.

The effects of examination malpractice were also critically examined. 73 students (81.1%) eventually signified their agreement with the statement that: examination malpractice discourages hard work. The offenders of examination malpractice cannot be said to be working. Students that were not hard working would always look for a way through the back door. Moreover, when the students who cheated in examinations excelled than those who were innocent, the innocent ones may be discouraged in the nearest future from being hard working. Examination malpractice may eventually produce half-baked graduates: 72 students (80%) overwhelmingly agreed that the problem of examination malpractice will lead to turning out of graduates that are not competent enough to excel in the labour and economy market of the country. In a related issue, 70 students (77.9%) were also of the opinion that examination malpractice would also decrease job efficiency. Students who have cheated in examinations may not have acquired necessary skill that can be efficiently put to use when they secure job. The daily news in the media, carry the information that most of the Nigerian graduates are not competent enough to perform skillfully and efficiently when employed in the labour market.

Another effect of examination malpractice is that it denies the innocent students opportunity of securing admission to tertiary institutions. 62 students (69.0%) were of the opinion that innocent students are being denied admission to tertiary institutions as a result of the examination practice. The available admission slots in the tertiary institutions were being unjustifiable taken by the offenders of examination malpractice that secured undue advantage over other students during the examination.

Finally, 70 students (77.8%) affirmed that examination malpractice would lower the standard of education in Nigeria. Examination malpractice can be pointed out as a strong factor that lowers the standard of education. Standard of education connotes “excellence in the services and products of educational programmes”. Standard means that the educational programmes are conducted on worthy and uncompromised academic principles and practices, that are geared towards equipping learners with knowledge and skills that can make them functional in the nation’s socio-economic sectors “(Ifeakor and Anekwe,



2010). When examination malpractice is allowed, the above statement cannot be achieved in a meaningful society.

Finally, we selected some possible solutions to the problem of examination malpractice in the society and requested our student participants to say their views on them. When data were sorted out, we discovered that 65 students (72.3%) advocated that if the country educational and job policies lay less emphasis on certificates and paper qualification, but strongly emphasis on skills and competences of the people in employment sector and in placing the people on social hierarchy, the problem of examination malpractices would be eliminated in our society.

Constant improvement in the funding of the educational sector is another solution that would alleviate the problem of examination malpractice. 62 students (69.0%) agreed with the above stated solution. When there is enough funding in the educational sector, our schools would be better equipped and the teachers and lecturers would be able to deliver effectively. The teachers /lecturers under these funding, must be adequately remunerated to boost their morale for outstanding delivery of their best skills and qualities.

Finally, if the psychological principles of self- confidence are instilled in the students, the fear that may lead them to be involved in the act of examination malpractice would not exist. 67 students (74.5%) were also of the opinion that self-confidence in every candidate /student in every examination would control the menace of examination malpractice. The students must be taught that: 'when there is a willing spirit there is a way to success'. Self – confidence must be taught to the students.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Only one hypothesis was tested in this research work.

H0: There is no Significant Relationship between Examination Malpractice and the turnout of incompetent University Graduates

H1: There is a Significant Relationship between Examination Malpractice and the turnout of incompetent University Graduates.

The chi-square test was applied to test the hypothesis



Table 2 : Do you agree that examination malpractice produces incompetent graduates

Levels	SA	A	D	SD	U	Total
100	13	20	2	1	2	38
200	4	10	1	1	1	17
300	5	5	4	1	2	17
400	10	10	1	1	1	18
Total	27	45	8	4	6	90

Source: Researcher's survey, 2013

SA = Strongly Agreed, A= Agreed, D = Disagreed,

SD = Strongly Disagreed and U = Undecided

Expected Frequency Column total x Row total: Grand total

Levels	SA	A	D	SD	U
100	3 x 27/90 11.4	38 x 45/90 19.0	38 x 8/90 1.69	38 x 4/90 2.53	38 x 6/90 2.53
200	17 x 27/90 5.1	17 x 45/90 8.5	17 x 8/90 1.51	17 x 4/90 0.76	17 x 6/90 1.13
300	17 x 27/90 5.1	17 x 45/90 8.5	17 x 8/90 1.51	17 x 4/90 0.76	17 x 6/90 1.13
400	18 x 27/90 5.4	18 x 45/90 9.0	18 x 8/90 1.6	18 x 4/90 0.8	18 x 6/90 1.2

When the data were computed, the computed value of chi-square (χ^2) = 915.37 is greater than the critical value of (χ^2) = 21.0261 at 5 % level of significance for 12df.

Decision: We accepted the alternative hypothesis (H1) and rejected the null hypothesis (H0). Therefore, there is a significant relationship between examinational practice and the turnout of incompetent University Graduates

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This research has vindicated that emphasis on certificate and paper qualifications, fear of failure, inadequate preparations for examination, teachers related factors i.e. poor teaching, teachers' laziness, teacher's unfriendliness, and other societal related factor of corruption were cogent among other factors which cause the problem of examination malpractice. Aderogba (2011); Jekayinfa et al (2011); Jimoh (2009); Oduwaiye (2005) and Asinya (2012) also confirmed these causative factors.

The effects of examination malpractice identified in this work are: discouragement of the hard working life style; turning out of half baked or even non-baked University graduates, denial of the innocent and hard working students the opportunities of being admitted to



tertiary institutions on the platform of fair play and the lowering effect on the standard of education in Nigeria.

In area of solutions to the problem of examination malpractice, we discovered that if less emphasis can be laid on paper or certificate qualification and strong emphasis is placed on the acquired skills and competence of the people, the problem of examination malpractice would be solved to some extent. There were stories of people who graduated with lower grades but performed skillfully and competently than some who graduated with very high grades.

Secondly, constant funding of the educational sector by the government and philanthropists in our society should be encouraged. If the educational sector is supplied with all the necessary needs, it would give necessary intellectual, moral, skills and educational needs to the students and such students would be better equipped with all important things required to undergo examination without any foul play.

Finally, self-confidence in students would also help in solving the problem of examination malpractice. When there is self confidence, the students would approach any examination with high spirit of competence and success oriented will.

In conclusion, the problem of examination malpractice should not be taken with levity because of its devastating effects on the entire society. Honesty, which is the best policy, must reign supreme in our educational system for the sake of our society of today and tomorrow.

It is therefore recommended that the government should set up a powerful government committee that would look into the process of de-emphasizing paper and certificate qualifications as ways of rating people's skills and competences as well as find the alternative ways of rating people based on what they can give out in terms of skill, intellect and competence. It is advocated that skills and competence should take 70%, while paper qualifications should take 30%.

We also recommend that government and individuals who are well to do in the society should assist in funding the educational sector so that there would be enough resources to revive and revitalize the educational system.

Finally, government should make it compulsory for every educational institution to have qualified guardians and counselors that would be assisting the students to solve any



psychological or mental problem they may have. Such experts must assist the students to solve the problem of examination phobia that may warrant them indulging in examination malpractice. The suggested solutions in other literature would also be of help in eradicating the problem of examination malpractice in our beloved country.

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