

**PSYCHOSOCIAL CORRELATES OF EXAMINATION
MALPRACTICE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOLS STUDENTS**

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Psychosocial Correlates of Examination Malpractice Among Secondary Schools Students

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Abstract

This is a correlational study designed to determine psychosocial correlates of examination malpractices among secondary school students in Ughelli North Local Government Area of Delta State. The population of the study consisted of 6,252 senior secondary school (II & III) students in all the 25 Public Secondary schools in Ughelli North Local Government Area. However, a sample of 400 students in SS II and III were drawn from 8 secondary schools. The sample was obtained through purposive and proportionate random sampling techniques. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the conduct of the study. The instrument used for data collection Psychosocial Correlates of Examination Malpractice Questionnaire (PCEMQ) was developed by the researchers. It consisted of eight sections. The instrument was validated by experts in Educational Psychology and Measurement and Evaluation. The resource persons were requested to vet the instruments in terms of suitability and adequacy of the items contained therein. The Cronbach Alpha technique was used to determine internal consistency of the items. However, the overall co-efficient obtained by the mean scores of the subscale is 0.78. Data collected were analyzed using multiple regression for research questions while the null hypotheses were tested using t-value associated with multiple regression at 0.05 alpha level. Results got after data analysis indicated that all psychosocial factors combined (test anxiety, low self concept, stress, study habit, parental influence, gender and peer pressure) correlated positively with examination malpractice among secondary school students; peer pressure had the strongest correlation while stress had the weakest positive correlation respectively. Based on the results, recommendations were made including the need to organize enlightenment programmes for parents and the community on the dangers of examination malpractice.

Introduction

More than ever before, education in Nigeria is suffering from the effect of cheating in examinations. From the basic level education through the secondary to tertiary levels, cheating in examinations has attained a gargantuan proportion that is beyond the comprehension of ordinary mind (Iredia, 2002). Idaka, Idaka and Egbon (2011) opined that one of the major consequence of examination malpractice is that students are awarded grades that do not reflect the true picture of the quantity of attributes they possess.

Academic performance is a measure of the ability of a learner to recall appropriate learned facts and information at a particular time. The degree of recall of learned experiences seem to depend on the influence of some psychological factors. These psychological factors that affect the academic performance of students in Junior Secondary Schools, include, phobia, stress, depression, delinquency and inferiority complex (Uzoeshi, 2005).

Idiaka, Idika and Egbona (2011) asserted that there is a relationship between some psycho-social factors and the tendency to be involved in examination malpractices.

The fear of failing exams produces stress among students. According to Uzoeshi and Iwundu (2002), the mere fact that examinations are approaching triggers off tension and anxiety. They found out that potential stress situations among learners include; lack of time to study, insufficient finance, fear of examination, poor interpersonal relationship, inadequate learning facilities and perceived difficult courses or subjects which leads to poor performance of learners in Junior and Senior Certificate Examinations. Udom, (1986) emphasized that students are prone to cheating and examination malpractice

due to test anxiety they have. Goleman (1995) noted that irrational fear or dread of school situations has led to withdrawal of some young learners from schools. This irrational fear which is described as phobia has contributed to poor performance of students in examinations.

Akpan (2011) and Ajibola (2011) posited that examination is the measurement of proficiency in knowledge and skills, either in oral or written forms and evaluating the adequacy of these properties possessed by candidate. WAEC (2003) defined examination malpractice as any irregular behaviour exhibited by candidates or anybody charged with the responsibility of conducting examination in or outside examination hall, before, during, or after such examination. Ivor (2010) posited that examination malpractice is violation of or infringements on examinations rules and regulations before, during or after the conduct of examination. Animasahun and Ogunniran (2014) stated that Examination malpractice is an act that contravenes the rules and regulations of a particular period of time.

Cornelius-Ukpepi, Ndifon and Erukoha (2012) posited that students with low self-concept are likely to attribute their failings to external factors other than themselves. They perceive themselves as ineffective therefore prone to cheating in examination in order to measure up with those who have high self concept. Ukpong (2000) inferiority complex among students affects their participation in classroom learning. There is a close relationship between self perception and participation in intellectual activities. Negative self concept inhibits an individual's participation in group activities that leads to socialization. Morrison (2001) described self concept as interplay between the individual and the environment.

Most students also have poor reading or study habit. Most of them do not have the orientation of studying at home which may be due to their family background and socioeconomic status of their parent. Isangedighi (1997) found that effective study habit can result in maximal achievement of students in tests and examinations. However, Neil and Fagbemi in Animasahun and Ogunniran (2014) are of the opinion that laziness of students causes

examination malpractice. Due to truancy, difficulty in studying, and spending more time chatting with friends or watching television or films, even the intelligent ones are looking for a way to engage in malpractice during examination because they could not prepare adequately for examination.

This study aims at investigating the extent to which psychological (anxiety, low self-concept/inferiority complex and sociological (parents, teachers, peer group influence, factors relates to examination malpractices.

The family is the single unit of the society. Every individual emanate from the family which is a dominant part of child's environment. The child learns moral, social, emotional and psychological attributions from the family. They learn to love, relates; associate, with others from the family. They also develop ideas of responsibility and aspiration from the experience they gather from the family. The family models the child. However, where there are too much expectation from the parents for the child, this put too much pressure on the child to achieve and please his parents at all cost. Salami (2008) sees parents as the cause of children's engaging in examination malpractice because they fail in their duties of modelling virtuous behaviours in their children. Some of the standards that parents demands from their children are hard or seemingly impossible to achieve. Ezezorgor (2012), Berline (2008) and Emmanuel (2003), asserted that examination malpractice is traceable to parents. They most of the time fail to provide necessary materials that would enable their children to do well in examination. Some of the parents pay for mercenary to write examination on behalf of their children. Some bribe teachers or buy live examination papers for their children. Animasahun and Ogunniran (2011) also stated that parents are too ambitious to their children admitted to tertiary institution and are ready to pay any amount of money to the officials of examination agencies to get favour for their children during examination so that they can pass and have requisite score necessary for admission into tertiary institutions.

Low or negative self concept is an inhibiting factor affecting good performance in examination. Ukpong (2000) opined that inferiority complex

which is as a result of low self concept among students affects their participation in classroom learning. This in turn leads to poor performance in classroom engagements and academic performance. Students with low self concept may be driven to indulging in examination malpractice in order to pass their examination since they do not believe that if they work hard and have self confidence about themselves, they can pass on their own.

Aminullahi (2006) and Dega (1987) found that gender of students influences examination. However, Igborgbor and Igbrobor, (1999) found that there is no significant difference in the proportion of the sexes involved in examination malpractices, but growing up as a male or female child may likely have influence on personality.

Peer pressure in the other hand becomes a very crucial variable when determining factors that facilitate attitude of secondary school students towards examination malpractice. Judy et'al (2002) stated that peer pressure emerges as a potential factor in the adolescent transitional period from childhood to adulthood. They went further to report that peers become more influential in the life of adolescents and dependent on their peers. The pressure to conform to the standards of the group has a strong impact on the behaviour of the adolescents. Komolafe (2004) reported that adolescence period is the stage when adolescent confide in their peers and spend most of their time with them. He referred to the age as the age of terrible teens. Santrock (2006) refer to it as the age of identity, independence and autonomy. There is strong affiliation and attachment of adolescents to their peers. Wikipedia (2010) reporting Sutherland theory stipulates that criminals learn criminal and deviant behaviour from the interactions between individuals and groups and not inherent in the individuals nature. Most of the student's involvements in examination malpractice were most times pressure from their peers.

Students who engage in disruptive acts sometimes result in poor academic performance. Deviant acts in school include; cultism, stealing, violation of school rules, examination malpractice, drug abuse and prostitution.

Such students do not take their studies serious; hence they perform poor in examination. This study aims at investigating the extent to which psychological (anxiety, low self-concept/inferiority complex and sociological (parents, teachers, peer group influence, factors relates to examination malpractices.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which psychosocial factors (test anxiety, low self concept, stress, study habit, parental influence, gender, and peer pressure) combined and independently correlate with examination malpractice among secondary school students.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the work

1. How do psychosocial factors (test anxiety, low self concept, stress, study habit, parental influence, gender, and peer pressure) combined correlates with examination malpractice among secondary school students?
2. To what extent do psychosocial factors (test anxiety, low self concept, stress, study habit, parental influence, gender, and peer pressure) independently correlate with examination malpractice among secondary school students?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level

1. The psychosocial factors (test anxiety, low self concept, stress, study habit, parental influence, gender, and peer pressure) combined do not significantly correlate with examination malpractice among secondary school students.
2. The psychosocial correlates (test anxiety, low self concept, stress, study habit, parental influence, gender, and peer pressure) independently do not significantly correlate with examination malpractice among secondary school students.

Method

This is a correlational study designed to determine psychosocial correlates of examination malpractices among secondary school students in Ughelli North Local Government Area of Delta State. The population of the study consisted of 6,252 senior secondary school (II & III) students in all the 25 Public Secondary schools in Ughelli North Local Government Area. However, a sample of 400 students in SS II and III were drawn from 8 secondary schools. The sample was obtained through purposive and proportionate random sampling techniques. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the conduct of the study. The instrument used for data collection was Psychosocial Correlates of Examination Malpractice Questionnaire (PCEMQ) was developed by the researchers. It consisted of eight sections. Section A contained personal data of the respondents; Section B to Section H contained 10 items each on Test Anxiety; Low Self Concept; Stress; Study Habit; Parental Influence; Gender; and Peer Pressure. The items were responded to on a 4 point rating scale: Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (SA). The instrument was validated by experts in Educational Psychology and Measurement and Evaluation. The resource persons were requested to vet the instruments in terms of suitability and adequacy of the items contained therein. The reliability co-efficient was determined with Cronbach Alpha technique and the following co-efficients were obtained - Test anxiety 0.73; Low Self Concept, 0.79; Stress 0.83; Study Habit 0.71; Parental Influence 0.85; Gender, 0.74; and Peer Pressure of 0.79. However, the overall co-efficient obtained for the subscales is 0.78. Data collected were analyzed using multiple regression for research questions while the null hypotheses were tested using t-test associated with multiple regression at 0.05 alpha level.

Results

Results got after data analysis were presented in the tables below:

Research Question 1: How do psychosocial factors (test anxiety, low self concept, stress, study habit, parental influence, gender, and peer pressure) combined correlate with examination malpractice among secondary school students?

Table 1: Multiple Regression analysis of all psychosocial variables as correlates of examination malpractice

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	SD Error	R Square Change
1	.704 ^a	.870	.495	26.68971	.50

a. Correlates (Constant), test anxiety, low self concept, stress, study habit, parental influence, gender, and peer pressure.

Table 1 showed that all the psychosocial factors (test anxiety, low self concept, stress, study habit, parental influence, gender, and peer pressure) at $p < 0.05$ were significant correlates of examination malpractice at Adjusted R Square of 0.50. This implied that all the psychosocial factors had 50% contribution in the interaction between the coefficients with positive correlates of examination malpractice among secondary school students.

Hypothesis 1: The psychosocial factors (test anxiety, low self concept, stress, study habit, parental influence, gender, and peer pressure) combined do not differ significantly in the extent to which they correlate with examination malpractice among secondary school students.

Table 2: One-Way ANOVA analysis of psychosocial variables correlates of examination malpractices

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	273835.234	7	39119.319	54.917	.000 ^b
	Residual	279237.444	392	712.340		
	Total	553072.678	399			

a. Dependent Variable: EM

b. Correlates: (Constant), Peer Pressure, Low Self Concept, Study Habit, Test Anxiety, Parental Influence, Gender, Stress

Information in Table 2 indicated that the calculated F-value of 54.917 of the psychosocial variables (test anxiety, low self concept, stress, study habit, parental influence, gender, and peer pressure) was greater than the Critical F-value of 1.96 at dfs of 7 and 392 and 0.05 alpha level. The null hypothesis One was therefore rejected. This implied that psychosocial variable (test anxiety, low self concept, stress, study habit, parental influence, gender, and peer pressure) significantly differ in the extent to which they relate with examination malpractice among secondary school students.

Research Question 2: To what extent do psychosocial factors (test anxiety, low self concept, stress, study habit, parental influence, gender, and peer pressure) independently correlate with examination malpractice among secondary school students?

Hypothesis 2: The psychosocial correlates (test anxiety, low self concept, stress, study habit, parental influence, gender, and peer pressure) independently do not significantly correlate with examination malpractice among secondary school students

Table 3: Coefficients of psychosocial factors relating to examination malpractice.

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	68.309	19.787		3.452	.001
1 Test Anxiety	-1.175	.328	-.136	-3.587	.000
1 Low Self Concept	4.027	.351	.530	11.473	.000
1 Stress	.139	.295	.021	.472	.637
1 Study Habit	-1.632	.325	-.199	-5.019	.000
1 Parental Influence	-1.073	.279	-.151	-3.852	.000
1 Gender	-.299	.300	-.043	-.997	.319
1 Peer Pressure	4.277	.364	.466	11.748	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Examination Malpractice
 Table 3 showed that Test Anxiety, Low Self Concept, Study Habit, Parental Influence and Peer Pressure ($p < 0.05$) are significant in the extent to which they relate with examination malpractice among secondary school students.

However, Stress and Gender ($p \geq 0.05$) are not significant in the extent to which they relate with examination malpractice among secondary school students.

Summary of Findings

From the findings of this study, it was found that:

- All psychosocial factors combined (test anxiety, low self concept, stress, study habit, parental influence, gender, and peer pressure) correlated positively with examination malpractice among secondary school students.
- Peer pressure had the strongest positive correlational value followed by Low Self Concept, Study Habit, Parental influence, Test Anxiety, Gender, and Stress which had the weakest positive correlation respectively.
- All psychosocial factors combined (test anxiety, low self concept, stress, study habit, parental influence, gender, and peer pressure) significantly correlated with examination malpractice among secondary school students.
- While Peer pressure had the strongest positive correlational value followed by Low Self Concept, Study Habit, Parental influence, and Test Anxiety, significantly relates with examination malpractice among secondary school students; Gender, and Stress do not significantly correlate with examination malpractice among secondary school students.

Discussion

The extent to which psychosocial factors combined (test anxiety, low self concept, stress, study habit, parental influence, gender, and peer pressure) correlates with examination malpractice was investigated in this study. Findings indicated that all the psychosocial factors (test anxiety, low self concept, stress, study habit, parental influence, gender, and peer pressure) correlated positively with examination malpractice among secondary school students. This finding was corroborated by Udom (1986); Goleman (1995); Cornelius-Ukpepi, Ndifon and Erukoha (2012); Isangedighi (1997); Ezezorgor

(2012), Berline (2008) and Emmanuel (2003); Aminullahi (2006) and Dega (1987) indicating all the psychosocial factors are responsible for examination malpractice at varying degrees.

Findings also indicated that Peer pressure has the strongest positive correlational value followed by Low Self Concept, Study Habit, Parental influence, Test Anxiety, Gender, and Stress and Stress with the weakest positive correlation respectively. It also indicated that stress and gender do not significantly differ in the extent to which they relate with examination malpractices. This is in contrast to Uzoeshi and Iwundu (2002) and Aminullahi (2006) and Denga (1987) who all asserted that gender influences examination malpractice.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. There should be enlightenment programme through the mass media on basic ethical values of self worth, dignity of labour, integrity and personal responsibility.
2. Parents should be models to their children by encouraging them to abhor examination malpractice.
3. Guidance counsellor should be employed to counsel students with low self concept and help students develop study habit and adjust to challenges faced at secondary school education.
4. Guidance counsellor to design strategies to managing students with psychosocial problems.
5. School principals, teachers and guidance counsellor should organize social awareness against examination malpractices.

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