



**PERCEIVED IMPACT OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE ON THE ACADEMIC  
ACHIEVEMENT OF SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS  
IN ENUGU SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
AREA OF ENUGU STATE**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study examined the perceived impact of examination malpractice on the academic achievement of senior secondary schools in Enugu South Local Government Area of Enugu State. Three specific purposes and three research questions guided the study. A survey research design was used for the study. The population of the study consists of all the economics students in the government secondary schools in the study area which is twenty four thousand three hundred and ten (24,310) with a sample size of two hundred and forty (240). The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The data collected was analyzed using mean and frequency table. The result showed that unseriousness among the students and teachers and overloaded syllabus are the root cause of examination malpractice in secondary schools. The researcher recommended that workshop and seminars should be conducted for both the parents and teachers for them to see the need to fight against malpractice. Suggestions for further studies were also made.*

**Introduction**

**Examination System in Nigeria**

The periodic testing and the measurement of students after acquisition of experience is known as examination (Efe 2011). Examination is the pivotal point around which the whole system of education revolves and the success or failure of the system of examination is indeed an indicator of the success or failure of that particular system of education (Olushola, 2013). Examinations vary in style, rigor and requirements. For example, in a closed book examination, an examinee is often required to rely upon memory to respond to certain items, whereas in open book examination, the examinee may use one or more supplementary tools such as reference books or calculators. Examination may be administered formally or informally. An example of a formal examination is the final examination administered by a teacher in the class room while informal

examination would be a reading examination administered by a parent to a child. Similarly, standard examinations are scored in consistent manner while nonstandard examinations are usually flexible in scope and format. Examination could be in written form, multiple choice, completion type, essay, true/false, mathematical question, or performance test. Olushola further submitted that the two basic assumptions of any examination worth its name are that (a) it should be valid and (b) it should be reliable. The two are distinct concepts. An examination is said to be valid if it performs the functions which it is designed to perform while the concept of reliability, refers to consistency of measurement. In actual fact, the prevailing system of examination and its mode of conduct defy both these assumptions. The system has degenerated to an extent that its validity and reliability are questionable. -

Olushola (2013), went further to state that undoubtedly, standards of performance at examinations have declined considerably within the past ten years or there about. So also has every sector of the societal development in the country. The most disturbing aspect of it all is the participation or involvement of school administrators, parent/guardians, and examinations personnel in examination malpractice. The rampant private and special centers for external examination like JAMB, WAEC and NECO are clear manifestations of the involvement of non-school administrators in the perpetration of examination malpractice. A former Nigerian President, Obasanjo, in 2006 stated that by 2010 if educationists and stakeholders did not pay adequate attention on the reorientation and re-channeling of the youth at the post-primary schools to a more acceptable and drastic reduction in examination malpractices, the nation's educational standard is bound to rot in pains. How one comes to acquire knowledge, what one comes to know and why such knowledge is possible is a function of cognitively learning in schools, said Mbanefo (2015). As it is known that learning goes hand in hand with malpractice and misconduct in Nigeria and other parts of the world, the students' cognition is derailed and it is gradually killing the society.

Examination malpractice according to Usman, (2016) 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. Examination malpractice is already becoming a culture in Nigerian educational scene because it is been condoned by most parents, students, teachers and lecturers (Ojerinde, 2015). Students often go into examination halls with pistols and daggers 'to take care' of anyone that would forestall them from cheating. 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. 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. 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, 2019; Ogum, 2016). Cheating in examination has become so 'internalized and legitimized' that some people now regard it as a normal process of passing examination in Nigeria.

The calamity of examination malpractice is not just the havoc it wrecks in our educational system but the gradual introduction of youths into the practice of fraud. 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, 2014). A crisis situation is bound to develop in the educational sector, if the trend is not prevented. Malpractices in examinations have become so widespread that many people doubt the quality of graduates from the Nigerian educational system. 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. The ugly incidence of examination malpractice accounts for the existence of several qualifying examinations in Nigeria such as post university matriculation aptitude tests, job placement aptitude test, among others to authenticate candidates' certificates. Since academic credentials are the only acceptable indices of educational attainment, the school going population now 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 have become a reserved army of the unemployable (Duze, 2013).

There is a general worry about the poor quality of education in Nigeria. The image of Nigerian education has been greatly tarnished as a result of examination malpractice which characterizes the nation's institutions of learning. Maduabum (2019) noted that examination malpractices are noticeable in every state of the federation in Nigeria and in all the school systems. Uzoagulu (2018), affirmed that giraffing, coping, and taking handwritten materials and textbooks into the examination hall rank first among other types of examination malpractices. Onyechere (2016), observed that perpetrators of examination malpractice employ different methods camouflaged' with various code names. He reported that examination malpractice could be caused by far of failure, undue emphasis on paper qualification and lack of resources for teaching and teacher-related factors. Cheating has become a national phenomenon to the extent that forging certificates to gain admission or employment is a usual habit among desperate Nigerians even among the political class. Several members of the legislative and executive arms of government in the last few years have been accused of certificate forgery in Nigeria and some have fallen from grace to grass as a result of examination malpractices. The case of a former Speaker of the House of Representative in Nigeria who falsely claimed to have acquired a degree certificate from University of Toronto but to the utter perplexity of all and sundry, was only a secondary school certificate holder is still fresh in the minds of many Nigerians. Examination malpractice has adverse effects on all facets of society, the individual, the home, the school, the government, the private organization and the international community negatively (Obasi, 2009).

Western education has become synonymous with modern civilization, enlightenment and socialization. This is because the more advanced nations of the world, with their superlative and result-oriented qualitative education have become the unassailable parameters for human transformation, innovation and social change. Education is expected to train the mind of its recipient for effective performance. It equips the individual with the information necessary for high level of human functioning. To be regarded as an educated person, an individual is expected to pass through, the whole process of examination conducted by a competent and recognized body. Adequate and proper acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills in school subjects and disciplines of study is invariably a function of quality education (Okara, 2012). Examination as

part of evaluation is aimed at determining a learner's level of skill acquisition or intellectual competence and understanding after a given training. Evaluation usually enables the teacher to be effectively ready for further teaching as this form of evaluation is often regarded as a feedback. But when examination is not properly conducted, the expected feedback may not result. Consequently the result of such evaluation leads to wrong decision and judgment which affect the teacher, the learner, the entire education industry as well as the society. A reality that can not be ignored is that no matter how lofty, how enviable, how laudable, how gigantic the education goals are, how relevant the school curriculum is organized, if no provision is made for accurate evaluation of learning progress, all these efforts will be a wasteful venture (Duze, 2011). Examination could be conducted for the purpose of selection, classification and certification. For examination to be valid and reliable it has to be administered under conducive and uniform conditions where examinees are made to adhere to stipulated rules and regulations.

In Nigeria the educational system and other systems are crisis-ridden. Nigerian educational system, has degenerated into a decadent, morbid institution plagued with fear of blood-thirsty secret-cult members, drug-driven violence and anarchy as well as rampant cases of examination malpractice. Some Nigerian students have become so wild that they abduct their teachers and even heads of institutions and yet get away with it. Some institutions of higher learning can no longer boldly claim to be the citadel of excellence they have hitherto been noted for in Nigeria. The sanctity of examination process has been trivialized by a lot of malpractice. Some recent researches have shown that majority of students who gained admissions into tertiary institutions in Nigeria are products of examination malpractice (Eba&Emaikwu, 2019).

### **Examination Malpractice**

Olushola, (2013), stated that examination malpractice is an unlawful behavior or activity engaged in by students to have personal advantage in an examination over their colleagues or mates who are taking the same examination. Malpractice could be committed before, during or after the examination by either the students taking the examination or by officials assigned with the administration of the examination. Dike (2017), from the psychological point of view saw examination malpractice as all forms of cheating which directly or indirectly falsify the ability of the students. It refers to counter practice that is against the ethics of examination. It is also an act of disrespect to all rules and regulations guiding the good conduct of any examination or any evaluation process.

Nwankwo, (2019), stressed that examination malpractice is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria, as well as other parts of the world, The first examination malpractice in Nigeria was reported in 1914, when there was a leakage of question paper of the Senior Cambridge Local Examination, The most pronounced malpractice in Nigeria in early examinations was that of 1964 that was tagged "Expo" and subsequently in 1970, 1973, 1974, 1979, 1981, 1988 and 1991 (Oladope 2017). Olushola (2013), went further to use the words of a former Nigerian President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, who said that students in the country perceived education as a means of getting a meal ticket and getting a job. The President further argued that this perception or orientation must change so that students would appreciate the intrinsic value of education, which is the total development of the individual to be able to make meaningful contributions to the family, community and the country at large.



Onyechere (2016), noted in the Annual Examinations Ethics Report that examination malpractice in the country had worsened. He stated that examination malpractice had graduated from acts involving students to ‘an organized crime controlled by syndicates with links in education ministries1 examination boards and education institutions’. The report disclosed that the National Examination Malpractice Index, (EMI), a measure for examination breaches, increased from 6.9% in 2005 to 7.2% in 2006, representing an increase of 0.3% in one year. The report further showed that Borno State led in the NorthEast with an EMI of 17.26%; Abia State led in the South-East with an EMI of 15.11% while Bayelsa State’ led in the South-South with 12.10%. Others were Lagos State in the South-West, 11.95%, Benue State in the North-Central with an EMI of 8.22% and Kaduna in the North- West with 5.21%.

Examination Malpractice is caused by a number of factors all related to moral decadence in Nigeria. Some candidates find that cheating, dishonesty; including embezzlement and stealing of public funds and property do not attract the condemnation and punishment they deserve and therefore see nothing wrong with those bad virtues. Obi and Obiakor, (2021), in a contribution on incidence of examination malpractice in society admitted that it is a reflection of the moral decadence of our country. They supported this by seeing examination malpractice as one of the features of a society that nurtures cheats and mediocre and turns them into celebrities. A lot of unemployed graduates and undergraduates see examination period as an avenue for making money. Some of them refer to the period of WPSSCE and other similar examinations as ‘harvest time’. (News Watch Magazine May 19, 2014).

In the Eastern part of Nigeria, the activities of hooligans which include, gaining entry into examination halls by force as examinations are in progress to remove question paper is another worrisome development. Dare (2013), identified plagiarism as a form of examination malpractice and subscribed that perpetrators of it should be investigated and punished in the same way as cheating in the examination hall.

Plagiarism is the use of another person’s work without appropriate acknowledgement both in the text and in the references at the end of the work. Dare further added that other forms of plagiarism include: writing of project(s), carrying out laboratory analysis or writing report on behalf of a student(s) by a member of staff, co-student or anybody. While we keep waiting on more unknown methods of examination malpractice, stakeholders must hold their heads high to fight this menace headlong.

### **Causes of Examination Malpractices**

The study of Makoju (2014), reported the responses of parents of secondary school students when asked the factors they think encourage examination malpractices in Nigeria? Many parents indicated that questions are not related to the syllabus and as a result examination malpractice is encouraged. The syllabus is developed by Nigeria educational research and development council (NERDC) known as teaching syllabus. Although the syllabus should be common in scope, the report has always been that JAMB syllabus is overloaded and difficult for candidates, so candidates often times find it difficult to cope. This promotes examination malpractices.

Some parents were of ‘the opinion that objective questions encourage examination malpractices. This is because students have developed different skills in using their finger to pass information



to their colleagues on the correct answer in objectives tests. In the same study by Makoju (2014) secondary school teachers were to indicate their views on factors responsible for examination malpractice? Out of 1685 teachers 879 (52.17%) said that students are not ready to learn.

In most public schools, students are seen roaming the streets, some with video games and some playing football. Since they are not ready to learn, the next thing they can do when examination comes is to engage in examination malpractice. Other factors responsible for examination malpractice such as emphasis on paper qualification, parents desire for their children to pass at all cost or means possible. Supervisors and custodians of examination papers are reflection of the wider society. Apart from those two potent factors, another strong reason for examination malpractices is the emphases on paper qualification.

Until less emphasis is laid on paper qualification and we place emphasis on the skills acquire in order to function well in the society, the issue of examination malpractice will persist. The craze for paper qualification is the off shoot of the poor implementation of our National Policy on Education. Emphasis is gradually being removed from paper acquisition to demonstrable skills and academic excellence. Possession of paper qualification not backed up with practical experience to show for it will sooner or later become meaningless.

### **Consequences of Examination Malpractices**

According to Onyali, (2019), examination malpractice indicates a declining quality of education. This implies that the quality of education in Nigeria is low, since involvement in it spreads across the country. This will affect national development adversely. Moreover, those who engage in cheating at a lower level age are likely to continue at higher level of education. When they graduate into the society, their previous attitudes can easily lead them into corrupt practices.

Another consequence is that, people who possess certificates through cheating could use the certificates to secure jobs which they would not be able to perform. Poor performance would lead; to poor productivity. Thus, development and sustenance of human and material resources would be at stake. There have been occasions when students are suspended, examiners are black listed and schools are derecognized as centers for public examinations, as 'a result of one form of malpractice or the other. The steps are meant to serve as deterrent to others.

### **Efforts so Far in Curbing Examination Malpractice**

There are different approaches adopted by different examination bodies, federal, state and local government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and concerned individuals. A good example is the head count in Oyo State where the commissioner for education called a team to schools to ascertain the number of students in each school in Oyo state in a bid to forestall examination malpractices. WAEC also has embarked on public campaign on the effects of examination malpractices and the punishments attached to each offence using handbills, posters, jingles, seminars and workshops. NECO also conducted workshops, seminars and public enlightenment campaign and NGO known as exam ethics project has worked tirelessly on curbing examination malpractices.



Concerned individuals like Jegede (2013), have made effort to check these vices. The federal government in the bid to curb examination malpractice enacted laws prohibiting examination malpractice. The most recent one is the computer based examination conducted by JAMB

**Quality Assurance: a Practical Way out to Examination Malpractice in Nigerian Secondary Schools**

Quality: something good, ideal, or of high standard, Quality assistance: consistent provision and utilization of good and high standard resources to foster effective teaching and learning, in ever' stage and aspect of the educational system. Quality assurance is meaningful when application of its strategy is not differed till the end of an educational programme.

Examination: Test, assessment, evaluation. It is an instrument for assessing individual's skills and knowledge in general, and specific areas of studies and overall academic achievements.

Examination malpractice: a 'misconduct or improper practice before, during or after any examination by the examiners or others with a view to obtaining good results, by fraudulent means.

Input: Human and non-human resources provided into an organization from the beginning of a programme to the implementation stage and to the end of the programme. Process: activities such as teaching, learning and counseling, in which person and the educational institutions engage.

An examination, which can be in essay or objective type, oral or written, theory or practical, constitutes an integral part of the education process. It is conducted in order to determine the extent to which knowledge and skills have been acquired based on examination results, decision could be taken on admission into educational institutions and employment in the labor market. As an instrument for decision making, examination is always prone to fear and anxiety. Many candidates would want to pass the examination by all means. Also many school authorities and parents would want to explore means of getting good grades, for their students and children.

The federal government promulgated laws which stipulated a 21 year jail term for those found guilty of examination malpractice. In spite of these measures, the menace continued to occur in virtually all public and institutionally organized examinations.

This work is therefore geared at examining the effect of examination malpractice on the academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Enugu South LGA.

## **Research Questions**

The following research question were raised to guide the study

1. To what extent are the causes of examination malpractice among senior secondary school students?
2. To what extent are the effects of examination malpractice on the academic achievement of senior secondary students?

3. What are the solutions to the issues of examination malpractice among senior secondary school students?

## RESEARCH METHODS

The chapter discussed is discussed under the following sub-headings; Design of the Study, Area of Study, Population of the Study, Sample and Sampling Techniques, Instrument for Data Collection, Validation of the Instrument, Reliability of the Instrument, Method of Data Collection, Method of Data Analysis and Decision Rule.

### Research Design

A survey research design was used for the study.

The study was conducted in Enugu South Local Government Area of Enugu State. The choice of the area was because of its geographical location. It has other surrounding local governments like Enugu North and Nkanu West. It is a well recognized business area in the state. It also has fifteen (15) government secondary schools.

The population of the study consists of all the senior secondary school students in fifteen (15) Government Secondary Schools in Enugu South L.G.A which is two thousand four hundred (2400) students.

A sample of two hundred and forty (240) senior secondary school students was drawn from six (6) selected schools sampled out of the fifteen government secondary schools in the area of the study. Simple random sampling was used to draw forty (40) senior students from each of the selected six (6) schools giving a total sample size of two hundred and forty (240) senior secondary economics students that was used for the study.

The instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire.

The instrument was validated by three experts

A reliability index of 0.75 was obtained indicating that the instrument was highly reliable.

The questionnaire was administered to the respondents by the researchers. The entire completed questionnaires were collected from the respondents after they have been filled at the spot.

Data were analyzed using mean score

## Results

### Research Question 1;

**What are the causes of examination malpractice among senior students in secondary schools?**

**Table one; Mean response on the causes of examination malpractice among senior students in secondary schools.**

S/N	ITEMS	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	N	ΣFX	$\bar{X}$	Remarks
1.	Paper qualification	140	100	-	-	240	860	3.6	A



2.	Parents desire for their children to pass at all cost	120	120	-	-	240	840	3.5	A
3.	Unseriousness among the students to study their books	180	60	-	-	240	900	3.8	A
4.	Unseriousness among teachers to teach	150	90	-	-	240	870	3.6	A
5.	Overloaded syllabus	200	40	-	-	240	920	3.8	A

From the computed mean in table 1, it shows that items 1-5 have the mean scores of 3.6, 3.5, 3.8, 3.6 and 3.8 respectively which indicated that the respondents agreed on the listed causes of examination malpractice in secondary Schools in the study area.

### Research Question 2

**What are the effects of examination malpractice on the academic achievement of senior secondary school students?**

**Table 2; Mean response on the effects of examination malpractice on the academic achievement of senior secondary school students.**

S/N	ITEMS	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	N	ΣFX	$\bar{X}$	Remarks
6.	Low educational Standard	120	120	-	-	240	840	3.5	A
7.	Graduates produced are half baked	140	100	-	-	240	860	3.6	A
8.	Mass failure	150	90	-	-	240	870	3.6	A
9.	Students will be reluctant to study for exams	180	60	-	-	240	900	3.8	A
10.	Academic achievements of students will decrease	200	40	-	-	240	920	3.8	A

From the computed mean in table 2, it shows that items 6-10 have the mean Scores of 3.5, 3.6, 3.6, 3.8 and 3.8 respectively which showed that the respondents agreed on the listed effects of examination malpractice on the academic achievement of senior secondary school students.

### Research Question 3

**What are the solutions to the issues of examination malpractice among senior secondary school students?**

**Table 3; Mean responses on the solutions to the issues of examination malpractice among senior secondary school students.**

S/N	ITEMS	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	N	ΣFX	$\bar{X}$	Remarks
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11.	Conducting workshops and seminars against exam malpractice	150	90	-	-	240	870	3.6	A
12.	Constant supervision of teachers activities	140	100	-	-	240	860	3.6	A
13.	Bringing laws that prohibits examination malpractice	200	40	-	-	240	920	3.8	A
14.	Enforcing a corporal punishment for anyone caught in the act of malpractice	120	120	-	-	240	840	3.5	A
15.	External supervisors should be assigned during examinations to checkmate both the teachers and students activities in the examination hall.	180	60	-	-	240	900	3.8	A

From the computed mean in table 3, it shows that items 11-15 have the same mean score of 3.6, 3.6, 3.8, 3.5 and 3.8 respectively which shows that the respondent agreed on the listed solutions to the issues of examination malpractice among senior secondary school students.

### Discussion of findings

Findings in table 1 showed that paper qualification, parent's desire for their children to pass at all cost, unseriousness among the students to study their books, unseriousness among the teachers to teach and overloaded syllabus are the causes of examination malpractice among senior secondary school students.

The finding was in line with the findings of Ochuko (2012) who stated that due to the greediness of teachers, they indulge 'themselves in examination malpractice.

Findings in table 2 revealed that low educational standard, graduates produced are half baked, mass failure of students, students will be reluctant to study for exams and their academic achievement will decrease are the effects of examination malpractice on the academic achievement of senior secondary school students.

Findings in table 3 revealed the solutions to the issues of examination malpractice which include; conducting workshops and seminars against exam malpractice, constant supervision of schools and teachers activities, bringing laws that prohibits examination malpractice, enforcing a corporal punishment for anyone caught in the act of malpractice and finally, external supervisors should be assigned during examinations to checkmate both the teachers and students activities in the examination hail.

### Conclusion



Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concluded that examination malpractice has become a menace to the educational system therefore, it is very necessary that both the government and education ministries should wage a war against it so that our educational system will not be affected much.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommended that

- i. Workshop and seminars should be conducted for both the parents and teachers for them to see the need to fight against malpractice.
- ii. Government should enforce a law that will fight against malpractice through law enforcement agencies.
- iii. Teacher's activities in the school and during examination should be supervised by external supervisors.
- iv. Students should be advised to study their books even before examinations so that they will not be dependent on malpractice.
- v. Parents should be advised to allow their children write their exams on their own.

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