

CURBING THE MENACE OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE AMONG STUDENTS IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION USING THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract

Examination malpractices have increasingly become a prevalent means for students to achieve academic success, raising significant concerns about the validity and reliability of their results. This pervasive issue undermines the credibility of educational assessments and poses a substantial challenge for institutions striving to maintain academic integrity. In response, colleges of education are implementing various measures to address this menace. Guided by the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), which posits that intentions significantly influence planned behaviours, this study aims to explore strategies for curbing examination malpractices through the assessment of students' intentions. It is in the light of the above, that this study is carried out to curtail the menace of examination malpractices using the theory of planned behaviour through the use of student intension assessment. The study adopted a descriptive survey design using questionnaires to elicit information from one hundred and fifty (150) students of Federal College of Education (Special) Oyo, randomly selected from 100 level to 300 level. The finding of the study revealed that respondents sampled who had been involved in the examination malpractices did so because they don't want to fail and they were initiated in to the act by their friends. And their actions were backed up with necessary sanctions that led to a change in behaviour. The study also recommends that The Examination Malpractice Act 33 of 1999 be changed to reinstate the provisions of Decree 20 of 1984, which called for twenty-one (21) years imprisonment without the possibility of pardon for those found guilty of conducting examination malpractice. This will serve as a disincentive to students, teachers, security personnel, and other complicit partners in the malpractice industry if it is completely implemented.

Keywords: Examination, malpractices, theory, planned behavior

Introduction

Examination malpractices have been seen as a cancer that is seriously causing menace to the Nigerian educational system as a whole. The issue now is like a detonated bomb in all levels of our education system in Nigeria from primary to tertiary institutions. The abnormality of it has become normal norms which has been part and parcel of school life recently. Examination fraud, as demonstrated by Akaranga and Ongong, (2013) has motivated students to raise their grade using unethical means and tricked the examiner into rating them equal to or better than students who had spent time studying. It has been demonstrated that doing so encourages

students to engage in vices like truancy, stealing, cultism, prostitution, and robbery (National University Commission 2016). In addition, cheating on exams encourages students to be lazy or uncommitted to their academic work. It further solidifies moral bankruptcy among today's student, who will become tomorrow's leaders. This is due to the fact that cheating on exams gives students the chance to learn about and partake in dishonest and fraudulent behaviour. These kinds of students are then likely to act dishonestly while working for any company. Apart from cultism, no other problem has generated more serious concern and discussion among Nigerians in recent times. The most painful aspect of this problem which Ogbaji and Aliawuya (2004) observed that people who are supposed to actively kicked against this evil are instead aiding and abetting it in one way or the other like some parents, lecturers, personnel of examination bodies and administrators. Despite some harsh decisions like cancellation of examination results and expulsion of culprits are taken to curb this bad behaviour, it is still showing its ugly head in the educational system. Examiner misconduct is described by Wilayat (2009) as any willful wrongdoing that violates an examination board's rules. It is improper behaviour on the part of candidates prior to, during, and after the exam with the intent to cheat for a high grade (Fasasi, 2006).

However, conduct relates to how a person behaves toward others, society, or objects, whether it is good or bad, normal or aberrant in accordance with social norms and values (Wilma & John, 2000). This is a behaviour that one person engages in and is audible or visible (Albelto & Troutman, 2002). The school, like any other social institution, does not exist in a vacuum; rather, it lives within a geopolitical and socio-milieu, as seen from the moral tone of the society, according to Itedjere (2006). As a result, actions taken in the course of fulfilling various functional responsibilities and providing services are required to be compliant with and represent the acceptable societal standards and ethos. According to Wilma and John (2000), individual differences, variations in family structure, environmental circumstances, and psychological factors are what explain behavioural differences among people. According to the idea of planned behaviour, which Arjen (2012) advanced, an individual's intention should be a predictor of any specific behaviour they engage in.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) predicts an individual's intention to engage in behaviour at a specific time and place. It posits that individual behaviour is driven by behaviour intentions, where behaviour intentions are a function of three determinants: an individual's attitude toward behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991). This intention is assumed to capture the motivational factors that influence behaviour. They determine people's resilience and determination to achieve a planned behaviour. The stronger the intention to engage in behaviour the more likely would it be performed. Based on the theory of planned behavior, intention can be determined considering; personal attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. Rebecca et al. (2012) studied the theory of planned behaviour in predicting academic misconduct intentions and behaviour. They studied the cheating intentions and behaviour of a sample of 241 business undergraduates. They found that the TPB accounted for 21% of the variance in cheating intentions and 36% of cheating behaviour. The finding of their study was that the TPB model is a valuable tool for predicting cheating behaviours and could further research on academic misconduct.

Many students still argue and emphasize that the escalating causes of examination malpractices in colleges is as a result of undue emphasis on paper qualifications. Apparently examination malpractices, seem to become the most available instrument to pass examinations in school. Therefore, for examination to be valid, reliable and to be used to judge the knowledge and the competence gained by the students in the school, examination must be free, fair and devoid of cheating; but could this be achieved and can the wild beast of examination malpractices among the student be tamed? This is one of the challenges faced by the institution which currently tried to take the bull by the horn by instituting various measures to control examination malpractices in the colleges of education

Given the foregoing, this study is conducted to investigate the threat of examination malpractices and ways of taming it by taking the theory of planned behaviour into account when assessing student intentions. As a result, it adds to the body of knowledge on examination malpractice by empirically answering the following research questions:

1. What factors encouraged students to engage in malpractice?
2. What are the personal attitudes of the student towards examination malpractices?
3. What are the subjective norms of the student towards others who involved in examination malpractices?
4. What are the perceived behavioural controls of the student towards methods of examination malpractices?

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design to investigate examination malpractices among students. This approach was chosen for its effectiveness in capturing the current state of the phenomenon. Gay (2003) described a descriptive survey as a method of gathering information to answer questions about the present status of a subject, while Orodho (2009) defined it as collecting data through interviews or questionnaires administered to a sample population. The design was particularly suited for exploring attitudes, beliefs and behaviours related to examination malpractices, enabling the researcher to collect accurate and relevant data from students at the Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo, in Oyo State, Nigeria. The study focused on all students enrolled in the institution, including males and females from 100 to 300 levels. A simple random sampling technique was employed to ensure equal representation, selecting 50 students from each academic level, resulting in a total sample size of 150 participants. Questionnaires were used as the primary data collection tool due to their affordability, ease of design, and capacity to elicit detailed responses. These questionnaires consisted of closed-ended questions and items rated on a Likert scale, with options such as "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," and "strongly disagree," to align with the study's objectives. Data were collected directly from the students, ensuring that the information was specific to the research focus. Data was analysed, using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods were applied. Descriptive tools such as frequency counts, means, and rankings provided insights into demographic characteristics and other independent variables. This methodological approach ensured the collection of detailed and meaningful data, offering a comprehensive understanding of examination malpractices and their underlying factors.

Results and Discussion

Table1: Distribution of Respondents according to Socioeconomic Characteristics (N= 150)

Socioeconomic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
15-19	112	75.00
20-24	23	15.00
25 and above	15	10.00
Gender		
Male	98	65.33
Female	52	34.67
Parent Level of Education		
Primary	59	39.20
Secondary	44	29.20
Tertiary	5	3.60
No formal education	42	28.00
Location of Residence		
Urban	107	71.33
Peri-urban	36	24.00
Rural	7	4.67
Home type		
Polygamous	48	32.20
Monogamy	102	67.80
Position in the family		
1-4	130	86.67
5-8	14	9.33
9-12	6	4.00
Mothers' Occupation		
Artisans	18	12.00
Traders	105	70.00
Civil Servant	18	12.00
No Job	9	6.00

Source: Field survey, 2024.

Socio Economic characteristics of the respondents

The data presented in Table 1 reveals that (15.0%), and (10.0%) of the students sampled were within the age of (20-24) years and (25 years and above) respectively while (75.0%) of the students which constitute the majority were within the age of (15-19) years. This implies that majority of students sampled for this study were teenager and they were expected to display some characteristics peculiar to their age which might likely influenced their decisions or actions. This corroborates the findings of Anyanwu et al. (2014) that “maturity is positively related to the psychological and cognitive development of students”

Table 1 also shows that majority of the respondents sampled were male constituting (65.33%) of the sampled population while (34.67%) were female.

Moreover, Table 1 again reveals that (39.20%) of the respondent parents sampled completed their primary school education, (29.20%) completed their secondary school education, (3.60%) completed their tertiary education and (28.00%) had no formal education. This implies that majority of the respondent parents sampled were literate and stand a chance of understanding the accruing benefits of Standard education". Table 1 further reveals that (24.0%) of the students residence were located in the Peri-Urban areas, (4.67%) students residence were located in rural area while (71.33%) constitutes the majority of students residence that were located in urban area. The implication of this is that location of residence is likely to influence their attitude and disposition towards the choice of subject they offer in school.

The data presented in Table 1 again reveals that (32.2%) and (67.8%) of the students sampled came from polygamous and monogamy homes respectively. The implication of this is that majority of students sampled came from monogamy homes which is likely to increase the chance of both fathers' and mothers' influence on the students' choice of subjects. According to Casanova *et al.* (2007) and Trusty (2002), "High achieving children tend to come from families which have high expectations for them without clear distinctions of the socio-economic backgrounds." Table 1 reveals that (9.33%) and (4.00%) of the students sampled occupied (5-8) and (9-12) position in their family respectively while (87.67%) of the students which constitute the majority occupied the position of (1-4) in their family. The implication of this is that student position in the family is likely to influence the attention given to them by their parent which in turn can influence the parental influence on their attitude and behaviour.

Table 1 presented the students mothers occupation which reveals that (12.00%), (12.00%), and (6.00%) of the students mothers were artisans, civil servant and jobless respectively while (70.00%) of the students mothers occupation were traders. The implication of this is that their mothers' occupation is likely to affect attention given by their mother which is likely to affect their behaviour in schools.

Table 2: Distribution of the Students based on Involvement in examination malpractices

Involvement in examination malpractices	Frequency	Percentage
Involved	72	48.00
Not involved	78	52.00
Total	150	100.00

Source: Field survey, 2024.

A. Assessment of students intension that lure them to examination malpractice

The data in Table 2 reveals the disposition of the student towards examination malpractices; (52%) of the students that constitute the majority had no involvement in examination malpractices while the remaining (48%) of the students had involvement in examination malpractices. The implication of this is that examination malpractices is still on the rampage due to slight difference noticed between those who are involved and those that are not involved.

Table 3: Distribution of the Students based on motivation for examination malpractices

Motivations	Frequency	Percentage
Fear of failure	72	48.00
Inadequate preparation	70	46.67
Perceived difficulty of examination	72	48.00
Parent's socio-economic condition	45	30.00
Peer influence/pressure	72	48.00

Source: Field survey, 2024.

B. Assessment of students subjective behaviour in checking their actions against examination malpractice

Table 3 further reveals that (45%) of the students were motivated to be involved in examination malpractices by parent's socio-economic condition, (70%) were motivated to be involved in examination malpractices by inadequate preparation and (72%) which constitute the majority of students were motivated to be involved in examination malpractices by fear of failure, perceived difficulty of examination and peer influence/pressure. The implication of this is that the students don't just get involved in examination malpractice but fear of failure, perceived difficulty of examination and peer influence/pressure motivated them and instigated them to get involved in malpractices.

Table 4: Distribution of the Students based on numbers of time they were caught in examination malpractices

Numbers of time caught	Frequency	Percentage
Once	60	40.00
Twice	9	6.00
Three times or more	3	2.00
Not Applicable	78	52.00

Source: Field survey, 2024.

Table 4 further reveals that (40%) of the students had been caught once for examination malpractices, (6%) of the students had been caught twice for examination malpractices and (2%) of the students had been caught three time or more for examination malpractices while (52%) which constitute the majority of students were not involved in the act. The implication of this is that no matter how smart the perpetrators are in act of examination malpractices, they will still be caught one day.

Table 5: Distribution of the Students based on Disciplinary Sanction taking against them

Disciplinary Sanctions	*Frequency	Percentage
Suspension from campus	45	30.00
Course Carryover	72	48.00
Public Embracement (Posting of name on School Website and Notice board)	70	46.67
Handing over to the law enforcement (Police/Civil Defense)	0	0.00
Rustication	0	0.00

Source: Field survey, 2024.

***(Multiple Response)**

Table 5 further reveals that (45%) of the students faced suspension from campus as disciplinary sanction for involving in examination malpractices, (70%) of the students were subjected to public embarrassment and (72%) which constitute the majority of students carried the course over. The implication of this is that the student caught will face severe punishment and sanction.

Table 6: Distribution base on effect of the sanction on students personality on examination malpractices

Effect of the sanction on students personality	*Frequency	Percentage
Loss of self- confidence	72	48.00
Embarrassment	72	48.00
Shame of facing colleagues and lecturers	72	48.00
Loss of dignity and trust	72	48.00
Failure of the course (the initial fear)	72	48.00
Need to prove oneself before acceptance	72	48.00

Source: Field survey, 2024.

(Multiple Response)*D. Assessment of students perceived behaviour after sanction**

The data in Table 6 reveal the effect of the sanction on student personality; all (48%) of respondents that constitute the total number of people who are involved in examination malpractices in the past attested to the fact that examination malpractices brings; loss of self-confidence, embarrassment, shame of facing colleagues and lecturers, loss of dignity and trust, failure of the course (the initial fear) and need to prove oneself before acceptance. The implication of this is that examination malpractices is a shameful act in the society.

Table 7: Distribution of the Students based on Disposition to examination mal practices

Disposition to examination mal practices	Frequency	Percentage
Positive Disposition against Examination Malpractices	0	0.00
Negative Disposition against Examination Malpractices	150	100.00
Total	500	100.00

Source: Field survey, 2024.

Change in behaviour noticed due to application of theory of the planned behaviour of the respondent

The data in Table 7 reveals the disposition of the student towards examination malpractices; all respondents that constitute (100%) of the population all had negative disposition towards examination malpractices. The implication of this is, the students' are really aware that it is wrong to be involved in the examination malpractices and it is also against the acceptable behaviour in the society.

Table 8: Distribution base on student suggested possible way out of Examination Malpractices

way out of examination malpractices	SA	A	D	SD	MS	R
Forbidding the use of electronics, such as cell phones and IPADs.	66	35	45	4	3.08	3 rd
A national campaign promoting honesty and integrity could aid in the fight against leaks and other anomalies.	52	30	55	13	2.80	6 th
Exam officials or outside supervisors should frequently drop by without notice, and bad students should be disciplined.	49	39	57	5	2.88	4 th
Appropriate orientation for new students in every institution upon their resumption on how to avoid examination misconduct and its implications.	82	41	17	10	3.31	1 st
To keep an eye on candidates for exams, testing organizations and educational institution leaders should install covert cameras in hallways.	74	30	38	8	3.14	2 nd
The Lecturers need to be motivated and remunerated satisfactorily and learning environment should be made friendly so that they can do their work adequately and cover the syllabus before examination.	47	45	50	8	2.86	5 th

Key:Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2, Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1, Mean score = MS, Ranking = R

Source: Field survey, 2024.

The information in Table 8 shows that proper orientation on avoiding examination malpractice and its consequences for all new students in all institutions at their resumptions occupied the top spot with a mean score of (3.31) followed by Examination bodies of educational institutions should install covert cameras in exam rooms to monitor examinees, which occupied the second position (3.14) and Forbidding the use of electronics, such as cell phones and IPAD occupying the third position with mean score of (3.08).

Furthermore, the table once more demonstrates that there is need for frequent unannounced visits from examination officials or outside supervisors to the examination hall, and disobedient students should be disciplined, which occupied the fourth position with a mean score of (2.88), while school lecturers should be encouraged and adequately compensated, and the learning environment should be made friendly so that they can complete their work satisfactorily and cover the curriculum before examination, which occupied the fifth position with a mean score of

(2.86), and National campaign on the values of honesty and integrity may help in combating leakage and other irregularities occupied the Sixth position with mean score of (2.80) . This implies that the majority of the sampled students believe that proper instruction on the repercussions of engaging in examination malpractice, the use of secret cameras and prohibiting the use of electronic gadget during examination will do a lot to save the college against the menace of examination malpractices.

Conclusion

The findings of this work revealed that majority of the respondents sampled who had involved in the examination malpractices did so because they don't want to fail and they were motivated in to the act by their friends. This formed their intention going into examination malpractices and due to societal norms that bring embarrassment, disciplinary measure and other sanction which they have not prepared for their action was tamed and bring about a change in behaviour that could be term as perceived behavioural control as opined by the theory of planned behaviour.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) is one of the most influential theories of human behaviour. It posits that individual behaviour is driven by intention, which is influenced by attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control. The research concludes that the menace of examination malpractices was checked using the theory of planned behaviour through the instrumentality of social sanction on such behaviour which brings about a resulting change in behaviour.

Recommendations

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

1. The provisions of Decree 20 of 1984, which called for twenty-one (21) years imprisonment without the possibility of parole for perpetrators of examination malpractice, should be reinstated, to serve as a disincentive to perpetrators such as students, teachers, security personnel, and other complicit partners in the malpractice industry.
2. Tools for effective learning activities should be made available, such as current, high-quality textbooks, modern laboratory equipment, and workshop tools.
3. Our youth should be properly taught moral principles, and parents should be advised to avoid encouraging their kids to cheat on exams.
4. To deter examination officials from accepting monetary and other form of inducements from parents, students, or others who might seek to tamper with the examination process,
5. Teachers and examination officials should receive increment in pay and special welfare packages, so that they will not be enticed with peanuts from perpetrators.

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