

## THE IMPACT OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AS PERCEIVED BY SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NORTH-CENTRAL NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*The study investigated the impact of examination malpractice on academic performance as perceived by secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria. Research questions and hypotheses guided the study. Hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The design was descriptive survey. A sample of 380 senior secondary school students was randomly selected. Tool used was Impact of Examination Malpractice on Academic Performance (IEMAP) questionnaire. ANOVA and t-test were used for data analysis. The findings revealed that examination malpractice was perceived to impact negatively on academic performance of male and female students. It impacted negatively on the academic performance of rural and urban schools as well as on public and private secondary school students. It recommended that the impact of examination malpractice to academic performance be communicated to students, and all stakeholders; it recommends also for continuous orientation and enlightenment of the general populace as a control measure.*

**Keywords:** Examination, examination Malpractice, Academic Performance, Perceive, Secondary school.

### Introduction

Education fosters individual growth across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, aiming to cultivate capable and self-reliant individuals (Obilor & Ikpa, 2020). Its core objective lies in nurturing literacy and self-sufficiency, commencing from the ability to self-learn and culminating in unaided performance in examinations. Examinations serve as a platform for selection, promotion, and certification, assessing the knowledge, skills, and behaviors learned during the educational process. However, despite its usefulness in evaluating both students and educators, examinations are marred by numerous irregularities caused by students, teachers, school authorities, and invigilators (Wilayat, 2012). Okoroafor (2019) highlighted the prevalence of examination malpractice in both urban and rural Nigerian schools.

Examination malpractice, defined by Nwana (2000), involves the abuse of rules governing internal and external examinations, starting from question setting to score assignment, thereby compromising the authenticity and validity of certificates. This misconduct distorts feedback and leads to misleading judgments, impacting learners, educators, and the entire teaching process (Akaranga & Ongong, 2013).

Academic performance forms an integral part of the education process, reflecting a student's competence across assignments, projects, tests, and examinations. It is pivotal in presenting students favorably within educational settings, appreciated by parents, sponsors, students, and teachers as a return for their dedication and hard work (Brew, Nketiah & Koranteng, 2021).

Akinleke (2017) emphasizes that academic performance acts as a necessary benchmark for students, institutions, families, and society, signaling better opportunities, careers, and quality of life. It forms the bedrock of a progressive society, influencing various facets of individual and societal development (Daiz-Morales & Escribano, 2015; Akinleke, 2017).

Furthermore, academic performance encompasses a range of behaviors and competencies, reflecting a student's professional aptitude, grades, and behavioral development (Kumar, Agarwal & Agarwal, 2021). It intertwines various factors such as student characteristics, educational environment, and personal readiness to shape performance (Liem & Tan, 2019).

Academic performance's significance transcends individual achievements, setting a benchmark for national development through education. It necessitates continuous improvement to meet the demands for competent professionals in various industries (Khan & Golder, 2020; Farouq, Chauldhry, Shafiq & Berhanu, 2011).

Examination malpractice has been extensively researched by scholars such as Okafor (2021), Petters and Okon (2014), Fasasi (2008), and Iheanacho and Ekpenyonganwan (2019), all pointing to its detrimental impact on students' academic performance and the broader educational system. These studies underscore its negative consequences across various educational levels, affecting both genders and transcending geographical boundaries.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The research design employed for this study is survey research design. Survey is appropriate for this study because it sought and gathered a large volume of data from a large population using a small representative sample. Survey research design has evolved over the years as a method of conducting researches that are non-experimental in nature. Being descriptive in nature, it tried to describe the characteristics of a chosen sample, study population and the target population.

### **Population of the Study**

The population for this study encompassed all secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria, spanning across six states—Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau—and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The total population of secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria amounted to 574,782. The study targeted senior secondary school students, chosen for their extensive experience within the secondary school environment. Their prolonged exposure to this setting allows them to offer insights into various aspects of school life, drawing from their interactions and experiences within the educational system.

### **Sample Size and Sampling Procedure**

To ensure a representative sample, the study employed a stratified sampling method. This process involved multiple stages: first, the selection of states, followed by

schools, and ultimately the random selection of students. Using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for determining research sample sizes, a sample of 380 was identified as appropriate and utilized. Out of the six states and the Federal Capital Territory constituting North-Central Nigeria, three states—Kogi, Nasarawa, and Plateau—were selected for sampling purposes. A total of 12 schools were sampled, with four schools chosen from each of the three selected states. The sampling strategy included both urban and rural schools within each state. Specifically, two schools were selected from urban areas and two from rural areas in each state. In both settings, data collection involved one private school and one public school to ensure diverse representation.

### **Instrumentation**

Impact of Examination Malpractice on Academic Performance (IEMAP) Questionnaire was used to carry out the study. IEMAP is an instrument designed by the researcher which elicited data from students about the prevalence and impact of examination malpractice on academic performance. It has sections A and B containing 12 items. Section A elicits data on demographic variables while section B elicits data on impact of examination malpractice on academic performance of students.

### **Reliability of Instrument**

The reliability was derived using the Spearman-Brown formula. With the odd-even correlation of 0.6 substituted into the formula, the correlation coefficient of 0.75 was obtained indicating an internal consistency.

### **Data collection Procedure**

During the pilot test, the IEMAP was administered to public senior secondary school students in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. Permission was obtained from the school principal, and a class comprising 36 SSSII students participated. The researcher provided instructions on how to complete the questionnaire, after which the students independently filled out the IEMAP. Following this, 95% of the distributed questionnaires were successfully collected.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

The data collected for this research was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used. The hypotheses were tested at a confidence level of 95%. The p-value was at 0.05 level of significance.

### **Results**

Question One: How does examination malpractice impact the academic performance of secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria?

**Table 1: Impact of Examination Malpractice on Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in North-Central Nigeria**

N = 380

S/N	Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1	It offers students grades they cannot defend	3.31	.92	Agree
2	It stifles critical thinking in students	3.13	.79	Agree
3	It exposes weaknesses in teaching	2.95	.99	Agree
4	It exposes weaknesses in learning	3.11	.93	Agree
5	Future career of students are affected	3.30	.89	Agree
6	It multiplies incompetence of students	3.09	.93	Agree
7	There is lack of competence in subject content	3.03	.93	Agree
8	It reduces the worth of certificates	3.11	1.00	Agree
Sectional Mean		3.13	0.92	

In Table 1, the mean score depicted the impact of examination malpractice on the academic performance of secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria. The sectional mean score for respondents indicated a strong agreement, averaging at 3.13. It was noted that the aspect where examination malpractice offered students grades they couldn't defend ranked the highest with a mean of 3.3. Conversely, the lowest impact was observed in how it exposes weaknesses in teaching, which had a mean of 2.9.

H01: There is no significant difference in the impact of examination malpractice on academic performance of female and male secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria.

**Table 2: t-test on the Difference in the Impact of Examination Malpractice on Academic Performance of Female and Male Secondary School Students in North-Central Nigeria**

Gender	Number	Mean	S. D	t-value	df	Sig(2-tailed)	Decision
Male	171	3.10	.55868	-.734	378	.463	Accepted
Female	209	3.15	.60994				

The analysis presented in Table 2 aimed to examine the disparity between male and female students regarding the impact of examination malpractice on academic performance in secondary schools across North-Central Nigeria. The obtained significance value of 0.46, surpassing the 0.05 level of significance, led to the acceptance of the hypothesis. Consequently, it was concluded that there is no substantial difference between male and female students concerning the impact of examination malpractice on their academic performance in North-Central Nigeria's secondary schools.

H02: There is no significant difference in the impact of examination malpractice on academic performance of private and public secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria

**Table 3: t-test on the Difference in the Impact of Examination Malpractice on Academic Performance of Private and Public Secondary School Students in North-Central Nigeria**

School	Number	Mean	S. D	t-value	df	Sig(2-tailed)	Decision
Public	190	3.17	.60234	1.184	378	.237	Accepted
Private	190	3.09	.57078				

The examination of Table 3 aimed to assess the distinction between public and private schools concerning the impact of examination malpractice on students' academic performance in secondary schools across North-Central Nigeria. The derived significance value of 0.23, surpassing the 0.05 level of significance, led to the acceptance of the hypothesis. Consequently, it was concluded that there exists no substantial difference between public and private school students regarding the impact of examination malpractice on academic performance in secondary schools across North-Central Nigeria.

H03: There is no significant difference in the impact of examination malpractice on academic performance of urban and rural secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria

**Table 4: t-test on the Difference in the Impact of Examination Malpractice on Academic Performance of Urban and Rural Secondary School Students in North-Central Nigeria**

Location	Number	Mean	S. D	t-value	df	Sig(2-tailed)	Decision
Urban	187	3.22	.56136	3.186	378	.002	Rejected
Rural	193	3.04	.59774				

The examination of Table 4 aimed to assess the distinction in the impact of examination malpractice on the academic performance of urban and rural secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria. The derived significance value of 0.002, falling below the 0.05 level of significance, led to the rejection of the hypothesis. Consequently, it was concluded that there exists a significant difference in the impact of examination malpractice on the academic performance between rural and urban secondary schools in North-Central Nigeria.

Ho4: There is no significant difference in the impact of examination malpractice on academic performance of secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria on the basis of state.

**Table 5: ANOVA for the Difference in the Impact of Examination Malpractice on Students' Academic Performance in Secondary Schools in North-Central Nigeria on the basis of State**

School States	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	2.526	2	1.263	3.717	.025	Rejected
Within Groups	128.103	377	.340			
<b>Total</b>	<b>130.629</b>	<b>379</b>				

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The analysis on Table 5 was carried out to test the difference in the impact of examination malpractice on students' academic performance in secondary schools in North-Central Nigeria on the basis of state. With a value of 0.025 (less than the 0.05 level of significance), the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the impact of examination malpractice on academic performance of secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria on the basis of state was therefore rejected and concluded that states differ significantly in the impact of examination malpractice on academic performance of secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The study identified various negative impacts of examination malpractice on the academic performance of secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria. This unethical practice resulted in students obtaining grades they couldn't justify, hindered critical thinking, compounded students' incompetence, and detrimentally affected their future careers. These findings align with Okafor's (2021) research on the causes and consequences of examination malpractice among senior secondary school students and Fasasi's (2008) investigation into quality assurance solutions for examination malpractice in Nigerian secondary schools, both indicating the negative impact of such malpractice on students' academic performance.

Furthermore, the study highlighted that examination malpractice significantly affected both male and female secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria similarly. It impacted the academic performance of male and female students alike. While this research didn't cover age-related impacts, other studies, such as that of Iheanacho and Ekpenyongawan (2019) at the University of Calabar, Nigeria, revealed that both genders engaged in examination malpractice across different academic faculties.

The findings of this study also emphasized the negative influence of examination malpractice on both private and public secondary school students. Additionally, it underscored its adverse effects on the academic performance of students in both rural and urban secondary schools. This implies that the impact was consistent, negatively affecting the academic performance of students in urban as well as rural settings.

The findings highlighted the adverse impact of examination malpractice on the academic performance of secondary school students across the North-Central Nigerian states. This indicates a negative influence on students across all the states in this region. Moreover, the degree of impact varied among these states. This aligns with the findings of Petters and Okon (2014), who conducted research on students' perceptions of examination malpractice in the education system and its implications for quality education. Their study revealed that examination malpractice not only discouraged hard work among secondary school students but also reduced their effectiveness. The implication is concerning; without curbing examination malpractice, there might be a further decline, possibly leading to behavioral deterioration, potentially affecting even high-performing students' motivation to maintain their academic excellence.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the findings, several conclusions were drawn: examination malpractice had a detrimental impact on the academic performance of secondary school students in North-central Nigeria. It adversely affected both male and female students. Moreover, it significantly lowered academic performance in both rural and urban schools. Lastly, the negative impact of examination malpractice extended across both private and public secondary schools in the region.

## **Recommendations**

1. It is crucial to monitor secondary schools in North-Central Nigeria rigorously to minimize the impact of examination malpractice on students' academic performance.
2. Communicating the detrimental effects of examination malpractice to students is essential to discourage engagement in such practices.
3. Continuous and updated communication among education stakeholders is imperative to collectively address the impact of examination malpractice and devise effective solutions.

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