



Predicting Secondary School Students' Attitude Towards Examination Malpractice Using Psycho-Social Variables in Uyo Local Government area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study predicted secondary school students' attitude towards examination malpractice using psycho-social variables in Uyo local government area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The specifically purpose the study was to determine the relationship that exist, the relative and the joint influence of the predictive variables (students' reading habit, peer pressure, self-concept and parental pressure) on the criterion variable (students attitude towards examination malpractice) as well as establish the most influential variable in the prediction model, there research questions were raised and the study adopted a correctional research design. 204 students constituted the sample size of the study, they were drawn from the fourteen public secondary schools in Uyo Educational Committee using simple random sampling technique (lucky dip), Two self-structured questionnaire titled "Psycho-Socio Variables Questionnaire" (PSVQ) and Examination Misconduct Questionnaire" (EMQ) were developed by the researcher and used for data capturing. Both face and construct validity was carried out by the researcher, PSVQ yielded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.84 while EMQ yielded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.71. The findings revealed that that the obtained regression equation model resulting from the set of four predictor variables have a statistical significant influence on the students' attitude towards examination malpractice. The correlation is very strong and positive, the predictor variables accounts for 87% of the observed variance in the criterion variable. Out of the four predictor variables, only one (Parental Pressure) significantly predicts students' attitude towards examination malpractice. Based on the research findings, it was recommended among other things that parents should be educated on the danger of mounting unnecessary pressure on their children academically. They should allowed their children to choose courses based on their passion and interest.

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Keywords: Students' Attitude towards Examination Malpractice, Students' reading habit, Peer pressure, Self-concept and Parental pressure

1. Introduction

Examination malpractice is a serious academic menace that has affects almost all the levels of educational activities in Nigerian and Africa at large. It refers to any act that contrivance the examination ethics either through the students, teachers, invigilators or even the examiner(s) etc it ranges from students brining in any material that could aid or enhance their academic performance, example cheating, impersonation, unethical behaviour outside the examination venue like tracing where the examination scripts.

are being marked for the purpose of inducing the examiner or marker(s) with the sole aim of achieving high grade in the examination. Examination or any form of assessment is an indispensable tool in measuring the extent to which learning has taken place. Ekong, Uya and Ekpeyong (2024) ^[5] defined assessment as a systematic procedure and objective method of determining the extent learning or instructional objectives have been achieved in line with expected change. At the other hand, Ekong (2026) ^[4] defined Examination as a series of tasks or questions given to a learner to ascertain the extent learning has taken place. It is the violation of examination ethics that makes it not valid. Ekong (2026) ^[4] defined Examination Misconduct as any intentional act that is capable of breaching the rules and regulations of examination committed by any party that is related to the examination with the sole aim of maximising grade of the examinees either before, during or after. One of the cardinal uses of examination is for certification. Certification is a prove that the individual bearing it has received formal education and well aim with the required skills that will make them function well in the World of work and for the challenges they will face in society. it is expected that upon completion of an appropriate level of education, an individual with a legitimate and relevant certificate should possess the requisite skills and competencies that align with job expectations.

The presentation of a genuine certificate, duly earned through rigorous educational processes, should ideally indicate that the individual is not only knowledgeable but also capable of performing the tasks associated with their respective job positions. This expectation underscores the importance of examinations, which serve as the established method through which school graduates are evaluated and adjudged qualified to receive their certifications. A well-conducted examination reflects the integrity and effectiveness of the educational system, providing a reliable benchmark for assessing a student's preparedness for their future roles in the workforce. However, it is essential to recognize that the issue of examination malpractice is a pervasive challenge that transcends national borders. For instance, findings from studies conducted in Australia reveal that 19% of tertiary school students admitted to copying from their peers during examinations, and 12% reported having brought unauthorized materials into the examination room (Gobie *et al.*, 2020) ^[8]. Similarly, in the United States, a significant proportion of students—26%—acknowledged having cheated on an examination at some point throughout their university careers (Geldsetzer, 2020) ^[7].

These statistics highlight a troubling trend that not only undermines the educational process but also poses significant risks to the integrity of degrees and certifications worldwide. The ramifications of such behaviours extend beyond individual outcomes; they can diminish the perceived value of academic qualifications within the job market, creating challenges for employers who rely on these certifications as indicators of candidate competency. To combat this issue, Bajinath and Singh (2019) ^[1] opined that educational institutions must implement stringent measures to deter malpractice, including fostering an environment that emphasizes academic integrity, employing technology to monitor examinations, and providing resources for students on ethical study practices. In doing so, they can help ensure that the certificates awarded truly reflect the capabilities and readiness of graduates to contribute meaningfully to their

chosen fields and society as a whole. Only through a commitment to uphold ethical standards in education can we hope to develop a workforce that is both skilled and trustworthy, ready to face the complexities of the modern world.

Scholars (Emmanuel *et al.*, 2021 and Eaton, 2023) ^[2, 6] have identified various factors contributing to the rise of academic dishonesty in Nigeria. They aptly noted that the Nigerian society's value system that tolerates and accepts corruption and identifies academic success as holding of certificate and not based on performance is a major contributing factor. The author noted further that the overdependence on educational certificate as a measure of one's knowledge and competence for job placement in the Nigerian society has resulted in a craze for certificates. In a bid to acquire academic qualifications by all means humanly possible, many Nigerian students have resorted to examination malpractice. Students are spur into this immoral act by a number of factors that could be traced to psychological or social factors. Psychosocial and social factors which are conceptualized as psychosocial variables are capable of predicting or influencing human activities such as examination malpractice (Heeren *et al.*, 2016) ^[10].

Psychosocial variables that have consistently influence students' approach to academic activities globally includes peer pressure, religious affiliation, parental rearing style, school location, socioeconomic status of parents, societal pressure, marital status of parents, anxiety, students' attitude towards learning, peer pressure, self-concept, parental pressure and reading habits. Within the scope of the present study, the researcher decided to carefully select relevant variables like student's peer pressure, self-concept, parental pressure and reading habits to determine the extent to which these variables could influence students' level of indulgent in examination malpractice. Habits can be describe as a pattern of behaviour an individual display frequently as a result of continuous repetition of that particular behaviour. According to Hagger (2019) ^[9] Habits is that small decisions and actions people engage in daily, it plays a significant role in shaping behaviours, thoughts, and lives. It has the ability to influence everything from personal decisions to academic integrity. In educational settings, habits can profoundly affect a student's approach to studying, preparation, and ultimately, examination performance. Unfortunately, some habits can lead to negative outcomes, such as examination malpractice, which undermines the integrity of educational qualification. Magulod (2019) averred that the relationship between reading habits and examination malpractice is intricately linked.

Peer refer to individual of the same age range, or who has the same social status with another (Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, 2011), they move in groups and do things in common and most likely to influence each other's action or inaction especially those ones that belongs to the same socioeconomic background or status. Peer group plays an increasingly influential role in adolescents' lives because during this period, adolescent begin to break away from their family members and explore the World by themselves, because of their quest to explore their environment, they do things that are morally wrong just to see the reaction of elderly people around them and they likely indulge in examination malpractice, (Oni, 2010) ^[16].

According to Okorodudu (2013) ^[15] peer influence has copious influence on adolescents' behaviour more than the

influence of school counsellors, teachers and other significant personality.

Researchers that have examined the influence of peer pressure concluded that it has a negative effect on moral behavior like examination malpractice (Litt & Stock, 2011)^[13]. In the same vein, Pramadi, Pali, Hanurawan, and Atmoko (2017)^[18] found that peer pressure significantly influence occurrences of examination misconduct. The quest to obtain academic qualifications by all means could also come from parents, some parents push their children to study courses that they have little intellectual ability or interest, solely to boost their ego, gain prominent and respect in the Society. Parental pressure is simply the drive parents mount on their children to follow-up a particular goal. (Moneva & Moncada, 2020)^[14].

Parental pressure can also be describe as the excess emotional effort parents exert on their children to pursue academic, cultural, social and religious task. Some of these task or dreams may originally not part of the child's dreams and aspiration in life. According to Obilor and Akwawo (2023)^[17] parental pressure has influence on students' approach to examination misconduct, they opine that parental pressure may inadvertently encourage unethical academic behaviours among students and researchers advocated for a paradigm shift in educational values from emphasis on certification to knowledge and vocational skills. Parents put pressure on their children basically to study hard and achievement academic excellent, unfortunately, some of these children may not have the intelligent quotient that tallies with the attractive academic task their parents' wishes them to achieve, at that point they have no other option than to resort to illegitimate ways of having good grade like examination malpractice. Unnecessary parental pressure may affect a child's self-concept, self-concept. According to Lee Jong-Ran and Jusung, (2017)^[11], self-concept refers to the way an individual visualizes his or her self as compared to other individuals. Self-concept can also be describe as specific manner at which a person view and feel his/her own self in relation to other member of a particular group. Lohbeck and Moschner (2021)^[12] pointed out that self-concept and academic achievement complement one another. Academic self-concept is formed through interaction and experiences acquired from the environment and influential persons in the society. Trujillo and Tanner, (2019)^[19] alluded that students who possess a good self-concept has strong sense of academic and are more motivated to learn, which in turn leads to satisfactory academic outcomes but students with low-self concepts has tendency to resort to short-cut because of lack of confidents in themselves, since they view themselves as incompetent and sometimes unable to accomplish great task or sun-mount challenges.

Statement of Problem

Examination is one of the surest means of measuring learning outcome after a person is exposed to a programme of instruction. If the items are properly set and administered, it can be reliably used to select candidate for placement in a new class or higher educational level. It can also be used for diagnostic purposes, to find out learning difficulties, however, presently in Nigerian educational system, examination malpractice is a pervasive and destructive cankerworm that has deeply infiltrated the fabric of various level of the school system, posing significant challenges to the integrity of certificates and degrees issued. Measures have

been taken by teachers, school authorities, administrators, examination bodies, government and even communities to curb these menace but these effort has not yielded significant results.

The consequences of examination malpractice are far-reaching ills for both students and the wider society which include: low productivity of the employees in the World of work, damage and sometimes waste of resources as a result of gross incompetent. Although scholars have carried out researches in this area, these researchers did not consider selecting the variables and putting them together in a single study, therefore the current research work will examine some psychological and social variables to determine their relative and collective effect on students attitude towards examination malpractice.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to predict students' attitude towards examination malpractices in Uyo Local Government Area using psychosocial variables. Specifically, the study seeks to determine the relationship that exist, the relative and the joint influence of students' reading habit, peer pressure, self-concept and parental pressure on the students attitude towards examination malpractice as well as establish the most influential variable in the prediction model.

Research Question

1. What is the relationship between each of the predictor variable (students' reading habit, peer pressure, self-concept, parental pressure) and students' attitude towards examination malpractices.
2. Does the obtained regression equation resulting from the set of four predictors (students' reading habit, peer pressure, self-concept, parental pressure) allow reliable prediction of students' attitude towards examination malpractice.
3. Which of the four predictor variables (students' reading habit, peer pressure, self-concept and parental pressure) are influential in the prediction model.

Methodology

This study adopted a correlation survey research design and was conducted in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. The population for this study comprised all the 6300 SS II students in all the 14 public secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area in the 2024/2025 school year (State Secondary Education Board, Statistics Division, 2022). The choice of this group of students was because they were mature enough to comprehend and respond appropriately to the research instrument. Besides, the students were preparing for external examination the Senior School Certificate Examinations by WAEC and or NECO thus would naturally be concerned about the subject of examination malpractices.

The sample for the study consisted of 204 students. The sample size of the study were drawn from the fourteen public secondary schools in Uyo Educational Committee, using simple random sampling technique (lucky dip), the researcher further employed simple random sampling technique (lucky dip) to select six public secondary schools in Uyo Local Educational Committee and from each of the six public secondary school selected, 34 students were also randomly selected in each school, making a total of 204 students that constituted the sample size for the study.

Two self-structured questionnaire titled “**Psycho-Socio Variables Questionnaire**”(PSVQ) and **Examination Misconduct Questionnaire**” (EMQ) were developed by the researcher through extensive consultation with students and review of related literature.

PSVQ has four subscales assessing the various sub-variables of the independent variable and EMQ has items that measured secondary school attitude towards examination misconduct. They were fashion and constructed on a 4-point likert type scale response option of Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A) Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD).

Both face and construct validity was carried out by the researcher, in face validity the instruments were given to two lecturers from the Department of Psychological Foundation of Education who are specialists in Measurement and Evaluation, The Cronbach’s Alpha method of reliability estimate was used in testing the stability and internal consistency of the research instrument. In doing this, 20 students that are not part of the sample population were made to complete copies of the questionnaire. Their responses were subsequently analysis using SPSS. This yielded the Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient of 0.84.

Data Analysis and Results

Table 1: Zero Order Correlation Matrix of Psycho-Social Variables on Students’ Attitude Towards Examination Malpractice

Variables	Var.1	Var.2	Var.3	Var.4	Var.5
Stud. Attitude	1.000				
Reading Habit	0.423	1.000			
Peer Pressure	0.380	0.072	1.000		
Self-Concept	0.724	0.016	0.241	1.000	
Parental Pressure	0.660	0.051	-0.017	0.810	1.000

Table 1 shows that students reading habit with $r = 0.123$, peer pressure had positive low correlation with students’ attitude towards examination malpractice. Students’ Self- concept

with $r = 0.724$ and parental pressure with $r =$ had a positive high correlation with students’ attitude towards examination malpractice.

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
1	.870	.756	.751	3.03095

ANOVA

Model	Sum of Square	Df	Mean of Square	F	Sig.
Regression	5644.033	4	1411.008	153.593	.000*
Residual	1818.962	198	9.187		
Total	7462.995	202			

Criterion variable: students’ attitude towards examination malpractice
 Predictor (constant) reading habit, peer pressure, self-concept; parental pressure

Table 2 revealed that the four predictor variables jointly related to the criterion variable and the correction is positive and high ($R=.87$), more importantly, the predictor variables

account for 87% of the variance observed in students’ attitude towards examination malpractice and it is statistically significant $F (4, 198) = 153.593, P < 0.05$

Regression Coefficient

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	5.844	2.470		2.366	.019
Reading Habit (X1)	.030	.087	.013	.349	.728
Peer Pressure (X2)	.064	.060	.038	1.069	.286
Self-Concept (X3)	-.029	.046	-.024	-.644	.520
Parental Pressure (X4)	2.118	.087	.866	24.447	.000*

By examining the regression coefficient table, the standardised regression coefficient showed that parental pressure X4 ($\beta =.866, t=24.447, p<.05$) is a significant predictor of students’ attitude towards examination malpractice. Peer pressure X2 ($\beta =.038, t=1.069, p>.05$); reading habit X1 ($\beta =.013, t=.349, p>.05$) and students’ self-concept X3 ($\beta = -.024, t=-.644, p>.05$).

Discussion of the Findings

The findings of this study revealed that the obtained regression equation model resulting from the set of four predictor variables have a statistical significant effect on the

students’ attitude towards examination malpractice. The correlation is very strong and positive, the predictor variables accounts for 87% of the observed variance in the criterion variable. Out of the four predictor variables, only one (Parental Pressure) significantly predicts students’ attitude towards examination malpractice. This result could be attributed to the fact that, parents are now putting unnecessary pressure on their children to study courses that they have little or no interest in. However, some parents deliberately forcing their children to study professional courses like Law, Medicine, Pharmacy etc. just to boast their ego and social status in the Community. In situation where

the child loves and doesn't want to disappoint the parents, they do everything possible to make sure that they pass their examination, some students who are not intellectual sound resort to examination malpractice. This finding is in concordance with Obilor and Akwawo (2023) ^[17] who found that parental pressure has impact on students' examination malpractice. The relative influence of the remaining three variables, that is, students' reading habit, peer pressure and students self-concept were not statistically significant in the regression model. The position of Magulod (2019) that the relationship between reading habits and examination misconduct is intricately linked was not affirmed from the result derived from the sample respondents. This is as a result of the fact that, there are variation in ways and manner of individual reading styles and habit which does not have direct influence on the students attitude towards examinations malpractice.

The result of the investigation also revealed that peer pressure was not statistically significant in the regression model, this could be traced to the fact that, the sampled respondents do not allow friends or classmate to influence them, especially concerning indulging in things that are inimical to their academic progress like examination malpractice. This finding is not in agreement with Pramadi, Pali, Hanurawan, and Atmoko (2017) ^[18] who found that peer pressure significantly influence occurrences of examination misconduct. Students' self-concept was not found to be statistically significant in the regression model. This outcome could be attributed to the fact that, the sampled respondents had built good self-concept from home and grew up under sound morals and values. This finding contradicts the assertion of Trujillo and Tanner, (2019) ^[19] who concluded that students' who possesses a good self-concept has strong sense of academic performance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the finding of the study, the regression model revealed that the model fits the data set, thus statistically significant $F(4, 198) = 153.593, P < 0.05$, the predictor variables accounts for 87% of the variance observed in the criterion variable. More importantly, the regression coefficient analysis revealed that parental pressure X_4 ($\beta = .866, t=24.447, p<.05$) is the most influential predictor in the regression model. It is thus concluded based on the finding that the obtained regression equation model resulting from the set of four predictor variables has a statistical significant influence on the students' attitude towards examination malpractice. The correlation is very high and positive (.87). Out of the four predictor variables, only one (parental pressure) significantly predicts students' attitude towards examination malpractice in the regression model. Other variables that may likely predict why students' indulge in examination misconducts could be outside the regression model, example are students' study habit, students' interest in academic activities, level of parents' income, level of test or examination anxiety of students, school location, teaching effectiveness of teachers etc. Based on the outcome of this study, it is recommended, among others that: (i). Parents should be educated on the danger of mounting unnecessary pressure on their children academically. They should allowed their children to choose courses based on their passion and interest, by so doing, it will deepen their zeal to work hard independently towards actualizing their goals rather than resort to short-cut like examination malpractice and other

vices to actualized goals that were not part of their dreams. (ii). Students should be promptly and properly rewarded for hard-work and good performance in their academic work in order to boost their zeal for academic excellent and promote independent work during assessment and examinations. (iii). Educational administrators, school counsellors and classroom teachers should jointly organise seminars and workshop for parents on the danger of forcing and putting unnecessary pressure on students' to pass examination by all means, as this make some students to resort to examination malpractice.

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