

Evaluation of the factors sustaining the persistence of examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

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**ABSTRACT**

The study was carried out to investigate factors sustaining the persistence of examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Ebonyi State. The study was based on three specific purposes while the corresponding research questions and two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The researcher adopted a descriptive research design. The population of the study was thirty-four thousand, three hundred (34, 300) while a multi stage random sampling technique was used to randomly select one thousand and ninety-four (1094) respondents comprising eighty-nine (89) principals, four hundred and forty-five (445) teachers, five hundred and forty (540) students spreading across the three educational zones of the area as well as twenty (20) NECO officials. The researcher constructed a twenty seven (23) item questionnaire titled: "Factors Sustaining the Persistence of Examination Malpractice (FSPEM) which was used for data collection, while mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questionnaires. The two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test. The findings of the study revealed, among others, that greed, among the school principals and proprietors, lack of adequate facilities, corruption of external bodies' officials and indiscipline of the student cause persistence of examination malpractice. It was therefore recommended among others that the principals, teachers, invigilators and external bodies should be disciplined and adequately remunerated to avoid being engaged in examination malpractices.

Keywords: Examination, malpractice, public, secondary and schools.

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**INTRODUCTION**

The continuous manifestations of various types of examination malpractice are spreading across the secondary school system. The implications of examination malpractice to our secondary school system are numerous [1,2,3]. Creativity and resourcefulness are hampered. It tends to make nonsense of examination results in our secondary schools particularly in Ebonyi State [4,5]. The schools are producing incompetent graduates who parade certificates they cannot defend and thereby offer substandard services that affect the lives of the masses negatively [6,7,8]. It reduces productivity in our public sector because, people charged with responsibility based on paper result cannot perform satisfactorily. Cancellation and withholding of results

are few among the several efforts made by relevant authorities and agencies in Ebonyi to contend with examination malpractice, yet, the incidence still thrives [9,10,11]. These challenges affect the achievement of the goals and objectives of secondary education in Nigeria and Ebonyi State in particular as stated in the National Policy on Education [12]. The thrust of this paper is to ascertain the factors that sustain the persistence of examination malpractice in schools. Examination malpractice is a predominant challenge ravaging our educational system. The importance as well as the workability of any educational system is its being able to achieve the goals of education [13,14]. Till this moment, examination no doubt is the important tools that can be used to

evaluate & access what the students have been able to learn after a period of learning [15,16]. Examination malpractice as a notion could be defined to include the practice that thwart the conduct of a fraud free examination which unlawfully brings a candidate to an advantage far and above other candidates in an examination [17,18]. Examination malpractice [19], opines that examination malpractice could be a commission or omission by an individual who in expectation of, after, before or during an examination deceitfully get any advantage for himself or any other person, which negates or contravenes the norms or regulations in such a way that same invalidate and renders unreliable the authenticity of such examination and invariably the value of the certificate so acquired [20]. Examination malpractice could occur at three different stages or levels, it can occur before the writing of the said examination, at the very time such examination is being written or after the examination has been written. The practice according to [21] can make the examinee who indulges in such to effortlessly obtain success as such putting examinee at an advantaged position over his/her contemporaries. Examination malpractice according to [22] has persistently remained the albatross of the Nigeria Educational System. [23], define Examination Malpractice as an unlawful act indulge in by a candidate or by an examiner, which is a contravention of the rules guiding the conduct and compatibility of such examination. The University of Port Harcourt Academic Policies [24] defines Examination Malpractice as various categories of fraudulent acts which falsifies the ability of a student either directly or indirectly. Some of the acts considered as acts of Examination Malpractice during examination, are procuring another person to write the exam for a candidate, having an already prepared answers booklet, copying from notebooks and textbooks, bringing in instructional aids or specimens into the hall, colluding with

an examiner to cheat in the examination hall, discussion or attempt to discuss amongst candidates, copying from other candidates' answer sheet in the examination hall, smuggling and submitting answer booklets already prepared as the original answer booklet after the said original script has been illegally removed out of the examination hall (University of Port Harcourt Academic Policy 2001. University of Ilorin Academic programmes 1997-2002 [25]. [26], in his contribution identified various types of examination malpractice which include copying from other candidates (*girrafing*); use of small pieces of paper containing answer to examination halls; copying answer unto lockers, body part, sheets of paper and currency notes; impersonal - snatching of examination answer scripts from other candidates offering of bribe for the manipulation of results; seduction of invigilators with drinks, money, sex, food and such things; re-writing after examination and so on. This is supported by [27], who emphasized that examination malpractice basically incorporates misconduct or improper practices in an examination, with the intention of getting commendable results by the said improper means. Indeed the manifestation of the various identified types of examination malpractices in secondary schools in Nigeria and Ebonyi State in particular is not new in any way. It has kept growing like a monster and is devastating the education system of the Nation and State. Studies conducted on examination malpractices in secondary schools in Nigeria show that the problem of examination malpractice is old and dates back to the formal introduction of Western Education in Nigeria [28]. [29], opines that education misconducts dates back to 1914. He further stated that about one quarter of the students of university of Maidugruri interrogated admitted to have committed one type of examination fraud or another. In 1984, the then Federal Military Government promulgated Decree 20 to deal with issue relating to

examination malpractice. Part of the Decree reads thus:

Any person who fraudulently or with intent to cheat or secure any unfair advantage to himself or any other person or in abuse of his office, produces, sells or buys or otherwise deals with any questions paper intended for the examination of persons at any examination or commits any of the offences specified in section 3(2)(7) (c) of this Decree, shall be guilty of an offence and on conviction be sentenced to 21 years imprisonment... [8].

The Examination Malpractice Act 33 of 1999 revised the above decree but now stipulates punishments ranging from a fine of N50,000.00. This development is due to the inability of the appropriate authorities to enforce the old Decree 20 of 1985. Despite all these laws, examination malpractice has been on the increase and may be due to non-implementation of the laws. This messy situation is having a negative effect on the nation's quality of education and the kind of certificates issued to students at different levels. So many people can no longer defend their certificates. In Ebonyi State, the cases of examination malpractice are on the increase despite the efforts of the government to curb it. During examination period, examination halls are seen to be rowdy and students indulging in one form of malpractice or the other. People are often seen trying to smuggle already prepared answer scripts to candidates in the examination hall. Examination stakeholders including parents, teachers, lecturers, supervisors and even security agents equally play their own roles in encouraging malpractices in examinations. Other unacceptable practices in examinations within the state include: impersonation (a situation where a candidate sits for another candidate, thereby pretending to be real candidate), insult or assault on examination officials and the use of electronic devices. Efforts have been made to discourage examination malpractice in Ebonyi State School System, especially in pilot schools, yet it has remains on the increase. Security agencies have constantly been deployed to schools especially during external examination, but most times these

security agencies help the students to engage in their mischief since it does put some money into their packets. This has rendered the effort of the government fruitless. As it has been discovered that low quality of education in Ebonyi State School has been a major reason for examination malpractice, the state government has made concerted efforts to enhance the quality of education. Be that as it is, it is evident from various findings that laxity on the part of students discourages the teachers and the government since their efforts is not met with proportional performance by the student. Ebonyi students have continued to indulge in examination malpractice despite the effect by the stakeholders in the education sector to curb the menace. Examination malpractice and the techniques employed by the culprits have persistently been on the increase in Ebonyi State secondary schools. As more effort are made by WAEC and NECO to discourage examination malpractice, students and staff of the secondary schools device new and more effective ways to cheat. These techniques tend to make caricature of every effort to stop it and this in turn makes nonsense of examination results in our schools. Success built on sound moral foundation can endure but successes built on fraud are bound to collapse sooner or later [3]. That means, the success achieved through examination malpractice is not a genuine one. The adverse effects of examination malpractice are numerous. Creativity and resourcefulness are hampered [5]. [6], went on to add that majority of the certificates obtained by candidates cannot be defended by the holders and thereby, produce incompetent graduates who offer

substandard services that in turn, affect the lives of the members of the society at large. In school-related factors, the secondary school head is viewed as the internal supervisor and the functions he performs in the school administration. He develops and employs qualified staff, provides facilities and the equipment, kept the proper school records and also ensure there is conducive teaching and learning atmosphere in the school [7]. As regards staff of schools as factors responsible for examination malpractice, [9], revealed that inadequate supply of qualified teachers do case examination malpractice. This means that if the

#### **Forms of Examination Malpractice**

The students come up with new dimensions and forms of examination malpractice every time. Some of the forms of the malpractices are discussed below:

1. Bring of Foreign Materials into Examination Hall: This is a situation where students bring into the examination hall notes, textbooks or sophisticated scientific calculators. [6], identified some other methods like giraffing, superprint, bullet, pregnant biros and so on.
2. Giraffing: This is a situation where the students look into other student's answer booklet to copy the answers into their own booklet. This is very rampant among students.
3. Assistance from educational stakeholders which include parents, teachers, printers and staff of examination bodies. Some parents buy question papers for their children,

#### **Factors Causing Examination Malpractice**

The last two decades have witnessed an alarming rate of increase in incidents of examination misconduct. Evidences abound of increasing involvement in examination malpractice by students, teachers and parents [7,8,9]. Examination Malpractice Act No. 33 of 1999 stipulates a minimum punishment of fifty thousand naira (#50,000.00) and a maximum of five years imprisonment, without option of fine for violators of the offences stipulated in the Act. Government,

teachers available do not teach the students the necessary things that will make them to be able to perform well in the external examinations not only in their school exams, but will force the students to engage in examination malpractice. Also, lack of education facilities does contribute significantly to the problem of examination malpractice in the Nigerian education system [9]. [15], also reveled that in most of the nation's secondary schools, teaching and learning do not take a conducive environment, like lack of the basic materials such as classrooms, adequate examination halls, and instructional materials.

even some buy certificate. Supervisors collide with the teachers, principals or students to teach the students during examination period and also teach giving marks to the students.

4. Impersonation: This is a situation where the candidate arranges with somebody to stand in or impersonator and writes the examination for them during the examination period. The impersonator then bears the identity of the student.
5. Leakage of the examination questions before the examination day is another form of examination malpractice. Some of the stakeholders like teachers or printers leak the examination questions by collecting bribes from the students or parents to solve the problems making such students will have undue advantage over other students.

examination bodies, and other concern citizens have made a lot of efforts to forestall the incidences of examination malpractice and the problems associated with the conduct of examinations in Nigeria. Although the efforts seem to be yielding some results, yet incidences of examination malpractice still feature prominently in the school system. Examination malpractice has been found to be sustained by a number of factors. [15], identified lack of confidence as a

result of inadequate preparation, peer influence, societal influence, parental support and poor facilities in schools as some of the factors responsible for examination malpractices. Writing in the same vein, [17], identified school programmes, teaching learning environment, the teacher, the student, over value of certificates, decadence in the Nigerian society and parental support as some factors responsible for examination malpractice in the Nigerian

educational system. It is noted that examination malpractice a variety of corruption is sustained by the things that sustains corruption in our society. [18], opines that social, economic, political, religious and educational vices are celebrated and rewarded in the country while virtue is punished as such both those who are expected to curb the menace and those who indulge in it continue in the practice.

### Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study:

**HO<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the school related factors that are responsible for the persistence of examination malpractice in public secondary school in Ebonyi State?

**HO<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of students and teachers on the invigilators'-related factors responsible for the persistent examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Ebonyi State.

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Area of the study is Ebonyi State which consists of three education zones namely: Abakaliki, Onueke and Afikpo. Ebonyi State consists of thirteen (13) Local Government Areas. The state lies between 7°3N longitude and 5°4'E with a land mass approximated at 5,932 square kilometers. According to 2006 population census, the population of the state is put at 3 million (three million) which is divided among its 13 Local Government Areas. The state has Abakaliki as its capital. The population of this study comprises thirty-four thousand, three hundred (34,300) respondents made up of two hundred and twenty-three (223)

principals; five thousand, nine hundred and forty-four (5944) teachers, twenty-eight thousand and eighty-five (28,085) SSSIII students and forty-eighty (48) NECO officials. The sampling was guided by [8], assertion that when the population of a study is a few hundreds, the sample size should be 40-50%. But if there are many hundreds [16], further indicated that where the population runs into several thousands, 2-5% should be used. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire, designed by the researchers titled: Factors Sustaining Persistence of Examination Malpractice (FSPEM). The questionnaire was structured to elicit responses from the principals, teachers, student and the external examinations officials on the factors sustaining the persistence of examination malpractice. The response scale for the questionnaire was rated as follows: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2 and strongly disagree (SD) = 1. The instrument was validated by three experts, two from the Educational Administration and Planning in Educational Foundations Department and one from Measurement and Evaluation Unit all from Faculty of Education, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.

### RESULTS

The results of the study as generated from the two research questions and two

null hypotheses earlier posited in this study are presented in this study.

#### Research Question 1:

What school related factors contribute to the persistence of examination

malpractice in public secondary schools in Ebonyi State?

**Table 1:** Mean ratings on the school related factors that contribute to the persistence of examination malpractice in secondary schools in Ebonyi State.

S/N	Items	X	SD	Decision
1.	Greed among the school administrators	3.36	0.72	Accepted
2.	Poor content coverage of the school curriculum	3.46	0.72	Accepted
3.	High performance expectation from students' examination	3.33	0.81	Accepted
4.	Indiscipline among staff involved in examination malpractice	2.04	0.75	Rejected
5.	Moral decline among students	3.28	0.72	Accepted
6.	Students are always ill-equipped for the examination	3.34	0.73	Accepted
7.	Examiners' quest to make money	3.38	0.70	Accepted
8.	Students' fear of failure	3.34	0.80	Accepted
9.	Lack of self-confidence of the students	3.37	0.72	Accepted
10.	High fees associated with SSCE	2.04	0.75	Rejected
11.	Lack of adequate infrastructure like examination halls, classrooms and furniture.	3.24	0.73	Accepted
12.	Advent and use of mobile and ICT tools during examination	3.45	0.74	Accepted
13.	Non-enforcement of laws and rules of examination malpractices.	3.45	0.66	Accepted
14.	Failure of government at all levels to equip her schools with modern facilities to aid teaching	3.27	0.89	Accepted
15.	Pressure from government agencies on school principals to indulge in examination malpractices	1.62	0.89	Rejected
16.	Lack of regular teachers' training and upgrading	3.42	0.72	Accepted
17.	Non-involvement of PTA in school administration	3.43	0.71	Accepted
18.	Recruitment of incompetent hands to handle administrative affairs in schools.	3.37	0.72	Accepted
<b>Grand Mean 2.95</b>				

Data on table 1 show that the respondents are of the view that there are some school related factors that contribute to the persistence of examination malpractices in public secondary school in Ebonyi State. With the exception of 4, 10, and 15 with mean values of 2.04, 2.04 and 1.62 respectively, other remaining 16 items have mean scores higher than the criterion mean of 2.50 as established. The items and their corresponding mean

values are as follows: Item 1- 3.36, item 2- 3.46, item 3-3.33, item 5 -3.28, item 6- 3.34, item 7-3.38, item 8-3.34, item 9 - 3.37, item 11-3.24, item 12 - 3.45, item 13 - 2.45, item 14- 3.27, item 16- 3.42, item 17- 3.43 and item 18 which has a mean value of 3.37. the grand mean value of 2.95 in Table 1 above is 0.45 higher than the criterion mean value of 2.50 and is acceptable for the study.

### Research Question 2

In what ways do invigilator-related factors account for the persistence of

examination malpractices in public secondary school in Ebonyi State?

**Table 2:** Mean ratings on the ways in which invigilator-related factors account for the persistence of examination malpractice in public secondary school in Ebonyi State?

S/N	Items	X	SD	Decision
19.	Selection of incompetent examination officers to the detriment of merit	3.30	0.68	Accepted
20.	Some invigilator allow examination malpractice to take place because they expect illegal gratification of students	3.43	0.71	Accepted
21.	Non-adherence of the invigilators to examination ethnics	3.43	0.72	Accepted
22.	Poor time management of examination invigilators	3.32	0.85	Rejected
23.	Collaboration of invigilators with school principal to facilitate examination malpractices	2.07	0.74	Rejected
<b>Grand Mean = 3.11</b>				

Four of the items in Table 2 numbered 19, 20, 21 and 22 have mean ratings of 3.30, 3.43, 3.43, and 3.32 respectively, which were all higher than the criterion mean value of 2.50. Only item 23 with a mean value of 2.07 has a mean value that is less than the criterion mean value of 2.50 set for the study. Consequently, the results indicate that the respondents responded in favour of the statement of the items, but however disagreed to the last item in

the table which sought to know if the persistence of examination malpractices is linked to the collaboration of invigilators and school principals. The grand mean value 3.11, with a positive difference of 0.61 from the criterion mean value of 2.50 is an indication that invigilator-related factors account to a reasonable extent, for the persistence of examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Ebonyi State.

**Test of Hypotheses**

**HO<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female teachers on school related factors that

contribute to the persistence of examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Ebonyi State.

**Table 3:** Independent sample t-test of male and female teachers on school related factors that contribute to the persistence of examination malpractice in public secondary school in Ebonyi State.

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-crt	t-cal	Sig. Level	Decision
Teachers	Male	225	3.09	0.19	443	7.701	0.006	0.05	No Sig. Diff.
	Female	220	3.16	0.15					

Data on table 3 show that the mean values of male and female teachers on the school related factors that contribute to the persistence of examination malpractices in public secondary school in Ebonyi State are 3.09 and 3.16 respectively. It also shows that the t-calculated (t-cal) value of 0.006 is less than the t-critical (t-crt) value of 7.701. The implication therefore is that the null hypothesis as stated above is upheld that there is no significant

difference in the mean ratings of male and female teachers on school related factors that sustain the persistence of examination malpractice.

**HO<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of students and teachers on the ways in which invigilator-related factors account for the persistence of examination malpractice in public secondary school in Ebonyi State.

**Table 4:** Independent sample t-test of students and teachers on ways in which invigilator-related factors account for the persistence of examination malpractices in public secondary school in Ebonyi State.

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-crt	t-cal	Sig. Level	Decision
Teachers	445	3.12	0.17	983	0.257	0.612	0.05	No Sig.
Students	220	3.15	0.17					

Data on Table 4 show that the mean values of teachers and students on ways in which invigilator-related factors account for the persistence of examination malpractices in public secondary school state are 3.12 and 3.15 respectively. It also shows that the t-calculated (t-cal) value of 0.612 exceeds

the t-critical (t-crt) value of 0.257. Thus, the null hypothesis as stated above is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is upheld that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of students and teachers on invigilators related factors sustaining persistence of examination malpractice.

#### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study can be summarized as stated hereunder:

1. The overall mean value of 2.95 as obtained in Table 1 shows that the respondents are of the view that there are some school related factors that contribute to the persistence of examination malpractices in public secondary school in Ebonyi State.
2. The overall mean of 3.11 as obtained in table 2 exceeds the criterion mean value of 2.50 as set for this study. Hence, there are invigilator-related factors that account for the persistence of

3. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female teachers on school administrative-related factors that contribute to the persistence of examination malpractice in public secondary school in Ebonyi State.
4. There is a significant difference in the mean ratings of student and teachers on the ways in which invigilator-related factors account for the persistence of examination malpractices in public secondary school in Ebonyi State.

#### CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are made:

1. That there are a number of factors that account for the persistence of examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Ebonyi State.
2. That there are some factors that account for the persistence of examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Ebonyi State.
3. That most of the administrative related factors that account for the persistence of examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Ebonyi State.
4. That a number of the factors that are responsible for the persistence of examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Ebonyi State

have connections with the Parents' Teachers Association (PTA)

5. That examination invigilators have failed in their duties of discouraging examination malpractice in public secondary school schools in Ebonyi State.
6. The external examination bodies like NECO has not lived up to expectations in checking the persistence of examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Ebonyi State.
7. That it will take concerted efforts of the state government, school invigilators, external examination bodies, school staff, parents and students to overcome the persistence of examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Ebonyi State.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

***The following recommendations are made based on research findings and conclusion.***

1. School administrators should be taught to value performance above self-gratification, and should be

- periodically sensitized on how good performance of students is valued more than personal financial gains.
2. School administrators should be adequately remunerated to discourage them from indulging in examination malpractice for the expected financial gains.
  3. That the content of the school curriculum should be adequately covered to ensure that students are well prepared for their examinations and thus, be able to shun examination malpractice.
  4. Attention should be given to moral instruction in Ebonyi State public secondary schools as a tool for instilling discipline among the students.
  5. The state government should as a matter of urgency, undertake the renovation and re-equipment of its schools with necessary infrastructure and instructional materials that will promote effective teaching and learning. This will make learning interesting and keep students' minds away from examination malpractice.
  6. The selection of examination invigilators should be based on merit and those selected should be well trained to forestall any form of inadequacies in the examination process.
  7. Examination bodies should put adequate measure in place to secure their sensitive materials in order to avoid leakages.

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Obasi *et al*

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