

## PSYCHO-DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES INFLUENCING EXAMINATION MALPRACTICES AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN OYO, OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*Examination malpractice has become a monster in the educational system, and its incidence has reached a frightening dimension in Nigeria. The study investigated psycho-demographic variables influencing examination malpractice among secondary school students in Oyo metropolis. A sample of two hundred and fifty senior secondary school students randomly selected participated in the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, and three validated instruments were used in generating data for the study. Six null hypotheses were set in piloting the study. Data were analyzed using multiple regression, t-test, and analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistics. There is significant composite contribution of students' religion, gender, academic self-efficacy and locus of control to examination malpractices ( $R=.427, R^2=183, (F(5.243=10.83, p<.05)$ ). Academic self-efficacy significantly contributed to examination malpractices among the students ( $B=43, t=7.35, p<.05$ ). Based on the findings, professional counsellors in schools should intensify efforts on how students could beef up their academic self-efficacy through enhanced self-esteem. Education stakeholders should collaborate in orientating students for independent work in the examination hall.*

**Keywords:** Academic self-efficacy, examination malpractice, gender, locus of control, religion, self-efficacy

### INTRODUCTION

The Process through which learning outcome is accessed among learners at all educational levels (Nursery, Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Institutions) is called examination. Globally, examination is a means through which teachers' teaching effectiveness and students' level of academic achievement could be measured. Results of examinations taken by the students serve as baseline for decision making by educational stakeholders. Ngozi and Ekejiuba (2021) assert that examination is not only a useful tool in measuring students' level of academic achievement; it also motivates and assists learners to know their academic strengths as well as their weaknesses. The need for the conduct of examination cannot be over emphasized in educational settings.

Ijaduola (2020) asserts that success in an examination at whatever level is generally rewarding and tends to immediately elicit such positive emotion as joy, happiness, relief, contentment and feeling of fulfillment and of general well-being. Depending on the nature of the examination, success could be greatly rewarded with progression to a higher level, assurance for new job, obtaining a certificate, accolades or other laurels, or simply bestowed the candidate a form of qualification for more demanding tasks. It is obvious that no single candidate ever wished or prayed to fail in an examination. Every candidate would want to pass any examination regardless of the level of preparedness or the means of passing (acceptable or unacceptable) in order not to be labeled or stigmatized as a failure. The unacceptable means of passing an examination is otherwise referred to as examination malpractice.

Examination mal-practice is a widely acknowledged syndrome in any educational system in the world for decades. Adeleke (1993) reported that Senior Cambridge Local examination leaked in 1914. He also reported that in 1963, the West African Examination Council (WAEC) detected leakages in the first School Certificate of Education examination, and since then the menace have grown in leaps and bounds. The incidence of this menace has reached a frightening dimension. The examination malpractice Act (1999) describes examination malpractice as any act of omission or commission by a person who in anticipation of, before, during or after an examination fraudulently securing any unfair advantage for himself or any other person in such a manner that contravenes the rules and regulations of an examination. Examination malpractice is any irregular behavior or act exhibited by candidates or anybody charged with the responsibility of conducting examination in or outside the examination hall, before, during or after such examination with the aim of taking undue advantage (WAEC, 2003).

Okoko and Adie (2016) define the menace as any deliberate act of wrongdoing contrary to the rules of examinations designed to give a candidate an undue advantage. This is a deliberate wrongdoing contrary to official rules of examination conduct. The practice could also be described as any act, behavior, or action exhibited by any educational stakeholder (teachers, students and parents) that is against the conduct/rules and regulations of any examination, and such act may be before the commencement of the examination, while the examination is on-going and after the examination has taken place. Kolawole and Tayo (2019) assert that examination malpractice is cankerworm that is destroying the credibility of examinations in Nigeria.

Oguzie, et al (2019) observed there are incidences of examination malpractices in both external and internal examinations in Imo State, Nigeria. The vices are manifesting in various forms ranging from copying other candidates' work while the examination is on-going, whispering to others for possible answer to questions, bringing microchip to the examination hall, slotting solved work into the collected answer scripts, writing examination on behalf of a candidate otherwise known as impersonation. Many have believed in it and are thus covertly or overtly encouraging the development of this social ill (Onyeama-Obioma, 2023).Evidences abound that examination malpractice is no longer a new phenomenon in Nigeria and it dates back to colonial period.

The first examination malpractice in Nigeria was reported in 1914, where there was an examination leakage of question paper in the senior Cambridge examination (Njoku & Njoku, 2016). For more than a century, examination malpractices have not been totally eradicated in Nigeria and these calls for more studies on the menace. Factors influencing examination malpractices include unpreparedness for examinations, high premium placed on certification, inability to cover the contents of the study, poor study habits, lack of confidence, family pressure (Nwosu, et al. 2020)

Psycho-demographic variables refer to individuals' psychological state such as emotional intelligence that showcases behaviour, and individuals' characteristics such as age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, education, etc. This study is anchored on theory of academic self-efficacy. The theory is derived from Bandura's (1982) social learning theory. Academic self-efficacy is the belief an individual has towards self in possessing the ability to have academic success. Examination malpractice may be borne out of weak sense of academic self-efficacy due to the fact that people with weak sense of self-efficacy believe that difficult tasks and situation are beyond their capabilities; and they quickly lose confidence in personal abilities (Bandura, 1994). Honicke and Broadbent (2016) observed that a learner's academic self-efficacy is strongly associated with academic performance.

A meta-analytic study by Huang (2012) revealed that academic self-efficacy of students differs between age, gender, and subject domains such as mathematics and social sciences. This means, the higher the scores of academic self-efficacy, the higher the levels of academic performance of the individual. An individual who has strong belief in his/her ability to read and pass well on any given examination may not indulge in any form of examination misconduct.



Murdock, Hale, & Weber (2001) reported that students that cheated in an examination had lower self-efficacy than those who do not cheat. It is therefore submitted that students resort to cheating when they do not expect to be able to pass an exam through their own abilities (Murdock & Anderman, 2006).

Ofodile, et al (2019) found significant negative relationship between secondary school students' academic self-efficacy and their involvement in examination malpractices. This means the higher the academic self-efficacy of an individual the less he/she would engage in examination malpractices. Student who belief that he can perform an academic task will not indulge him or herself in examination malpractices. A student's mindset of succeeding in academic tasks is the most important source of his or her self-efficacy. Research suggests that increases in self-efficacy can increase both motivation and performance (Funder, 2007).

Religion, gender, and age are demographic variables considered in this study. It is assumed that religion has a motivating force and plays a vital role in preventing people from indulging in negative behaviours as it helps in enhancing moral chastity. Omoregbe (2007) submit that religion is a perspective from which exemplary lives of high morality can be viewed and that high moral standard can be attained. Many studies have reported that religion reduces the tendency towards deviant and immoral behaviours (Olatoye, 2007; Strawbridge, et al, 2008).

Aminullai (2006) found that gender influences examination malpractices among students. He observed that male students are more involved than their female counterparts. Omonijo and Nnedum (2012) also found that male students involve more in examination malpractices than their female counterparts. Whereas, Rotimi and Omonijo (2014) observed that female students are more involved in examination malpractices than their male counterparts. However, Dada (2014) observed no significant relationship between age of students and their involvement in examination malpractices. Owenga, Aloka, & Raburu (2018) found quite a substantial amount of variance in level of examinations cheating caused by variability in the personal determinants of students.

The two psychological constructs considered in this study are self-efficacy and locus of control. Self-efficacy as a construct is the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations (Bandura, 2005). Those beliefs are described as determinants of how people think, behave and feel (Bandura, 1994). To a large extent, an individual's self-efficacy plays a major role in how goals and tasks are accomplished, and how challenges are approached. The judgment of self-efficacy is based on four principal sources of information: performance mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and allied types of social influences that possess certain capabilities and strengths (Bandura, 1989). All these relate to thought processes on individual's beliefs which affect behaviour and performance.

Locus of control refers to individual differences in people's beliefs about what controls events in their lives. It primarily concerns decision making and the role of expectancies (Rotter, 1954, 1982). Gomez (1997) describes locus of control as the degree to which people think they or other factors control events in their lives. It denotes the extent to which individuals attribute their achievement either to external influences such as fate or to internal influences such as hard work or competence.

Rotter (1966) submits that people have two types of expectancies: specific and general. Expectancy for behaviour is an individual's belief, or subjective probability, about how likely it seems that the behaviour will attain its goal (Funder, 2007). Rotter's expectancy is the belief about reinforcement, and this is seen as the key agent of behavioural change. Generalized expectancies are general beliefs about whether anything one does is likely to make a difference. Some people believe that they have little control over what happens to them; this means that they have low generalized expectancies. Rotter referred to generalized expectancy as locus of control. People with internal locus of control are those with high generalized expectancies that think that what they do affects what happens to them. Those with external locus of control have low generalized

expectancies and tend to think that what they do will not make much difference. Bandura's efficacy is the perceived probability that an individual can do something; while Rotter's expectancy is a belief about reinforcement which is seen as the key agent of behavioural change.

Locus of control typically relates to how students perceive the causes of their academic success or failures in school. If someone believes that his or her successes or failures are due to factors within his or her control, such as effort or ability, that person is said to have an internal locus of control. On the other hand, if he or she believes that his or her control, such as fate or luck, that person is said to have an external locus of control. Students that have internal academic locus of control believe that they have control over their academic outcomes. On the contrary, those that are externally inclined look out for support in scholastic achievements. People with a strong internal locus of control believe that the responsibility for whether or not they get reinforced ultimately lies with themselves. Internals believe that success or failure is due to their own efforts. In contrast, externals believe that reinforces in life are controlled by luck, chances or powerful others. This makes them see little impact of their own efforts on the amount of reinforcement they receive (Abdel-fattah, Chubb, & Fertman, 2016). Therefore, students' inclination of locus of control may have impacts on examination malpractices as it influences their motivational and cognitive reactions.

Ekechukwu and Nwamdi (2017) found that locus of control is a significant determinant of examination malpractices. Students with an external locus of control generally believe that their successes or failures result from external factors beyond their control, such as luck, fate, circumstance, injustice etc. Therefore, a student's internality or externality may influence the attitude to put up during examination. Those that are internally inclined will not look up to fellow classmates to help them while writing examinations. External locus of control students have little reason to exert task-oriented effort in an attempt to work at passing an examination on their own without looking out to classmates for support during examination.

Students may indulge in examination malpractices if they doubt their ability to recall answer to questions during examination. Studies revealed further that lack of confidence by students is another reason for engaging in examination malpractices (Nambela, 2020). It suffices that an individual's belief system in his or her ability and the type of support that one should seek for contribute significantly to different types of behavior in the examination hall. This is in line with Chindedu and Eber (2021) submission that, an individual's perception of his/her ability in accomplishing certain activities is the outcome of a dynamic interaction of three important factors: person's behavior, personal factors and environmental condition. It means that, one may be influenced to exhibit deviant behaviour (examination malpractice).

## Hypotheses

Six null hypotheses set in piloting the study are:

- Ho1:** There is no significant composite contribution of students' religion, gender, locus of control and academic self-efficacy to examination malpractices in school.
- Ho2:** There is no significant relative contribution of students' gender, age, religion, locus of control and academic self-efficacy on examination malpractices in school.
- Ho3:** There is no significant influence of gender on students' involvement in examination malpractices.
- Ho4:** There is no significant influence of age on students' involvement in examination malpractices.
- Ho5:** There is no significant influence of students' religion on their involvement in examination malpractices.
- Ho6:** There is no significant influence of locus of control on students' involvement in examination malpractices.

## METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive research design. Senior secondary school students in Oyo are the population of this study. Two hundred and fifty students were randomly sampled from Senior Secondary Schools in Oyo using simple randomization technique. Three instruments used in eliciting responses from research participants are: Students' academic self-efficacy scale (Morgan & Jinks, 1999), Rotter's Internal-External Locus of control (1966) scale, and researchers' self-developed questionnaire on examination malpractices were used in generating data for the study. Demographic information of the respondents (gender, age and religion) is also tapped. Students' self-efficacy scale by Morgan and Jinks (1999) was adopted for the study. The scale has 24 items placed on a modified four point Likert's rating ranging from Really Agree (RA) = 4 to Really Disagree (RD) = 1. The reliability of the scale was established by using test-retest methods 0.72. The reliability coefficient established by Morgan and Jinks was 0.79. Reliability of the scale for the current study with test-re-test yielded 0.82 Cronbach alpha.

Rotter's Internal-External Locus of control scale (Rotter, 1966), a 30 item forced choice, self-report inventory was adapted with modification to some of the items was employed. The score is the number of external choices selected; the higher, the more external the locus of control of an individual. Rotter reported Cronbach alpha of 0.81 which established reliability of the scale. Researchers of this study administered the modified version used to some subjects through test-re test and recorded reliability coefficient of 0.69; this made the scale usable for the study.

Examination malpractices scale that was developed by the researchers has 14 items. Response to the items of the questionnaire ranges from Really Agree (4) Agree (3), Disagree (2) to Really Disagree (1). The instrument was administered to students outside the study locale using test-retest reliability style, it yielded 0.89 reliability coefficient. The instruments were administered to senior secondary school students in Oyo town and retrieved on the spot with the support of two research assistants. Generated data for the study were analyzed with multiple regression, t-test and Analysis of variance statistical packages.

## RESULTS

Socio-demographic variables of the study

**Table 1: Respondents' distribution by Gender**

Gender		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	100	40.0	40.0	40.0
	Female	150	60.0	60.0	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

From Table 1, there are 100 (40.0%) males while the remaining 150 (60.0%) of the respondents are females.

**Table 2: Respondents' distribution by Age**

Age Groups		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	12-15 years	38	15.2	15.2	15.2
	16 and above	212	84.8	84.8	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 indicates that 38 (15.2 %) are 12-15 years of age while the remaining 212 (84.8 %) of the respondents are 16 years and above.



**Table 3: Respondents' distribution by Religion**

Religion		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Christianity	49	19.6	19.6	19.6
	Islam	194	77.6	77.6	97.2
	Others	7	2.8	2.8	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

From Table 3, there are 49 (19.6 %) Christians, 194 (77.6 %) are muslims and the remaining 7 (2.8 %) respondents are of other religions.

### Hypotheses Testing

Ho1: There is no significant composite contribution of students' religion, gender, locus of control, and academic self-efficacy to examination malpractices in school.

Table 4: Regression analysis of composite contribution of Students' religion, locus of control, gender and academic self-efficacy to their examination malpractices in school

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.427 <sup>a</sup>	.183	.166	7.34282		
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2926.501	5	585.300	10.856	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	13101.820	243	53.917		
	Total	16028.321	248			

a. Dependent Variable: Students' examination malpractices

b. Predictors (Constant): Students' religion, gender, locus of control, and academic self-efficacy

From Table 4, there is a significant composite contribution of students' religion, gender, locus of control, and academic self-efficacy to their examination malpractices in schools ( $R=.427$ ,  $R^2 = .183$ ,  $F_{(5,243)}=10.83$ ,  $p< .05$ ). Therefore, Ho1 is not accepted.

Ho2: There is no significant relative contribution of students' gender, age, religion, locus of control, and academic self-efficacy to their examination malpractices in school.

**Table 5: Regression analysis of composite contribution of students' gender, age, religion, locus of control and academic self-efficacy to their examination malpractices in school**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	10.453	3.853		2.713	.007
	Students'_academic _self-efficacy	.366	.050	.430	7.352	.000
	locus of control	.227	.948	.014	.239	.811
	Students' Gender	.545	.955	.033	.570	.569
	Student s' Age	-.011	1.310	.000	-.008	.994
	Students' Religion	-.567	1.063	-.031	-.534	.594

a. Dependent Variable: Students' examination malpractices

Table 5 indicates that students' academic self-efficacy significantly contributed to the students' examination malpractices in schools ( $\beta=.43$ ,  $t=7.35$ ,  $p<.05$ ), whereas locus of control ( $\beta=.014$ ,  $t=.239$ ,  $p>.05$ ), gender ( $\beta=.033$ ,  $t=.57$ ,  $p>.05$ ), age ( $\beta=.000$ ,  $t=-.008$ ,  $p>.05$ ) and religion ( $\beta=-.031$ ,  $t=-.534$ ,  $p>.05$ ) did not contribute significantly to students' examination malpractices in schools. The hypothesis is accepted

Ho3: There is no significant influence of gender on students' examination malpractices in school.

**Table 6: T-test analysis on influence of gender on students' examination malpractices in schools**

	Student Gender	N	Mean	Std. D	Df	t	Sig.	Remarks
Students'_examinati on_malpractices	Male	100	34.6500	6.85400	248	.003	.997	NS
	Female	150	34.6467	7.98080				

Table 6 revealed that there is no significant influence of gender on students 'examination malpractices ( $t=.003$ ,  $df=248$ ,  $p>.05$ ). Therefore, Ho3 is accepted.

Ho4: There is no significant influence of students' age on their involvement in examination malpractices in school.

Table 7: t-test analysis on influence of students' age on students' examination malpractices in schools

	Student Age	N	Mean	Std. D	df	T	Sig.	Remarks
Students' examination malpractices	12-15	38	34.8947	7.87329	248	.219	.827	NS
	16 and above	212	34.6038	7.49240				

From Table 6, there is no significant influence of students' age on students' examination malpractices ( $t=.219$ ,  $df=248$ ,  $p>.05$ ). Therefore,  $H_{o4}$  is accepted.

$H_{o5}$ : There is no significant influence of religion on students' examination malpractices in school.

Table 8: Analysis of Variance on influence of religion on students' examination malpractices in schools

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	8.987	2	4.493	.079	.924
Within Groups	14132.037	247	57.215		
Total	14141.024	249			

From Table 8, the analysis of variance reveals that there is no significant influence of religion on students' examination malpractices ( $F_{(2,247)}=.079$ ,  $p>.05$ ). Therefore,  $H_{o5}$  is accepted.

$H_{o6}$ : There is no significant influence of locus of control on students' involvement in examination malpractices in school.

Table 9: T-test analysis on influence of locus of control on students' examination malpractices in schools

	Low cost consuming	N	Mean	Std. D	Df	t	Sig.	Remarks
Students' examination malpractices	Internal	147	34.2857	8.05036	248	-.925	.356	NS
	External	102	35.1863	6.76878				

Table 6 revealed that from the t-test analysis, there is no significant influence of locus of control on students' examination malpractices ( $t=-.925$ ,  $df=247$ ,  $p>.05$ ). Therefore,  $H_{o6}$  is accepted.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings of this study showed significant composite contribution of religion, gender, locus of control and academic self-efficacy to examination malpractices among secondary school students. This corroborates the findings of Aminullai (2006) who discovered that gender influences examination malpractices among students. However, findings by Omonijo and Nnedum (2012) revealed that male and female students do not differ in their involvement in examination malpractices. The result also negates Rotimi and Omonijo (2014) findings which showed that female students are more involved in examination malpractices than their male counterparts. Based on the findings of this study and previous research findings on this area of study, students' involvement in examination malpractice is not determined by gender as both male and female individuals were guilty of the offence. However, it is usually assumed that male participation in anti-social behavior is common, and that their involvement in risk-taking behavior is higher when compared with their female counterparts. This means that education stakeholders should work on both male and female students in curbing undesirable behaviours.



More so, the study revealed that students' academic self-efficacy relatively contribute to examination malpractices. This result supports Bandura's (1994) assertion that individual's self-efficacy belief affects behavior and performance. It also buttresses Murdock & Anderson's (2006) submission that students resort to cheating when they do not expect to pass an exam through their own abilities. The result further lays credence to Funder (2007) who posited that, increases in self-efficacy can increase both motivation and performance. This also supports Chinedu and Eber (2021), who submit that an individual's perception of his/her ability in accomplishing certain activities is the outcome of a dynamic interaction of three important factors: person's behavior, personal factor and environmental condition. It means that one may be influenced to imitate and exhibit deviant behavior such as examination malpractice. The result ran contrary to the findings of Ofodile, et al. (2019) that reported significant negative relationship between secondary school students' academic self-efficacy and involvement in examination malpractices. The implication of this finding rests on the fact students whose cognitive abilities are high and those who belief in themselves are not likely to engage in examination malpractices.

### **Conclusion**

Examination malpractice is an unwholesome practice that should be stemmed down with everything it will take by education stakeholders. School authorities and examination bodies should ensure that examination rules are not compromised or corrupted. There is need for students to imbibe the principle of hard work and personal commitment to academic activities and examinations. Intrinsic motivation is highly needful for students to propel themselves for excellent academic achievement without indulging themselves in various forms of examination malpractices.

### **Recommendations**

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

- Professional counsellors should be fully engaged in schools to counsel students on how to apply themselves fully to achieve high academic performance and discourage them from indulging in examinational malpractices.
- Students should be guided on how to tailor their study habit towards adequate preparation for examinations and develop self-regulatory attitude for independent scholastic achievements.
- Education stakeholders should employ strategies of re-orientation in curbing the menace of examination malpractices among students in Nigeria.
- Parents and teachers should provide extrinsic motivation to students early in order to build up confidence in them to face life challenges which include the need to pass examination with self-efforts.
- The Examination Malpractice Act 33 of 1999 should be enforced to serve as deterrent to examination malpractice offenders.
- Classroom teachers and professional counsellors in the school should collaborate on development of ethical values that place high premium on fairness, hard work, integrity and honesty.
- School counselors should provide guidance to students on effective study techniques e.g . SQ3R study technique (Study; Question; Read, Review and Revise) in order to achieve deep learning for optimal academic performance that is devoid of examination malpractice.

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