

**EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE: A SOCIAL MALADY (A STUDY OF DELTA STATE, NIGERIA)****AGETUE, F. N.****DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION, DELTA STATE POLYTECHNIC, OGWASHI-UKU****&****NNAMDI, E. A.****DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION, DELTA STATE POLYTECHNIC, OGWASHI-UKU****ABSTRACT**

*Examination malpractice has assumed an endemic and pandemic dimension in Nigerian educational institutions. Public examinations are characterized by widespread violation of examination ethics facilitated by what is widely known as “miracle centres”. Many students have been rusticated or out rightly expelled, while staff of examination bodies and academic institutions have equally come under the hammer of the law on account of their immoral involvement in examination malpractice. Available literatures reveal the absence of effort to empirically and forcefully demonstrate the impact of this anathema on the micro (individual) and macro (society) levels. This work aims at addressing this gap. A hypothesis which dwells on the relationship between examination malpractice and social maladies (operationalized at the society and individual levels): ranging from crime rate, blight of corruption, avoidable deaths, graduate unemployment, perpetrators’ poverty condition to culprits’ eventual frustration, guide the study. Survey design is adopted and consequently, three hundred (300) respondents are drawn from the three Senatorial Districts of Delta State using cluster and simple random sampling techniques. Instrument for data collection is structured questionnaire, while Tabular presentation/percentages and Chi square ( $X^2$ ) statistical tool are adopted to analyze the research questions and test the hypothesis formulated for the study at 0.05 level of significance respectively. The depressing impact of examination malpractice on the individual perpetrators and society at large are revealed to be significantly severe. It is recommended that social re-orientation be embarked upon to re-direct the attention of students and parents to seeking knowledge rather than certificates and those quality resource persons be engaged in all levels of the educational system, especially the formative or basic levels.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Education is unarguably central in today’s knowledge-driven economy that is the very definition of Twenty-first Century. It is a major sector of every economy whether developed or underdeveloped. Nations devote a significant portion of their budgetary allocations to education in view of the critical role it plays in every society. In fact, the level or quality of a nation’s educational system indicates the level of the nation’s development. Therefore, education

has grown to be a major indicator of a nation’s development. This has explained the practice of parents in developing countries sending their children or wards to study in developed societies where there exists quality education maintained over time.

The channels through which nations achieve their educational objectives are educational institutions, which range from kindergarten, primary, secondary to tertiary levels. A major tool for ascertaining the level of

students' assimilation or knowledge in the educational system is examination. Examination is a tool devised and used by educational institutions to assess and determine the extent to which students understood or assimilate what they have been taught in the class room or field.

For proper conduct and to be able to serve as a tool for assessment of learning in the educational system, examination has rules and regulations devised by stakeholders to ensure the integrity of examinations. Any act that goes against these rules and regulations that are deliberately established to guide examination is known as examination malpractice.

Examination malpractices are the irregularities and infringements of the rules and regulations governing the conduct of examinations (DSPG, 2006).

Onyechere (2006) holds that examination malpractice is any form of misconduct or neglect that contravenes the rules of acceptable practice before, during and after an examination by anybody in any way.

Examination malpractice has assumed frightening dimension and seems to resist the actions so far devised to combat it. It is a type of corruption that destroys the minds of the students and perverts the moral values of the society; thus it poses a dangerous vice that poses serious threat to the future of the individual (micro) perpetrators and the society (macro) at large.

This work which is aimed at studying how examination malpractice pose threat to the individual that engage in the vice and the society, is of interest to the researchers because of the fact that graduates do not only fail to measure up to the standards of

both international and external evaluators in the society, but have become a threat to life of the populace.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Examination is the instrument used in measuring the extent of understanding and assimilation of students in a particular subject. It is a sine qua non in the existence of any academic institution. On account of this crucial place occupied by examination in the educational system, specific rules and regulations have been deliberately formulated to guide the conduct of examinations. These ethics must be observed for any examination to be adjudged worthwhile. However, it is not uncommon to observe with dismay that these rules or ethics of examinations are consciously and blatantly violated to enable some deviants gain undue advantage. The subversion or flagrant violation of examination ethics constitutes examination malpractice. Olatoye (2011) defines examination malpractice as any illegal act committed by students, parents, teachers, supervisors, invigilators, examination officers and anybody or group of people before, during or after examinations in order to obtain undeserved marks or grades.

Examination malpractice in Nigeria is as old as the country as Onuka (2004) states that the first examination malpractice in Nigeria was reported in 1914 (the year erstwhile Southern and Northern Protectorates were amalgamated and christened Nigeria) when there was a leakage of question papers into the Senior Cambridge Local Examination. Examination malpractice has become phenomenal and household name in all levels of Nigeria's education system. With time, while attempt is made to curb the spate and nuisance of examination malpractice, more sophisticated and

complex methods are devised by debased elements that engage in it; thus giving it a hydra-head dimension. In fact, "miracle center" has become a common register in Nigeria's education system.

Examination malpractice is one of the evils that have incontrovertibly become a serious threat to the survival of the society and relevance of Nigerian Institutions (Okwuenu and Eneogwe, 2007). Annually, public examination bodies withhold or cancel a good number of examination results on account of widespread perpetration of examination malpractice by candidates, most instances facilitated by the ignoble aiding and abating role of examination officials. Many students have been rusticated or expelled sequel to their involvement in this despicable act. A good number of teachers, lecturers and other examination officials have faced various disciplinary actions ranging from advice, warning, caution, suspension, interdiction, to dismissal.

The fact still remains that many students engage in examination malpractice in the course of their study without being caught. They graduate with grades which do not reflect their academic prowess. They end up occupying sensitive positions in the society by mere presentation of their undeserved certificates facilitated by the undue emphasis placed on "credentialism" by employers of labour, particularly in the public sector. Today, there are doctors, engineers, chemists, managers and other professionals in critical sectors of the society who pose serious threat to the survival of the society because they cannot put into practice what they claimed to have studied in school.

There is no gainsaying that for every action, there is a reaction. Hence, it is not out of

context to state that those involved in examination malpractice, caught or uncaught, suffer their actions in one way or the other. Since they exist in societies, the social system is not isolated from the eventual consequences of this anomaly. The foregoing depicts examination malpractice as an ill-wind that blows no one any good.

This research therefore, seeks to make manifestly clear and empirically too, the unwholesome effects of examination malpractice in the society as well as those that engage in it. This will lucidly reveal the enormity of the phenomenon and make relevant authorities to tackle the problem squarely and eschew massive involvement of students and examination officials in examination malpractice.

#### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study is intended to verify the debilitating effects of examination malpractice on the individual that engage in the unethical conduct and the society at large, with reference to Delta State. Consequently, the study will attempt to forcefully and manifestly reveal, through empirical study, the dangers associated with examination malpractice, thereby saving the educational system from total collapse and save humanity from destruction; considering the fatal effects of a medical doctor or engineer who holds certificate obtained through indulgence in examination malpractice, for instance.

The specific objectives include:

1. To establish the relationship between examination malpractice and crime rate in the society.
2. To ascertain whether examination malpractice is linked to the blight of corruption in the society.

3. To reveal the interplay between examination malpractice in some strategic professions and avoidable deaths.
4. To establish the relationship between examination malpractice and graduate unemployment for those that indulge in the vice.
5. To ascertain whether examination malpractice results in the perpetrators' poverty condition.
6. To know whether examination malpractice leads to frustration in the life of the culprits.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions have been formulated for the purpose of this study.

1. Is there any relationship between examination malpractice and crime rate in the society?
2. Does examination malpractice have a link with the blight of corruption in the society?
3. Is there interplay between examination malpractice in some strategic professions and avoidable deaths?
4. Does examination malpractice result in graduate unemployment for those that indulge in the vice?
5. Does examination malpractice result in the perpetrators' poverty condition?
6. Does examination malpractice lead to frustration in the life of those who indulged in the vice?

### RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between examination malpractice and social ills at macro and micro levels.

### Significance of the Study

This study is quite apt as it will be of immense benefit to the society. The hard done by products of examination

malpractice is enormous and has resulted in debilitating socio-economic conditions in the society. It will make the society safer and peaceful.

The study will be of relevance to management of educational institutions, policy makers and relevant authorities to specifically appreciate the social and economic evils fraught with examination malpractice and take appropriate steps to arrest the phenomenal enervating situations.

### CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

The following concepts have been deemed fit to be clarified for the purpose of this study.

**Examination:** Webster Dictionary defines examination as an exercise designed to examine progress or test qualification or knowledge while the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (7<sup>th</sup> Edition) defines examination as spoken or practical test, formally written especially at college or school to see how much students know about a subject or what they can do. A test or examination is an assessment intended to measure a test-takers knowledge or skills, aptitude, physical fitness or classification in many other topics (e.g. beliefs). A test may be administered orally, on a paper, on a computer or in confirmed area that requires a test-taker to physically perform a set of skills. Examination in this work relates to practical and written tests adopted to assess the extent of understanding of students of particular course or field of study based on which appropriate certificates are issued.

**Examination Malpractice:** Examination malpractice is defined as any deliberate act of wrong doing contrary to the rules of examinations designed to give a candidate an unfair advantage. Nuraini (2015) sees examination malpractice as an illegal behaviour by a candidate before, during or

after the examination so that he/she can attain success easily and cheaply. It is therefore a premeditated act that runs contrary to established and extant examination rules geared towards giving those involved undue advantage.

**Social Malady:** This refers to disorder or disease that impedes the smooth and progressive society. They are problems within a society that negatively and severely affect the stability, peace and development of the society at large. Such ills include, graduate unemployment, crime wave, corruption, avoidable deaths, frustration, among others. These conditions hamper development, hence resulting in social paralysis or breakdown that reflects that the society is indeed sick.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

Some authors have attempted to highlight the consequences of examination malpractice but have not actually demonstrated the specifics and operationalize the variables that are easily appreciated by all. For instance Onyibe (2015) holds that examination malpractice has become a household name in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. He took a sweeping analysis of the menace of corruption in the society and stated that key effects of examination malpractice includes discouragement of students from hard work, low productivity and job performance, bribery, corruption and certificate racketeering. He concluded that examination malpractice, with its disadvantages, is affecting all the facets of the society.

Oghuvbu (2008) in his work entitled, *Examination Malpractice and the Society*, painstakingly highlighted forms of examination malpractice to include examination leakages, impersonation, bringing foreign materials into examination halls, swapping of booklets, among others. The author linked the vice to undue emphasis on certificates, poverty level,

lack of proper guidance and counseling programme, lack of confidence, desire to succeed without hard work, lecturers' inefficiency among others. He revealed that parents, guardians, school management and examination officers are the advocates of examination malpractice. On the effects, the author identified wrong award of grades and positions, gradual destruction of the educational system and decline in the nation's economy. Another is disgrace of dismissal and expulsion on staff and students caught in examination malpractice respectively.

Nuraini, (2015) categorically states that examination malpractices have consistently remained a bane of Nigeria educational system, resulting in a belief across the shores of the country that most academic certificates being issued to graduates in Nigeria are no more valuable than the pieces of paper on which they are printed. The author highlighted the causes of examination malpractice to include laziness of students, large population of students, desperation, corrupt invigilators/supervisors, among others. On effects of the menace, she casually asserted that creativity and resourcefulness are hampered and that it wreaks great havoc on the social, religious, economic and political life of Nigerians.

It is pertinent to state that these cited efforts are either not empirical or failed to pin down and operationalize the effects of examination malpractice at the micro and macro levels of the society. Hence, this study will fill this gap in knowledge.

#### METHODS

Survey research design was adopted in this study. Primary and secondary sources of data were used to generate data for the study. The researchers restricted the study to Delta State, divided into the three Senatorial Districts – South, Central and

North. However, the target population was constituted by enlightened members of the public, especially management of tertiary institutions, government officials and captains of industries who encounter the “products” of examination malpractice in the course of their operations.

For effectiveness and convenience, the researchers determined the sample size of the study as three hundred (300) respondents. This sample is made up of one hundred (100) respondents each from the three Senatorial Districts of the State as stated above.

Cluster and simple random sampling techniques were used to obtain the sample of the study. The Senatorial Districts are to be considered as clusters as they have geographical boundaries. Simple random sampling will eventually be used to draw one hundred (100) respondents from each of the Senatorial Districts. These techniques were adopted to ensure that the sample is a representative of the State and that every member had equal opportunity of being drawn for the study.

#### **INSTRUMENT FOR DATA COLLECTION**

Structured questionnaire was used to generate the primary data of the study for ease of analysis. The questionnaire has six (6) questions which revolve around the objectives, research questions and hypothesis of the study.

#### **METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS**

Tabular presentation/percentage was adopted to analyze the outcome of the questionnaire, with the research questions formulated for the study as key variables and basis of analysis while the hypothesis formulated for the study was tested using Chi square ( $X^2$ ) statistical tool at 0.05 level of significance.

#### **DECISION RULE**

The decision will be made on the basis of the hypotheses. If Chi square ( $X^2$ ) calculated value is less than Chi square ( $X^2$ ) table value, accept the null hypothesis. However, if the chi square ( $X^2$ ) calculated value is greater than the table value, reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) and accept the alternate hypothesis ( $H_1$ ).

#### **MEASURES**

The evils of examination malpractice will be operationalized with three sub-constructs: crime rate in the society; blight of corruption in the society; and avoidable deaths; at the macro or societal level; and also three sub-constructs: graduate unemployment, perpetrators' poverty condition and frustration in the life of the culprits, at the micro or individual level. The responses will be measured along a modified four-point scale of Strongly Agree (S.A.), Agree (A.), Disagree (D.) and Strongly Disagree (S.D.).

**Table 1:** Responses of Respondents on the Relationship between Examination Malpractice and Social ills at Macro (Societal) and Micro (Individual) levels.

S/N	ITEM	S.A.	A.	D.	S.D.	TOTAL
1	Is there any relationship between examination malpractice and high crime rate in the society?	122 (40.7%)	100 (33.3%)	60 (20%)	18 (6%)	300 (100%)
2	Does examination malpractice have any	111 (37%)	123 (41%)	54 (18%)	12 (4%)	300 (100%)

	connection with the problem of corruption in the society?					
3	Is there any relationship between examination malpractice in some key/essential professions (Medical/Structural Engineering) & avoidable/untimely deaths?	200 (66.7%)	71 (23.7%)	25 (8.3%)	4 (1.3%)	300 (100%)
4	Does examination malpractice bring about graduate unemployment for those that indulge in the vice?	211 (70.3%)	84 (28%)	3 (1%)	2 (0.7%)	300 (100%)
5	Does examination malpractice lead to the perpetrators' poverty condition?	180 (60%)	96 (32%)	20 (6.7%)	18 (6%)	300 (100%)
6	Does examination malpractice lead to frustration in the life of those who indulged in the vice?	196 (65.3%)	83 (27.7%)	18 (6%)	3 (1%)	300 (100%)

**Source: Field Survey, 2018.**

Table 1, above reflects the responses of the respondents as contained in the questionnaire administered for the purpose of the study, which directly relates to the research questions and revolves around the hypothesis stated below. 74% (S.A. - 40.7% & A. - 33.3%) which constitutes majority of the respondents stated that there is relationship between examination malpractice and high crime rate in the society. At the Macro level, 78% (S.A. - 37% & A. - 41%) of the respondents also asserted that examination malpractice is connected to the problem of corruption in the society. There is relationship between examination malpractice in some key/essential professions (Medical/Structural Engineering)

& avoidable/untimely deaths as held by unwieldy 90.4% (S.A. - 66.7% & A. - 23.7%) of the respondents.

On the Micro level, the outcome of the questionnaire is that examination malpractice brings about graduate unemployment for those that indulge in the vice as stated by 98.3% (S.A. - 70.3% & A. - 28%) of the respondents. Also 92% (S.A. - 60% & A. - 32%) of the respondents opined that examination malpractice leads to the perpetrators' poverty condition; just as it was held that examination malpractice leads to frustration in the life of those who indulged in the vice by 93% (S.A. - 65.3% & A. - 27.7%) of the respondents.

### TEST OF HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis formulated for this study, which is:

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between examination malpractice and social ills at micro and macro levels.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is significant relationship between examination malpractice and social ills at micro and macro levels.

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(fo-fe)^2}{fe}$$

where:  $\chi^2$  = Chi Square  
 $fo$  = Observed frequency  
 $fe$  = Expected frequency  
 $\sum$  = Summation

**Table 2: EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE AND SOCIAL ILLS**

Responses	fo	fe	(fo-fe)	(fo-fe) <sup>2</sup>	(fo-fe) <sup>2</sup> /fe
SA	170	75	95	9025	120.3
A	93	75	18	324	4.3
D	30	75	-45	2025	27
SD	7	75	-68	4624	61.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>300</b>			<b>213.3</b>

**Source: Survey Data, 2018**

$\chi^2$  Calculated Value: = 213.3

Degree of Freedom (df) = (C-1) (r-1) = (6-1) (2-1)  
 = 5 x 1 = 5

Level of Significance = 0.05 :  $\chi^2$  Critical/Table Value = 11.070

Decision Rule: Reject H<sub>0</sub> and accept H<sub>1</sub> if Critical/Table Value is greater than Calculated Value. If otherwise, the reverse.

Since the Calculated Value (213.3) is greater than the Critical/Table Value (11.070), we reject H<sub>0</sub> and accept H<sub>1</sub>: There is significant relationship between examination malpractice and social ills at macro and micro levels.

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Examination malpractice is indeed irregularities and infringements of the rules and regulations governing the conduct of examinations which carry related penalties.

This depravity has assumed a frightening and alarming phenomenon in Nigeria society. The quest for certification

and "making it at all cost and by all means" syndrome has deplorably pervaded the Nigeria educational system. This despicable act that should be condemned by all and sundry is rapidly ascending to the level of a norm. Examination malpractice is brazenly practiced by students aided and abated by parents as well as examination bodies/academic institutions officials/staff. Since every action must have reaction, examination malpractice has impacted seriously on the socio-economic fabric of the Nigeria society.

This study revealed there is a strong nexus between examination malpractice and crime rate in the society. This is obvious since students who indulge in the vice are aware of the criminal implications of their actions



and would not hesitate to adopt criminal practices in the larger society. This group of unrefined elements eventually constitute nuisance to the society. In the same vein, the apologists of examination malpractice are inconvertibly prone to corrupt practices. In fact, Oghuvbu (2008) succinctly asserts that the production of corrupt graduates by corrupt graduates, especially through scientific behaviour or action that violates the laid down rules and regulations for proper conduct of the procedure for certifications have resulted in poor implementation of Nigeria's well-articulated educational policy, resulting in backwardness in political, social, economic and technological growth and development. This is because many of the students had to pay their way through while in school, hence, they see nothing wrong in continuing with the trend in the society upon graduation. This work showed that there is a strong correlation between examination malpractice and the blight of corruption in Nigeria society.

Where some members of key and strategic professions engage in examination malpractice in school, it could result in avoidable deaths in the society. Patients have met their untimely death due to the quackery of some "doctors" who were not driven by knowledge but certificate centered. The construction sector is not left out as "engineers" who do not have the necessary expertise have, through delivery of substandard structures, sent many to early grave in the spate of collapsed structures even while under construction.

This study equally revealed that there is mutual relationship between examination malpractice and graduate unemployment in the society since those who indulge in examination malpractice hardly can defend

their certificates. This is obvious since they lack the basic skills to be productively engaged in workplace. In fact it was unequivocally asserted that some graduates from Nigeria's higher institutions of learning were not employable (Okonjo, 2012).

Following from unemployable condition of those that engaged in examination malpractice, they lack means of good standard of living and slid into poverty. Joblessness means lack of means of meeting basic necessities of life. This study also established a link between examination malpractice and poverty condition of perpetrators. It was also discovered that examination malpractice results in frustration in the life of the culprits as they are caught in socio-economic and psychological state of helplessness. A frustrated individual is obviously a threat to the society given the potential nuisance actions that constitute harm to the society.

## **CONCLUSION**

The sanctity and integrity of examinations in many Nigeria institutions of learning have been vitiated by the brazen and widespread acts of examination malpractice. The materialistic predisposition of staff of these institutions of learning, as well as the inordinate quest for certification in the society, has eroded core values of Nigeria society. Graduates that ought to be the spice of the society have conversely become vice and danger to the society.

This work revealed that there is significant nexus between examination malpractice and crime rate, the prevailing blight of corruption, as well as avoidable death resulting from quackery which examination malpractice is a key catalyst. Also is the unemployment or unemployable condition of some graduates, the resulting poverty and

frustration of the life of the culprits. These are social nuisance that does not depict a healthy social system. It is therefore concluded that examination malpractice destroys the sinew of society and is a social disease that does nobody (individual culprits and society) any good.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are deemed necessary.

- There is urgent need for social re-orientation to re-direct the belief of students and parents that certificate and not knowledge is the ultimate. The values of hard work, honesty, contentment and integrity should be imbibed by all and sundry in all spheres of the society.
- Corruption, which has pervaded the entire society, should be addressed squarely through the implementation of the extant laws that seek to curb the monster without fear or favour and no matter whose ox is gored.
- Certification should be de-emphasized by government and other major employers of labour. Acquisition of requisite knowledge and skills should be the conditions for staff engagement in the work place. This will significantly, systematically and automatically exclude products of examination malpractice from the industrial setting and also discourage students from indulging in the criminal act of examination malpractice.
- Quality resource persons: teachers, lecturers, instructors, counselors/psychologists should be in educational system to ensure that the students are appropriately tutored and guided. This has become necessary because one can only operate within

the limits of his or her knowledge; one cannot give what he or she does not have.

- Wherever appropriate or suitable, automated means of assessing students should be adopted. This will eliminate primordial dispositions of corrupt staff of institutions of higher learning, which are keen on extorting money from students to award unmerited and disproportionate marks or grades to them.
- A curriculum on examination ethics and dangers of examination malpractices in the society and how it endangers the future of those that engage in the vice should be designed and taught in schools from primary to tertiary levels. This will make students to be aware of the destructive and debilitating effects of this academic fraud and dissociate themselves from it.

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