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**TOWARDS REDUCING EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN SCHOOLS: THE  
ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGY TEACHER**

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**Abstract**

*Of all educational problems in Nigeria today, the greatest threat is the issue of examination malpractice in schools. Thus, this paper deals with the concept, meaning, trends, and categories of examination malpractice. The underlying causes of examination malpractice in schools which include factors such as psychological factors, economic factors, environmental and institutional factors, socio-political factors, lack of proper academic guidance and much emphasis attached to the acquisition of certificates and paper qualifications have been discussed. The paper has also discussed the role of the psychology teacher in reducing examination malpractice in the school setting. These include improvement on the psychological and intellectual well-being of students, strategies to better understand and explain students' learning problems and successes, provision of knowledge base for the use of various teaching methods in the classroom, understanding the process of growths and developments of students by a way of examining their individual differences and how to cater for their peculiar differences, use of various testing procedures, cognitive behaviour treatment, modeling and behaviour reinforcement in school settings, and advocacy and sensitization on attitudinal orientation and changes of the public against the menace of examination malpractice. Finally, the paper recommends provision of adequate and improved equipment and infrastructure in schools, enhanced teachers' salaries and incentives, parental control and supervision to check children's behaviour, friendship, and companionship in order to detect deviant behaviour, hitch-free examination hall through adequate invigilators and security, guidance and counselling centers at schools and communities to provide guidance on examination ethics and orientation services, and enforcement of disciplinary measures on examination malpractice, among others.*

**Keywords:** Towards Reducing Examination Malpractice in Schools and the Role of Psychology Teacher

The derogative falling of educational standards in Nigeria is becoming uncontrollable due to the derail of our educational practices as well as malpractices in school assessments. The periodic assessment and evaluation of students' performance after exposure to teaching-learning process has become mere fantasy and meaningless dreams; as cheating in examinations has pervaded all our educational facets (primary, secondary, tertiary or professional institutions of learning) with attendant effects on quality education and graduates of schools (Amadi & Opuiyo, 2018). The standards of performance at examinations in schools today have declined considerably; a practice that has undermined the validity and reliability of the ultimate goals of giving examination and the integrity of certificates issued by schools (Okolie, Nwosu, Eneje, & Oluka, 2019). Examination malpractice as a form of social menace is prevalent in Nigerian schools; and perhaps in other parts of the world (Tambuwal, 2015). Therefore, the degree at which examination malpractice is moving in our institutions of learning and the damage it has caused the quality of educational delivery constitutes the bases of investigation in this study with the view of determining the role of a psychology teacher so as to minimize the syndrome.

### **Examination Malpractice: Concept, Meaning and Trends**

According to Adamu (2001) considered examination malpractice as the cheating which directly or indirectly falsifies the ability of the student. Duyilemi (2003), examination malpractice refers to all forms of ill-practices, mis-behaviours and fraudulent acts associated with the process and conduct of examination. Afolabi and Loto (2005) viewed examination malpractice as an act of omission and commission that contravenes the rules and regulations of the examination bodies or councils. Sorbari and Eremie (2018) described examination malpractice as an unlawful behaviour engaged by students or any of their advocates (parents or guardians) to have advantage in an examination over others. In a nutshell, the concept of examination malpractice refers to any illegality by students, parents or guardians, and staff before, during, and after the examination to achieve an undue favour.

The growing menace of examination malpractice in our schools has its foot prints in Nigeria since in the early generation (Duyilemi, 2003). The first examination malpractice in Nigeria was a leakage of question paper technical school. In early 60s, examination malpractice was pronounced and tagged as 'expo'; covering spying or peeping into another candidate's answer script popularly known as 'giraffe' (Ozigi, 1978). Malpractices in examinations in the contemporary days have taken more sophisticated into the senior

Cambridge Examination in 1914. In the same view, Molewa (1976) maintained that in 1948, a Nigeria's candidate had his paper cancelled as a result of incident of examination malpractice at matriculation examination to the then 'Yaba' Nigeria dimensions such as the use of electronic devices (like mobile hand sets and computerized calculators and wrist-watches).

### **Forms and Categories of Examination Malpractice**

Okolie, Nwosu, Eneje, and Oluka (2019), Amadi and Opuiyo (2018), Osiogun and Mamman (2017), Baji (2008), Yahaya (2006), and Duyilemi (2003) have identified the following forms and manifestations of examination malpractice in schools.

**Impersonation:** This may involve the exchange of examination numbers or names on answer sheets, or the intentional use of someone else's examination number or card.

**Exchange of materials in examination hall** such as question papers containing jottings that are relevant to the on-going examination.

**Insulting or assaulting any supervisor or invigilator.**

**Theft, swooping and illegal removal of an examination script during or after the examination.**

**Introduction and use of relevant unauthorized materials in the examination hall.**

**Non-submission of answer scripts or replacing answer scripts with another one during or after the examination.**

**Writing on question papers, or handkerchief or any other means such as on the hijab, brazier, lap, sucks, and palms.**

**Any kind of mischief likely to hinder the smooth running of examination such as flooding, fire outbreak, and physical violence.**

**An act of misconduct in form of conversation during examination.**

**Facilitating/abetting cheating.**

**Cheating outside the examination hall by consulting cheat notes and relevant materials or colluding with a member of staff in order to submit a prepared answered sheet or booklet(s) as substitute for the original script(s).**

**Plagiarism:** This is the use of another person's work without proper acknowledgement both in the text and in the reference.

**Giraffe:** This connotes an act of looking at the neighbor's work knowingly or unknowingly.

There are other categories of examination malpractice which include; secret breaking into a staff office in order to obtain examination materials, writing project or laboratory or field report on behalf of somebody, manipulation of registration forms and examination cards in order to sit for an examination, colluding with a medical doctor in

order to obtain a fake medical certificate of illness, and receiving calls and text messages in an examination hall.

### **Underlying Factors Responsible for Examination Malpractice in Schools**

There are a number of factors responsible for examination malpractice in Nigeria. Sorbari and Ereie (2018), Aglazor (2017), Tambuwal (2015), Baji, (2008), Afolabi and Loto (2005), Bernard (1998) and Denga (1996) have posited the following as the underlying causes of examination malpractice:

**Psychological Factors:** This includes all forms of stress, tension and anxiety experienced by the students in the course of teaching and learning as well as undertaking school programmes or activities. Thus, psychological reasons such as stress, tension, fear and anxiety of failure may lead to emotional upset and prompt students to develop undesirable habit of cheating in trying to meet the various academic strains, demands and challenges. Psychological tremor of failure or scoring low grades also affect students' concentration and cognition at the teaching/learning process; thereby causing some of them to engage in all sorts of misconducts during examinations.

**Economic Factors:** Economic factors such as poverty, low economic standard and per capital income to 'cater for the needs and wants of staff under the education industry (e.g., school administrators, supervisors, teachers and examination officers). The prevailing economic hardship and poverty levels of Nigerians which is manifested in lack of basic needs had injected the personnel involved in affairs of measurement and evaluation with the act of bribery taking. Corrupt practices such as exchange of money (bribe), gift items and contracts to examination officials from students or candidates sitting for examinations or their associates/guardians are responsible malpractices in schools and have rendered our examinations incredible and defective.

**Socio-Political Factors:** The undue quota admission system into schools to serve socio-political interests constitutes another remarkable cause of examination malpractice. Admitting unqualified candidates who cannot defend their results to meet geographical spread, social status and political interest and patronage have led to the emergence of low academic performance; culminating into cheating or unconventional behaviour and malpractices during and after examinations in order to pass.

**Environmental Factors:** The nature and type of environment under which students undertake classroom lessons and write examination influence them. Thus, the problem of overcrowded nature of our classrooms, lack of good infrastructural facilities and learning materials (such as school library, resource rooms and play activities), poor handling and administration of examinations and lack of adequate security and invigilators during

examinations have strong relationship with engagement in examination malpractice (Okolie, Nwosu, Eneje & Oluka, 2019). When the sizes of students' population are too large for proper monitoring in the process of leaching and conduct of examinations, the end effect is cheating due to lack of proper control, management, and supervision (Osiyiogu & Mamman, 2017).

**Institutional Factors:** Institutional factors, in this context, include poor neighbourhoods, influence of peer group, negative motivation and problem personality profiles (Baji, 2019 & Tambuwal, 2015). These factors together may trigger individual behaviour the students to engage in examination malpractice because of the following reasons:

Poor school settings and bad school leadership style.

Negative influence of the peer group believing they can succeed in examinations without vigorous academic studies.

Lack of proper attention to teaching profession resulting into incisive strikes and closure of schools. This affects coverage of the stipulated syllabus.

Motivation for cheating as a result of competition within siblings especially in a polygamous family or competition between one community and the other.

Moral decadence from the side of students and staff. This may be due to sexual harassment, sex for marks, and gratification for higher grades.

Cultism by enforcing cheating under the given cult membership and fraternity.

Teachers' attitude toward students. Some lecturers are out to fail and frustrate students without a good cause. This is done through poor continuous assessment and marking schemes.

Poor method of teaching by some teachers. This causes poor understanding of lessons, which results in cheating in order to pass by all means.

Furthermore, the ill-motivation and undue emphasis placed on certificates and paper qualifications is responsible for promotion of examination malpractice in schools. The Nigerian society has placed too much consideration on certificates and 'paper qualifications as a means of employment and achieving social status. This strongly prompt people to special examination centers organized for malpractices in order to procure a certificate through 'hook' or 'crook' ways (Amadi & Opuiyo, 2018). Singh (2018), Sorbari and Eremie (2018), Denga (1986) and Fafunwa (1981) also attributed causes of examination malpractice to lack of proper guidance and counselling programmes for students. Candidates apply for courses for admission and offer them without proper guidance. Some parents, on the other hand, impose courses on their children so as to achieve pride. Many students, on another hand, lack good reading habits and thus have poor academic orientation and organization.

Besides, the principle of individual differences in intelligent quotient (IQ) level marks another reason for examination malpractice (Roth & Jornet, 2017). The school composed of brilliant (gifted) and weak students, and each group struggle for academic success. The intelligent students are smart and therefore react quickly to facilitate their easy pass in examinations while the academically weak students in attempt to meet up with the academic challenges seek for external help through misconduct and malpractice (Okolie, Nwosu, Eneje, & Oluka, 2019).

### **The Role of the Psychology Teacher in Reducing Examination Malpractice in Schools**

The field of psychology concerns with the scientific study of behaviour. Psychology is defined as the science of behaviour and mental processes. Psychology as a discipline has other branches such as: developmental psychology, experimental psychology, social psychology, abnormal psychology, clinical psychology, genetic psychology, educational psychology and many others. Thus, educational psychology is the application of the knowledge gained from these areas of psychology to solve educational problems. It is a branch of psychology that deals with the learner, learning and instructional processes and different conditions of learning (Pritchard & Woollard, 2013 & Turner, 2017).

### **Who is a Psychology Teacher?**

Smith and Firth (2018) described a psychology teacher as a career staff or personnel who teaches or lectures in schools, colleges or universities, and conducts research in areas of educational psychology such as human developments, learning, intelligence, motivation, classroom management and assessment. The roles of the psychology teacher in reducing examination malpractice in the school setting include the following: (Baji, 2008, Essuman, 1990; Gibso, 1980; Oladele, 1984).

The teaching-learning process in schools is enormously complex; covering many factors, which influence students' learning. These include factors such as family background, developmental levels of the students, prior knowledge, motivation and effective teaching. The psychology teacher investigates these factors and proffer strategies to better understand and explain students' learning problems and successes. This helps to improve general teaching-learning process and specifically students' academic performance which in turns serves as antidote to examination malpractice.

The psychology teacher emphasizes disciplined inquiry, a systematic and objective analysis of information toward decision making for the improvement of the psychological and intellectual well-being of students. When there is improvement on students' psychological and intellectual well-being, students tend to concentrate and commit themselves to learning

which helps to neutralize the effects of stress and anxiety as causes of examination malpractice.

The psychology teacher undertakes quantitative and qualitative studies on teaching and learning which helps to establish a knowledge base that provide concepts and skills that could be adapted for the use of various teaching methods in the classroom. When effective teaching method is used, it facilitates learning and improves academic performance and consequently helps to eradicate the psychological tremor of scoring low grades which make students to engage in examination malpractice in order to pass.

The psychology teacher provides a holistic approach in understanding the process of growths and developments of students by a way of examining their individual differences and how to cater for their peculiar differences. This approach helps to determine individual students that are at the risk of involving in examination malpractice through individualized instruction and intervention strategies to address their academic weaknesses.

The psychology teacher provides assessment of learning outcomes using various techniques and testing procedures (such as psychological tests). The outcomes of these tests are used to improve on the learning strategies and for selection of qualified candidates during admission process as against admitting unqualified candidates due to political interest which results into examination malpractice to pass by all means.

The psychology teacher uses methods of diagnosing learning difficulties to discover students with special needs and adjustment problems. This helps to determine appropriate counselling and remedial services in order to improve their learning and performance in examinations.

The psychology teacher develops research skills on school leadership styles and student-teacher relationships. This helps to mitigate the effects of examination malpractice due to poor school leadership styles and ill-interpersonal relationships between teachers and student.

The psychology teacher uncovers the influence of environment on academic performance. This process helps to enhance good stimulating learning environments and educational interventions for students to achieve academic goals.

The psychology teacher engages in cognitive behaviour treatment, modeling and behaviour reinforcement in school settings. This strategy helps to modify students' behaviour and instill good study habits among students during examinations.

The psychology teacher engages in advocacy and massive sensitization on attitudinal orientation and changes of the public through workshops, seminars, drama and media chat to reposition people's minds against cheating during examinations and acquisition of defective certificates.

## Conclusion

Examination is believed to serve as prediction of academic progress and career development of individual students. It is a powerful tool in judging the standards of education in a country. Hence, the fraudulent practices in examinations today are responsible for the falling standards of education and the value of assessment in schools. Examination malpractice destroys the moral and integrity of the culprits and in turn gives poor values and false impression of the capabilities of graduates due to defective certificates and unjustified paper qualifications. The remedy therefore is to match a movement against this monster in order to restore our value of education that will produce the best brains that would stand tall away equal and make lasting contributions to the advancement of the society and humanity at large.

## Recommendations toward Reducing Examination Malpractice in Schools

The following are measures that will objectively reduce the menace of examination malpractice in schools:

Government should consider education as a treasure where every sustainable development can be attained. Thus, conducive learning environment through provision of adequate equipment, infrastructure and enhanced teachers' salaries and incentives should be given priority by the relevant authorities and agencies. Also, scholarship awards to students who excelled in school activities (academic, socio-cultural and sports) by the stakeholders such as government agencies, voluntary organizations and individual philanthropists should be provided. This practice will boost good competition and enhance hard work among students thereby reducing the tendency of their involvement in examination malpractice.

Parents should provide good child care and parenting through guidance, proper monitoring and sustainable motivation. This should include modifying the home environments with rich learning and play activities and checking of children's behaviour, friendship, and companionship in order to detect deviant acts among school children for corrective measures.

Strict professional ethics of teaching should be adhered to both in the process of employment and practice. This will ensure quality of teachers and reduce moral bankruptcy such as bribery and corruption before, during and after examinations.

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Hitch-free examination hall through adequate invigilators, proper time-table schedule and security should be guaranteed to manage temptations and cheating during examinations.

Guidance and counselling centers should be established at schools and communities to provide necessary guidance on examination ethics as well as educational, social, mental and vocational orientation and services.

Disciplinary measures on examination malpractice should be re-enforced. Punishments and penalties for offences and misconducts during and after examinations should be duly implemented without fear or favour to serve as detriment.

The policy of aptitude test before admission into schools such as the post JAMB should be maintained to identify those candidates that are incompetent to pursue rigorous academic exercise.

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