

## RELIGION AND ETHICAL PERCEPTION OF FORMS AND EFFECTS OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN OYO STATE

**Dr. Ojediran, Sunday Abel.**

*Dept. of Christian Religious Studies  
School of Secondary Education  
(Arts & Social Science Programmes)  
Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo  
sundayojediran2017@gmail.com*

&

**Ojediran, Nike Oyebimpe**

*Dept. of Educational Psychology  
School of Education  
Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo  
ojediranoyebimpe@gmail.com*

### **Abstract**

*Examination Malpractice is perceived to have bastardized the standard of Education in Nigeria. Previous works on religion and ethics have focused largely on education's contributions to national development with little focus on forms and effects of Examination Malpractice in the nation's secondary schools. However, the conduct of free and fair Examination has become a mirage based on various forms of malpractices involved. This study therefore, investigated the religion and ethical perception of students on Examination Malpractice in selected Senior Secondary Schools in Oyo State, Nigeria. Survey research design was employed and Ethical Egoism theories were adopted in the analysis of data. Findings revealed abysmal styles in the conduct of examination as one multiplayer factor with serious multiplier effects that have constituted the bane of educational system. The religio-ethical model advanced that the study again revealed that this act of immorality was not exclusive to public schools; faith-based private institutions were affected. This study was, therefore, designed to examine how the word of God could be used to teach the students at secondary school level in order to eschew examination malpractices, curb students' perception of examination malpractices and effects.*

**Key words:** Examination malpractice, Perception, Ethics, Religion and Secondary schools.

### **Introduction**

Education in Nigeria is nationally conceptualized not simply as the medium for cultural and national development but as a mechanism through which the society generates knowledge and skills required for its survival and sustenance. It enriches people's understanding of themselves and the world. It improves the

quality of lives and broadens social benefits of individuals and society. The success of an educational system depends upon the effectiveness of its examination. It is a fundamental component of teaching learning process. Examinations are arranged to evaluate the academic achievement of students and to know whether they have achieved a standard of academic learning and knowledge. Examinations are considered the basis for promotion to higher classes; a source of motivation for learners for better studies; a basis for prediction about students' future education and job aptitudes.

Examination has to do with passing value judgment on an individual in the course of acquiring skills or knowledge over a period.<sup>1</sup> Examination also has to do with passing value judgment on an individual on the basis of the individual's performance in a set of questions, statements or series of tasks given, with the intention of assessing how much of a desired trait, skill or knowledge the individual possesses. In some cases, the following terms are used interchangeably to refer to examination: assessment, measurement, evaluation and testing.

In Nigeria, achievements at any level of education are crowned with certification for those who successfully complete the course of study with good academic records. Thus, at the end of secondary school education, students are expected to sit for public examinations and certificates are awarded according to the level of performance. Education occupies a very strategic position in our lives. Teachers and counsellors rely on it for a comprehensive evaluation of their students and clients. To decide whether a student merits being promoted to another class, a series of achievement tests that will eventually culminate in a well-founded decision has to be given. In industrial setting, exports, in human relations and employment, tests are used in reaching a decision as to the employability of an individual applicant.

The observation that our current examination system does not test learners in the application of the acquired information and knowledge to new life situations but certificate acquisition. Therefore, many graduates do not adjust themselves when they connect with practical life. Nowadays, the incidence of malpractices in examinations is in full swing and most persons in the society i.e., parents, teachers, students, security agencies and examination bodies are equally involved in supporting and encouraging the course of examination malpractices which is a great threat to the educational system. As it is presently, examination malpractices are considered the right of the students. Some teachers, students and parents are equally responsible for this destructive trend in examination malpractices.

According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary "malpractice is a wrong or illegal action demonstrated by an individual while discharging professional

responsibilities”. Examination malpractice is a corrupt practice and irregular behaviour exhibited by the candidates or any person charged with conduct of examination in or outside the examination hall before, during or after examination<sup>2</sup>. Examination malpractice “as an intentional and planned unlawful activity to place a candidate at an unfair advantage or disadvantage<sup>3</sup>. He further said that malpractice has generally contributed to the overall demotion and deterioration of the standard of education in Nigeria. In fact, examination malpractices constitute the most serious problems facing every levels of educational system in Nigeria. It is a known fact that there is no part of this country that is spared of the menace of examination malpractice it cuts across every segment of the Nigerian society. Both the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the religious and non-religious are all involved in one way or the other in perpetuating the evil vice of examination malpractice in all our institutions of learning.

Describing the trend which examination malpractice has taken since the last decade, examination malpractice has become a well-organized business in which supervisors/invigilators of examination, subject teachers, and even school authorities and their host communities have played prominent role. It is no longer news that invigilators are often beaten up by desperate students who accuse such invigilators of standing in their way to cheat. Some host communities have chased away invigilators considered to be uncooperative during examinations all in the name of securing success for their wards.<sup>5</sup> From the foregoing therefore, one may conclude that various groups of people partake in encouraging examination malpractices. Most of the time, the family, the school and the society serve as forces that promote anti-social behaviours of examination malpractices. The modern communication technology i.e phones, internet have seriously worsened the situation. Questions can travel from a location to different parts of the world within a second through snapping with phones and sending via internet and phone.

Ethics on the other hand is one of those nebulous concepts that do not lend themselves to a broadly and generally acceptable definition. What seems to be a consensus about ethics is that, it has to do with what is good or bad, what is morally right or wrong. What is acceptable in a given environment or not, what is expected or not of a person etc. Ethics connotes the guidelines or rules of conduct by which we aim to live, work and socialize. Ethical behaviour occurs when one acts with equity, fairness and impartiality and respects the rights of others or simply put, when one does what is morally right. Ethics therefore is a system of accepted rules about behaviour based on what is considered right or wrong. It can also be seen as a discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation. Ethics has also been defining as that branch of philosophy that deals with values relating to human conduct, with respect to the

rightness and wrongness of certain action. For the purpose of this research work, ethics is viewed in terms of expected behaviour during examination.

Examination malpractice is an illegal or unethical behaviour by somebody in the process of testing an examinee's ability or knowledge by means of questions.<sup>6</sup> Examination malpractice is any irregular behaviour exhibited by a candidate or anybody charged with the conduct of examination before, during or after the examination which contravenes the rules and regulations governing the conduct of such examination. Such examination malpractice will include any of the following: examination leakages, impersonation, cheating, collusion, swapping of scripts, smuggling of answer scripts in examination halls, result/ certificate forgery, verbal/physical assault on examination administrators that involve students giving or receiving unauthorized assistance in an academic exercise or receiving credit for work that is not their own. The effect of this position is evidenced by the poor performance of some students in higher institutions of learning despite possession of grade (A) O/level results. It has been widely reported that parents aid and abet examination malpractices directly or indirectly because they even go to the extent of bribing their way through to ensure that their wards get unearned grades.<sup>7</sup>

The teachers on their part encourage examination malpractices because they lacked the zeal to work and at the end would want to be praised for a job which was never done, thus graduating students who do not actually possess the abilities for which they were examined. The policy of government speaks volumes in this regard; a situation where commendations on the part of government on the teachers and the school is based on acquisition of excellent results and consequently a good rating in external examinations is an encouragement to examination misconduct. Also, the admission policies of most higher institutions of learning nowadays encourage students and parents to go to any length to get good results. Most higher institutions now grade o/levels results for admission purposes. Candidates with good grades are first considered for admission not minding how the results were acquired.

### **Examination Malpractice**

The concept of examination malpractices has been defined by different authors in different ways. Examination is an important instrument that is used to objectively evaluate and assess students' learning outcomes and ability to demonstrate knowledge, understanding, and mastery of different concepts and ideas. However, actions and practices that undermine the integrity of the examination process pose a serious threat to the quality and credulity of the students' learning outcomes. Examination malpractice is an example of actions that threatens the integrity of examinations, or damages the authority of those responsible for conducting them. Examination malpractice is also a threat to the

validity and reliability of the educational system. It is harmful not only to the moral development, but also to the intellectual development of the student. In recent years, examination malpractice in Nigeria has not only been on the increase but has also become sophisticated and aggressive.

### **History of Examination Malpractice in Nigeria**

The history of examination malpractice in Nigeria is not recent. It dates back to the colonial era. The first examination malpractice in Nigeria was reported in 1914, when there was a leakage of question paper in the Senior Cambridge examination. Since then, the incidence of examination malpractice has remained in the country.<sup>8</sup> However, examination malpractice existed at minimal and in simple unsophisticated forms in the earlier years but became more pervasive as from the 1970s. It must be noted that in the recent past, the incidence was not limited to final examinations conducted by public examination bodies alone. It occurs in school assessment, and this is carried over to external examinations especially the ones conducted for certificates or for admission purposes.<sup>9</sup>

The incidences of examination malpractice are common everywhere and every examination season witnesses the emergence of new and ingenious ways of cheating. The alarming rate of examination malpractice in secondary schools is witnessed in public examinations such as the Senior School Certificate examination (SSCE).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Over the years a preponderance of examination malpractice has reduced the quality of students admitted from Secondary Schools into the various higher institutions of learning spread all over Nigeria. This also reduced the quality of manpower available to help build the nation into an enviable height among the committee of nations. Nigeria is a religious Nation, the high level of religiosity in the Nigerian society and status accorded to most popular religion (Christianity and Islam) in Nigeria national life has not reflected in reducing act of dishonesty. However, one wonders if truly religions have played any role in eradicating Examination malpractices in Oyo state considering the fact that religion gave birth to Formal Education in Nigeria. It appears however that ethical behaviours including trust, appropriate social and moral values, integrity and responsibilities are deeply eroding from Nigeria educational system. This assertion is true, looking at the trend of events; one could see that our value system has been totally eroded.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study will therefore:

1. Examine various forms of examination malpractices common among senior secondary schools in Oyo state.

2. Analyze the consequences of examination malpractices on the students of senior secondary school students

### **Scope of the Study**

The study specifically reviewed the conduct of external examinations especially WAEC in selected secondary schools in Oyo State. Oyo State was chosen because of its size and pride of place accorded Western Education in the South West Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria. Oyo State is the capital of old western region and is dominated by majorly Yoruba speaking people. The three senatorial districts were covered which comprises of Oyo North Senatorial District with thirteen (13) Local Government Councils, Oyo Central Senatorial District with eleven (11) Local Government Councils and Oyo South Senatorial District with nine (9) Local Government Councils in the course of this research work.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the various forms of Examination Malpractice in Senior Secondary Schools in Oyo State?
2. What are the effects of examination malpractice on the standard of education in Oyo State and the Nigerian society at large?

### **Forms of Examination Malpractice**

- a. **Leakage:** This means that the content of examination or part of it is disclosed or in the public space prior to taking the examination. Usually it involves one or more of the following: staff members, examination officials, printers, front readers and messengers. e.g. some students interviewed in some of the schools visited claimed that the questions and solutions of WAEC and NECO examinations are always online in the social media before the commencement of each examination. This claim was confirmed by the researcher too. Some of these websites are examruns.com, examafrica.com, waecgist.com and waecexpo.com<sup>4</sup>
- b. **Impersonation:** An individual who is not registered as candidate for a particular examination takes the place of one that is registered. Usually this involves collusion between the Chief Examiner and the examination supervisor. It urgently involves tertiary institution students taking the position for monetary reward or in kind.
- c. **Swapping:** This is an exchange of paper booklets so that the bright student can write answers out for his/her friends. This was also observed in some secondary schools visited during 2021 May/June and June/July WAEC/NECO Examinations.
- d. **Body Aids:** Involve jotting of points/answers on the underwear's or thighs for referencing during examination. This is also part of what the researcher observed on the field.

- e. **Mercenary Service:** Involves employing the service of another student/person to write the examination. This was noticed in some schools visited especially in the rural areas. This is common in external examinations e.g. the researcher observed the presence of mercenaries in some centres visited in the last November/December Neco examinations e.g Opapa Grammar School, Oyo and Army Children School, Oyo in Oyo State.
- f. **Time out:** Is the act of going out to the toilet to read up answers. Commonly observed and practiced in some public and private schools visited. Some students came out of the hall only to look at some points from the notes kept inside the toilet.
- g. **Direct Access:** It is an act whereby an examiner helps students during examination. This was common in some public and private school visited whereby subject teachers were drawn in to the examination hall to assist the students. These teachers moved round touching the answers to objective questions or even dictate solutions to the candidates.<sup>7</sup> This was part of what the researcher observed in some schools in the course of this work.
- h. **Stroke:** Is a situation whereby students engaging ICT devices to indulge in examinations in order to gain the examiner's sympathy while marking. This was also commonly observed. Most students stock in phones in pants, bra etc where answers were sent to them from friends, teachers or examination malpractice syndicates after solving the examination questions. The social media has not help matters as student's smuggled phone into the hall to copy answers as evidenced in some schools visited by the researchers.

### **Consequences of Examination Malpractices**

Examination malpractice is a social evil that has caused a lot of damage to the society. The findings of this research work have been able to establish the following consequences of examination malpractices in Oyo State.

1. **Low standard of Education:** Examination malpractice has led to the collapse of Educational standard in Oyo State. Most secondary school leavers nowadays in Oyo state cannot defend their O/level certificates due to the fact that the certificates were gotten through fraudulent means.  
**Cancellation of results:** Examination malpractice has led to the cancellation of results of students in some secondary schools in Oyo State while some results of students were scrutinized and withheld. Findings of this research have revealed that some of these students whose results were cancelled are actively involved in examination malpractices while others are victim of circumstances.
2. **Discouragement to hardworking students:** Most hardworking students are discouraged because unserious and indolent students are getting results

which they have not laboured for. This research finding shows element of discouragement on the part of serious and well-focused students

3. Anti-social behaviour: Examination malpractices have led to anti-social behaviours like cultism, alcoholism, drug abuse and addiction, etc. Findings of this research have shown that students who engaged in examination misconduct have their peer groups who influence them into these anti-social behaviours.
4. Worthless certificates: This work has been able to establish that examination malpractice discredits certificate acquired through fraudulent means. Such certificates become valueless piece of paper.
5. Killing of reading culture: The findings of this research have shown that examination malpractice has killed reading culture in most students. It has led to loss of interest for reading by students. Students have become lazy due to over reliance on cheating in examination. They believe that solutions will always be brought during the period of examination.
6. Loss of confidence: The confidence is lost on the validity and reliability of examination conducted by examination bodies in Nigeria. This leads to total erosion of confidences in the certificate awarded by examining bodies internationally

**What are the consequences of examination malpractice to the society?**

Results

S/ N	Items	SA (%)	A (%)	SD (%)	D (%)	Mean	Std. D	Rank
1	Examination malpractices lead to production of unqualified professionals.	31 (9)	136 (39.4)	50 (14.5)	128 (37.1)	3.465 0	97134	5.5
2	Examination malpractices lead to poor oral tone in secondary schools.	105 (30.4)	40 (11.6)	194 (56.2)	8 (1.7)	3.515 0	77639	3
3	Examination malpractices leads to loss of value and worthless of results and certificates issued by examination bodies.	74 (21.4)	197 (57.1)	56 (16.2)	18 (5.2)	3.670 0	.6582 3	1
4	Examination malpractices leads to anti-social behaviour e.g. armed robbery among others.	147 (42.6)	174 (50.4)	24 (7)	00	3.235 0	.8204 5	8

5	Examination malpractices lead to loss of integrity by principals, teachers, students and schools.	80 (23.2)	126 (36.5)	70 (20.3)	69 (20)	3.465 0	.7426 5	5.5
6	Examination malpractices render the goals of education invalid.	52 (15.1)	79 (22.9)	107 (31)	107 (31)	3.470 0	.6792 7	4
7	Examination malpractices leads to low standard of education in general	12 (3.5)	68 (19.7)	113 (32.8)	152 (44.1)	3.445 0	.8836 7	7
8	Examination malpractices make school authorities loss the capacity to enforce rules and regulations.	105 (30)	0	69 (20)	172 (50)	3.215 0	.8732 6	9
9	Parents and guardians lose the money they invested on their children and wards.	00	24 (7)	136 (39.4)	185 (53.6)	2.925 0	.9612 5	10
10	The fight against corruption cannot succeed if examination malpractices continue to be endemic in the educational system.	58 (16.6)	80 (23.2)	93 (27)	114 (33)	3.565 0	.5895 0	2
<b>Weighted mean</b>							<b>3.3975</b>	

The table showed that 42% of the respondents agreed that Examination malpractices lead to poor oral tone in secondary schools, 78.5% agreed that Examination malpractices leads to loss of value and worthless of results and certificates issued by examination bodies, 93% agreed that Examination malpractice leads to anti-social behaviour e.g. armed robbery among others and 59.7% agreed that Examination malpractice lead to loss of integrity by principals, teachers, students and schools.

The table further revealed a weighted mean of 3.3975 out of the maximum obtainable score of 4.00 which higher than the standard mean of 2.5. This translates that examination malpractices have influence on the society. The most

consequence is that examination malpractices leads to loss of value and worthless of results and certificates issued by examination bodies which is the highest ranked in the table (mean =3.6700 >3.3975). Also, fight against corruption cannot succeed if examination malpractice continues to be endemic in the educational system is ranked second on the consequences of examination malpractice (mean= 3.5650>3.3975). Examination malpractice lead to poor moral tone in secondary schools. This is the third ranked in the table (3.5150>3.3975). other consequences according to their ranked are as follows; examination malpractice render the goals of education invalid (mean=3.4700), examination malpractice leads to loss of integrity by principals, teachers, students and schools and examination malpractice lead to production of unqualified professionals (mean=3.4650), examination malpractices lead to low standard of education in general (mean= 3.4450), examination malpractices lead to anti-social behaviour e.g. armed robbery among others (mean= 3.2350), examination malpractices make school authorities loose the capacity to enforce rules and regulations (mean=3.2150) and parents and guardians lose the money they invested on their children and wards (mean=2.9250).

This is in line with the view of psychological and Ethical Egoism Theories which stated that human behaviour as naturally programmed to behave only for own self-interest. If widely followed, sooner or later someone's interest would conflict with another interest. The promotion of one's own good will, will conflict with the general good.

### **Conclusion**

It has been established that examination malpractice is a major ethical problem that Nigeria is facing and if not properly checked could spell doom for the nation. The implication of this is a negative character development of the students, poor moral tone in secondary schools, loss of value and worthlessness of SSCE results and certificates issued by this examination bodies WAEC, NECO, NABTEB. Lack of discipline in secondary schools and poor standard of education are factors that need to be checked to return normalcy to the education sector.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this research work, the following recommendations were made by the researcher:

1. Good Parental upbringing: Charity begins at home therefore for examination malpractice to be eliminated or reduced to the barest minimum, parents has a big role to play in inculcating good moral values into their children. Giving good parental upbringing will help teenagers to surmount many pressure of life.
2. Better condition of service for teachers and examination officials: To eradicate examination malpractices in Oyo State Secondary Schools,

teachers and examination officials and other stakeholders should be adequately remunerated.

3. Inculcating moral and religious education in secondary schools will assist in curbing examination malpractices
4. Workshops and seminars on religion morality and ethics should be organized for students and teachers in senior secondary schools.
5. Religious leaders should discourage immoral character through sermons and teaching.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

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