

Empirical Investigation into the Causes, Forms and Consequences of Examination Malpractice in Nigerian Institutions of Higher Learning

¹NNAM, M UCHENNA, ²INAH, ANGELA FUNKE

¹Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki

²Department of Human Resources Management, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike-Umuahia

Abstract: The study explored examination malpractice in Nigerian institutions of higher learning using Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki as a study area. A cross-sectional research design was adopted in this study. Cluster sampling technique was used to cover a population of 250 final year students, who responded to a 30-item structured questionnaire. The data extracted from the questionnaires were analysed using Likert Scale formula. Three objectives were formulated to guide the study. The study revealed, among others, that lack of modern learning-teaching resources, undue emphasis on paper qualifications, overcrowded examination halls, loose invigilation, and ill-preparation of students induce examination malpractice in Ebonyi State University. This criminal act manifests in various forms such as smuggling of illicit materials relating to the course to be taken into the examination hall, widespread copying from one another during examination, plagiarism as regards Project work, the use of mobile phones and other electronic devices during examination. Examination malpractice has numerous adverse effects on cheats, school system and the larger society. The study recommended that both the public and private organisations in Nigeria should not depend solely on excellent paper qualifications in assessing potential employees in the labour market; the education sector should be properly equipped, motivated and duly considered in the national development plans to avoid incessant strikes witness in the system; and the school premises in every University in Nigeria should be made conducive and to reflect human dignity in all aspects: comfortable accommodation, sports and recreational facilities, ideal libraries, and other state-of-the-art accoutrements as recommended by the National Universities Commission (NUC).

Keywords: Causes, Consequences, Empirical, Examination Malpractice, Forms, Investigation, Nigeria.

1. INTRODUCTION

Examination is a yardstick against which students' or candidates' competence and progress are formally measured and appraised in the education sector. Notwithstanding, the standard or quality of examination in Nigerian institutions of higher learning has been tainted with malpractice and thus becomes an issue of major concern to relevant authorities. An increasing number of stakeholders within and outside the academic circle have raised fear on the rapid degeneration of our education industry, owing to the widespread examination malpractice witnessed in the system in recent times. For instance, research suggests that the calamity of examination malpractice is not only the havoc it wrecks in the Nigerian educational system but also the gradual introduction of youths into the practice of fraud. Given the prevalence of examination malpractices in our universities, results tend to give a false picture of the state of affairs; hence a good number of school graduates cannot defend the excellent certificate they are brandishing [1]. Nigeria is currently witnessing an alarming rate of examination misconducts in its institutions of higher learning. The rate of this crime has become so widespread that there is virtually no examination anywhere at all levels and outside the formal school system

that there is no one form of illegal practice or another. The problem of examination is common everywhere, and every examination session witnesses the emergence of new and ingenious ways of cheating [2].

The Nigerian University system is in the throes of examination malpractice. It is perturbing and astounding, but an absolute reality, to note (at least, from the dialing observations of the researchers as once and still students) that old forms of examination malpractice in Nigeria have either ebbed away or deftly supplanted by more sophisticated and scientific ones. This ugly development is a clear indicative of anomic condition, emergency situation and, most importantly, it portends that Nigerian institutions of higher learning is on the verge of total destruction except timely drastic measures are taken to curb the growing trend of this despicable act that happens to prevail at this point in Nigerian history. In response to the pervasive influence of examination malpractice in Nigeria, various schools, examination bodies and all levels of government have impose punitive measures on perceived offenders. Even individuals and groups have been calling for stiffer penalty on perpetrators of this dastardly act. In the long-run, some measures taken by school authorities, examination bodies and government to stem the tidal wave of examination malpractice in Nigeria has cast aspersions on the objectivity, integrity and legality of such examination malpractice fighters. In other words, students/candidates have in one way or another victimized and their fundamental human rights flouted on the account of combating examination fraud in the country.

In support of the above viewpoint, [3] notes that the concern for and about the standard of education in Nigeria has propelled relevant examination bodies to take disciplinary action on erring individuals. To fulfill this mandate, these examination bodies have adopted measures ranging from withholding of examination results to outright cancellations, (expulsion), imposition of ban on certain categories of persons and examination centers, and in some instances, summarily tried an accused or threat to arraign a suspect before a court for trial. The crime of examination malpractice became more pronounced and devastating in 1984 which culminated in the legal war waged against it (in the same year) to the extent that offenders bagged 21 years imprisonment as promulgated by the then extant decree [4] [5].

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

To put the problem of this study in perspective, it is noteworthy to define the concept of examination malpractice. Examination malpractice can be defined as a process of using unauthorised method to secure an undue advantage at an examination with a view to achieving success in such examination [6]. Examination malpractice is an act of cheating at examination, or any act intended to benefit or give undue advantage to oneself or another by deceit or fraud before, during and after examination [7]. In this study, the researchers define examination as an official test, spoken or written, administered to a person who had undergone certain level of training and preparations to ascertaining the progress so far made. Therefore, examination malpractice is a direct or an indirect use of illegitimate means to pass an examination/test, obtain grades or certificate(s); it is an unlawful assistance rendered to a student(s)/candidate(s) for them to attain an unmerited height before, during and after a knowledge-competent-testing exercise or competition.

The researchers surmise from the above definitions and preceding argument that examination malpractice is not only morally reprehensible but also a criminal act that is currently ravaging the Nigerian educational system, and indeed, the entire society. The problem of examination malpractice in Nigeria is pervasive and alarming as substantiated by current studies, examination malpractice is a social evil that can damage the society to the extent of possibly leading to a failed state [8] and a crisis situation is bound to develop in the educational sector if the crime of examination malpractice is not prevented or controlled [9]. The situation has become so exacerbated in Nigeria that some students go into the examination hall with pistols and daggers 'to take care' of anyone that would forestall them from cheating [10]. Under this state of affairs, invigilators and teachers/lecturers may be intimidated and inveigled into ignoring students/candidates' misconducts during examination, or maimed or killed in the bid to prevent them from cheating. This anomic condition in Nigerian Universities will invariably bode ill for the growth, development and survival of the system. On the other hand, the social implication of examination malpractice is strongly felt in the society as expelled cheats (students/candidates) roam and run amok on the street, constituting an awful nuisance and increasingly engaging in criminal activities such as robbery/heist, gambling, drug abuse/alcoholism, rape, cultism, political thuggery, kidnapping, and the like.

Despite the general condemnation of examination malpractice and stiffer penalty (both justified and unjustified ones) meted out to perpetrators of examination malpractice in Nigeria, the rate at which people commit this crime is still on the

increase. For instance, the current Examination Malpractice Act No 33 of 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) stipulates that violators of examination malpractice shall be subjected to a maximum of Five (5) years imprisonment or pay an option of fine of Fifty Thousand Naira (N50, 000.00) or without an option of fine. However, this legal sanction appears to be ineffectual as a remarkable number of people still commit examination malpractice, even with impunity and utmost disregard for the existing legal instrument and damage to our education industry. The central problem of this study is to examine the causes, forms and consequences of examination malpractice in Nigerian institutions of higher learning. It is on this premise that a study of examination malpractice in Nigerian institutions of higher learning with reference to the peculiarity of the Ebonyi State University condition is desirable.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

In order to articulate the problem further, the following objectives were formulated to guide the study:

1. To identify the factors responsible for students’ involvement in examination malpractice in Ebonyi State University;
2. To unravel the various forms of examination malpractice in Ebonyi State University; and
3. To ascertain the consequences of examination malpractice in Ebonyi State University.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study followed a cross-sectional research design to explore the underlying causes, forms and consequences of examination malpractice in Nigerian institutions of higher learning using Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki as a case study. The target population of this study comprised 148 male and 102 female Social Science students in their final year of study at the Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. The Faculty of Social Sciences in the study area is made up of Five (5) Departments: Sociology and Anthropology, Political Science, Economics, Psychology and Mass Communication. Cluster sampling technique was used in this study to select the respondents. The target audience of this study was considered to be very close to equal. Thus, an average and or fraction of 50 respondents were randomly selected from each of the Departments, totaling 250. Of the 250 questionnaires distributed and retrieved, 20 were not properly filled and therefore were rejected. This development brought the total sample size of the study to 230. Below is the distribution of respondents based on properly filled and returned questionnaires:

Sociology	50
Psychology	48
Political Science	45
Economics	45
Mass Communication	42
Total	230

Data for this study were collected using structured questionnaire. The instrument only took care of the objectives of the study which were further divided lettered A–E. The response format of the instrument is the modified Likert-Scale type with assigned values as follows: Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Strongly Disagree and Disagree. A test-retest method of obtaining reliability of the instrument was used. The result of reliability co-efficient of 0.68 was obtained through the whole use of Pearson Product Moment-Correlation. For the purpose of analysis, frequency and mean (x) score were used to analyse the data on a five-point-scale as follows: Strongly Agree (SA) = 5, Agree (A) = 4, Undecided (U) = 3, Strongly Disagree (SD) = 2, Disagree (D) = 1. This was computed thus: $5+4+3+2+1 = 15 \div 5 = 3$. A mean of 3 was accepted while any mean below 3 was rejected. Finally, tables were used to organise the data collected from the field for clarity and easy understanding.

3. RESULT

3.1 OBJECTIVE 1: TO IDENTIFY THE FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR STUDENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN EBONYI STATE UNIVERSITY:

TABLE 1: CAUSES OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	U	SD	D	TOTAL SCORE N	ΣFX	X	REMARKS
		5	4	3	2	1				
1	Undue emphasis on paper qualifications.	140 700	51 204	20 60	4 8	15 15	230	98.7	4.2	Accepted
2	The quest for money-making.	10 50	12 48	29 87	22 44	157 157	230	386	1.6	Rejected
3	Schools environment located in a crime-bidden areas and poor organisational structure under which most examinations are conducted encourage malpractice.	76 380	82 328	32 96	20 40	20 20	230	864	3.7	Accepted
4	Ill-preparation of students.	66 330	89 356	40 120	30 60	5 5	230	871	3.7	Accepted
5	Overcrowded examination hall encourages malpractice.	97 485	72 288	36 108	5 10	20 20	230	911	3.9	Accepted
6	Lack of state-of-the-art teaching and learning resources.	51 255	130 520	10 30	5 10	34 34	230	849	3.6	Accepted
7	Undue involvement of students in social activities within and outside the school environment.	52 150	100 400	39 117	30 60	9 9	230	736	3.2	Accepted
8	It is a part or an offshoot of the ills of the society.	70 350	105 420	38 114	7 14	10 10	230	908	3.9	Accepted
9	Fear of failure on the part of student.	42 210	100 400	53 159	10 20	25 25	230	814	3.5	Accepted
10	Loose invigilation during examination owing to lack of manpower and absence of scientific crime-detection gadgets.	80 400	87 3.48	42 126	4 8	17 17	230	899	3.9	Accepted
	Grand Mean								35.2	

Source: Survey Data 2014

In table 1, item 1 has a mean score of 4.2 which shows that the respondents strongly agreed that undue emphasis on paper qualification is the major cause of examination malpractice in Nigerian Universities. Item 2 has a mean score of 1.6, suggesting that a remarkable number of our respondents strongly disagreed that the quest for money is responsible for examination malpractices among University students. Items 3 and 4 with mean scores of 3.7 respectively show that ill-preparation of student for an examination, and crime-ridden environment and organisational structure under which examinations are conducted contribute to examination malpractice. In the same table 1, item 5 with mean score of 3.9 shows that our respondents are of the view that overcrowded examination encourages malpractice. Item 6 has a mean score of 3.6, signifying that examination malpractice is caused by lack of state-of-the-art teaching and learning resources. In item 7, the respondents representing a mean score of 3.2 are of the opinion that students' undue involvement in social activities leads to examination malpractice. Item 8 with a mean score of 3.9 is a clear indication that examination malpractice is part of the ills of the society. Item 9 has a mean score of 3.5 which shows that University students take to examination malpractice because of palpable fear of failure in a given examination. In item 10 with a mean score of 3.9, the respondents strongly agreed that loose supervision during examination resulting from lack of manpower and absence of scientific crime detection gadgets encourages University students to cheat during examinations.

3.2 OBJECTIVE 2: TO UNRAVEL THE VARIOUS FORMS OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN EBONYI STATE UNIVERSITY:

TABLE 2: FORMS OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	U	SD	D	TOTAL SCORE N	ΣFX	X	REMARKS
		5	4	3	2	1				
11	Sorting of courses (bribing of course lecturers) by student.	62 310	139 556	15 45	5 10	9 9	230	930	4.8	Accepted
12	Leaking of examination question papers.	17 85	18 72	10 30	130 200	55 55	230	442	1.9	Rejected
13	Taken examination for another student (impersonation).	26 130	35 140	15 45	142 284	12 12	230	611	2.6	Rejected
14	Copying from colleagues (fellow students) during examination.	101 505	67 268	5 15	5 10	52 52	230	850	3.6	Accepted
15	Smuggling of 'exhibits' (unlawful materials) popularly known as microchips into the examination hall to be used as a guide or aid.	44 220	122 488	30 90	15 30	19 19	230	847	3.6	Accepted
16	Scientific malpractice/the use of mobile phones during examinations.	95 475	81 255	11 33	23 46	20 20	230	829	3.6	Accepted
17	Altering of result grades or scores.	2 10	8 32	17 51	149 298	54 54	230	445	1.9	Rejected
18	Marking malpractices.	62 310	150 600	12 36	2 4	4 4	230	954	4.1	Accepted
19	Continuous assessment malpractice.	100 500	77 308	10 30	20 40	23 23	230	901	3.9	Accepted
20	Plagiarism with regard to project works.	106 530	92 368	5 15	5 10	22 22	230	945	4.1	Accepted
	Grand Mean								34.1	

Source: Survey Data 2014

In table 2, items 12, 13 and 17 have mean scores of 1.9, 2.6 and 1.9 respectively showing that leaking of question papers, impersonation and altering of result grades or scores are not common form of examination malpractice among University students while item 11 with a mean score of 4.8 shows that sorting of courses is a common form of examination malpractice among students. In the same table, items 14, 15 and 16 with mean scores of 3.6 each indicate that copying from colleagues in the examination hall, smuggling of 'exhibit' into the examination hall to be used as a guide during examination proper, and the use of mobile phones as an aid during examinations are common among University students. Item 18 with a mean score of 4.1 strongly agreed that marking malpractice is commonplace in Nigerian Universities, item 19 representing a mean score of 3.9 reveals that continuous assessment malpractice is widespread in the University, and item 20 with a mean score of 4.1 strongly suggests that plagiarism as regards research work is a common form of malpractice among University students.

3.3 OBJECTIVE 3: TO ASCERTAIN THE CONSEQUENCES OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN EBONYI STATE UNIVERSITY:

TABLE 3: CONSEQUENCES OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	U	SD	D	TOTAL SCORE N	ΣFX	X	REMARKS
		5	4	3	2	1				
21	Examination malpractice discourages hard work and dignity of labour among students.	43 215	133 532	5 15	9 18	40 40	230	820	3.5	Accepted
22	It produces 'half-baked' (ill-prepared) graduates.	84 420	79 316	25 75	9 18	33 33	230	862	3.7	Accepted
23	It results in a high rate of school dropouts, expulsion, withdrawal of certificates, cancellation of results, etc.	100 500	64 256	16 6	2 6	48 48	230	816	3.5	Accepted
24	Examination malpractice does not only tarnish the image of an institution but also a country where it is deep-rooted.	73 365	80 320	48 144	19 38	10 10	230	877	3.8	Accepted
25	It helps students to graduate with good grades and results	9 10	8 32	40 120	110 220	63 63	230	445	1.9	Rejected
26	It encourages other antisocial conducts on campus such as cultism, indiscipline, among others.	19 95	25 100	20 60	135 230	31 31	230	516	2.2	Rejected
27	The problem of examination malpractice in Nigeria is rather exaggerated.	10 50	30 120	30 90	130 260	30 30	230	550	2.3	Rejected
28	Examination malpractice in Nigeria is actually on the increase.	122 610	90 200	2 6	3 6	13 13	230	835	3.6	Accepted
29	The rate at which students commit examination fraud in Nigeria is still moderate.	5 25	77 308	33 99	45 90	70 70	230	852	2.5	Rejected
30	Examination malpractice does more good than harm to its perpetrators.	6 30	21 84	40 120	126 252	37 37	230	525	2.2	Rejected
	Grand Mean								29.2	

Source: Survey Data 2014

In table 3, items 25, 26, 27, 29 and 30 with mean scores of 1.9, 2.2, 2.3, 2.5 and 2.2 respectively strongly disagreed that examination malpractice helps students to graduate with good results, that it encourages other antisocial conducts such as cultism and indiscipline, that it is exaggerated by observers, that the rate at which students commit this act is not moderate, and that it does more harm than good to its perpetrators. In the same table, items 21 and 23 with mean scores of 3.5 each show that examination malpractice discourages hard work, and results in high rate of dropout and expulsion from schools. Item 22 with mean score of 3.7 agreed that examination malpractice produces 'half-baked' graduates. The opinions of our respondents in items 24 and 28 with mean scores of 3.8 and 3.6 respectively suggest that examination malpractice does not only tarnishes the image of an institution but also a country where it is entrenched, and that the problem of examination malpractice is really on the increase.

4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study examined the underlying causes, forms and consequences of examination malpractice in Nigerian institutions of higher learning. The discussion is premised on the extracted and carefully analysed primary data and was supported with relevant up-to-date literature to give the study a scientific outlook. The following subheadings were distilled in relation to the objectives of the study: Factors responsible for students' involvement in examination malpractice, various forms of examination malpractice and consequences of examination malpractice at the Ebonyi State University.

4.1 FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR STUDENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN EBONYI STATE UNIVERSITY:

In Table 1, empirical evidence reveals that a preponderance of the respondents strongly agreed that crime-ridden environment where some Nigerian Universities located and poor organisational structure under which most examinations are conducted (3.7 mean score); congested examination halls (3.9 mean score); loose invigilation during examination owing to lack of manpower and absence of scientific crime-detection gadgets (3.9 mean score); lack of state-of-the-art teaching-learning resources (3.6 mean score); and undue involvement of students in social activities within and outside the school environment (3.2 mean score) are some of the major cause of examination malpractice. Some researchers on examination malpractice in Nigeria share similar views with the current researchers. For instance, [11] maintain that lack of preparation by students, deplorable teaching-learning environment, poor security network, peer influence and societal pressures, poor facilities in schools, among others as some of the causes of students' involvement in examination malpractices in Nigeria, while [12] simply puts it thus: the process and conduct of examination in some Nigerian Universities has become a 'contemporary shame'.

The result of this present study and literature so far reviewed shows that contemporary Nigeria is indeed in the state of anomie. The root cause of examination malpractice in Nigerian institutions of higher learning is strongly linked to the stresses and strains of social structure and political economy of contemporary Nigerian society (its educational system inclusive) which encourages, among other things, success (acquire wealth, good paper credentials, built house, etc) but without providing a level playing field and equal legal opportunities for all categories of people to achieve these over-emphasized and lofty goals. According to the findings of this study, examination malpractice is glaringly a resultant effect of undue emphasis on paper qualification which is a major criterion for employment in the Nigerian labour market and for employees' assessment in the country. The respondents recorded an exceedingly high mean score of 4.2 in this regard. Admittedly, contemporary Nigerian society places great emphasis on success without equivalent emphasis on institutional means of attaining these goals. That is, the society is characterised by a heavy emphasis on certificate and materialism either acquired by fair means or foul! Examination malpractice is thus a variation of corruption endemic in Nigerian society. No wonder a remarkable number of the respondents representing a mean score of 3.9 strongly agreed that examination malpractice in Nigerian Universities is a leave borrowed from the ills of the larger society, corrupt practices endemic in our country.

Paradoxically and in keeping with the findings of this study, examination malpractice is rather celebrated and rewarded while virtue is frowned at and punished in Nigeria. Similarly, [13] reveals that Nigeria is witnessing an increase in examination malpractices because academic excellence, skills and competency are sacrificed on the altar of certificate. In addition, [14] Nigeria is bedeviled with social and economic ills such as cultism, moral decadence, social injustice, corruption, examination malpractice, etc; our country has become a society where the custom is to decorate miscreants,

scam artists and violators of Nation trust with National honours and appoint them to exalted public offices. In supporting of our study, [15] posits that the value system in Nigeria has broken down completely and so adults and youths alike act without moral scruples. This is the reason why examination malpractice still thrives despite its grave consequences on the social, political and economic structures of the nation. Furthermore, a substantial number of our respondents with a rejected mean score of 1.6 maintained that University students resort to examination malpractice for pecuniary purposes. Thus, the result of this present study diametrically opposed the view of [16] who argues that the act of cheating during examination has taken the gabs of an organised business, spinning millions of Naira yearly to practitioners. Gone are the days when perpetrators of examination fraud were done by individuals desperate to pass and acquire certain paper qualifications. Forming one big unholy act to aid and abet examination malpractice these days are many heads of schools, teachers, invigilators, supervisors, students, examiners and touts, whose motive is to make quick money rather than genuine love for students being examined.

4.2 FORMS OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN EBONYI STATE UNIVERSITY:

Examination malpractice varies from one cheat to another and institution to institution, but their common interest or goal is to attain an unmerited success after taken an examination and occupy an enviable height in the society—it manifests in different forms. In Table 2, a greater proportion of the respondents agreed that ‘sorting of courses’ (the act of bribing course lecturers by student in order to obtain good grades in a given course), 4.8 mean score; copying from colleagues during examination, 3.6 mean score; smuggling of ‘exhibits’ (unlawful tiny pieces of paper or related materials containing nugget of information relating to a course to be taken by students) into the examination hall, 3.6 mean score; scientific malpractice/the use of mobile phones and other electronic devices during examinations as a guide, 3.6; plagiarism with regard to students’ Project works, 4.1; etc are common forms of examination malpractice at the Ebonyi State University. Thus, our findings coincide with [17] that copying from one another, taken hand written materials and textbooks into the examination, and continues assessment malpractice rank first among other forms of examination malpractice at all levels of education in Nigeria. Another study [18] agrees with ours that forms of examination malpractices in Nigerian institutions of higher learning include: ‘giraffing’ (students spying on their colleagues’ work), students storing answers on their mobile phones and exchanging written information in examination hall.

4.3 CONSEQUENCES OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN EBONYI STATE UNIVERSITY:

In Table 3, a few respondents with a mean score of 1.9 agree that students’ involvement in examination malpractice helps them to graduate with a good grade or result; a mean score of 2.2 states that examination malpractice encourages other antisocial conducts on campus cultism, gross indiscipline, etc; a mean score of 2.3 indicates that examination malpractice in Nigeria is rather exaggerated; a mean score of 2.5 suggests that examination malpractice in the country is still at its moderate level; and a mean score of 2.2 admits that examination malpractice in Nigeria does more good than harm to its perpetrators. The implication of these rejected mean scores is that the respondents in an implicit manner maintain that the rate of examination malpractice at the Ebonyi State University is alarming. For instance, the opinions of the respondents representing a mean score of 3.6 strongly agreed that examination malpractice in this school is on the increase. Owing to their dialing observations as once and still students, the researcher allude to the public outcry and available literature that the phenomenon of examination malpractice is increasing on dialing basis and has been aggravated by the large scale and shameful involvement of dishonest and greedy teachers, school heads, parents and all those who take part in examination administration in Nigeria [19]. The impact of examination malpractice in Nigeria is catastrophic; the situation negatively affects all facets of our society: individuals, homes, schools, government and private organisation, and the International community [20].

The same Table 3 has it that the vexed issue of examination malpractice is on the increase with a wide range of negative implications not only on the cheats, but also the Nigerian educational system and the entire society. According to the result of this study, a mean score of 3.5 was accepted from the respondents that examination malpractice discourages hard work and dignity of labour, a mean score of 3.7 has it that students of examination malpractice lack the wherewithal to not only defend the certificates they brandish upon graduation but also in the organisation where their working, a mean score of 3.5 maintain that involvement in the leads to a high rate of school dropout/expulsion, and a mean score of 3.8 shows that examination malpractice tarnishes the image of an institution and country. Examination malpractice, therefore, is morally reprehensible and socially condemned.

From the study, it is obvious that the problem of examination malpractice in Nigerian Universities is currently alarming with adverse effects on individual cheats (students or candidates of examination malpractice) our school system and the larger society. As the pattern and trend of examination malpractice in Nigerian Universities, so its destructive influence pervades all aspects of human endeavours. In this regard, the respondents in our study noted the following consequences: rampant cases of confiscated examination results, withdrawal of certificates, students of examination malpractice are either suspended or meted with outright rustication, among others. No wonder in the 2003 Joint Admission and Matriculation Board, 1,099,241 candidates sat for the examination and 116, 990 of them had their results withheld for various examination offences [21]. The Registrar of National Examination Council (NECO) reports that 32, 414 candidates' results were either cancelled or withheld on the grounds of examination malpractice in the 2009 West African Senior School Certificate Examination in Nigeria [22]. The Head of the WAEC National Offence announced that the 2010 November/December West African Senior Certificate Examination was characterised by malpractices. Of the total of 324, 998 candidates registered for the examinations, 310,077 candidates comprising 168, 835 male and 141, 242 female candidates actually sat for the examination.

5. CONCLUSION

This is an empirical-based study which dissects examination malpractice in Nigerian institutions of higher learning using Ebonyi State University as a study area. The validity and reliability of any logical conclusion depends on its strong and direct relationship with data presentation and analysis/discussion of findings. The responses of our target audience actually answered the core of the problem of examination malpractice in Ebonyi State University as reflected in the objectives of the study. The study was supported and strengthened with the existing body of knowledge and relevant literature on examination malpractice in Nigerian. The conclusion was reached that the conduct of examination in the Nigerian institutions of higher learning is almost always marred by malpractice. There is no doubt that this ugly development in the Nigerian education sector further gives rise to the introduction and adoption of various 'criminogenic' ways of committing this crime, namely, smuggling of unlawful tiny pieces of paper or related materials containing nugget of information relating to a course to be taken by students into the examination hall (these materials are called 'expo', 'micro chips' and 'exhibits', or 'Mgbo', 'Omokirikiri' and 'Omo-reminder' in the local vernacular), bribing of course lecturers by students in order to obtain good grades in a particular course (this criminal act is technically called sorting by students while lecturers call it co-operation or PR, Public Relation), copying from fellow students during examination, plagiarism by students with respect to their Project work, scientific examination malpractice via the use of mobile phones and other electronic devices during examination, and the like.

The researchers conclude from the study that examination malpractice in Nigerian institutions of higher learning is caused by scores of variables. These factors are, among others, undue emphasis on excellent paper qualifications in the labour market at the expense of requisite skills and wealth of knowledge; environmental nature of some Universities (some schools in Nigeria are located in deviant/criminal neighbourhoods); poor organisational structure under which most examinations are taken; overcrowded examination halls; undue involvement of students in social activities within and outside the school environment; and lack of state-of-the-art teaching and learning resources. The researchers draw the conclusion that the rate at which students indulge in examination malpractice in contemporary Nigeria is alarming with numerous harmful effects on individual cheats, school system and the society in its entirety. Involvement in examination malpractice generally discourages hard-work; students of examination malpractice are ill-prepared and therefore lack the wherewithal to compete favourably within and outside the school system. Other consequences of examination malpractice in Nigeria include expulsion, cancellation of results, withdrawal of certificates, etc.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the foregoing thoughtful data interpretation and analysis, the researchers made the following recommendations:

- Both the public and private establishments should pay much attention to competence, professionalism and wealth of experience of would-be employees in the labour market rather than depending solely on the certificates they brandish.

- Stakeholders in educational sector and the school management should regularly organise seminars for students of all levels with a view to exposing them on the dangers of examination malpractice.
- The Nigeria government should realise that education is the bedrock of every society and a springboard for empowerment in a complex and competitive world of ours. Therefore, the educational sector should be properly equipped, motivated and duly considered in the national development plans to avoid incessant strikes witness in the system.
- The school premises in every University in Nigeria should be made conducive and to reflect human dignity in all aspects: comfortable accommodation, sports and recreational facilities, ideal libraries, and other state-of-the-art accoutrements as recommended by the National Universities Commission (NUC).
- The establishment of schools should be planned in a systematic manner, taking into consideration the goals they are set out to achieve, and the progress of implementation of such plans should constantly be monitored and appraised at regular intervals.

REFERENCES

- [1] N. A. Ada, *Issues in Sociology of Education*. Makurdi, Peach Global Publications, 2004.
- [2] B. O. Jimoh, "Examination malpractice in secondary schools in Nigeria: what sustains it?" *European Journal of Educational Studies*, Vol. 1 No. 3, pp. 101-108, 2009.
- [3] C. O. Ndifon, and R. A. Ndifon, "Public examinations in Nigeria and punishing malpractice: human rights perspective," *British Journal of Arts and Social Science*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 325-333, 2012.
- [4] K. Adabale, "Legal framework for campaign against examination malpractice and students' cults," A Paper Presented at the International Conference Centre, Abuja on 2nd -4th December, pp. 1-16, 1997.
- [5] D. Z. Palu, and H. A. Bodunde, "Education in Nigeria: a critical analysis," In S. I. Okoli and L. U. Ezeani (Eds.), *An Overview of Examination Malpractices in Nigerian Educational System*. Onitsha, Lincel Publishers, pp. 96-104, 1999.
- [6] C. E. Iloakasy, "Education in Nigeria: a critical analysis," In S. I. Okoli & L. U. Ezeani (Eds), *The roles of Parents and Teachers in Combating Unreliable Examinations in the Nigerian Educational System*. Onitsha, Lincel Publishers, pp. 87-95, 999.
- [7] B. O. Balogun, "Examination malpractice and the Nigerian society," *The University of Jos Journal of Educational*, Vol. 4 No. 1, pp. 110-116, 1999.
- [8] J. Aminu, "Examination malpractice in Nigeria: roots, sustenance, endemicity, dangers and assailance," A Keynote Address Delivered in a two-day Summit on Examination Malpractice in Nigeria Organised by the Federal House Representative Committee on Education held at the Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Centre, Abuja on 15th-16th August, 2006.
- [9] S. O. Emaikwu, "Assessing the impact of examination malpractices on the measurement of ability in Nigeria," *International Journal of Social Sciences and Education*, Vol. 2, No. 4, pp. 748-757, 2012.
- [10] S. O. Emaikwu, and E. Mba, "Examination malpractice in tertiary institutions: implications and the way forward," In A. U. Akubue and D. Enyi (Eds.), *Crisis and Challenges in Higher Education in Developing Countries*. Nsukka, A Publication of the Department of Educational Foundation, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 2007.
- [11] G. A. Badmus, "Accountability in teaching/learning environment and examination malpractices," A Paper Presented in a two-day Summit on Examination Malpractice in Nigeria Organised by the Federal House of Representative Committee on Education held at the Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Centre, Abuja on 15th-16th August, 2006.
- [12] M. Nwadiani, "Curbing examination malpractice in the Nigerian educational system," A Paper Presented at the 1st Annual Conference of the Faculty of Education, Ambrose Ali university, Ekpoma, Edo State, Nigeria on 10th-12th November, 2005.

- [13] H. Gbagolo, "Examination malpractices in Nigeria: a review of literature," *Continental Journal of Education Research*, Vol. 4, No. 3, pp. 34-43, 2011.
- [14] M. B. Ojeikere, "Examination activities in Nigeria: victims of social vices," A Paper Delivered at the West African Examination Council Monthly Seminar, 10th September, 2004.
- [15] A. N. Alutu, and O. Aluede, "Secondary school students' perception of examination malpractice and examination Ethics," *Journal of Human Ecology*, Vol. 20, No. 4, pp. 13-23, 2006.
- [16] Onyechere, "Exams malpractice now multi-billion Naira business," *Vanguard*, 4th March, pp. 24-27, 2004.
- [17] A. E. Ozuagulu, "Combating examination malpractice in Nigerian universities: a case study of Enugu state university of science and technology," *Technology and Research Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 94-102, 2012.
- [18] U. D. O. Bruno, and G. C. E. Obidigbo, "The counseling implications of examination malpractice among university
- [19] Undergraduates," *Research Journal of Organizational Psychology & Educational Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3, pp. 199-202, 2012.
- [20] N. Y. S. Ijaiya, "Eradicating examination malpractice: a micro theoretical framework option," *Nigerian Journal of*
- [21] *Development Issue: Socio-Political Economic development*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 72-85, 1998.
- [22] E. Obasi, *Certificate Syndrome*. Owerri, Stateman Publishers, 2009.
- [23] U. L. Oriola, "JAMB result at a glance. *Newsage (Lagos)*," 29 July, P: 16, 2003.
- [24] E. Ayegba, "Enugu tops NECO exam fraud chart," *DailyTrust*, 10 September, P. 7, 2009.