

## EXAMINATION MALPRACTICES AND CORRUPTION AMONG STUDENTS AT CROSS RIVER UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, CALABAR, NIGERIA

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**ABSTRACT:** *Examination malpractices have become a recurrent decimal in higher institutions in Nigeria. Misconducts in examinations tend to have a connection with corrupt practices involving students in these institutions as it provides opportunities for them to get an education by fraudulent means. That questions the validity and credibility of the grades they earn in academics and reflects in their overall performances in the labour market. Based on the Bandura's social cognitive learning theory, an ex-post facto was conducted to inquire about the correlation between examination malpractices and corruption among students in Cross River University of Technology (CRUTECH), Calabar, Nigeria. Three research questions and null hypotheses were developed for the study. 800 participants were randomly recruited from the population within the research site. Data was analyzed via Pearson product moment correlation coefficient statistic. The findings indicated that cheating, gratification and bribery have significant relationships with corruption among students at CRUTECH. Simply put, these are among the practices students employed to commit examination fraud. It is recommended that key stakeholders, inter alia, need to develop holistic and workable methods to curb the menace in the interest of national development.*

**KEYWORDS:** *examination malpractice, corruption, students, higher institutions*

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## INTRODUCTION

Examination malpractice is a widespread case of corruption in higher institutions of learning in Nigeria. Students at CRUTECH, Calabar also seem to be involved in this menace plaguing national education. Corruption is any act of dishonesty in public service. Examination malpractice is inextricably connected to corruption as it involves any fraudulent act that gives a student an advantage to get unmerited grades before, during and after examination. Fasasi (2006) also shared his views in support of this definition. Higher education in Nigeria is in a troubled state. Frequent industrial disharmonies due to meagre resourcing of universities, poor remuneration, cultism, materialistic tendencies etc involving university staff disincentive effective teaching and learning. Quite a number of parents and guardians believe that obtaining good grades in examinations can ultimately lead to career success for students. Some of them consequently mount huge pressure on, and if possible, meddle with the educational process to ensure their relations can pass given tests. Employers in the country, on the other hand, prioritize certification over acquisition of employable skills from job seekers. This causes students to more desperately engage in inappropriate activities so as to be able to pass tests at all cost than to be educated. Such practices

raise questions about the credibility of the grades students earn at school and reflect on the overall performances of those affected at their workplaces.

Examination malpractice is an unethical way to engage in examinations and to unduly benefit from it. Participation in this act makes the students to develop knowledge and skills illicitly (Cizek, 1999 cited in Akinrefon, Ikpah & Bamigbala, 2016), motivated by the quest to also prove his or her ability to acquire knowledge, paper qualification and to excel in academics at all cost (Bitrus, 2013). This sharp practice in the higher institutions has become rampant to the extent it is appearing to supplant the right procedures often emphasized in the conduct of examinations.

Corruption has so permeated the Nigerian educational system that a considerable number of students now see malpractices as the right means to achieve in academics. As such, breaches of or disregard for the rules and regulations of examinations can be committed with impunity. Recurrent irregularities in examinations in Nigeria has attracted attention from stakeholders including government. Though not happy with the situation, government and other stakeholders, however, do not seem to sustain efforts towards addressing it.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMING**

This paper is framed around the social cognitive learning theory developed by Bandura (1965). One dominant argument in the Bandura's formulation is that learning cannot occur by learning but influenced by modeling. Learning takes place via observation and modeling the observed behaviour. Even in his later work Bandura stated further that "of the many cues that influence behavior, at any point in time, none is more common than the actions of others" (Bandura, 1986:206)". The model comprises the individual, behaviour and environment. It highlights the existence of interaction between a copy and model. Such influences of a model on the learner could be real, perceived or imagined. Much of human learning, according to this postulation, occurs in a social environment.

Ideas from Woolfolk (1995) also align with Bandura's. In his contribution, Woolfolk supports the notion of human learning occurring by interaction among people, adding that people, including students in tertiary institutions, acquire values, skills, knowledge, rules, beliefs, attitudes and strategies by observing how these are enacted by significant others on their daily interactions. Students thus replicate the behaviour of models based on how useful and appropriate it is to them and the consequences of modeled behaviours and act following their beliefs regarding the expected outcome of actions (Maheka, 2015). As models get punished or rewarded for their behaviour, the people imitating them also make adjustments in accordance with those consequences (Woolfolk, 1995; Maheka, 2015). Bandura calls this reciprocal determinism (Bandura, 1986; Munsaka, 2011)

Examination malpractice, as a form of corruption, is a behaviour that students at CRUTECH emulate from models such as parents, siblings, university staff, peers etc. The students probably engage in the act because it serves to help the models to pass tests, demonstrate acquisition of skills and knowledge and certificate to justify the resources committed into learning at the university. By performing these actions, the students believe that malpractices have provided easier pathways for career success for the models. The association of examination malpractice with

corruption is not to be hyperbolic. It is also inappropriate to trivialize the issue. Malpractice, for some students, is to “be smart” to achieve one’s educational objectives without having to labour one’s mind with the issue of hard work, morality and legality. In which case, when the inordinate desire to pass examination arises, hard work, morality and legality in the conduct of examination become negotiable. Since the regulations however remain vehement to protect ensure objectivity, credibility and reliability of examination and the evaluation process of a candidate’s performance, students are aware that there are penalties for infractions. As such, in line with the behaviours of models, they endeavour to also make sure their actions in examinations are undetected.

## LITERATURE ASSESSMENT

Work from some sub-Saharan researchers e.g. Fasasi (2006), Emaikwu & Eba (2007), Ugwu (2012), Akinrefon, Ikpah & Bamigbala (2016) etc, and that done by their western colleagues such as Cizek (1999), Woolfolk (2004), Brimble & Stevenson-Clarke (2005) etc and another one in Asia e.g. Wilayat, (2009) have documented on the concept of examination malpractice. Concerns from across these regions give the impression that examination offence is a global issue; not limited to only Nigeria. The ideas of these researchers on the issue, based on their experience from the different contexts, nonetheless bear some similarities. As such there is a consensus among these authors about the meaning of examination malpractice. Malpractice, according to them, is any unethical act that confers unfair advantage to a student to get undeserved grades in an examination. An unethical act implies that there are rules and regulations guiding the conduct of examinations/tests especially in the school system. Such laws are made because the responsible authorities want to have a uniform, equal and objective procedure that is fair to assess and rate the performance of every student. It is so to ensure students earn their grades through hard work and honesty; not to buy grades.

An action is deemed unethical when a student exhibits behaviours contrary to acceptable standards regulating approved examinations. Students who engage in examination malpractice, according to Cizek (1999) in Akinrefon et al (2016), demonstrate acquisition of illicit knowledge and skills. From the perspective of Cizek, it is decipherable that illicit knowledge is illegal, lazy, temporary, cheap, unoriginal, unproductive, destructive and inferior. Some students, regardless, do not value hard work and merit. One narrow belief among them in this regard is that whatever means a person applies to pass examination can likely lead to graduation and certification. It is anti-education (Oko. Nguwasen & Ajaegbo, 2017).

This paints a picture of low appreciation for the intrinsic worth of education whose aim is to promote a holistic development of the individual to be able to make meaningful contributions to enhance living conditions in the society. Irregularities in examination among students is a child of corruption as it is about abuse of the essence of examination. It is clearly a manifestation of corruption in the universities in Nigeria. Itedjere (2006) cited in Omemu (2015) states it more succinctly that examination malpractice is a product of a society that nurtures cheats and mediocrity and turns them into celebrities as a result of their ill-gotten wealth. This is a succinct description of the Nigerian society. Hard work, brilliance and merit are vilified and cheating is rewarded and celebrated. Parents, siblings, peers and community members regard cheats as smart

people (Ukuekue, 1999; Ojo & Olumuyiwa, 2011). Examination fraud assumedly sometimes does not occur merely for the purpose of achieving credentials or materialism illegitimately, but appears to be a new culture attempting to substitute the acceptable way of making the people earn an education in the context.

Students identified factors responsible for examination malpractice to include poor concern to students' welfare by stakeholders in education, parents, siblings, peers etc (Akinrefon et al, 2016). Bitrus (2013) added other causes thus: poor teaching and learning habits, poor self-confidence by students, poor conditions of examination centres, loopholes in the laws preventing malpractices etc. Examination malpractices in Nigeria come in various forms. Onyibe, Uma & Ibina (2015) enumerated these to include collusion, impersonation, copying, inscription, bribery and intimidation. Other forms are impersonation, gratification, grades trading, use of electronic devices etc. In a cross sectional research, Jekayinfa, Omosewo, Yusuf & Ajidagb (2011) have also documented further details about the forms and causes of examination misconducts in Nigeria.

These occur differentially before, during and after examinations. The different forms of practicing illegality shows the extent to which the perpetrators can be mischievous and daring to cheat in examinations. The strategies are ingenious, but buoyed by criminal intentions. It reveals the level of the spread of corruption among students on campuses. It might be argued that examination misconduct, as a form of corruption, thrives due to incessant strikes involving university teachers in the country, too much emphasis on paper credentials by employers etc. It is nonetheless nothing compared to the damning consequences it has on national development. It reduces the ability of the country to compete favourably in global economy.

Malpractices in Nigeria is traced to the first leakage of the Cambridge examination in 1914 (Adesina, 2000; Omemu, 2015). Consequently, the government has since made some attempts to check this plague in the national educational system. For instance, the military government enacted Decree No. 21 in 1985 (Ojo & Olumuyiwa, 2011). The civilian government subsequently enacted Act No.33 of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) prescribing punishment for examination offenders ranging from cancellation of results to 21 years in jail (Oduwaiye, 2014; Oko & Adie, 2016). And in 2007 the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) introduced the Community Action and Transparency Initiative (CATI) and the Examination Malpractice Blacklist Initiative (EMBI) (Eneh & Eneh, 2014). Some of the offenders found to be blacklisted were sanctioned appropriately. Others escaped punishment following the departure of the originator of these initiatives and Minister of Education, Dr Obiageli Ezekwesili.

Government does not seem to sustain the effort to stem the tide of examination malpractice in Nigeria's educational sector, particularly in higher education. Even individual universities, including CRUTECH, also tend to be inconsistent and/or lackadaisical in reviewing local laws prohibiting examinations offences. Lapses in legal instruments in themselves aid and abet examination malpractices. They leave loopholes for examination offences to thrive. Students can feel motivated to breach examination guidelines with impunity when they find that the law is unelaborate and authorities care less about penalizing perpetrators for infractions. Examination

malpractice is a type of corruption that destroys the minds of students and weakens the moral value of the Nigerian society (Yushua, 2012; Oseni, 2014).

## **RESEARCH RATIONALE**

All students in universities in Nigeria, including CRUTECH, are evaluated based on learning and character. The expectation is for them to show industry to acquire values, skills, knowledge, certificates etc by authentic, reliable and credible means. Policy makers and government developed mechanisms for achieving this purpose as enshrined in the national policy on education. One measure by which to achieve this is examination/test. Examinations are widely regarded as tools for performing an objective and uniform assessment of the abilities of students in these institutions nationwide. Government and universities also promulgated relevant laws to protect the integrity, credibility and reliability of examinations, ensure students leave school with employable skills and to punish any breach to examinations regulations and processes.

However, despite the efforts of stakeholders in this direction, corruption has become pervasive that the effects are also manifesting in form of malpractices in examinations involving students at CRUTECH. The conduct of examinations in the university is sometimes characterized by cheating, bribery, collusion, giraffing, possession of extraneous materials, gratification, grades trading etc among the students. The situation is putting the integrity, reliability and validity of examinations at risk. Also, it raises questions about the authenticity and reliability of the grades and certificates the students earn and reflects in their performances in the labour market.

## **RESEARCH PURPOSE**

The present study investigated the correlation between examination malpractice and corruption among students at CRUTECH. It particularly examined the relationship between:

1. Cheating in examination and corruption among students at CRUTECH;
2. Gratification in examination and corruption among students at CRUTECH; and
3. Bribery in examination and corruption among students at CRUTECH.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

These questions were posted to direct the research:

1. What is the relationship between cheating in examination and corruption among students at CRUTECH?
2. What is the relationship between gratification in examination and corruption among students at CRUTECH?
3. What is the relationship between bribery in examination and corruption among students at CRUTECH?

## **RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the research:

1. There is no significant relationship between cheating in examination and corruption among students at CRUTECH.
2. There is no significant relationship between gratification in examination and corruption among students at CRUTECH.
3. There is no significant relationship between bribery in examination and corruption among students at CRUTECH.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Focus of the study is indicating empiricist/positivist leaning (Baxter & Babbie, 2004). Thus, the quantitative strategy was adopted as the appropriate approach to guide access and analysis of data (Creswell, 2003). Such a procedure enabled the conversion of data into numerals for statistical analysis. Also, it provided a standardized and objective criteria for data collection, analysis and reporting findings (Muijs, 2004; Isangedighi, 2011). Since the study favoured quantification, an ex-post facto was employed as a more suitable research design so as to examine the effect of the uncontrolled variable on the controlled variable (Isangedighi, 2011) in the context.

CRUTECH, a state university, was used as the research site. It had four campuses including Calabar, Obubra, Ogoja and Okuku. CRUTECH had about 6,000 students from diverse backgrounds. The authors contacted officials of the Registry Department of the university to use their official documents to identify the students. 800 participants were randomly selected for the study and that represented 13.3 per cent of the overall population. Contacts were made with participants in their lecture rooms to be recruited to participate in the study across the campuses. Participants included 400 males and 400 females from the various academic programmes and classes at the time.

The examination malpractice and corruption questionnaire (EMCQ) was mainly used to generate data. Both authors are active researchers. They carefully designed the questionnaire with modifications from other questionnaires that are relevant to the present study. The document was also passed onto psychometric experts for check. Having passed these scrutiny, EMCQ thereafter was trialed with 20 students at the Calabar Campus of the university. Data arising from the pilot study was subjected to reliability testing via the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient and the statistic gave a result of .763 and a range of <1. This implies that EMCQ is reliable for use for the primary research. Generalization on the findings were made to the entire research population.

In compliance with ethical protocols, the authors obtained permission from the responsible authorities to be able to gain access to participants and data. This is to ensure the conduct of the research is not covert. The respondents were all adults and self-consented to take part in the study. Names of the participants are anonymous and their data is also held confidentially.

As stated earlier the purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between examination malpractice and corruption among students at CRUTECH. Accordingly, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was adopted as an appropriate correlational statistic for data analysis. The authors were unfamiliar with the analysis of data via a computer program e.g. the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Data was, therefore analyzed manually at .05

level of significance and 95% confidence interval. Summary of data analyses is presented on tables 1, 2 and 3:

**Table 1: Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between cheating in examination and corruption among students at CRUTECH.**

Variable	N	$\sum x$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum xy$	df	$r^{cal}$	$r^{crit}$	P
		$\sum Y$	$\sum Y^2$					
Cheating in examination	800	280604	78738604816	50969471768	198	6.71	1.054	<.05
Corruption among CRUTECH students	800	181642	32993816164					

\*Confidence interval (CI) = 95%

Data on table 1 illustrates that at 95% CI and 198 degree of freedom (df),  $r^{cal}$  (6.71) is greater than  $r^{crit}$  (N = 800,  $r = 1.054$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Null hypothesis that states that there is no significant relationship between cheating in examination and corruption among students at CRUTECH is jettisoned while the alternative is upheld. It suggests that cheating in examination has a significant relationship with corruption among students at CRUTECH. In other words, cheating in examination is a form of corruption among students in the institution.

**Table 2: Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between gratification in examination and corruption among students at CRUTECH.**

Variable	N	$\sum x$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum xy$	df	$r^{cal}$	$r^{crit}$	P
		$\sum Y$	$\sum Y^2$					
Gratification in examination	800	232802	54196771204	294077811442	198	5.84	1.018	<.05
Corruption among CRUTECH students	800	126321	15956995041					

\*Confidence interval (CI) = 95

The result of data analysis as shown on table 2 indicates that at 95% CI and 198 degree of freedom (df),  $r^{cal}$  (5.84) is greater than  $r^{crit}$  (N = 800,  $r = 1.018$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Null hypothesis that states that there is no significant relationship between gratification in examination and corruption among students at CRUTECH is rejected while the alternative is retained. It surmises that gratification in examination has a significant relationship with corruption among students at CRUTECH. In a simple term, gratification in examination is an aspect of corruption among students in the university.

**Table 3: Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between bribery in examination and corruption among students at CRUTECH.**

Variable	N	$\Sigma x$	$\Sigma x^2$	$\Sigma xy$	df	$r^{cal}$	$r^{crit}$	P
		$\Sigma Y$	$\Sigma Y^2$					
Bribery in examination	800	304671	92824418241	62920350249	198	7.15	1.134	<.05
Corruption among CRUTECH students	800	206519	42650097361					

\*Confidence interval (CI) = 95

The outcome of data analysis as shown on table 3 states that at 95% CI and 198 degree of freedom (df),  $r^{cal}$  (7.15) is greater than  $r^{crit}$  (N = 800,  $r = 1.134$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Null hypothesis that states that there is no significant relationship between bribery in examination and corruption among students at CRUTECH is rejected while the alternative is accepted. It suggests that bribery in examination has a significant relationship with corruption among students at CRUTECH. In a clear language, bribery in examination is a part of corruption among students in the university.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following findings were obtained from data analyses:

1. Cheating in examination has a significant relationship with corruption among students at CRUTECH (N = 800,  $r^{cal} = 6.71$ ,  $r^{crit} = 1.054$ ,  $df = 198$ ,  $CI = 95\%$ ,  $p < .05$ );
2. Gratification in examination has a significant relationship with corruption among students at CRUTECH (N = 800,  $r^{cal} = 5.84$ ,  $r^{crit} = 1.018$ ,  $df = 198$ ,  $CI = 95\%$ ,  $p < .05$ ); and
3. Bribery in examination has a significant relationship with corruption among students at CRUTECH (N = 800,  $r^{cal} = 7.15$ ,  $r^{crit} = 1.134$ ,  $df = 198$ ,  $CI = 95\%$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of data analysis for the first hypothesis suggested that cheating in examination has a significant relationship with corruption among students at CRUTECH. Impliedly, cheating during tests is a manifestation of corruption among students in the institution. The students do this by inscribing answers to questions on parts of their bodies, on classroom walls, on classroom equipment e.g. desks, fans etc.; concealing the answers in pieces of papers and using electronic gadgets e.g smart phones to browse the answers from the internet, phone calls, copying from colleagues and textbooks, exchange of answer scripts among colleagues etc. It is in line with one finding of a survey conducted by Amadi & Opuiyo (2018) which revealed these as the methods students apply to cheat during examinations. Students learn these corrupt practices from predecessors serving as models and/or develop them by selves. It is a product of a society that nurtures cheats and mediocrity (Itedjere, 2006; Omemu, 2015).

The outcome of data analysis for the second hypothesis indicated that gratification in examination has a significant relationship with corruption among students at CRUTECH. The students sometimes can develop strategies to compromise the integrity of a staff as a means to ‘water the ground’ so as to be able to perform examination malpractices with ease. University staff are likely to accept material gifts from students e.g. money, clothes, sex, food stuff, recharge cards etc so as to pass the person. Such presents are often voluntary and can take place at the start of examination, as the examination is in progress and at the time of processing and publishing the results. Gifts from students or their representatives are intended to commit staff to support them to commit examination fraud. According to Jekayinfa et al (2011), the staff can consequently grant students privy access to the contents of an examination directly or indirectly to the students or their agents intently to give the student unfair advantage to pass the examination. Also, the staff might unduly favour the students during invigilation, marking, scoring, grading and processing of results. Gratification is a method by which students receive favour in examination undeservedly from lecturers and other staff.

The result of data analysis for the third hypothesis revealed that bribery in examination has a significant relationship with corruption among students at CRUTECH. It aligns with the work of Onyibe et al (2015) in which they stated that bribery is used to facilitate teacher-student collusion to commit examination fraud. Bribery has a codename at CRUTECH. It is called “sorting”. Sorting, in this sense, means ensuring only students who have paid to pass are given the opportunity to do so. The practice is rampant in the institution. It is the economic factor that is associated with malpractices, and sometimes the inordinate quest for materialism on the part of the staff. The students or their agents pay some money to staff to buy question papers, take illicit materials into examination centres and/or to be given better grades (or to upgrade scores). In this case male students are more likely to pay money whilst the females do so with money or sex.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations were made to address the challenges associated with the findings:

1. Technology should be deployed to facilitate digital processing of student results and to reduce malpractices;
2. University education requires revitalization by government so that it will have the needed resources to motivate learning, ensure academic excellence among students and prevent examination misconducts among them;
3. Management of the university should make rules prohibiting staff from collecting any material gift that is above ₦500 or its equivalent in foreign currencies from students or their agents;
4. Guidelines on the conduct of examination should be elaborate and clearly documented in the student handbook. Examination offences should also be clearly spelt out in the document for the information of all students;
5. The university should do expulsion and suspension of students, and appropriate punishments meted to staff to demonstrate its uncompromising stance against examination offences;

6. Management of the university should constitute a committee to perform regular review to ensure consistency, detect anomalies in the issuance of student results and to punish offenders
7. Regular lectures on examination malpractices and corruption in universities should be organized for students and staff to keep keeping them aware of the dangers of the practice on university education and national development;
8. Management and staff should be firm in implementing examination regulations to deter students and staff from the practice;
9. The Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC) should up their campaign against all forms of examination fraud in universities and be resolute in sanctioning offenders according to law; and
10. Management of the university should hold regular meetings with parents and, together, develop avenues for preventing undue interference of parents with examinations processes.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

Examination malpractices, as shown by findings, have an association with corruption among students at CRUTECH. It is a form of corruption as students apply it to get grades through dishonest means. Examination fraud is a bane to national education system in Nigeria. Malpractices compromise standards, particularly, of university education. As examination misconduct thrives it diminishes the worth of the education and certificates which students possess. The practice questions the credibility and reliability of the paper qualifications that the students achieve and capability of applicants to perform well at workplaces. Proof of education that is obtained by fraudulent means weakens the ability of the workforce to engage in innovations to promote economic growth and development in the country. Nigeria's educational system is experiencing some failures in global competitiveness and examinations malpractices in her tertiary institutions have a connection to the situation.

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