

ASSESSING THE EXTENT OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN EASTERN REGION OF SIERRA LEONE

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Abstract

This study assesses the extent of examination malpractice in senior secondary schools in eastern region of Sierra Leone. The question to what extent is examination malpractice in senior secondary schools in eastern province of Sierra Leone was investigated based on the following objectives: determine the level of knowledge among Senior Secondary Schools students regarding examination malpractice; determine the incidence of examination malpractice; and determine the attitude of students towards examination malpractice in Senior Secondary Schools. The results of the findings revealed that students are aware of rules and regulations on examinations and that external examination West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE) has the highest rate of malpractice. The types of examination malpractice prevalent are giving money to invigilators, teacher/supervisors to help answer questions during and after examinations and bringing mobile phones into the examination hall to access answers. Students' attitudes regarding examination malpractice expose a complicated web of assumptions and justifications. Although most admit that these behaviors are illegal, many defend cheating as a necessary strategy to meet academic goal. Recommendations include: the government must enhance the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) rules and regulations, intensify monitoring, and organize positive counseling for students on examination malpractice, and workshops to promote good habits among peers.

Key words: Knowledge, attitude, examination, malpractice

Introduction

Education is of such importance that it is the responsibility of governments to ensure that educational institutions are maintained so that their citizens will have the opportunity to be educated (Elmurod, 2021). Education further prepares its students' minds for successful performance. It provides the person with the knowledge required for advanced human functioning. A function of high-quality education is invariably the proper and adequate acquisition of necessary knowledge and skills in academic courses and fields of study (Okara, 2012). Every development recognizes the value of education. Students become more knowledgeable and change as a result of education. Examinations are the measurement of proficiency in knowledge and skills, either in oral or written forms, and evaluating the adequacies of these properties possessed by candidates (Aminasahun & Oregonian, 2014). Nyamwange, Ondima, and Onderi (2013) opined that school examinations are a tool for measuring learners in education systems all over the world. Examination as it relates to education is an assessment tool used to determine the level of learning of students and pupils' the results of such examination are used to effect promotion into a new class, graduate from one course to another as base for possession of strength and job placement (Adeloye, 2010).

Examination, according to Maheka (2015), is one of the assessment tools used to periodically assess and evaluate products of the educational system, mastery of content and instructors' effectiveness in delivering the content at different levels. The use of examination to promote learners from one level of education to the next level and for certification of candidates has brought about competition among learners leading to examination malpractice. This is because candidates at all levels of education desire to pass examinations to enable them a transition from one level of education into the next or admission

into tertiary education. These recent trends in the education system have resulted into different kinds of examination malpractice in all forms of examinations. Dobson (2012) defined examination malpractice as the violation of rules and regulation guiding the conduct of examination in accordance with specific, norms, setup by the examination institution. It also involves the various method employed by candidates to cheat before, during or after examination. Marsh (2017); Adams (2018); Brown (2019) and Callahan (2010) showed that academic dishonesty is a serious issue and has increased significantly in the last decades. Many observers see the source of this rise in the development of technology and the internet (Stogner, Miller, and Marcum, 2012). In a 2010 study of undergraduates in Portugal studying economics and business degrees, 62% of students acknowledged to copying at least once (Teixeira and Rocha, 2010). Over 60% of undergraduate students in Taiwan claimed academic dishonesty in 2007, according to researchers there (Lin & Wen, 2007).

According to Omemu (2015), a student's involvement in examination malpractice is determined by their level of knowledge and skill acquisition. More importantly, the inferiority complex that any kid who fails an exam experience at school, at home, and in society as a whole will drive them to any lengths to pass the test. According to Makoju, Adewale, Nwangwu, and Shuaibu (2004), examination malpractice occurs whenever parties involved (i.e., candidates and anyone else involved in the conduct of examinations from setting the question to the release of results) fail to follow the rules and regulations governing the conduct of any examination. Although examination malpractice in the past may not be totally rule out, the current trend according to Obudigha (2010) is alarming and calls for proper management in order to rid the school of its consequences. Whereas, in the past, students tended to hide the act, now they blatantly advertise the act and positively too. In a study of 4,500 high school students from 25 US high schools, Schulte (2002) reported that 72% of the students admitted to seriously cheating in examinations. According to Wu & Cao (2012) cited in Starovoytova, Namango& Katana (2017), the proportion of university-students who had cheating experiences is up to shocking 90%.

In another study involving 20,829 middle and high school students, Josephson reported that 70% of the students claimed that they cheated on examinations. McCabe's (2005) studies of high school students in the USA revealed high levels of such misconduct. He found out that 75-80% of students admitted to copying from others or taking forbidden materials into tests or examinations (Eckstein, 2003). There is a large number of students who without remorse are trying to improve their grades or avoid failure by defying the rules (Szabo & Underwood, 2004). This phenomenon has attracted the attention of many researchers from different nations. American research has shown, for this purpose, a majority of students, estimated at seventy percent (70%) are engaged in examination malpractice (McCabe, Trevino and Butterfield, 2001). They stated that the most common form of examination malpractice used during examinations was to ask other students during examinations. This is because candidates have fear of failure which is the reason why they engage in examination malpractice. Candidates also engage in examination malpractice because of high levels of stress which they have for obtaining the pass percentage and also because these scores are considered for promoting them to the next level. McCabe, Trevino and Butterfield (2001) observed that the rate of examination malpractice has been increasing over the past thirty (30) years.

In the United States for example, Vowell and Chen, (2004) reported that eighty- eight percent (88%) of the learners engaged themselves in examination malpractice because of fear of failure. Dosu, Gotan, Deshi, and Gambo (2016) assessed the re-occurring incidence of examination malpractice in Plateau State College of Health Technology Pankshin, Nigeria. Their study explored the types and incidence of examination malpractice and the perception of students concerning the factors that illicit misconducts during the examination. Using a questionnaire, data was sourced from second and third-year students.

Their results revealed that copying from other students (43%) and the possession of foreign materials (32%) represented the most common and predominant type of examination malpractice. Mulandu (2011) asserts that cheating is an unethical behavior that many students currently indulge in since it seems to occupy their attention. Without considering the moral integrity that goes hand in hand with intellectual excellence, students nowadays aim to display academic excellence. The majority of pupils, he continued, don't care how they achieve high test results. Vivien (2001) examined students' attitudes toward cheating and whether they would report instances of cheating they witnessed. A total of 518 students participated in the study from three educational institutions. Findings suggested that students perceived cheating behaviors involving examination related situations to be serious, whereas plagiarism was rated as less serious.

Cheating in the form of not contributing one's fair share in a group project was also perceived as a serious form of academic misconduct, although a majority of the students admitted having engaged in such behavior. With regard to the prevalence of academic cheating, the findings suggested that students are morally ambivalent about academic cheating and are rather tolerant of dishonesty among their peers. On the issue of whether cheating behavior should be reported, the findings revealed that majority of the students chose to take the expedient measure of ignoring the problem rather than to blow the whistle on their peers. This is also applicable in the Nigerian educational system where students are found to be tolerant of dishonesty among their peers and are never willing to report their fellow students who are involved in examination malpractice or any form of academic misconduct. Behavior is related to how well the student is driven to engage in examination malpractice, and because the beliefs promote such vice, it is simple for the student to have a favorable attitude about cheating in examinations because they are motivated to do so. Before now, to be caught cheating was a thing of shame, but students now glorify examination malpractice (Cornelius-Ukpepi, 2010).

Academic –cheating is a phenomenon present also at all-levels of education in Kenya and generally treated with considerable-Leniency on the part of the faculty and administration. Additionally, it appears that although most students (92%) believe that cheating is not ethical, almost half (45%) believe it to be socially- acceptable. In the work of Koko (2014), a respondent advanced the argument that “examination malpractice cannot be curbed in Nigeria because it is helping majority of students at different levels acquire certificates they may not get if they honestly write the examinations”. Another respondent opined that “when I realize I cannot compete with my peers who pay for better grades through examination malpractice, I become very disillusioned in my studies and as a result I determine to join in the acts”. In Sierra Leone, there was increase in examination malpractices in November/December WASSCE from 2.66% in 2011 to 4.97% in 2012 and to 9.91% in 2013 (SLEC, 2014). Also, there was increase in examination malpractices in May/June WASSCE from 1.74% in 2012 to 2.19% in 2014 and to 4.76% in 2015, Sierra Leone Examination Committee (SLEC, 2015). The Patriotic Vanguard (2019) reported that the Communication Specialist for the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE), expressed concerns that the quality of education in Sierra Leone has steadily declined over the past decades, significantly impacting the nation's human development.

Examination malpractices seriously undermine the "Integrity" component of the Free Quality School Education (FQSE)” The newspaper thought that it is a growing trend and an open secret in Sierra Leone that when the time comes for public examinations, all stakeholders involved with either organizing the examinations, or preparing pupils for them, think about the process as a time to do business and make money, or giving money and get their ways in the examinations. Patriotic Vanguard (2019) accused pupils of luring their parents into paying for examinations at a whopping cost of 600,000 Leones (about US\$60) per subject and that the crime is so organized that teachers, head teachers, principals and officers

of the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) have reportedly made and continue to make a huge amount of money out of the malpractice. Awareness Times Newspaper (2018) revealed that seventy-one (71) people alleged to have been involved in examination malpractices for the private West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) were arrested at a private residence. It added that their investigation has revealed that the candidates are now taking the private WASSCE examination, but were made to rewrite the same examination at night, for that reason, they were camped in the house. The situation worsens during the marking of written exams, where some markers demand bribes for passing grades or allow retakes. Some have been caught by Ministry of Education officials (Patriotic Vanguard, 2019).

A report from Sierra Express Media (SEM) (2016) disclosed that the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), on the 10th of September 2016, conducted random checks on West Africa Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE) Centers across the country. The move was part of the Commission's focus on improving integrity in the Educational Sector. Following the Commission's intervention, in coordination with the Police and Education Officer, Kono, two Senior Secondary School students in Koidu City and Kono District in the Eastern region were caught with cell phones containing model answers to the 2015/2016 WASSCE Mathematics examination paper. The initial investigation revealed that these pupils had access to Mathematics questions before the Examinations from social media. The ACC briefly took the pupils into care after the paper questioned, and released them to continue taking the other papers. According to Thomas (2017), the director of public education and outreach at the Anti-Corruption Commission made the statement on the arrest of three teachers of a particular Senior Secondary School in Kenema City, Eastern region of Sierra Leone, who are also Examiners of the West Africa Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE) for alleged corruption offences. The said teachers were marking the March 2017 WASSCE papers on English Language, History and Literature and allegedly asked students to pay the sum of One Hundred and Fifty Thousand Leones (Le150,000) for each subject so that they could rewrite the examinations at a secret location in Allen Town Freetown, to enable them to pass the papers. A team of ACC investigators raided the premises and effected arrest on the three teachers, with three girls and two boys suspected to be pupils who were rewriting the examinations.

Additionally, another male presumed to be the landlord of the premises where the illicit activities took place was also apprehended. There are cases of deceitful school administrators, teachers, parents, and students involved in examination malpractice. The continued high rate of examination malpractice has raised public concerns about the credibility of the results and certificates obtained by the schools. The aim of the study, therefore is to assess the extent of examination malpractice in Senior Secondary Schools in Eastern Sierra Leone: Knowledge Level, Incidence, and Attitude.

Research Hypothesis:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the attitude of students towards examination malpractice and their knowledge on examination malpractice

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the level of knowledge of students on examination malpractice and their incidence of examination malpractice

H₀₃: There is no significant difference between the attitudes of students towards examination malpractice and the incidence of examination malpractice

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive research design. The sample consisted of 1506 senior secondary school students drawn from 20 senior secondary schools in the Eastern Region of Sierra Leone. Questionnaire, focus group discussion, interview and observation were the main instruments used. The items of the instruments were validated by the supervisors. The split-half method was adopted in establishing the reliability for the instruments. The reliability co-efficient of 0.75 was found which was appropriate for the study. The researcher and the trained enumerators visited each school and discussed the purpose of the study with the principals and teachers. Questionnaires were distributed to students, focus group discussion with parents, and interview with teachers, school leavers, and other stakeholders. In descriptive statistics, the use of simple frequencies, percentages and means was produced as a result of the analyzed data, and the results were presented in tables and charts. The Pearson product moment correlation model was used to test the hypotheses through the use of correlation matrix method at a significant level of 0.01.

Presentation of Findings and Discussions

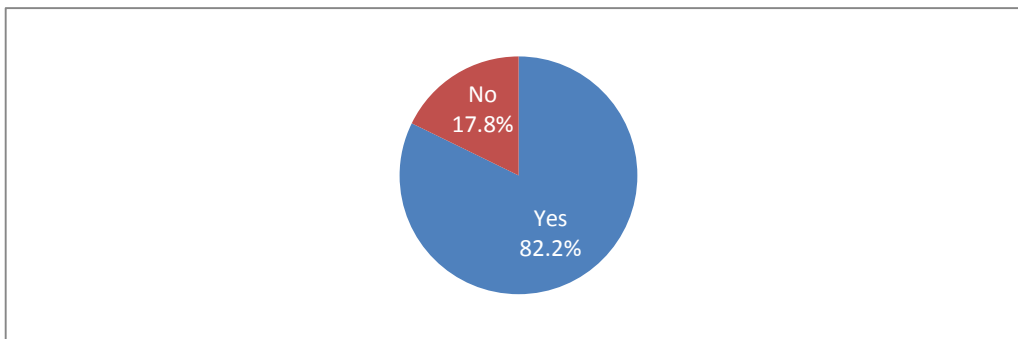


Figure 1: Knowledge of MBSSE Rules and Regulations on Examination

The figure shows the information on knowledge of MBSSE rules and regulations on examinations. A sample of 1506 respondents was investigated. The result revealed that 1238 (82.2%) of the respondents stated that they have knowledge of the MBSSE rules and regulations on examinations, while 268 (17.8%) of the respondents indicated that they have no knowledge of the MBSSE rules and regulations on examinations.

The views of respondents during the focus group discussion and interview indicated that students and teachers are conscious of the rules and regulations, but they violate them with impunity. Volunteer teachers and need for schools to excel have exacerbated the problem. Also, that examination malpractice, rules, and regulations are all things that we are aware of, yet because students are so anxious to pass examinations, they consistently disobey all of these things.



Figure 2: Respondents Involvement in Malpractice in any of the Examinations Multiple Responses

Figure 2 depicts the responses of respondents in connection with their involvement in malpractice in any of the examinations. The findings revealed that 1421 (94.4%) of the respondents stated that they had been involved in malpractice in external examination while 1006 (66.8%) indicated they had been involved in malpractice in internal examination. The views of majority of the respondents during the focus group discussion and interview revealed that malpractice is very high at external examinations (WASSCE).

Table 1: Caught in Examination Malpractice by Sex

<i>Caught in the act</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
No	341	517	858	57.0
Yes	364	284	648	43.0
Total	705	801	1506	100.0

The findings indicated that 858 (341 female and 517 male) reported not caught in examination malpractice, while 648 (364 female and 284 male) of the respondents reported caught in examination malpractice. The findings imply that more females were caught in examination malpractice. The focus group discussion and interview indicated that the days when female students were embarrassed to cheat on examinations are long gone. These female students are now leading the way. Even hijab hooded students cheat.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Types of Malpractice Caught Doing by Sex

Type of Malpractice Caught Doing	Female	Male	Fre	%
Carrying books and handouts to the Examinations Hall	87	55	142	9.4
Bringing mobile phone into the examination hall to access answers	61	78	139	9.2
Writing answers on handkerchiefs, mathematical sets, blank surfaces, palm, thighs, desk etc. to be used in examination hall	75	64	139	9.2
Hiding books/cheat papers and handouts in toilets, panties, brassiere, head wears: hijabs, hats, caps and other secret places to be used during examination hours	69	70	139	9.2
Giraffing (stretching neck) to copy from others work	80	59	139	9.2
Talking to or asking a colleague to assist you, or you assist someone in any form, during an examination	63	51	114	7.6
Moving in and outside the examination hall just to get help from outside	43	53	96	6.4
Prepared notes (cheat sheet) hidden on one's table during an examination	44	37	81	5.4
Mean	51.4	48.6	100	6.6

Multiple Responses

As per the majority rule, the means for females and males are 51.4 and 48.6, respectively, serving as the decision point. 87 females and 55 males were caught carrying books and handouts to the examination hall, while 61 females and 78 males brought mobile phones into the examination hall to access answers. Additionally, 75 females and 64 males were caught writing answers on handkerchiefs, mathematical sets, blank surfaces, palm, thighs, and desk to be used in the examination hall. Moreover, 69 females and 70 males were found hiding books/cheat papers and handouts in toilets, panties, and headwear: hijabs, hats, caps and other secret places to be used during examination hours. Giraffing, (stretching the neck to copy from others' work), was reported by 80 females and 59 males. Again, 63 females and 51 males were found talking to or asking a colleague for assistance during an examination. Furthermore, 53 males and 50 females reported being caught moving in and outside the examination hall to seek help from outside and writing notes/answers on papers and desk surfaces with blunt edges not seen by invigilators and

examination officials respectively. The focus group discussion, interview, and observation depicted that bringing mobile phones loaded with notes, an examination cheat sheet, writing notes on their body parts, handkerchiefs, mathematical sets, blank surfaces, and desks, hiding cheat sheets under one's table, talking to other students to help them with the questions, copying from others' work, and giving money to teachers, invigilators and supervisors.

Table 3: Distribution According to Those Punished

<i>Punished</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
No	1018	67.6
Yes	488	32.4
Total	1506	100.0

According to the findings on those caught in the act of examination malpractice, 67.6% (1018) of the respondents stated that they were not punished, while 32.4% (488) claimed to be punished. The focus group discussion, interview, and observation portrayed that some of those caught in examination malpractice were punished.

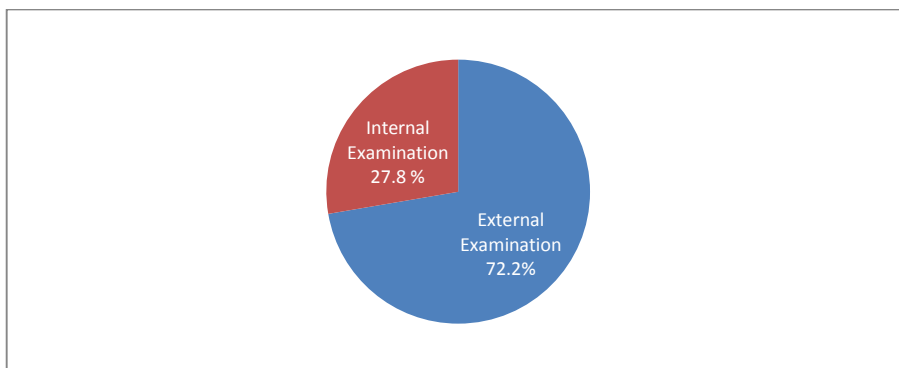


Figure3 Distribution of Examination with High Rate of Malpractice

The data shows the responses of respondents to the type of examination that has a high rate of malpractice. According to the information, 72.2% (1088) claimed that external examination has a high rate of malpractice, while 27.8 % (418) stated internal examination. The focus group discussion, interview, and observation showed that malpractice is at high rate in external examination.

Table 4 Types of Examination Malpractices Prevalent in Senior Secondary School

<i>No</i>	<i>Research Item/Statement</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1	Giving money to invigilators, teacher/supervisors to help answer questions during and after examinations	1012	67.2%
2	Bringing mobile phones into the examination hall to access answers	995	66.1%
3	Writing answers on handkerchiefs, mathematical sets, blank surfaces, palm, thighs, desk etc. to be used in the examination hall	995	66.1%
4	hiding books/cheat papers and handouts in toilets, panties, brassiere, and head wears; hijabs, caps to be used during examinations	979	65.0 %
5	Giraffing (stretching of the neck) to copy from others work	928	61.6%
6	Talking to or asking a colleague to assist you, or you assisting someone in any form, during an examination	824	54.7%
7	Moving in and outside the examination hall just to get help from outside	684	45.4%

Multiple Responses

The table provides data on the types of examination malpractice prevalent in senior secondary schools. According to the findings, majority of the respondents 1012 (67.2%) indicated giving money to invigilators, teachers, and supervisors to help answer questions during and after examinations. Next is bringing mobile phones into the examination hall to access answers and writing answers on handkerchiefs, mathematical sets, blank surfaces, palms, thighs, desks, etc. to be used in the examination hall, which were claimed by 995 (66.1%) of the respondents each. Furthermore, the findings revealed that 979 (65.0 %) indicated hiding books, cheat papers, and handouts in toilets, pants, brassieres, and headwear; hijabs and caps to be used during examinations were prevalent in senior secondary schools. Giraffing (stretching of the neck) to copy others work was said to be prevalent by 928 (61.6%) of the respondents. Again, talking to or asking a colleague to assist you, or you assisting someone in any form, during an examination was considered prevalent by 824 (54.7 %) of the respondents. The majority of the respondents 684 (45.4%) indicated that moving in and out of the examination hall just to get help from outside was prevalent.

Table5 Distribution of Attitudes of students towards examination malpractices

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Slightly agree		Summed Data (Agreed)		Slightly disagree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Summarize d Data (Disagreed)	
	Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre	%
Examination malpractice is an illegal act	842	55.9	355	23.6	101	6.7	1298	86.2	60	4.0	53	3.5	95	6.3	208	13.8
A pupil who is caught in examination malpractice should be expelled	536	35.6	389	25.8	150	10.0	1075	71.4	74	4.9	110	7.3	247	16.4	431	28.6
It is good to acquire better grades by all means	208	13.8	291	19.3	246	16.3	745	49.5	290	19.3	245	16.3	226	15.0	761	50.5
It is right to obey rules and regulations on examinations	264	17.5	336	22.3	199	13.2	799	53.1	196	13.0	214	14.2	297	19.7	707	46.9
Everybody is involved in examination malpractice so I will do it.	242	16.1	259	17.2	247	16.4	748	49.7	193	12.8	244	16.2	321	21.3	758	50.3
There is nothing wrong with examination malpractices	163	10.8	277	18.4	208	13.8	648	43.0	221	14.7	307	20.4	330	21.9	858	57.0
It is wrong to report examination malpractice	220	14.6	256	17.1	181	12.0	657	43.7	230	15.3	264	17.5	355	23.6	849	56.4
I will study very hard as not to be involved in examination malpractice	299	19.9	322	21.4	111	7.4	732	48.6	230	15.3	261	17.3	283	18.8	774	51.4

Table 5 presents data that was summarized into two categories: strongly agreed, agreed, and slightly agreed, were summed up to mean agreed, while strongly disagreed, disagreed, and slightly disagreed were summed up to stand for disagreed. From the table above, the majority of the respondents, 86.2% agreed that 'examination malpractice is an illegal act, while 13.8% disagreed with the statement. 71.4% of the respondents agreed that a pupil who is caught in examination malpractice should be expelled while 28.6% disagreed with it. The data on 'it is good to acquire better grades by all means' indicated that 49.5% agreed while 50.5% disagreed. 53.1% of the respondents agreed that it is right to obey rules and regulations on examinations while 46.9% disagreed. The majority of the respondents 49.7% agreed that everybody is involved in examination malpractice, so I will do it, while 50.3% disagreed with the

statement. 43.0% of the respondents agreed that there is nothing wrong with examination malpractices, while 57.0% disagreed with the statement. 56.4% disagreed that 'it is wrong to report examination malpractice, while 43.6% agreed with the statement. Finally, the majority 51.4% disagreed with I will study very hard as not to be involved in examination malpractice," while 48.6% agreed with the statement. The results of the focus group discussion, interview, and observation with teachers and other stakeholders on the attitude towards examination malpractice depicted that teachers do not care if students engage in examination malpractice and that all they know is that their students pass.

Correlations

		<i>Attitude</i>	<i>Incidence</i>	<i>Knowledge</i>
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	-.033	.038
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.401	.336
	N	1506	1506	1506
Incidence	Pearson Correlation	-.033	1	.143**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.401		.000
	N	1506	1506	1506
Knowledge	Pearson Correlation	.038	.143**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.336	.000	
	N	1506	1506	1506

****.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The data table displays the Pearson product correlation coefficient, indicating a significant positive relationship between respondents' knowledge and the incidence of examination malpractice at a probability value of ($P \leq 0.01$). Conversely, there is no significant difference between attitude and knowledge, and attitude and incidence, suggesting that attitude does not impact the knowledge and incidence of respondents in examination malpractice. In the model decision between knowledge and incidence, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative is accepted. As for attitude and knowledge, and attitude and incidence, the correct prediction was made, leading the researcher to maintain the null hypothesis and disregard the alternative.

Discussion

According to the result, the majority of the respondents have knowledge of examination malpractice and the rules and regulations on examinations in their respective schools. Further revealed was the knowledge respondents have of the MBSSE rules and regulations. The findings depicted that respondents have knowledge; therefore, there is a tendency for them to abide by the rules and regulations on examinations. The result is consistent with Omemu's (2015) finding that a student's involvement in examination malpractice is determined by their level of knowledge and skill acquisition. More importantly, the inferiority complex that any kid who fails an exam experience at school, at home, and in society as a whole will drive them to any lengths to pass the test. The majority of the respondents revealed they were involved in malpractice during the external examination (WASSCE). It is an indication that students who cheat in examinations have high expectations for success and a competitive attitude towards grades.

Every student wants to enter university; therefore, they place more emphasis on cheating in WASSCE (external examinations). Additionally, data showed that respondents' conduct about cheating was strongly influenced by their desire for passing marks in order to be eligible for promotion. Majority of the respondents admitted that they have never been caught cheating and were captured in the act. Obudigha (2010) findings reported that the current trends in examination malpractice is alarming and calls for proper management in order to rid the school of its consequences because in the past, students

tended to hide the act, but now they blatantly advertise the act and positively too. Similarly, the findings of this study revealed that majority of the respondents admitted to be involved in the activities considered as examination malpractice. The result showed that majority admitted to be involved in examination malpractice during examination period, but only few were caught in the act and were not punish. The findings of this study corroborate Wu & Cao (2012) cited in Starovoytova, Namango & Katana (2016) that the proportion of university-students who had cheating experiences is up to shocking 90%. The study is consistence with another study involving 20,829 middle and high school students, where Josephson reported that 70% of the students claimed that they cheated on examinations.

Also similar to McCabe's (2005) studies of high school students in the USA found out that 75-80% of students admitted to copying from others or taking forbidden materials into tests or examinations. With regards to punitive measures inflicted on those involved in examination malpractice, the results revealed that the majority of the respondents claimed that punitive measures were inflicted on those involved in examination malpractice. The findings implied that there are punitive measures put in place for those involved in examination malpractice. The result is a confirmation with Achio (2005) that the administration of examinations is governed by a variety of rules and regulations. The examination bodies typically list appropriate sanctions that go along with the rules and regulations. But in order to gain access to exam materials, candidates will go out of their way to break the law. The findings revealed that malpractice is more prevalent in external examinations than internal examinations. This is consistent with the study done in 2004 by Olugbile, which found a high percentage of examination malpractices in Nigerian secondary school certificate examinations. The result further revealed that giving money to invigilators, teachers, and supervisors to help answer questions during and after examinations was most common.

It is in line with Aluede (2015) who opines that students resort to "blocking", that is, using money to get high and unmerited marks from teachers in order to enhance their grade point. Also, the findings indicated that bringing mobile phones into the examination hall to access answers, writing answers on handkerchiefs, mathematical sets, blank surfaces, palms, thighs, desks, etc. to be used in the examination hall, hiding books and cheat papers and handouts in toilets, panties, brassieres, and headwear; hijabs, caps to be used during examinations; giraffing (stretching of the neck) to copy others work; and talking to or asking colleagues to assist you, or you assisting someone in any form during the examination were reported to be other examination malpractice that were most common. The result is in support of Bruno and Obidigbo's (2012) observation that students frequently cheat on examinations by bringing little pieces of paper, giraffing or spying on their classmates' work, whispering, and impersonating others. Also, the result agreed with an interview where one of the principals stated that despite students being checked, they still bring a variety of items into the examination room, including mobile phones, written answers on handkerchiefs, mathematical sets, and parts of notebooks or cheat sheets. This appears to be the most common form of examination malpractice employed by the students.

The findings are almost in line with Thompson, Ansoglenang, and Laar's (2019), who conducted a cross-sectional survey at the University of Development Studies to look into cases of examination malpractice. The three most common ways for students to cheat on examinations are by bringing in unauthorised materials, writing answers on body parts, and asking for help from peers. The findings are also in support of the researcher and enumerators' observation that the use of mobile phones to access answers, giraffing (stretching of the neck) to copy from others work, written answers on handkerchiefs, mathematical sets, and parts of notebooks or cheat sheets, and talking to or asking colleagues to assist them in answering questions in the examination hall were the most common at WASSCE.

Further observation revealed that during internal examinations, giraffing (stretching of the neck) to copy others work, written answers on handkerchiefs, mathematical sets, and parts of notebooks or cheat sheets, talking to or asking colleagues to assist you, or you assisting someone in any form during the examination were common. These findings are in line with those made by Irira (2014), Jokthan (2013), Arakaranga and Ongong (2013), Fatai (2005), and Chapi (2011), who found that the most common method of cheating in examinations was the use of synoptic notes, which could be written on neatly folded sheets of paper, on the arms, thighs, hems of clothing, handkerchiefs, calculators, or toilet paper; giraffing; bribery; leakage; overcrowded examination halls; and the use of mobile phones to send text messages on the questions to people outside the examination hall, who will then text the answers back. The findings on the attitudes of pupils towards examination malpractice were summed up as either agreeing or disagreeing.

Mulandu (2011) asserts that cheating is an unethical behaviour that many students currently indulge in since it seems to occupy their attention. Without considering the moral integrity that goes hand in hand with intellectual excellence, students nowadays aim to display academic excellence. The majority of pupils, he continued, don't care how they achieve high test results. What matters most to them is their success at the end of the testing period. The result revealed that the majority of the respondents agreed that examination malpractice is illegal, although some disagreed. This finding is in consonance with Cornelius-Ukpepi (2010), who noted that although most students (92%) believe that cheating is not ethical, almost half (45%) believe it to be socially acceptable. This is also in line with the focus group discussion with teachers, which reveals that teachers agreed that examination malpractice is illegal, but TKA-5 stated that: *I want all my pupils to pass the examinations at all costs, whether examination malpractice is legal or illegal.* Additionally, the majority of the respondents agreed that 'a student caught in examination malpractice should be expelled,' 'examination malpractice is a result of pleasing parents and guardians,' 'examination malpractice is a shameful act,' 'the best way to pass an examination is to cheat if one has not studied well,' 'it is right to obey rules and regulations on examinations,' 'examination malpractice must be stopped in schools,' 'entrance into university is more important than examination malpractice,' 'examination malpractice is regarded as a sinful act,' and 'I will study very hard as not to be involved in examination malpractice.'

On the other hand, the majority of the respondents disagreed that 'it is good to acquire better grades by all means,' 'everybody is involved in examination malpractice, so I will do it,' 'there is nothing wrong with examination malpractice,' and 'I will study very hard as not to be involved in examination malpractice.' On the issue of whether examination malpractice must be stopped in schools, the majority of the respondents agreed. This implied that students are not happy with the irregularities, but they indulge in them because they want to please their parents and guardians, everybody is involved in examination malpractice, or they want better grades by all means. The findings are contrary to Koko (2010), where a respondent advanced the argument that "examination malpractice cannot be curbed in Nigeria because it is helping the majority of students at different levels acquire certificates they may not get if they honestly write the examinations". According to the findings on "it is wrong to report examination malpractice, the majority of the students disagreed, meaning it is right to report examination malpractice since it is unethical. This is contrary to Vivien (2001), who examined students' attitudes towards cheating and whether they would report instances of cheating they witnessed. The findings revealed that the majority of the students chose to take the expedient measure of ignoring the problem rather than blow the whistle on their peers. This is also applicable in the Nigerian educational system, where students are found to be tolerant of dishonesty among their peers and are never willing

to report their fellow students who are involved in examination malpractice or any form of academic misconduct.

The data table displays the Pearson product correlation coefficient, indicating a significant positive relationship between respondents' knowledge and the incidence of examination malpractice at a probability value of ($P \leq 0.01$). The result corroborates with Makoju, Adewale, Nwangwu, and Shuaibu (2004) that examination malpractice occurs whenever parties involved (i.e., candidates and anyone else involved in the conduct of examinations from setting the question to the release of results) fail to follow the rules and regulations governing the conduct of any examination. Also, the result is in support with Szabo & Underwood (2004) that a large number of students who without remorse are trying to improve their grades or avoid failure by defying the rules. The result is similar to Achio (2005) who found that candidates, however, go out of their way and break the rules and regulations in order to have access to examination materials

Conclusion

It is concluded that there is adequate Knowledge regarding examination malpractice. Teachers and students are both aware of the MBSSE rules and regulations concerning examinations but this understanding does not turn into effective adherence to the rules. Therefore, incidence of examination malpractice continues to occur frequently. Moreover, it is concluded that attitudes toward examination malpractice reflect underlying opinions. While many recognize its detrimental effects, some may feel pressured to engage in unethical practices.

Recommendations

The government should strengthen the MBSSE regulations on examination backed by policy and adequate funding to support the implementation of Examination Malpractice regulations. MBSSE should intensify the monitoring of teaching as well as how examinations are conducted to make sure that students are receiving quality teaching which will adequately prepare them for examinations, and that the invigilation guidelines are adhered to. Through seminars and workshops, students should be encouraged to avoid spending time with their dishonest friends imbibe good habits for others to follow. Students who are champions against malpractice should be recognized as student mentors and given awards. Parents should also inculcate in their children sound morals and ethics and teach them to refrain from cheating on examinations.

Also, the MBSSE through the teachers should make sure that reorientation sessions and positive counseling are organized for students who have exhibited incidences of cheating in examinations. There must be awards given to teachers and other education personnel who identify these miscreants. Schools must invest in hand held devices that detect children entering examination halls with mobile phones. Strict penalties must be enforced against government authorities including heads of institutions, WAEC officials and other officials who face losing their jobs if they are caught in the crimes. The government and school authorities should frequently host seminars and workshops to inform students, parents, and other administrators on the vices of examination malpractice. The government through MBSSE should incorporate examination malpractice in the school curriculum as one of the emerging issues in schools in order to enhance continuous awareness among learners. Counselors, teachers, and community teachers' association should create programs that will help discourage positive attitude towards examination malpractice among students. The MBSSE, TSC, NaWEM, and other organizations should regularly host workshops on examination administration for teachers as part of their teacher sensitization campaigns.

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