

An Assessment of Students' Related Institutional Factors that Contribute to Examination Malpractice in Public Universities: A Case Study of Eldoret West Campus, Moi University, Kenya

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Abstract

This study sought to investigate the students' perceived institutional factors that contribute to examination malpractices in Eldoret West Campus of Moi University, Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. The study was guided by Albert Bandura's social learning theory which asserts that an individual's behavior is influenced by the nature of his/her environment. Descriptive research design was used. Simple random, stratified and purposive sampling techniques were used in choosing the sample size. The sample size for the study was one hundred and sixty (160) third year education students. The research instruments used to collect data were questionnaires, interview schedules and document analysis. The analysis of data was done using both qualitative and quantitative statistics with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and results interpreted using frequencies, means and percentages.

Key Words: Examination Malpractice, Institutional Factors, Public Universities

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The rapid transformations in ideologies and proliferated complexity technology in the current world presents novel challenges and thus put new demands on our education system. It poses colossal challenges to educational stakeholders to reconsider their basic tenets and to restructure schooling to respond constructively and progressively with the technological, social and ideological changes currently underway. This calls for the educators in every level to change and improve the preparation of students for productive functioning in the continually changing and highly demanding environment. Educational systems worldwide rely on examination systems for an objective assessment and evaluation of what learners have achieved after a period of schooling. This means that any act denting examination process presents a great threat to validity and reliability of examination results and thus the goals of that educational system become misshapen. Exam malpractices present a challenge whose effect can be felt in every single segment of the society and the nation as a whole.

What is Examination Malpractice?

Examination malpractice is defined as a deliberate wrong doing contrary to official examination rules designed to place a candidate at an unfair advantage or disadvantage (Onuka & Amoo, 2004). It is any form of cheating which directly or indirectly falsifies

the ability of the students. It can also be defined as any form of illegal and unauthorized assistance given to a single candidate or group of candidates in an examination (Jimoh *et al.*, 2009). Examination malpractice is however, commonly termed as a deliberate wrong doing contrary to official examination rules designed to place a candidate at an unfair advantage or disadvantage (Wilayat, 2009). Fasasi (2009) asserts that examination malpractice may be recognized as —a delinquency or improper practice, before, during or after any examination by examinees or others with a view to obtaining good results by fraudulent means. From these three definitions, it can be presumed that examination malpractice is an unethical act because it encourages mediocrity in that students who succeed through such unorthodox methods may be rated equal to those who struggle on their own to excel.

Exam Malpractices in Kenya

Cheating in exams is a global phenomenon already reported in Japan, Pakistan, Great Britain and here in Africa (Roberts, 2008). This disease has plagued deep at all levels of our educational system ranging from the tertiary institution down to the primary level. In Kenya, it first came to public notice when the Kenya National Examinations Council introduced the use of computers in early 1990's. Since then, each examination season has been characterized by new and ingenious ways of examination irregularity. Of late, there is a worrying trend of irregularities in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (K.C.P.E.) and Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (K.C.S.E) Examinations. This is happening despite stringent measures being put by the Kenya National Examination Council (K.N.E.C) and the Ministry of Education (M.O.E).

The Examination Council has to outsource personnel for the administration and supervision of exams. Strengthen schools through providing adequate infrastructure and teachers, so that candidates have confidence to tackle exams on their own. It is noted that despite continued vigilance during national examinations, cases of irregularities continue to thrive in what could be a threat to the credibility of the Kenyan education system.

It was reported for instance that in the year 2011, 1904 students were found to have engaged in examination malpractice, this is an increase from 1835 in 2010. There seems to be an upward trend in the cases reported of examination malpractice (KNEC, 2012). This study therefore sought to gain insight into the student's perceived social factors such as alcoholism, negative peer influence, employed students and lack of accommodation facilities that contribute to examination malpractices.

Effect of Examination Malpractices on Educational Development

The negative impact of examination malpractice often leads to discontinuation of a student from an academic institution. In fact, almost all universities in Kenya have put in place measures and procedures for dealing with examination malpractices whenever they are deemed to occur. For example, Kenyatta University 2011/2013 catalogue, in reference to examination irregularity says: —A student who is caught involved in any examination irregularity shall be suspended immediately by the Registrar (Academic) upon receipt of instant report, pending appearance before the Disciplinary Committee. Whereas at the University of Nairobi, in its rules stipulates that —Any student caught

cheating in examination e.g. by copying, having or making reference to unauthorized materials, communicating to other students verbally or through other means will be expelled from the University, and shall not be eligible for admission to any other programmes of the university (UoN, 2014).

Despite the effect of cheating to the student, cheating is lethal to the educational development since it makes it to produce incompetent workforce who can't be effective in their careers and thus injures the national development. Examination malpractice vitiates the credibility, validity and reliability of test, which are basic instruments of examination. When people who are not found worthy in learning and character are certificated fraudulently, such phenomenon present serious implication for the society.

The prevalent collapse of buildings, economic sabotage, drug trafficking, fake drug manufacturing and sales are examples of practical effects of moral decadence, emanating from examination malpractice. Our value system has so degenerated that we find it difficult to call a spade a spade. Effects of examination malpractice and fraud are manifested, at our filling stations, churches, homes, hospitals, markets and so on.

Forms of Exam Malpractices

It has already been pointed out that during each examination season; students tend to invent very ingenious ways of cheating in examinations; some of which may be very challenging even for the most vigilant invigilators to detect. In Kenyan public universities, a most common reported form of cheating is by use of *mwakenya* (synoptic notes). University students who prepare and carry synoptic notes into the examination hall in the name of *mwakenya*, do so deliberately knowing that it is an evil act with dire consequences. Some of the other ways include the leakage of examination papers prior to examinations, impersonation, external assistance, writing the answers on the blackboard dictation during examinations, illegal candidates, electronic assistance using phones, pagers etc, smuggling whitepaper into the hall, reproduction of another candidate's work with or without permission, inadequate spacing, lax supervision and inflation or reduction of a candidate's original mark by those who grade the scripts.

Statement of the Problem

Malpractices in examinations have become a problem in Kenyan public universities. In Moi University, despite a number of measures put up by the academic board and the senate to curb examination malpractices, there are still cases of examination malpractices. A recent study by Keter (2012) on the types of examination malpractices among undergraduate students in Moi University found that 51% of school of Business and Economics students admitted cheating, along with 44% of students in School of Engineering, 58% in education, and 45% in Law.

Table 3. Number of students expelled for exam cheating for the academic year 2008/2009 in Moi University

Year of Study					Gender		Totals
1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	M	F	
52	51	97	23	3	133	93	226

This shows that cheating in exams in this university is still prevalent, hence, this study seeks to unravel the Students' perceived institutional factors that contribute to examination malpractices in Moi University, Eldoret West Campus.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted Bandura's (1963) Social learning theory. Social learning theory is a perspective that states that people learn within a social context. This notion states that an individual's behavior is influenced by the environment. In other words, a person's behavior, environment, and personal qualities all reciprocally influence each other.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research adopted a descriptive research design. It was adopted because it can provide information about the naturally occurring health status, behavior, attitudes or other characteristics of a particular group.

The study was carried out in Eldoret West Campus, a satellite campus of Moi University situated in Eldoret town. The reason for the choice of Eldoret West Campus was that it is purely PSSP institution, and it based on the research by Keter (2012), which showed that students who engage in examination malpractice are PSSP students. The campus is found in Eldoret west district, Uasin Gishu County.

The target population of the study comprised of all the undergraduate students in public universities in Kenya, all the teaching staff and administrative staff in the universities.

Purposive sampling was used in sampling the student counselor, dean of school of education, chief examinations officer. Stratified random sampling procedure was used to select 160 third year students out of 535 in the school of education since it had been observed that they were the most affected by examination malpractice (Keter, 2012).

The researcher used questionnaires, interview and document analysis to collect the data required in this research. The questionnaire designed was meant for the selected third year students. The interview schedule designed was meant for the Dean School of Education, Student Counselor and Chief Examinations Officer. Document analysis consisted of analyzing the content of documentary materials such as senate reports, incident occurrence forms and school records.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic Information

Gender of the respondent. The results showed that 82(54.7%) respondents were male students, 68(45.3%) respondents were female students. This could be deduced that majority of the students in Eldoret west Campus are male students in comparison to female students. This was also significant to the study since McCabe and Trevino (1993) research established that males tend to cheat slightly more than females.

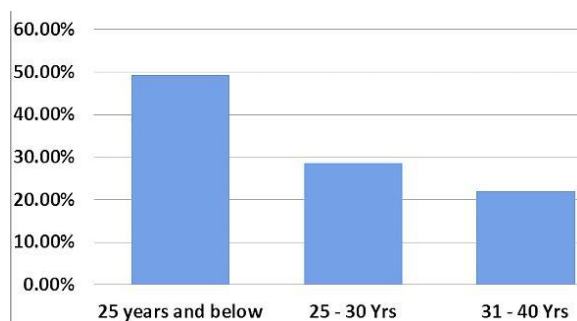


Figure 1. Age of respondents

Age of respondents. The results shows that 74 (49.3%) students were aged below 25 years, 43 (28.70%) students were aged 25 – 30 years while 33 (22.0%) students were aged 31 – 40 years. The results indicate that majority (49.3%) of the students in Eldoret West Campus were aged below 25 years. This was of significance to the study since this is the age bracket that the students are very active and majority are thought to involve themselves in examination malpractices (Smith *et al.*, 2004).

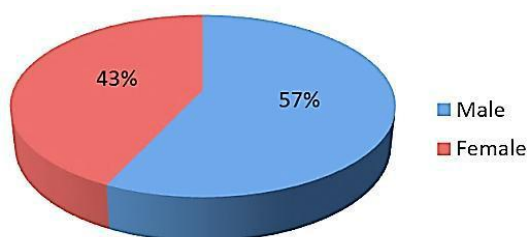


Figure 2. Gender of the respondent

Students' Perceived Social Factors that Contribute to Examination Malpractices

Table 4. Students perceived social factors that contribute to examination malpractices

Variable	SA		A		UD		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Negative peer influence	82	54.7%	53	35.3	4	2.7	7	4.7	4	2.7
Alcoholism and drug abuse	68	45.3%	55	36.7	8	5.3	9	6.0	10	6.7
Lack of confidence	48	32.0	66	44.0	10	6.7	15	10.0	11	7.3
Fear to fail	82	54.7	53	35.3	7	4.7	4	2.7	4	2.7
Pregnancies	36	24.0	35	23.3	30	20.0	28	18.7	21	14.0
"come we stay relationships"	43	28.7	39	26.0	26	17.3	22	14.7	20	13.3
Poor payment of school fees	33	22.0	43	28.7	23	15.3	26	17.3	25	16.7
Involvement in business activities	30	20.0	30	20.0	26	17.3	36	24.0	28	18.7
Employed students	35	23.3	44	29.3	24	16.0	23	15.3	24	16.0

From the above responses it can be shown that majority of the students (90.0%) and the interviewees were in agreement with the statement that negative peer influence caused examination malpractices amongst students in Eldoret West Campus. For example interviewee Jane a Student Counselor* (not real name) reported;

Students segregate in groups and most of the time they highly influence each other. One of the students explained to me how the group she was in lured her up into alcoholism, which later made her end up cheating in exam, since she had no time to read rather she was always on dates and alcoholism.

In a group, the students would either encourage or discourage the vice of examination malpractices or discourage it. In a situation where one or two members of the group with high influence encourage the vice, the whole group would succumb to the pressure.

From the findings, majority of the students (82%) and the interviewees agreed that alcoholism and drug abuse amongst the students leads to examination malpractices. To place this in the right context, when a student is a drunkard, he/she spends money and time. This in turn reduces time that an individual studies thus translating to use of shortcuts including examination malpractice.

The finding shows that majority of the students (68.0%) and the interviewees believed that lack of confidence influences negatively the students to engage in examination malpractices. One of the interviewees John an administrator in the School of Education Dean's Office* (not his real name) concurred with this when he disclosed that;

Majority of those students who come to my office to apply for special examination do not usually have concrete reason to do so. Majority claim they are sick hence acquire the letter from the dispensary the very day, and there are no records that they have been sick. When I become friendly to them and encourage them to do the exam they admit to have feared the exam because they were not prepared for it.

Students who speak English as a second language have been shown to commit academic malpractices more than are more likely to be caught than native speakers, since they will often not want to rewrite sources in their own words, fearing that the meaning of the sentence was lost through poor paraphrasing skills (Carroll, 2002). Thus students with high confidence also have high self- esteem and they believe in themselves and even in an examination they believe they can achieve hence; they do not commit examination malpractice compared to those with low confidence.

The results further indicated that majority of the students (90.4%) and the interviewees as stated above believed that examination malpractices are caused by fear to fail examinations amongst the students. Many individuals normally would not want to be viewed as failures, in which it starts right from the family level when the parents punish the poorly performing students and rewards the best performers. Furthermore, the child grows knowing that failing in an examination is evil and punishable hence the fear to fail leads to many vices of cheating including examination malpractice.

On one hand, majority of the students (43.3%) were in agreement with the statement that pregnancies cause examination malpractices amongst students in Eldoret West Campus. Pregnancy comes with many symptoms among them being feeling drowsy, nausea, and fatigue, among others (Anderson-Levitt, 1998). This demands that the expectant person takes time resting or struggles to be at par with others. This may lead to examination malpractices since the concerned student does not have enough time to attend to all classes or revise thus the only way they can pass examinations is through the use of unscrupulous means to obtain higher marks in the examinations. This matched with the information given by *Jane (not her real name) who is a students' Counselor who reported that:

Most of the female students defer their studies when they get pregnant and if not they struggle to catch up with others in which sometimes it is not possible. There are cases in which a student delivers days or weeks to exams, and when they proceed to do the exam they admit to have copied from friends. There are also some extreme cases in which a student impersonates and does the exam on behalf of the friend or writes two scripts one for the friend and the other his/her own, especially during Continuous Assessment Test (CAT).

Regarding relationships, majority of the students (54.7%) believed that —come we stay relationships amongst the students lead to examination practices. This is because most of the time these students are out of class taking care of their relationship as an academic wife or husband as affirmed by Jane a Student Counselor* (not real name);

I handle many cases in which the students are found living together as husband and wife in hostels, inconveniencing the other roommates. These students displace their counterparts as they turn the room into a family house. This can also happen during the day. The students also admit missing several classes.

On the poor payment of fees as a factor in examination malpractices, majority of the students (50.7%) believe that poor payment of fees leads one to engage in examination malpractices since most of the time the concerned students are out of class looking for extra money to pay their fees arrears and may not have enough time to attend to class work. In addition, the lack of mental peace due to unsettled fees arrears makes the student unable to read well thus due to fear to fail the student gets involved in examination malpractice as explained also by Beck and Kerry (2009) . This point was also agreed to by the interviewees. For example John an administrator in the School of Education Dean's office* (not real name) states that;

I experience very long queue of students in my office towards exams and sometimes when the examinations have started. The students confess deep seated problems in their social life and mainly their families that really humbles. Sometimes the student has to defer the examinations several times before completing the degree program. The students confess the inability to settle and study as examinations nears when they are conversant that their school fees have not been paid. The last minute help students to discuss and in gathering the inner peace and strength to handle the examinations, yet these students spend time in long queues unable to tell if they will really sit for the examinations or not.

On involvement of students in business activities as a factor, majority of the students (42.7%) and the interviewees do not believe that engagement of students in business activities may lead to examination malpractices. Most students apply to rent business premises within the campus especially in students centre. They then hand over the business to an outsider, someone who is not a student, who will strike a deal with the student concerning on the commission that the student will receive. Thus the student does not need to be present all the time in the business but may occasionally come and calculate their commission. Thus the student learns to manage a business without necessarily missing classes or dedicating too much time which is attributed to the major cause of examination malpractice (Olatoye, 2000).

Concerning part-time studies as a cause, majority of the students (52.6%) and the interviewed persons believed that employed students may be involved in examination malpractices. John an administrator in the School of Education* (not his real name) confessed that;

In our school the students who work at the same time study miss classes more than the full time students (those who do not work).

Most of the time they are busy in their work stations with little time left for attending to class activities. Also majority of them do not ask for study leave because they do not qualify or they reserve for examination time. These students also face other challenges in the job for example night shifts, transfers, job travelling schedules which include field work among others. These students who are employed have families thus they have so many activities to do at ago. To test the significance of each variable at 95% confidence level, chi-square was used. The results are presented in table 3.

Table 5. Level of significance of social factors that contribute to examination malpractices

	Negative peer influence	Alcoholism and drug abuse	Lack of confidence	Fear to fail	Pregnancies	—Come we stay relationship	Poor payment of school fees	Involvement in Business activities	Working students
Chi-Square	76.440 ^a	53.280 ^a	50.560 ^a	156.507 ^b	95.160 ^a	2.160 ^c	134.040 ^a	88.453 ^b	42.667 ^c
df	2	2	2	3	2	1	2	3	1
Asymp. Sig.	0	0	0	0	0	0.142	0	0	0

From table 3, at 95% confidence level, it was found out that all the students' perceived social factors that contribute to examination malpractices amongst students in Eldoret West Campus were significant ($p \leq .05$). This shows that Negative peer influence, alcoholism and drug abuse, lack of confidence, fear to fail, pregnancies, come we stay relationships, poor payment of school fees, student involvement in business activities and work amongst students contribute to examination malpractices in the campus. These findings concur with that of Carroll, (2002) who cited that time management and engagement of students in other social activities was a principal cause of examination malpractices in Colleges in the US. Similarly Power *et al.*, (1989) and McCabe and Trevino, (1993) showed that the important causes of academic misconduct is the contextual factor, peer pressure. They indicated that all people tend to follow the norms of their peer group, which would include norms about academic malpractices. Thus students who believe that their peers approve of malpractices are likely to cheat. Indeed, multiple studies show that the most decisive factor is a student's decision to cheat. This shows that peer influence amongst students in Eldoret west Campus may lead to examination malpractice.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The research found out that the following social factors were responsible for examination malpractices in Moi university, west campus; Negative peer influence, alcoholism and drug abuse, lack of confidence, fear to fail, pregnancies, —come we stay relationships, poor payment of school fees, student involvement in business activities and work amongst students.

Recommendations of the Study

The following recommendations were made based on the study findings;

- a) The number of student counselors should be increased in order to increase direct contact with students thus reducing dependence of students on fellow students. This will in turn reduce peer pressure and also reduce cohabiting thus reducing pregnancy cases.
- b) The university should initiate social/spiritual programs to train students on ethics and thus make them refrain from alcoholism, drug abuse or unnecessary pregnancies.
- c) University administration should organize workshops for students with businesses to train students on how to balance business with their study programs, in order not to compromise their studies. The same should be instituted for employed students so that they know how to balance career with their studies.
- d) Strict use of class attendance registers and strict class attendance by the lecturers will force the students to attend classes hence limiting time spent on drugs especially alcoholism and build their confidence.

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BIO-DATA

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