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Examination Behaviours Among Polytechnic Students

Mr. AJOGBEJE, Oke James
Senior Lecturer, Department of Mathematics
College of Education, Ikere – Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria.
e - mail: ajogbejeoke@yahoo.com
Phone Number: +2348137779336

Dr. (Mrs.) ADESINA, Modupe Olutayo
Senior Lecturer, Department of Sport Science & Health Education
Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida University, Lapai – Minna
Niger State, Nigeria
e - mail: taatootayo@yahoo.com
Phone Number: +2348034336076

Mr. EGBON, Friday Ogoigbe
Lecturer, Department of Mathematics
College of Education, Ikere – Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria.
e - mail: egbon.friday@yahoo.com
Phone Number: +2347062213007

Abstract
This paper attempted to identify some of the examination misbehaviours common among 485 male and 360 female students randomnly selected from Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo using stratified sampling technique. The results of the study showed that there was inadequate preparation for examination and inadequate use of study group by the students. When the respondents were asked to assume that they were in a typical examination hall and to identify the degree at which some examination misbehaviours were unnoticeably going on among their coursemates, the respondents were able to identify ten distinct examination misbehaviours. The results also showed that both sexes claimed to have observed these misbehaviours among their coursemates. All the same, most polytechnic students usually wait for examination time-table before they start preparation for examination. It was recommended that teamwork should be developed among the students by giving them group assignment, which could lead to adequate preparation and effective group work among polytechnic students. The government needs to evolve an alternative process of reward commensurate to academic achievement rather than certificate only.
Keywords: Examination, malpractices or misbehaviours, Study Group, Group Work, Polytechnic Students and Level of Academic Exposure

Introduction

One educational problem that has been of more concern and which has generated very serious discussion among contemporary Nigerians is the issue of examination malpractices or misbehaviours in both private and public examinations as well as internal and external examinations in the country. Examination malpractices or misbehaviours, a cankerworm in the educational system, cuts across all levels of education in the country. Adaramola (1997) argued that the problem has eaten deeply into the fabrics of our educational system and the assessment of curriculum objectives is loaded with bias. Things have already degenerated to the level that the validity and authencity of certificates awarded in Nigerian institutions may be questonable to the outside world. Examination misbehaviour or malpractice has been defined variously by experts with more or less the same meaning. Eperokun (1975) posited that examination malpractices involve various methods employed by candidates to cheat before or during examination. Similarly, Ongom (1994) defined examination malpractices as wrong doings in an examination, which involve misconduct and irregularity contrary to the established rules and directives to be followed in order to affect a fair conduct of examination.

Viewing examination malpractice from both legal and moral perspectives, Salami (1994) defined examination malpractice as an improper and dishonest act associated with examination with a view to obtaining an unmerited advantage while Adaramola (1995) sees the issue in an operational term as “any situation that offers an examinee

undue advantage over others in an examination". Aside this, Faloye (2002) also contended that examination malpractices are multifarious including such practices as bringing extraneous materials into the examination hall, collusion, impersonation, having foreknowledge of questions, mass cheating, assault on supervisors and "giraffing".

Examination malpractices have become a very hard nut to crack because of the collusion and/or collaboration of some school principals and some officials of the examination bodies responsible for processing the examination questions (Adediran 2002). Some parents and communities influence examination officials with a lot of incentives. Such parents and communities want their children or wards to pass at all costs. Ajayi (1997) reported that governments at various levels (federal, state, local, etc) have not been passive in combating this problem. The Federal Government of Nigeria in move to fight corruption and other forms of indiscipline promulgated several decrees, particularly Decree 20 which stipulates punishment for examination malpractices. Despite these decrees, examination malpractices have not been completely wiped out of our society. Guardian (1985) claimed that some Nigerian secondary schools have been blacklisted by the West African Examination Council (WAEC) due to connivance of authority or supervisor at students cheating in examination halls. Ajayi (1997) also reported that Ondo State for example set up a panel on examination malpractices in 1995 with directives to all the principals of secondary schools in the state to supervise the senior secondary school examination in thier various schools with a view to holding the principals accountable for examination malpractices in their schools.

One is tempted to ask if decrees stipulating various degree of punishments for examination malpractices cannot stem cheating, how much worth or emphasis could be laid on the certificates being awarded by our institutions knowing fully well that examination scores are being inflated by all sorts of means apart from the normal human errors. What are the features of examination behaviours, which can be reduced or improved upon among polytehnics or Nigerian students at large. Hence, the purpose of this study therefore is to identify some of the features of examination behaviours such as preparation schedule for examination, the use of study group, the frequency of some of the methods of "misbehaviours or cheating" during examinations among polytechnic students and to determine the degree of association between class and attitude to group study, gender and identified examination malpractice and gender and attitude to group study. In order to address the above stated problem the following research questions are raised:

(i) What is the level of student's preparation before sitting for an examination?
(ii) When does the commencement of group work start before examination?
(iii) What is the mode of constituting the membership of study group?
(iv) Which time of the day do these study groups conduct their group work?
(v) What is the relationship between the level of academic exposure and students' attitude towards study group?
(vi) What is the relationship between sex and students' attitude towards group work?
(vii) What is the degree of association between sex and identified examination malpractices among polytechnic students?

Research Method

Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo was the targeted population for this study from where a sample of 500 National Diploma year II (ND II) and 345 higher National Diploma year II (HND II) students were selected using stratified random sampling technique. The sample also consisted of 485 male and 360 female students drawn from five faculties namely: Faculties of Engineering Technology. Environmental Technology, Food Technology, Business Studies and General Studies. All the selected students had spent at least three semesters and sat for semester examinations during each of the three semesters in the Polytechnic.

A questionnaire was designed and validated using experts advice by the researcher for the purpose of the study. Aside the section, which asked about the demographic data of the students, the instrument contained three other sections namely: Section A – Preparation schedule for Examinations; Section B – Amount of study Group work done by students during semester; and Section C – Common Examination Malpractices observed by the students during the examinations. An internal consistency estimate of 0.74 was obtained using Kuder – Richardson formula (KR20). The questionnaire was administered to large classes of the selected faculties. After successful administration of the questionnaire, a random selection of the completed questionnaire was carried out. The total sample of 845 students was obtained with Faculty of Business Studies having 345 students, 185 from Faculty of Engineering Technology, 145 from Faculty of Environment Technology, 105 from Faculty of Food Technology and 65 from Faculty of General Studies. The data collected were subjected to statistical analysis such as percentages and chi – square (x^2) test.

Results and Discussion

The first four research questions were answered using percentages while the remaining three research questions were answered using Chi – square (X^2) test.

Research Question 1: *What is the level of student's preparation before sitting for examination?*

Table I: Preparation Schedule for Examination

Schedule	% of each Group			
	Male(485)	Female(360)	ND II(500)	HND II(345)
1. When lectures start	14.5	10.3	11.5	14.5
2. At the middle of the semester	25.4	24.7	16.6	20.0
3. Four weeks to the examination	20.4	22.2	27.5	24.5
4. As soon examination time table is displayed	26.9	27.5	31.4	28.8
5. Some few days to the beginning of examination	8.6	9.7	7.2	8.4
6. Preparation for courses as shown on exam. time table	4.2	5.6	5.8	3.8

Table 1 revealed that most of the students start preparation only when the examination timetable is displayed on the notice board. The table also showed that 26.9% of male, 27.5% of female, 31.4% of ND II and 28.8% of HND II students started preparation when the examination time – table is displayed that is two weeks to the examination. A sizeable percentage of the students started their preparation for examination at the middle of the semester while some students started preparation for examination four weeks before the examination.

Research Question 2: *When does the commencement of group work start before examination?*

Table II: Commencement of Study Group Work

Schedule	% of each Group			
	Male (305)	Female (202)	ND II (345)	HND II (162)
1. Immediately after the completion of registration process.	20.8	14.2	14.7	21.5
2. Whenever there is an assignment.or continous assesment test	27.7	42.6	36.4	28.7
3. During the commencement of mid – semester test.	33.9	26.4	32.6	30.3
4. During the semester examination period	17.6	16.8	16.3	19.5

Sixty percent (60%) of the total students interviewed were members of one study group or the other. Table II showed that study group works started their activities at different times in the semester but most of the students claimed to have commenced study group work immediately an assignment was given by their lecturers. 43% of the female students participated study group work than their male counterparts (28%) whenever assignments are given out. All the same, 21% of the male students started group work immediately they resumed for the semester while only 14% of their female counterparts claimed to start during the same time. 36% of ND II students started study group work during the commencement of continuous assessment test or whenever there is an assignment while 29% and 30% of the HND II students started group work during the commencement of continuous assessment test or assignment and during the commencement of mid – semester test respectively.

Research Question 3: *What is the mode of constituting the membership of study group?*

Table III: Membership of Study Groups

Schedule	% of each Group			
	Male (243)	Female (202)	ND II (345)	HND II (162)
1. Male and Female in my class.	24.3	23.3	23.7	25.1
2. Male students only.	35.4	32.5	38.9	33.6
3.Female students only.	13.0	16.3	11.2	13.2
4.My Fiancee	8.1	8.7	7.8	8.3
5.Member of my religious belief	12.2	12.4	12.2	12.1
6.Students from my geographical area	7.0	6.8	5.6	7.7

Table III showed the distribution of members of study group. Gender segregation pattern was noticed. 33% of the female students preferred to study with their male counterparts only, while 35% male students preferred to study with male students only. Approximately 12% of the members of each group preferred working with members of their religious inclination. Traces of ethnic affiliation in the choice of study group members were equally noticed. The predominant choice for study group membership is male – male followed by male – female choices.

Research Question 4: *Which time of the day do these study groups conduct their group work?*

Table IV: Time of the Day Allotted for Study Group Work

Schedule	% of each Group			
	Male (305)	Female (202)	ND II (345)	HND II (162)
1. Early hours of the day before lectures start	8.2	3.1	5.4	7.2
2. During lecture free periods of the day	10.5	9.8	12.3	10.4
3. Between 8.00p.m. and 10.00p.m.	22.4	27.4	25.3	27.8
4. Between 10.00p.m. and 12.00 midnight	27.1	31.2	34.5	32.4
5. Between 8.00 p.m. and 12.00 midnight	20.8	17.2	13.7	14.2
6. After 12.00 midnight	11.0	12.3	8.8	8.0

The students that were involved in study group were asked to specify the time of the day when they carried out their group work. The result is shown in Table IV. Table IV revealed that the most frequent time of the day used for group work as indicated by the students was between 10.00p.m. and 12 midnights. During this period 27% of the male students, 31% of the female students, 35% of the ND II students and 32% of the HND II students were engaged study group work. Similarly, 22% male, 27% female, 25% ND II and 28% HND II students preferred between 8.00 p.m. and 10.00p.m. for their group work. A small percentage of the students indicated the early hours of the day before lectures start as their preferred period for group work. However, it is noted that a fairly small percentages of the students preferred lecture free periods of the day and after 12.00 midnight for group work or study.

Research Question 5: *What is the relationship between the level of academic exposure and students' attitude towards study group?*

Table V: Relationship between Class and Attitude to Study Group

Attitude to Group Work	% of each Group					
	Class	Yes	No	X^2	X^2	Remark
1. Study group is an academically purposeful exercise	ND II	200	145	4.58	3.84	S
	HND II	110	52			
2. The benefits accruable from study group are highly reward able	ND II	214	131	0.37	3.84	NS
	HND II	105	57			
3. Any meeting time is suitable for me	ND II	185	160	0.17	3.84	NS
	HND II	90	72			
4. Concentration in a group study is for better than an individualize study	ND II	246	99	4.59	3.84	S
	HND II	130	32			

Table V depicts the relationship between class and attitude of students to group study. Table V reveals a significant relationship between the level of academic exposure and the view that study group is an academic exercise worthwhile ($X^2 = 4.58$, df = 1 $P < 0.05$). There was also a significant relationship between the level of academic exposure and level of concentration in a study group ($x^2 = 4.59$, df = 1, $P < 0.05$). All the same the relationship between the level of academic exposure and benefits accruable from study group as well as between the level of academic exposure and the appropriateness of meeting time were not significant at 0.05.

Research Question 6: *What is the relationship between gender and students' attitude towards*

group work?

Table VI: Relationship between Gender and Attitude to Study Group

Attitude to Group Work	% of each Group					
	Class	Yes	No	X^2	X^2	Remark
1. Study group is an academically purposeful exercise	Male	237	68	21.54	3.84	S
	Female	118	84			
2. The benefits accruable from study group are highly reward able	Male	240	65	4.61	3.84	S
	Female	142	60			
3. Any meeting time is suitable for me	Male	201	104	1.89	3.84	NS
	Female	121	81			
4. Concentration in a group study is for better than an individualize study	Male	245	60	17.03	3.84	S
	Female	129	73			

Table VI shows the relationship between gender and students' attitude towards study group. Table VI reveals that the relationship of gender on group study as related to the academic purpose of group work, benefits accruable from study group and concentration in study group were all significant at 0.05. All the same there was no significant relationship between gender and the appropriateness of meeting time.

Research Question 7: *What is the degree of association between gender and identified examination malpractices among polytechnic students?*

Table VII: Relationship between Gender and Identified Malpractices among Polytechnic Students

Identified Malpractices	Degree of Involvement				
	Sex	Very Often	Often	Never	X^2
1. Impresonation (i.e helping another person to write examination)	Male	287	156	32	8.51
	Female	220	105	35	
2. Writing on thighs, ruler, handkerchiefs, calculator cover, palms and tables etc for use during examination	Male	152	185	148	5.01
	Female	118	112	130	
3. Bringing into examination hall already prepared answer sheets.	Male	295	145	45	1.53
	Female	204	117	39	
4. Giraffing (an art of streching ones neck to spy and copy another person's work)	Male	325	130	30	19.33
	Female	290	55	15	
5. Using sunglasses or caps during examination to be able to spy and copy other's work.	Male	65	340	80	6.03
	Female	30	275	55	
6. Exchanging one's position with or without the invigilators Assistance	Male	315	105	65	
	Female	211	121	28	18.33
7. Visiting toilets with intention to drop incriminating materials or bring in or read portion relevant to examination questions	Male	330	120	35	7.46
	Female	120	115	123	
8. Exchanging papers (scripts, question paper e.t.c) with one another in the examination hall	Male	299	143	43	5.97
	Female	251	85	24	
9. Bringing into the examination hall "micro-tin tin" or "micro-chips"	Male	305	123	57	24.76
	Female	265	85	10	
10. Use of programmable calculator, organizer or handset to store information for use in examination hall.	Male	285	160	40	3.06
	Female	221	101	38	

Table VII shows that the relationship between genders and the observed degree of participation of the student in examination malpractice were significant at 0.05 level of significance and the degree of freedom 2 except for the malpractices that involved bringing into examination hall alrready prepared answer scrips and the use of programmable calculator, organizer and handsets to store information for use in examination hall. Further

observation of Table VII shows that a greater percentage of the male students identified "visiting toilets, "giraffing" "exchange of seats" "bring in micro" – tin tin or "micro chip" "impersonation" as the most prevailing malpractices.

Conclusion

The results discussed above revealed the need for students to begin early preparation for continuous assessment tests or semester examination as soon as they resumed for academic work. Handworking and determined students would not wait till the examination timetable is displayed on the notice board before they start serious and proper preparation for the examinations. All the same, most polytechnic students usually wait for examination time-table before they start preparation for examination. In most cases such students are late and catching up becomes difficult, the resultant effect is misbehaviours during examination in order to pass at all cost. Gender was equally identified as a predominant consideration for study group membership. Similarly, gender and class factors were also observed in determining students' attitude to group work.

Recommendations

Teamwork should be developed among the students by giving them group assignment, which could lead to adequate preparation and effective's group work among polytechnic students. The group work should start at the beginning of each semester. Ojerinde (1986) suggested that if a period of four hours is spent per week as early as the semester begins on group work, the period of examination will look normal to the students and they would be used to the same group work for effective studying rather than engaging themselves in examination malpractices. He further claimed that the craze for certificate in Nigeria as the only source of meal ticket and the competitive nature of the society in which we live is pushing students into a number of malpractices.

The promulgation of decrees has failed to solve the problems of cheating during examinations; hence there is need for the government to evolve a process of reward commensurate to academic achievement rather than certificate only. Most of the identified examination misbehaviours among polytechnic students during examinations should be discouraged by committed and vigilant invigilators and supervisors. Large classes allow for large – scale examination misbehaviours, hence enough facilities and invigilators should be provided for large classes during examination. Students should be educated during lectures and tutorial classes that they need not to be cheaters to be winners. Finally, gender was observed as a major consideration for study group membership. This process of socialization should be encouraged among the polytechnic students and the counselling units should utilized these factors during counselling sessions.

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