

Review Article

A Scale Developed to Measure the Perception of Nigerian Undergraduate Students on Cheating in an Examination

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Abstract: A scale that will be used to measure undergraduates perception on cheating in an examination was developed by the researchers. Five hundred university of Ibadan undergraduate students were used to standardize this scale. The scale consists of thirty items with high and acceptable psychometric properties. It is suitable for identifying factors that promote examination malpractice and will be useful in developing policies that will minimize or eradicate examination malpractice. It is good in determining the predisposition of undergraduate students/individuals to examination malpractice.

Keywords: Examination, Malpractice, Undergraduate Students

1. Introduction

The perception of students toward the act of cheating in an examination [examination malpractice] can promote or hinder their consistent engagement in it, as a means of passing examination, although some of the specific perceptual and behavioral factors that promote cheating on examinations in Nigeria have been elucidated, a method of measuring and explaining the predictors to cheating [examination malpractice] is an important step in promoting the effectiveness of a strategy for curbing the frequency of its occurrence.

This study examines how such a method with a scale for assessment, contributed to the understanding and measurements of cheating behavior in examinations in Nigeria. The findings are of relevance also to other African countries.

Statement of Problem

Cheating in examination is a form of corrupt practice that has crept into the fabrics of all levels of the educational

enterprise in the country. It is a problem in Nigeria that seems to be as old as the introduction of formal system of education [Afigbo 1993] the first major incidence of examination malpractice was in 1914, when the senior Cambridge local examinations leaked. This scenario took an unprecedented surge in 1963 when some public examinations of 1967, 1977, 1981, and 1987 got leaked.

There are severe implications of large scale cheating in examination, including the reduction in quality of graduates that are produced in the country, resulting in decrease in labor productivity.

Furthermore, organization may be forced to import foreign expertise to cover up for labor inadequacies. This may worsen the current levels of national poverty and adversely affect the basic welfare of the population, as more graduates are likely to be unemployed and balance of payment/trade unfavorable.

As a result of unprecedented surge in 1963, and the corresponding leakage of 1967, 1977, 1987, the federal government propounded decree (Decree 27 of 1973) and

miscellaneous decree 20 of 1984 to curb examination malpractice, the latter decree prescribed 21 years jail term offenders.

These and other measures put in place still do not disengage people from engaging in examination malpractice. In the WAEC conducted examination of 1991, 30,982 students were involved in Examination malpractice while 35,479 were reported in 1922. This number of offenders and related offences resulting in cancelation of result is quite disheartening. In view of the adverse effects that examination malpractice has on the educational system. It becomes necessary to critically examine it. At what stage do cheating in examination occur, what are the institutional and individual factors that promote cheating and specifically what are the perceptual factors that promote cheating on an examination.

One reason for the minimal effect of the existing advocacy methods for curbing examination malpractice in Nigeria is that most intervention does not take into consideration perceptual factors that may promote or hinder cheating in an examination. In so far as some knowledge of the nature of such predictors and proceed to controlling or adopting them through the use of an appropriate strategy. The method of measurement that was used in the present study includes identifying the perception/attitudes associated with cheating in an examination. Furthermore, the measurement identifies individuals who think and do not think favorable of cheating or examinations. Finally, the measurement scale employed is suitable for addressing critical issues that surround high rates of cheating and increased the occurrence in various populations.

2. Materials and Methods

A scale for measuring of perception on cheating in an examination. The scale consists of 30 items, each one worded in a relatively short statement. The items examine the three main components of attitude, affective, behavioral and cognitive. The items concerning affective reaction examine one emotional state before, when or after cheating in an examination. The behavioral components examine the tendency for an individual to engage in cheating. Lastly, the cognitive component examines the individual thoughts about the act of cheating and those who engage in cheating on examinations.

In the measuring instrument, each of the items can be answered in five possible ways (5 point rating scale of likert form), based on the respondents perception of cheating as follows with the points scored for each answer. A= strongly agree (5point), B= agree (4point), C= undecided (3point), D=disagree (2point) and E=strongly disagree (1 point). The total score is the sum of the point for the items in each of the three dimensions of the scale. The higher the score, the more likely the person is to engage in cheating. However, some items on the scale were reversed, the individuals are required to place mark on any response opinion that best described their opinions.

2.1. Respondents

All 150 undergraduate students who are currently students of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, were asked to take part in this study. The choice of University students is appropriate in view of the primacy and recency effect that tertiary institutions have on skilled labor productivity. Further, the students are generally knowledgeable also at the cause, form attitudes and other related information to cheating in examinations. We attempted to include all the students during the entire period of the study, however, 15 were unwilling to take part, and 35 did not return the questionnaire. Meanwhile, we were able to retrieve the total number of 100 questionnaires, which were properly filled and returned. Based on these, the total numbers of 100 questionnaires were subjected to statistical analysis. Among the 100 participants, 36% were females while 64% were males.

2.2. Design

150 respondents were selected using random sampling. The population was heterogeneous that have diverse views about cheating. These 150 participants were asked to indicate five(5) attitudes that they felt were associated to cheating examinations. These views yield 56 descriptions, which were clarified and elaborated through a thorough written interview with the participants. The statements collected were gathered together with supplementary information derived from literature review it was thus possible to construct items, each anchored by a 5 point like format. Three university lecturers with research knowledge, interest and expertise in examination conduct; from the department of educational management, counseling psychology and adult education respectively were asked to judge the items that constituted by the presented gathered statements. From the data gathered from this phase, individual items that needed to be modified were modified and those that were to be discarded were discarded. The rewriting of the items was done to reduce measurement error as well as to increase the precision of the final measuring scale.

Statistical procedures: Data were analyzed using covariance matrix, space saver (Guttman split-half), and cronbach alpha using the statistical packages for the social sciences (SPSS-Version 5.0)

3. Results

Feasibility: The 100 respondents completed the instrument on one occasion. The mean completion time was 3.1 and 1.9 min for respondents.

Reliability: The reliability of the scale items area assessed by subjecting the items of the scale to cronbach alpha and split-half. In these ways, the reliability of each of the scale items on cheating in an examination by asking the low respondents to complete the instruments.

The split_half reliability method, cronbach alpha reliability method, and spearman brown reliability method were used to assess the reliability of the scale. The instrument was

administered to the respondents at once, and separate scores assigned to every respondent on two selected halves of the scale. Each respondent was given one score on the odd-numbered items and a second score on the even-numbered items since there was no statistically significant difference between the means and variances of the means and variances of the two halves, the reliability of the whole scale was estimated by the cronbach alpha, which yielded the coefficient of 0.77, the split half coefficient value estimated of 0.77, the split half coefficient value estimated was -51 and spearman brown coefficient value of -51 were recorded respectively.

Validity: Ideally, validity would be established if the scale (predictor) were compared with a measure of actual perception on cheating in an examination (criterion), with the scale scores predicting the criterion scores. In the absence of such a criterion, however, face-validity method was adopted for evaluating validity. A high content validity was established for this instrument by the concurrence of three expertise who are lecturers from three departments namely departments of Counseling psychology, Educational Management, and Adult education respectively, all in the Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan.

4. Discussion

The aim of this study was to design and evaluate a scale for measuring the perception of students on cheating in an examination. The items selected for inclusion into the scale covered important aspects of the experience in cheating in an examination and consequences of the behavior. The study data were obtained from samples of University students in Nigeria, using an analytical technique that was appropriate and robust for this samples. Although it is difficult to generalize and to apply the findings to non-university educated Nigerians, there are nevertheless some implications both for the use of the scale cross-culturally and for its utilization in programs to prevent examination malpractice in Nigeria.

First, the assessment of the design of the measuring of the design of the measuring instrument was encouraging. Respondents found it to be quick and acceptable. Evidence from both expert judges and respondents suggested that the

scale covered the most important perception of examination malpractice. Reliability assessments for each item and the overall scales were acceptable. Secondly, there is strong support for the validity of the measurement scale. In the absence of an established method of assessment to serve as a criterion, indirect methods of validation were used. The face validity method was used also. This method of assessing the perception on cheating in an examination is considered to be adequate. Furthermore, the method this method will be used to assess factors that hinders or promotes examination malpractice. This scale has been judged to be useful in assessing the predisposition of individuals to flout/abide by examination rules and regulations.

In conclusion, these result shows that the scale is a reliable and valid index of the perception on cheating in examination by the target population. Individuals who respond to the questions on the scale were given points on the each of the scale item. In addition, the scale appears appropriate for general descriptive purposes and our findings shows that the quantitative measurement of some aspects of the perception on cheating in an examination is possible with relatively simple methods. It is desirable to expand the scope of the results of this study to cover a wider population. Further evaluation of this scale needs to be conducted on other population groups in the country with the aim of improving and refining the method. This should provide additional information, especially on the scales reliability and validity.

Appendix

This questionnaire is designed for research purpose. It contains thirty (30) statements. Read each statement carefully and tick the appropriate box that best represent your opinion. Fill in your response for each statement, your response will be highly appreciated and treated confidentially.

Section A

Age: 16-20 ☐ 21-25 ☐ 26-30 ☐ 31 and above ☐

Sex: Male ☐ Female ☐

Marital Status: Single ☐ Married ☐ Divorced ☐

Religion: Christianity ☐ Islam ☐ Traditional ☐ Others: ☐

Section B

Read carefully and tick appropriately in the box. Response key: SA=Strongly agree, A=Agree, U=Undecided, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly disagree.

NO	ITEMS	SA	A	U	D	SD
1	Cheating is unnecessary for moderately easy examination.					
2	Cheating pays in competitive examination to please parents and guardian.					
3	Cheating is encouraging since most of the people who cheat are not caught					
4	Cheating is bad because honesty is the best.					
5	Cheating is the only way out, since much work is done over a long period and is examined once.					
6	Cheating should be avoided; it is the devil's hand work.					
7	Cheating is helpful for those that feel nervous during examination					
8	Cheating is risky and should be avoided.					
9	One should boycott a friend that cheats in an examination.					
10	Cheating does not prick my conscience.					
11	Cheating in an examination is a good short cut to success.					

NO	ITEMS	SA	A	U	D	SD
12	Cheating makes me feel guilty, it is morally wrong.					
13	Cheating is good and helps in obtaining good grade.					
14	Cheating makes me think low of myself, it is degrading.					
15	Cheating is unnecessary if one prepares very well for an examination.					
16	Cheating is necessary if one wants to progress in academics.					
17	Cheating is the best option for difficult subjects/exams.					
18	Cheating is sinful and against my religion					
19	One should cheat in an important examination.					
20	Cheating should be avoided as the law imposes a severe penalty on it.					
21	Cheating in an examination is not a proper/ideal way to success.					
22	I always feel calm and confident when cheating in an examination.					
23	Cheating in an examination has a negative effect on my future.					
24	Cheating can be added to a little preparation for an exam.					
25	Cheating is not good even if the examination is hard.					
26	Cheating is not encouraging since it attracts punishment.					
27	Cheating is good because honesty is not always the best in an examination condition.					
28	Cheating is easy and profitable.					
29	Cheating disturbs my conscience.					
30	One should not cheat even if the examination condition is not strict.					

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