

Combating Threats to Examinations integrity in the South-South Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria: Implications for Educational Evaluation and Counselling

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Abstract The quantitative merit of examination or test taking for diagnostic, placement and quality controls is usually measured in terms of appropriateness and quality assurance of its outcome. It became inevitable that for examination to be credible, it must possess the key elements which are validity and reliability. It must also be free, fair, and devoid of cheating (Arijesujo and Adeyoju 2012). This study investigates ways of combating threats to the integrity of examinations in Nigeria. Using the south-south geo-political Zone as a case study, the study had all the academic (Lecturers); civil society groups and Journalists resident in the Zone as the population of the study. Purposive sampling method was used to obtain the actual working population of 600 (six Hundred) made up of 200 (Two Hundred) respondents each from the academics (Lecturers), civil society groups and Journalists. A self structured instrument titled “combating threats to examination Integrity scale (CTEIS) was used to collect data for the study. The instrument was validated by three psychometricians, face and content validities were the parameters, while its reliability was ascertained using the split half method. This resulted into an outcome of 0.86 which was deemed suitable for the study. Data was analyzed using frequency counts, percentages and mean for the research question, while the hypothesis was tested by using analysis of variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance. Decisions on the items were based on mean responses above 2.50 were interpreted as agreed while those below the criterion mean of 2.50, interpreted as disagreed. Results showed that all the issues raised were conceived as factors militating against combating threats to examination integrity, except (5) five the hypothesis showed no significance difference hence the null hypothesis were upheld. It was therefore recommended among others that financial grants in aid be extended to operators of our education system in order to cushion the need effect. Implications of the study were highlighted vis-vis the role of guidance counseling services with regard to advisory, prevention, remediation and appraisal or evaluation.

Keywords Combating, Threats, Examination, Integrity

1. Introduction

Maintaining examination integrity has become a ding-dong affair in this part of the continent. The Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) has refused to compromise with the antics of perpetrators of examination malpractice which makes public examination lose their credibility. The sectors that have been hard hit by this ugly trend are the public examination body's viz-West African Examination council (WAEC) National Business and Technical Examination Board (NABTEB) and the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB). (Umatu 2013)

There are other professional bodies that are responsible for the issuance of licenses to their members. These include the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN),

Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria (CIBN), Nigeria Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) and others too numerous to mention. All these bodies are mostly disadvantaged when it comes to threats to examination integrity. In View of this ugly trend, Arijesuwu and Adeyoju (2012), averred that despite the strategic importance of examination or test taking for diagnostic, placement, classification and quality control in Nigerian Institutions, the Integrity and credibility of public examinations have been greatly eroded and corrupted with increasing incident of examination malpractice.

The dynamic pattern, scope and sophistication that examination malpractice in the country seems to have eroded the sanity and sanctity of a formal examination taking thus rendering its products, victims of credential suspect. Arijesuyu (2010), noted that, examination malpractice has become a well organized business in which supervisors, invigilators, subject teachers schoolauthorities and their host communities have started to enjoy. It is common to hear that supervisors are often beaten up by desperate students who accuse such supervisors of standing in their way to cheat.

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This paper is of the view that examination integrity can be attained if there is a change of mindset of examination officials. A situation where the head of institutions in the State has sympathy for the choice of supervisors, such as in the case of WAEC is very worrisome. Allegiance of the supervisors in maintaining integrity now shifts to the custodians who will determine where a particular supervisor will function (Rosy centres) as one who holds the ace to examination integrity.

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that was employed in this study is the theory of human motivation in psychology and the needs theory by Abraham Maslow. In his paper, "A theory of human motivation in psychological Review" he was of the view that human beings have an innate curiosity which is the id. In every endeavour, it is essential to first and foremost meet the basic and physiological needs in the first instance before others. The inability to meet these needs can create internal pressure that can influence a person's behaviour (positively or Negatively). This is the bane of examination integrity in this part of the globe. The level of poverty is so severe that an average civil servant can hardly meet up with his or her basic needs, hence one can notice very high level of corruption as the only way out. It is based on this premise that the average public officer sees examination as a windfall, an avenue to make up for the lost grounds, the quest to meet up with needs challenging him.

Purpose(s)/Objectives

It is the purpose or objective of this study to investigate the possibility of combating threats to examination integrity in this part of Nigeria. The study also intends to:

- (i) Find out, the immediate causes of lack of integrity in public examinations;
- (ii) Find out, if poor examination centres are major contributors to the lack of integrity in public examinations;
- (iii) Find out, if inadequate preparation on the part of the students are outstanding causes of lack of integrity in public examinations;
- (iv) Find out, why examination officials are posing threats to public examination integrity.

Research question:

Research question: What are the opinions of Academics (Lecturers), civil society groups, Journalists in the South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria towards combating threats to examination integrity?

Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of academic (lecturers), Civil society groups and Journalists in the south-south geo-political zone of Nigeria towards combating threats to examination integrity.

3. Methods

This study applied the survey research design, the choice of this design was informed by the fact that, a survey research design involves a large number of persons and describes population characteristics by the selection of an unbiased sample. Here, only the sample is studied and findings are generalized to the entire population (Ukwuije & Obowu-Adutchay 2012). The population of the study was made up of all academics (Lecturers), Civil society groups and Journalists in the south-south geo-political zone of Nigeria. Purposive sampling method was adopted to get six hundred (600) who participated in the actual study with each of the occupational areas contributing two hundred (200). The instrument used for the study was titled "Combating threats to Examination Integrity scale (CTEIS). The instrument had two sections A & B. Section 'A' focused mainly on the bio-data of the respondents while Section 'B' was a modified likert four-point scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly disagree weighted 4,3,2 and 1 points respectively. Furthermore, the section 'B' contained fifteen (15) self-structured questions on combating threats to examination integrity. The instrument for the study was developed by the researchers and validated by two experts in measurement and evaluation, face and content validities were the parameters. A pilot test was carried out using sixty (60) respondents, twenty (20) each from the three categories of workforce in one State. An internal consistency co-efficient of 0.85 was obtained after a test-retest method was used to ascertain the fitness of the instrument for the study. The researchers administered the instrument personally and retrieved all, and it was devoid of any mortality. The research question was answered descriptively using frequency counts, percentages and mean, while the hypothesis was tested using analysis of variance (Anova).

Research question 1. What are the opinions of Academics (Lecturers); Civil society groups and Journalists in south-south geo-political zone of Nigeria towards combating threats to examination integrity?

Table 1. Shows that, the decision taken on each item, was a typical representation of the views or opinions of the respondents towards combating threats to examination integrity. Using the criterion mean of 2.5 and sticking to the rule that any item whose means is below 2.5 remains rejected while those with the means above 2.5 is considered accepted. In this case items 1,2,3,5,6,9,11,12,13,15 were all above 2.5 hence were accepted as factors that would be given proper attention if combating threats to examination integrity would be achieved. Meanwhile items 4,7,8,10 and 14 were rejected because they did not meet the standard of above 2.5, besides the respondents strongly disagreed that the items could not make any difference in changing the scenario.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of Academics (Lecturers), civil society groups and Journalists in the south-south geo-political zone of Nigeria towards combating threats to examination integrity.

Table 1. Descriptive analysis of respondents' opinion towards combating threats to examination integrity

| S/No | Description | SA (4) | AG (3) | DA (2) | SD (1) | \bar{X} | Decision |
|------|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|-----------|----------|
| 1 | To combat threats to examination integrity implies changing mindsets of operators | 54 | 29.6 | 11.8 | 3.7 | 3.01 | Accepted |
| 2 | The role of examination supervisors are major threats to examination integrity | 55.2 | 30.6 | 10.7 | 3.5 | 3.0 | Accepted |
| 3 | Pass your examination by all means syndrome by the candidates. | 59.1 | 39.8 | 1.9 | - | 2.91 | Accepted |
| 4 | Candidates readiness calls for suspicion towards examination integrity | 23.3 | 36.6 | 46.5 | 16.7 | 1.7 | Rejected |
| 5 | Inadequate preparation for examination is another cause of threat to examination integrity | 50.2 | 44.0 | 4.9 | 0.9 | 3.3 | Accept |
| 6 | Government's inability to implement the various decrees on examination malpractice is lending weight to continuity | 57.1 | 36.6 | 5.0 | 1.3 | 3.3 | Accept |
| 7 | Leakage of question papers does not thrive anymore since it is no longer lucrative | 19.2 | 28.4 | 40.1 | 12.3 | 2.43 | Rejected |
| 8 | Eradication of examination malpractice is achievable in Nigeria | 23.6 | 24.2 | 40.0 | 6.2 | 2.31 | Reject |
| 9 | Inadequate manpower to handle the various subjects effectively is a major set back | 55.2 | 39.9 | 4.9 | - | 3.4 | Accept |
| 10 | Federal Government promulgation of decrees 20 in 1984 and decree 33 of 1999 to palliate threat to examination integrity | 21.5 | 26.3 | 49.7 | 2.4 | 2.41 | Reject |
| 11 | Lack of integrity on the part of schools principals and education supervisors in the various schools boards across the Nation is a major handicap. | 45.7 | 43.5 | 9.8 | 1.1 | 3.1 | Accept |
| 12 | Cost of registering for the various examinations and fear of failure are big threats | 49.3 | 42.5 | 6.3 | 1.8 | 3.2 | Accept |
| 13 | Poor distribution system of live question papers heightens tension which contributes to threat to examination integrity | 58.5 | 36.6 | 4.9 | - | 3.4 | Accept |
| 14 | Only the examining bodies can stop examination malpractice | 16.8 | 25.6 | 52.1 | 5.4 | 2.26 | Reject |
| 15 | Under funding of the various secondary schools are major threats to examination integrity | 52.5 | 43.1 | 4.0 | 0.4 | 3.4 | accept |

Table 2. One way analysis of variance (Anova) summary table of the respondents to combating threats towards examination integrity

| Sources | sum of squares | DF | Means squares | F-value | Significant |
|----------------|----------------|-----|---------------|---------|-------------|
| Between groups | 1238.62 | 2 | 84.17 | | |
| Within groups | 7654.38 | 199 | 62.53 | 1.786 | 659 |
| Total | 8893.00 | | | | |

$P = > 0.05$

Table 2: shows that the calculated F-value (1.786) is not significant, implying that the responses of academics (Lecturers), civil society groups and Journalists in the south-south geo-political zone of Nigeria towards combating threats to examination integrity is not significant. On this note, the null hypothesis stands accepted. However, when the various groups were subjected to scheffe's test the outcomes were as tabulated in the table below.

Table 3. Scheffe's multiple comparisons of group means

| Groups compared | F |
|---|------|
| Academic (Lecturers) and civil society groups | 0.85 |
| Civil society groups and Journalists | 1.14 |
| Academic (Lecturers) and Journalists | 1.26 |

Table 3: shows that the difference in the mean responses of academics (lecturers) and Civil society groups; Civil society groups and Journalists, academics (lecturers) and Journalists were all not statistically significant. In the same vein the null hypothesis stands accepted.

4. Discussion

Table 1: Indicates that the various responses of the three occupational groups towards combating threats to integrity of examination was commendable, as a look at 15 (fifteen)

items showed that 10 (ten) items had their means above 2.5 meaning that they were accepted as established challenges towards continuous examination integrity. 5 (five) items whose means fell below 2.5 were rejected. The respondents rejected them on the premise that, those reasons do not constitute hitches no challenges towards examination integrity. This finding is in line with Okoha (2007) who reported that some host communities in Nigeria have chased away invigilators considered to be uncooperative during examinations, all in the name of securing key to success for their wards. The study in table 2, is the analysis of variance summary, revealed that, there was no significant difference in the opinions of the means of Academics (Lecturers), civil society groups and Journalists. This finding shows that the three occupational groups were convinced in their opinions that 10 out of 15 items were competent to sustain threats to examination integrity. While five (5) items did not measure up to the required criterion of 2.5 and above required level.

However, threats to examination integrity can be checked if serious attention is given to these factors and they are ameliorated for the purpose of ending threats to examination integrity. This finding is in line with that of Abrosini (2012), who found that, sorting is a threat to examination integrity. Sorting according to him is a nickname for academic corruption that has lately become endemic in tertiary institutions for which the National University Commission (NUC) recently launched a war against the ugly development. This result was also confirmed by the application of scheffe's multiple compares. The three groups still showed no significant difference. This attests to the genuineness of the result. That the three occupational groups showed no significant differences in their means. Where any were observed, such differences were not statistical significant.

5. Conclusions / Recommendation / Implications for Educational Evaluation and Counseling

This study succinctly explored the ways to combat threats to Integrity of examination with emphasis on the south-south geo-political zone of Nigeria. Never-the-less, combating threats to integrity of examination is achievable using the south-south geo-political zone as a case study. This contention was arrived at, after introducing one research question and one hypothesis. Fifteen (15) items made up the instrument which was used to generate data that were used to answer the research question and also test the hypothesis. Ten (10) items whose means were above 2.50 passed the test of fitness meaning that if those challenges were tackled headlong, the issue of combating threats to examination integrity would be a thing of the past. In a similar manner five (5) items did not make the mandatory 2.5 hence were dropped as not strong enough to eradicate threats to examination integrity.

The only hypothesis in the study, had three occupational groups viz Academics (lecturers); Civil society groups and

Journalists as its variable, when subjected to one way analysis of variance, (Anova) it's outcome was that there were no significant differences among their means. Even when further subjected to the scheffe test the outcome did not signify any remarkable difference in their means also. Based on the results and findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. That financial grants and aids (Non repayable) and repayable loans be given to teachers and officials in the education sector to obviate the incessant occurrence of threats to integrity of examination;
2. That a project targeted at changing the mindsets of parents/guardians and students towards examinations integrity be put in place;
3. That all examinations be computer based;
4. That more attention should be given to students in terms of preparation so as to enable them match words with action;
5. Finally special science centres be created in say, three (3) per Local Government Area to get science students properly equipped and prepared for examinations.

6. The Implications for Counseling and Evaluation

The implications for evaluation and counseling is very obvious, for a case like combating threats to examination Integrity, since evaluation is all about taking decision of good or bad; pass or fail, and making valid judgment. It is thus an educational evaluation vested responsibility, based on its empirical findings that, combating threats to examination integrity is achievable. The various decrees against examination malpractice should be strengthened. Culpable teachers and officers detailed to manage the examinations should be punished to serve as a deterrent to others. On the side of counseling, parents/guardians should be subjected to periodical counseling and remediation. There should also be room for advisory prevention and appraisal.

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