

A Perception of Examination Malpractice and Pupil's Academic Performance in Primary Science in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The focus of this study was to determine perception of examination malpractice and academic performance in Primary Science among sixth grade in Cross River State, Nigeria. In order to achieve the set objectives of this study, three hypotheses were formulated and tested. Two instruments were used for data collection. They were perception of examination malpractice questionnaire (PEMQ) and a 50-item primary science achievement test. These instruments were validated and administered to one thousand eight hundred and eighteen (1818) pupils out of sixty-eight thousand, two hundred and one (68,201) pupils in seventy (70) schools in the study population. A proportionate stratified random sampling technique was adopted hence; the study area was stratified into three educational zones with different populations. The data obtained were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r), One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Independent t-test statistical tests at 0.05 level of significance. The major finding of this study was that there was a significant relationship between pupil's perception of examination malpractice and academic performance in primary science. Based on the findings, it was concluded that if pupils understand the damage examination malpractice does to the educational system and study adequately; it will help them to perform well in science and minimize examination malpractice. It was recommended that pupils should be made to understand the dangers of examination malpractice and culprits caught in examination should be used to set good examples for others to enable them model adequate behaviours and study hard for their examination.

Keywords: perception, examination, malpractice, academic performance, primary science, cheating, educational zone, gender

1. Introduction

The issue of examination malpractice in the nation's educational system is not new to many Nigerians, for it has been occupying the centre pages of public discourses in recent years (Olubusuyi, 2004^a; Olubusuyi, 2004^b ;). According to Igwe (1990: 355) examination malpractice is "cheating at examinations or any act intended to benefit or give undue advantage to oneself or another by deceit or fraud, before, during and after examinations". It has also been defined by Badmus and Odor (1996) as wrong doing in terms of construction, custodianship, administration, marking and release of results, with the intention of conferring undue advantage on some candidates over others. In the same vein, World Bank Group (2001) sees examination malpractice as a practice which involves deliberate act of wrong doing, contrary to official examination rules, designed to place a candidate at an unfair advantage. Be that as it may, examination malpractice is any wrong doing, during and after examination that offers undue advantage to a candidate to the detriment or disadvantage of others.

The perception someone holds about examination malpractice depends on the person involved. Pupils or students perceive examination malpractice differently compared to their teachers. Some perceive it as a serious problem in school and in the society which needs to be addressed while some perceive it as a normal process of writing examination without which they will not pass; still others are indifferent about examination malpractice. For their teachers examination malpractice is an academic crime. Kleiner (1999) for instance, affirmed that the majority of the students did not believe cheating was always wrong. Before now, to be caught cheating was a thing of shame, but students now glorify examination malpractice (Cornelius-Ukpepi, 2010). Reports show that students are ready to pay any prize, cash or kind to pass examination they did not prepare for (Olukotun, 1998).

1.1 Literature Review

Examination malpractice is a wide spread issue and the general attitude of the public towards the phenomenon seem to contribute to its acceptance among school children. However, researchers have recently attempted to study the potential reasons or circumstances that lead to cheating. Anderman, Griesinger and Westerfield (1998) carried out a study on student-described motivations and their tendency to cheat. The researchers noted that previous research found the middle school experience to be more grade and performance oriented than the coddled learning environment in the elementary grade. Also, trivial dishonesty present in childhood such as mindless glances at a neighbour's test or playing a game unfairly suddenly becomes serious cheating in both the middle and high school as student grapple with constant changes in classes and teachers as well as increased pressure to perform. Since middle school is the first stage in education where widespread cheating becomes an issue, Anderman and associates decided to question what type of student would resort to cheating in a high stress environment. Based on the result of the study of 285 urban middle school students, Anderman and associates concluded that, as a whole, students who admit to cheat worry frequently about school, perceive their school as being focused on performance and feel that their classrooms are centred on extrinsic rewards. Cheating students also tend to engage in self-handicapping behaviours such as making excuses or attributing failure to circumstances as opposed to ability. The research result implies that students who do not try to use deliberate problem solving skills and who perceive extrinsic reward as the focus of their school and pressure to perform as well as attributing failure to other factors other than ability to perform are more likely to engage in cheating.

Corroborating the above view, Nenty (1985) observed that students who attributed their performance to luck other than ability or intelligence tend to cheat more in examination than those who attribute performance to ability. In the same vein Stipek and Hoffman (1980) found that students with a history of lower expectancy for success on a task tend to attribute failure to lack of ability than students with a history of average and high academic success. This invariably implies that such students parallel themselves with the task and the past failure record and conclude that success is far-fetched thereby devising other means of succeeding which culminates in examination malpractice.

From primary through secondary to tertiary institutions, some students are consistently involved in some form of cheating. Evans & Craig (1990^a) found in a study that 61% of middle school students and 71% of high school students perceived cheating to be serious problem in their schools. In a recent research conducted by Murdock, Hale, and Webber (2001) on a survey by who is who among American High School students, 80% of high achieving high school students admitted to have cheated at least once.

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 behaviours involving exam 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 behaviour. 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 behaviour 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.

The Centre for Academic Integrity (2005) found that on most campuses, over 75% of students admit to some form of cheating. McCabe (1999) performed a survey of 2,100 students, about one third of the participating students admitted to serious test cheating and half admitted to one or more instances of serious cheating on the written assignments. Kleiner (1999) asserted that students' definitions of what constitute cheating are varied and often lax. In a new study of 500 middle and high school students, the CAI (2005) discovered that only one-third of the students said that working with other students on assignments was cheating and just half thought it is wrong for parents to do their homework. Murdock et al (2001) carried out a study on who's who among the American high school student, and found that half of them said they did not believe cheating was always wrong and nearly all cheaters said that they have never been caught.

In reference to the above assertions, it can be deduced that students have noted that working together in assignments is cheating. Also, primary school pupils (middle school) do not even know what constitutes cheating. Even in the Nigerian primary schools some pupils cheat without knowing what it really means or may be

because others are doing it.

Stern and Havlicek (1986) surveyed 314 undergraduates in a study with 194 faculties regarding their experiences with academic dishonesty. Eighty percent of the students admitted engaging in some form of academic dishonesty during their academic careers. However, Davis, Grover, Becker and McGregor (1992) later carried out a study in which a 21 item questionnaire was administered to more than 6000 students in 16 states and 13 private higher education institutions and found that while most students claimed it was wrong to cheat 76% reported having cheated in high school or college. It was further reported that gender and institutional affiliation influenced their cheating behaviour. One of the determinants of cheating was a diminishing sense of academic integrity.

Guttman (1984) examined pupils in both religious and public schools in regard to cognitive morality and actual moral behaviour. The result showed low correlation among various measures of moral cognition and moral behaviour. The religious subjects exhibited higher levels of moral reasoning, but resisted temptation less on a test of actual cheating behaviour. Later Calabrese and Cochran (1990) examined the relationship of alienation to cheating among 1534 students in public and private schools. The sample consisted of grade 9-12 students of various racial backgrounds. The sample also consisted of 64% from public schools and the remainder from private schools. The authors reported that cheating was more prevalent among white males who attended private schools who were more likely to cheat to assist others.

Godfrey and Waugh (2001) investigated the perceptions of academic dishonesty by students who attend institutions which form a religious school system. The sample consisted of 694 secondary school students. The two aims of the study were first, to establish the extent to which a sample of students from a religious school system engage in academic cheating and perceive cheating to be of concern in their schools. The second aim was to examine the perceptions of religious students to four aspects of cheating – perceptions of what constitutes cheating, perceptions of why cheating occurs, perceptions of how cheating can be prevented and the attitude of students to cheating. The instrument of data collection was the questionnaire. The data was first analysed using frequency counts and later converted to percentage. The study revealed the following results.

- 1) Students in this sample perceived cheating to be a problem in schools and society;
- 2) Most pupils surveyed have engaged in most of the types of cheating behaviour at least once in their schooling;
- 3) It is evident that pupils from religious schools are concerned at the level of cheating in their schools and have clear understanding of cheating practices;
- 4) Students of religious schools have clear perceptions of what constitutes cheating;
- 5) Students believe that teachers can assist with the prevention of cheating by informing students well in advance of assessments, ensuring tighter control of every assessment materials and seating arrangements and by in forcing penalties rather than increasing penalties.

The findings implied that students of religious schools are well aware of what makes up cheating and perceived cheating as a serious problem in school and the society at large. They also have a belief that teachers can curb examination malpractice if they enforce penalties.

Olawuyi (2005) carried out a comparative study on perception of religious and secular secondary school students about examination malpractice. 630 students from both institutions participated in the study. The survey research designed was adopted for the study. The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire. T-test statistical tool was used to analyse the data. The result revealed a no significant difference in the perceptions of students from both religious and secular schools about examination malpractice. The researcher concluded that students in whatever situation they find themselves are not shielded from the menace. Also, Onakoya (2005) conducted a study on the influence of students' perception and attitude on cheating behaviour in examination at a Christian based University. A questionnaire was used to collect data from 250 students from a private University. Ex-post Facto research designed was adopted for the study. Pearson Product Moment Correlation and independent t-test statistical tools were used to analyse the data. Findings from the study indicated that a relationship existed between students' perception and their attitude towards examination cheating behaviour which revealed that students who are immoral have more negative attitude toward cheating, students who perceive themselves as being incapable of adequately meeting the challenges facing them and solving problems on their own, most times resort to cheating and there was a significant negative relationship between students' perception and actual cheating behaviour.

In a cross cultural study of cheating, Evans, Craig and Mietzel (1993) reported that as many as 80% of students believed cheating to be a problem. Also, Godfrey and Waugh (1993) using the same questions with a sample of

223 students reported the same percentage. Ferrari (2005) carried out a study in which dishonest academic behaviours of plagiarism and cheating were used as the target because prevalence of up to 70% among students has been reported by (Storch, Storch, and Clark, 2002; Whitley and Keith Spiegel, 2002). A total of 124 college students (92 women and 32 men) participated in the study. The survey designed was adopted for the study. A twenty item self-reported uni-dimensional impostor phenomenon scale and a twenty-four items scale questionnaire was used to gather data. The chi-square statistical tool was used to analyse the data. It was revealed that both subscale scores were significantly related in the present study by Ferrari.

Furthermore, Whitley and Keith-Spiegel (2002) in the review of literature on college students reported that academic dishonesty such as cheating and plagiarism was higher among students who feel pressured to succeed and who claim a history of such dishonesty in the past. Moreover, persons who engage in academic dishonesty have moderate expectations for success, anticipate high rewards for their success, and are competitive about obtaining grades.

In reference to the above view point, persons with such characteristics are supposed to work hard for success rather than engaging in academic dishonesty to succeed, but the reverse is the case because such students don't believe in hard work. For instance, Newberger (2003) quoting a college students' newspaper essay in the education testing service proposal thus: For some students, the essay says,

The desire to secure the best grades has become a paramount force that drives their education with so much emphasis placed on outcomes... Grades, rather than education, have become the major focus of many students entering Universities today. Their goals become simple: get in, survive, get the grade, and get out (p. 6).

The quotation above applies directly in the Nigerian educational system right from the primary through secondary to tertiary institutions where students believe in struggling to get in by all means, survived by all means; get the grade and get out.

Onifade, Allen, Nabangi and Reynold (2002) assessed the distribution of free-riding (cheating) behaviour among different qualities of business students, investigated their perception of the ethics of such behaviour, and examined the extent of the usefulness of take home tests in view of the inherent opportunity they provide for students to free-ride. Data was collected using tests and a post examination questionnaire. Thereafter, analysis of variance and chi-square statistical tools were used to analyse the data. The results showed that:

- 1) Students recognize free-riding for what it is and view it as unethical;
- 2) Low-performing students are more likely than high-performing students to free-ride;
- 3) Take home tests provide pedagogical benefit to all students but they are more helpful to high-performing students than to low-performing students.

The implication of the above result is that although take home test are useful, students take opportunity to cheat most especially low performing students who are fond of copying assignments from others.

Bowers (1994) reported that the greatest amount of dishonesty takes place in home work and laboratory assignments (unsupervised assignments). These unsupervised assignments may be given to students to be completed by group efforts. Ravenscroft and Buckless (1992) maintained that take home tests which are unsupervised provide opportunity for low performing students to cheat on high- performing students,

Also, Bowers (1963) in Newberger (2003) surveyed 5,000 college students, 11% of whom admitted to collaborating with other students on work that was assigned to be done individually. McCabe and Trevino (1993) replicated Bower's study in some of the same colleges and found 49% admitting to the same kind of forbidden collaboration. This implies that collaboration in assignments which is supposed to be done individually is cheating and this has also been a case among Nigerian students.

Literature on perception of examination malpractice by gender is scarce. A few related issues were examined by some researchers. For instance Davis, Grover, Becker and McGregor (1992) in a study where they administered a 21 item questionnaire to more than 6000 students reported among other things that gender and institutional affiliation influence their cheating behaviour. In the same vein Calabrese and Cochran (1990) examined the relationship of alienation to cheating among 1534 students in public and private schools. The sample consisted of grade 9-12 students of various racial backgrounds. It was reported that cheating was prevalent among white males who were more likely to cheat to assist others. Several other researches on the perception of cheating have indicated that males appear to engage in cheating more than females (Evans and Craig, 1990b, Evans, Craig, Mietzel, 1993). Considering the age at which children start cheating, Schab (1969) as reported by Smith (2005) found that approximately 24% of the girls and 20% of the boys admitted that they first began cheating in the first

grade, 17% of the girls and 15% of the boys began cheating in eight grade and 13% of the girls and 9% of the boys began in the seventh grade. From the above assertions it has indicated that the number of girls involved in cheating is more than boys based on the percentages.

There has been no consensus on the findings regarding gender influence on examination malpractice. Black (1962) as cited by Nsekpong (1986) asserted that there is no significant difference between male and female with respect to their level of cheating. On the contrary, Hill (1972) asserted that there is a significant difference between men and women attitude to cheating.

Also, Denga (1983) found that more males engaged in cheating behaviour at any given point in time than females. In contrast to the above view, Anderson (1968) as cited by Hill (1972) reported that females cheat more than males. The author reiterated that girls tended to cheat more frequently in some subjects like mathematics while boys cheat more frequently in vocabulary test.

Athanason and Olasehinde (2002) reviewed several literatures relating to influence of gender on academic cheating or dishonesty and found that there is gender difference and that women are less likely to cheat than their male counterpart.

Good, Nichols and Sabers (1999) noted in their study that there may be differences in perception of cheating between males and females, yet a meta-analytic study of gender and sex roles in relation to cheating produced a low mean effect size of 0.19 for self-reporting of cheating (Whitley, Nelson and Jones, 1999). Furthermore, Athanason and Olasehinde (2002) went ahead to analyze the results of reviewed literatures and found that the overall proportions of female students cheating varied from a low of 0.05 to a high of 0.99 (median = 0.56) and for men, the proportion varied from 0.16 to 0.91 (median = 0.61). There was no significant difference in the average proportions reported for males and females. On the whole, accumulating the findings, a number of studies that reported both proportions and the actual number of males and females involved showed that 21% of females and 26% of males had cheated. This therefore had shown that males are more likely to cheat in examination than females.

Minesota State University (2006) reported that of the four recent studies that included gender as a possible explanatory variable for cheating, three studies found that males were more likely to cheat while one study found no significant correlation of gender and academic dishonesty.

From the contradictory findings of various researchers, it implies that gender may have influence on students' cheating behaviour or may not depending on the situation the students find themselves.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which pupils' perception of examination malpractice relate to their academic performance in primary science. Specifically the study seeks to examine the extent to which:

- 1) Pupils' perception of examination malpractice relates to their performance in primary science;
- 2) Pupils' perception of examination malpractice differs according to Educational zones;
- 3) Pupils perception of examination malpractice differs by gender.

1.3 Research Questions

In order to carry out the investigation on this issue, the following research questions are formulated to guide the direction of the study:

- 1) How does pupils' perception of examination malpractice relate to their academic performance in primary science?
- 2) How does pupils' perception of examination malpractice differ according to educational zones?
- 3) To what extent does pupils' perception of examination malpractice differ by gender?

1.4 Hypotheses

In an attempt to answer the above questions, the following hypotheses are formulated to guide the study.

- 1) There is no significant relationship between pupils' perception of examination malpractice and performance in primary science;
- 2) Pupils' perceptions of examination malpractice do not significantly differ according to educational zones;
- 3) Pupils' perception of examination malpractice does not significantly differ by gender.

2. Research Method

The study adopted the Expost-facto research design. The population of the study consisted of all the 2005/2006 academic session of primary six pupils in the three Educational zones of Cross River State. The total was 68,201 pupils with 34396 males and 33805 females. A proportionate stratified sampling technique was used to select 70 schools out of 994 to participate in the study. A simple random sampling technique of hat and draw method was further used to select 1,818 pupils who participated in the study. Two instruments were used for data collection. The perception of examination malpractice questionnaire (PEMQ) and a 50 item primary science achievement test were administered after which data collected was coded for analysis. These instruments were face and content validated. The reliability was carried out using Cronbach Coefficient alpha method. The estimates ranged from 0.50-0.90 which was considered appropriate.

3. Data Analysis

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between pupils' perception of examination malpractice and academic performance in primary science. Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient (r) was used to test the hypothesis. The result is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (r) analysis of the relationship between pupils' perception of examination malpractice and academic performance in primary science

Variable	N	Σx	Σx^2	Σy	Σy^2	Σxy	r-value
Perception (X)	1818	28050	518124			1214924	0.2263*
Academic performance (y)		77011	3425696				

$P < .05$; $df = 1816$; critical r -value=0.194

From Table 1, the Pearson Correlation analysis gave an r -value of 0.2263. This was observed to be greater than the critical r -value of 0.194 with 1816 degrees of freedom at 0.05 levels of significance. Based on the result the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between pupils' perception of examination malpractice and academic performance in primary science was rejected while the alternate hypothesis was upheld.

Ho2: Pupils' perception of examination malpractice does not significantly differ according to educational zones. One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the hypothesis. The result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the difference in pupils' perception of examination malpractice by educational zones

Perception by Educational zones S/n	Group	N	Mean Score	SD
1	Calabar Zone	493	15.70	2.09
2	Ikom Zone	1011	20.90	13.92
3	Ogoja Zone	314	17.03	5.47
	Total	1818	53.63	21.48
Source of variance	Sum of square	df	Mean square	F
Between groups	1103797.9	2	551898.95	1100.49*
Within groups	910253.1	1815	501.5	
Total	2014051	1817		

$P < .05$, $df = 2, 1815$, critical $F = 3.00$

The result in Table2 showed an F -value of 1100.49, which is greater than the critical F -value of 3.00 at 0.05 level

of significant with 2, and 1815 degrees of freedom. The mean measures the total average of pupils perception on examination malpractice. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that pupils differ in their perception of examination malpractice according to educational zones.

In order to determine the mean that contributed to the significant difference in pupils' perception of examination malpractice in the three educational zones, a pair-wise comparison analysis using Tukey a posteriori test called Honestly significant difference (HSD) test was done. The result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Tukey's HSD multiple comparison analysis of the difference in pupils' perception of examination malpractice in the three educational zones

	$\bar{X}_1$	$\bar{X}_2$	$\bar{X}_3$
$\bar{X}_1$ 15.70	-	-5.2	-1.33
$\bar{X}_2$ 20.90	-	-	3.87
$\bar{X}_3$ 17.03	-	-	-

df = 1815; K = 3; at .05; HSD 4.98

Going by the difference in the means between group 1 mean X_1 , versus group 2 mean, X_2 (-5.2); and group 1 mean X_1 , versus group 3 mean X_3 , (-1.33); only the later exceeded the HSD of 4.98 negatively. Also the difference in the means between group 2 mean X_2 versus group 3 mean X_3 (3.87) is less than the HSD of 4.98. It was concluded that pupils in the three educational zones perceive examination malpractice differently.

By implication, this means that pupils in Calabar educational zone with average score of (15.70) have different perception of examination malpractice from pupils in Ikom zone with mean (20.90) and Ogoja zone with mean (17.03). The plausible reason for the difference may be due to location, exposure or psychological state of the respondents.

HO3: Pupils' perception of examination malpractice does not differ by gender. The result is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Independent t-test analysis of the difference in perception of examination malpractice by gender

Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	t-value
Male	822	16.01	5.48	
Female	996	15.68	0.6	1.23

$P > .05$; df = 1816; critical t-value = 1.960

From Table 4, the independent t-value of 1.23 was obtained. This was observed to be lower than the critical t-value of 1.960 at .05 level of significance with 1816 degrees of freedom. Calculated t-value of 1.23 indicated that perception of examination malpractice does not differ by gender. Hence, the null hypothesis was retained. The plausible reason for the insignificant difference between male and female may be due to the psychological and moral state of the individual.

4. Discussion

The result from the analysis of hypothesis one showed that there is a significant relationship between pupils' perception of examination malpractice and academic performance in primary science. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. This finding implies that lack of understanding of what examination malpractice means by pupils at the primary school level can lead to their indulgence in examination malpractice, which may affect their academic performance most especially science, which require the study and understanding of concepts for sustainable academic performance in the subject.

This finding is in consonance with Kleiner (1999) who asserted that students' definitions of what constitute

cheating are varied and lax. Also that parents and the public contribute to the vague definitions of cheating. That is, most behaviour portrayed by adults in the society do not clearly show what to be considered as cheating and as such pupils get confused of what cheating is. The plausible reason for this agreement is that pupils in all cultures learn by imitation and when adults do not show clearly the meaning of cheating, children will follow suit without understanding what cheating means and can do the system.

The finding of this study supports the finding of the Centre for Academic Integrity (2005). In a study, the centre found that out of 500 middle and high school students, only one-third of the students said that working with other students on assignment was cheating and just half thought it was wrong for parents to do their homework.

Furthermore, the finding of this study confirms the finding of Murdock et al (2001) in a study on Who's who among American high school students which revealed that half of the subjects said that they did not believe cheating was always wrong. The reason for this may be due to pupils' unawareness of the dangers of examination malpractice and their moral state. This implies that if pupils have a positive perception of examination malpractice, they will refrain from cheating and depend on their individual effort to solve school problems. But if they have a negative perception of examination malpractice, they will always see nothing wrong with cheating.

The finding from the analysis of hypothesis 2 indicated that there is a significant difference in pupils' perception of examination malpractice according to educational zones. The pupils' perception of examination malpractice in Calabar zone was different from pupils' perception of examination malpractice in Ikom and Ogoja Educational Zones respectively. The probable reason may be due to the location, exposure or moral state of the subjects. This may explain the high level of cheating in the rural areas where people prefer to sit for examination.

This finding is relatively in line with the finding of Godfrey and Waugh (2001) who found from a study on perception of academic dishonesty by students who attended religious institutions that the students have clear perceptions of what constitute cheating. Also Onifade et al (2002) in a study on the distribution of free-riding behaviour among different qualities of Business Students as well as investigated their perception of the ethics of such behaviour, discovered among other things that students recognize free-riding for what it is and view it as unethical. The reason for these consistencies may be that pupils in all cultures and institutions are quite aware of the unethical behaviour.

In contrast to the finding of this study, is the finding of Olawuyi (2005), who revealed in a comparative study on perceptions of religious and secular secondary school students about examination malpractice that there is no significant difference in the perceptions of students from both religious and secular schools about examination malpractice.

Furthermore, Onakoya (2005), in a study on the influence of students' perception and attitude on cheating behaviour in examination at a Christian based university discovered that a significant relationship existed between students' perception and their attitude towards examination cheating behaviour. The reason for these contradictory findings may be due to socio-cultural background or the class of students used hence, this present study utilized primary school pupils. It could also be due to the research design and method employed.

The result from the analysis of hypothesis 3 showed that perception of examination malpractice does not differ by gender. This implies that the perception of what examination malpractice means does not depend on whether the individual is a male or female. In other words, gender does not determine perception of examination malpractice in this study.

This finding lend credence to the view of Black (1962) as cited by Nsekpong (1986) who affirmed that there is no significant difference between male and female with respect to their level of cheating. The finding also is in agreement with the finding of Vitro (1992) who asserted that there is no significant difference in the cheating behaviour of boys and girls. This means that gender does not influence pupils' perception of examination malpractice. Hence anybody can decide to cheat depending on his or her awareness of the ills of examination malpractice. The reason may be due to the psychological and moral state of the individual.

On the contrary, Good et al (1999) noted that there may be difference in perception of cheating between male and female. Accordingly, the Minesota State University (2006), reported that out of the four recent studies that included gender as a possible explanatory variable for cheating, three studies found that males were more likely to cheat while one study found no significant correlation of gender and academic dishonesty, which is in agreement with the finding of this study.

Again, this finding is in consonance with the finding of Whitley et al (1999), reporting on the meta-analytic study of gender and sex roles in relation to cheating found a low mean effect size of 0.19 for self-reporting of

cheating. The plausible reason for these contradictory findings may be due to socio-environmental and differential educational factors.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that pupils' perception of examination malpractice has a significant relationship with their academic performance in primary science, does not differ by gender but differ according to zones. This implies that if pupils have positive perception of examination malpractice, they will refrain from examination malpractice and their academic performance will be enhanced. On the other hand, if they have negative perception based on examples showed to them by teachers and parents they will always indulge in examination malpractice.

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