

Self-Regulatory Training: A Tool for Curbing Students Attitude towards Participation in Examination Malpractice in South West, Nigeria

¹MAKINDE, Veronica Ibitola *PhD.*, ²OGUNLADE, Joseph Olurotimi *PhD.* & ³AKEREDOLU, Samuel Ayodele

¹²³Department of Counselling Psychology, Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology Ikere – Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria

Email: ¹ibitolamakinde@gmail.com, ¹makinde.veronica@coeikere.edu.ng, ²ogunlade.joseph@coeikere.edu.ng, ³Akeredolu.samuel@coeikere.edu.ng

Corresponding author: *MAKINDE, Veronica Ibitola
Tel.: +237 Email: ibitolamakinde@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Examination malpractice has remained a serious clog in the wheel of educational progress across the globe. It seems that every effort geared towards curbing it are concentrated on external forces that predisposes individual towards cheating thus the scourge remained unabated. This study therefore investigated the effect of Self-regulatory training (a deliberate control of one's behaviour) as a counselling tool for curbing examination malpractice among senior secondary school students in South West, Nigeria. The study was delimited to Senior Secondary School I in Ondo and Ekiti States. One hundred and eighty (180) respondents were drawn from the targeted sample using a multi-stage and stratified random sampling procedure. The study was a 3group pre-test and post-test quasi experimental design. Three hypotheses were raised to guide the study and the research instrument were two structured questionnaires Students Self Perception Questionnaire (SSPQ), Examination Malpractice Attitudinal Rating Scale (EMARS) aimed at identifying students with low self-concept and those that are prone to examination malpractice. One treatment package on self-regulatory training was used to teach the two experimental groups after which a post test was carried out on both the experimental groups and the control group. Data collected were analysed using Analysis of Covariance and t - test statistics. The results showed a significant difference in the three hypotheses tested and the null hypotheses were rejected. Findings revealed that self-regulatory training is effective in assisting students to develop negative attitude towards examination malpractice while the therapy was more effective on boys than girls. It was recommended among others that Counsellors should as matters of urgency attend to the internal and external factors that predispose students to examination malpractice through individual and group counselling, seminars and workshops. Counsellors should endeavour to motivate, students towards developing self confidence that will lead to effortful self-control which is the motive of self – regulatory training.

KEYWORDS

Examination malpractice, Attitude, Self – Regulatory Training.

Introduction

Fundamental changes in the intellectual and social outlook of any society have to be preceded by an education revolution and the only instrument for measuring or assessing the quality of knowledge acquired at any given time is “*Examination*”. Examination, therefore serves a valuable purpose of knowing whether the objective of a course is achieved or not. It also serves as a form of feedback on the effectiveness of teaching – learning process to students, teachers, parents, school administrators, curriculum planners and government. Over the years examination malpractice had remained a serious clog in the wheel of quality education in Nigeria. Teaching and learning activities which are designed to nurture students’ knowledge for development and improvement of the society seemed to be failing in achieving academic excellence and moral standard due to cases of examination malpractice. The implication is that students’ performance at both internal and external examinations can sometimes not be used as yardstick for measuring their intellectual capability or academic competence.

Examination malpractice is define as a deliberate wrong doing contrary to official examination rules designed to place a candidates at an undue advantage or disadvantage (Onyibe, Uma &Ibina, 2015). In a nut shell examination malpractice is any misconduct, improper practice or wrong doing before, during and after examination with a view to obtaining good results. Examination malpractice can be tagged as an epidemic across nation as most examinations are marked by complaints of various forms of malpractice, and in most of these examinations, cheating is a recurrent event (Petters & Okon, 2014) and cheating has been identified as a worldwide phenomenon (Nyamwange, Ondima & Onderi, 2013) as it is not peculiar to students alone. There are cases of examiners leaking questions before the conduct of the examination, parents contributing huge amount to bribe invigilators, teachers being paid to provide solutions to questions and later pass it into the hall for students to copy, school administrators giving bribes to invigilators to aid and abet cheating, invigilators leaving the examination hall, giving room for students to engage in examination misconduct only to come back few minutes to the end of the scheduled time, alteration of candidate’s mark(s) by examiners during marking. Efforts made by the past and present government to curb examination malpractice had not successfully eradicated the scourge of cheating. Factors such as incessant teachers’ strikes, poor reading culture, low self-esteem and internal locust of control and fair of failure are responsible for examinational practice (Akinleye and Makinde, 2012) Obidoa, Onyechi&Okere (2013) also blamed it on lack of seriousness of students in their studies, poor teaching and learning, poor invigilation and over-emphasis placed on paper qualification by employers of labour. They went further that researchers should consistently look for means of curbing the menace.

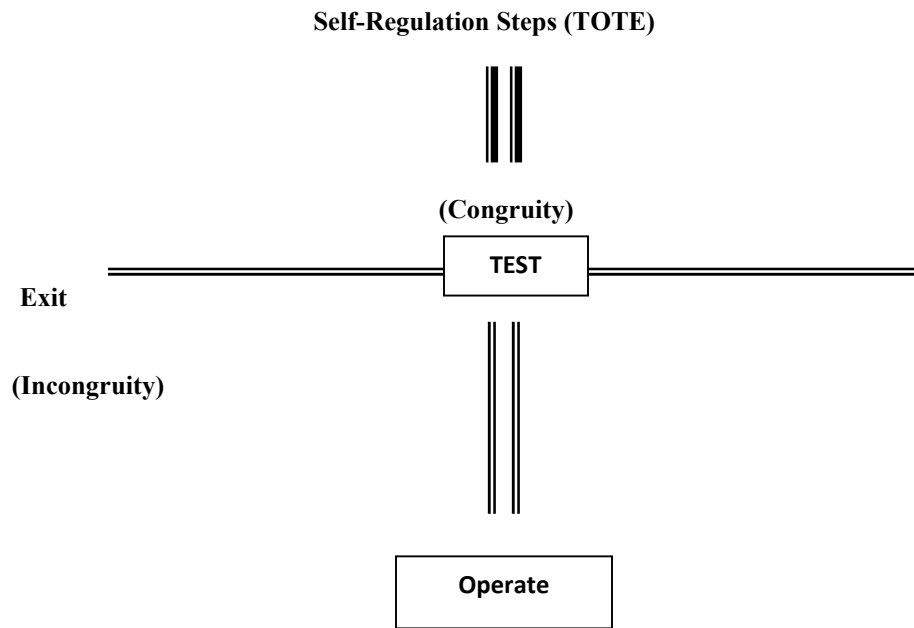
Highlighting the effects of examination malpracticeLefoka (2020) stated that students who passed their examination through malpractice entre public space not qualified to serve the society, a situation which will lead to erosion of confidence in the education system, loss of credibility in education assessment, examination agencies discredited leading to loss of confidence in the certificate issued by such agencies,

cancellation of results causing undue pains and suffering for hardworking and innocent students, wastages in re-conducting examinations when massive cheating are detected.

Over the years efforts to curb examination malpractice had been geared towards external force that predisposes students to malpractice like, conducive environment, availability of machineries, parental influence and poor supervision. The researchers believed that individual's behaviour or attitude towards examination malpractice can be redirected to avoid cheating during examination malpractice. Attitude refers to individual's beliefs, personal opinions ideas and views which can prompt an individual to feel or act in a particular or peculiar way. It involves individual's innate tendencies that determine his or her behaviour and if such individual is trained to deliberately alter and control (self – regulate) their attitude against cheating, it will help in eradicating all forms of malpractice at the long run.

Self-regulation can be defined as the whole system of standards, thoughts, processes, and actions that guide people's behaviour toward desired end states (Carver and Scheier, 2012). It is an ability to increase the degree of flexibility of human behaviour in order to adjust to societal or situational demands that one encounter on daily basis. Self-regulatory training involves teaching clients on how to control, direct their thoughts, feelings, attitude, behaviours and urges, in order to reduce the self-discrepancies that are haunting them towards reaching a goal. Self-regulation exposes learners to self-help skills and volitional strategies aimed at avoiding external and internal distractions (like cheating) in order to maintain their concentration, effort and motivation while performing academic task. There is the assumption that low Self-Control can result in undesirable behaviours, addiction, poor academic performance, deviant sexual behaviour, obesity, and criminal activity are a few of the well-documented areas where low self-control is evident. Low self-control leads to actions that put people at risk (Miller, 2020) better quality interpersonal relationships (Vohs et al., 2011), and basically, a happier life (Cheung et al., 2014; Hofmann et al., 2014). . Therefore if well exposed to self-regulatory training, learners would imbibe the qualities and characteristics of self-regulation which in summary, consist of seeing themselves as agents of their own behaviour, believing in learning as a proactive process, being self-motivated and using strategies that enable them to achieve desired academic result without any fraudulent means.

Self-regulation is based on the control theory of Carver and Scheier's (2000) which claimed the process is an application of cybernetics to human self – regulation. Control theories are defined by a continuous feedback loop that functions to assess and respond to discrepancies from a desired state (Carver & Scheier, 2001) They proposed that two social cognitive concepts are important for the understanding of human self – regulation from the perspective control theory: self – awareness (self- focus and self – directed attention) and expectancy, both of which influence the engagement and disengagement of self – regulatory activity. According to them self-awareness engages the comparator in the self- regulatory system. Self – awareness allows us to assess how successful we are in meeting our goals and ideals. The core idea in control theory is a cognitive feed-back loop summarized by the acronym TOTE which stands for Test Operate-Test Exit as shown below



Source: Franzoi S. L. (2000) social psychology P

According to the control theory of self-regulation, when an individual's attention shifts from external environment to oneself, one compares the performance and progress of current activity to the current active goal or standard and attempt to reduce any perceive discrepancies. When we become self-aware we enter the first "test" phase. When we are privately self-aware we will compare ourselves against a private standard (for example, our own values), but when we are publicly self-aware we will compare ourselves against a public standard (for example, our beliefs about what other people value). In the test phase, if we discover that we are falling short of the standard (for example, not studying enough), then we operate to change ourselves (we study harder). Soon we self-reflect again – the second test phase is to see whether we are moving closer to reaching our standard. This test and operate cycle repeats itself until there is no longer a difference between our behaviour and the standard. It is believed that students can self-regulate different dimensions of learning, for example, their motives for learning, the methods and strategies they use, and the social environmental resources in their surroundings. The objective of the treatment sessions was to enhance high self-concept, logical reasoning, develop improved learning skills and to develop greater flexibility and adaptability. The outcome is to assist respondents to develop an internal control that will prevent them from cheating even when the environment is conducive for cheating.

Statement of Problem:

Examination malpractice had remained a canker worm which had eaten deep into Nigerian education system and very efforts by relevant stakeholders to curb it had proved abortive over the years with new methods and techniques springing up on daily basis. The researchers believed that factors propelling students to cheating are internal and when an individual is guided to develop positive internal self control cheating will be abated.

Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

- (i) There is no significant difference between the pre – test and post test scores of students exposed to self-regulatory training in Ondo and Ekiti States and the control group.
- (ii) There is no significant difference in the attitude towards examination malpractice between those exposed to self-regulatory training in Ondo and Ekiti States.
- (iii) There is no significant difference in the attitude towards examination malpractice between male and female students exposed to self – regulatory training in Ondo and Ekiti State.

Methodology

The researchers used a three – group pre-test–post-test quasi experimental design with two experimental groups and one control group. The three groups were exposed to pre-test after which the experimental groups were given treatment package and three groups were later exposed to post-test. The results of the treatment group with the control group were compared to determine the effectiveness of the therapy. The effects of the treatment package were also determined using gender (Male and Female). The population consisted of all Senior Secondary School one in South West Nigeria, two states was selected from the population through balloting. Three co – educational schools was selected for the study through stratified random sampling technique, 60 students each were drawn from the sample to make a total of 180 SSI. The choice of SSI was to allow the respondents to have developed a stable internal control before their final year examination. There are two instruments Students Self Perception Questionnaire (SSPQ), Examination Malpractice Attitudinal Rating Scale (EMARS) and a treatment package for the study. The first instrument (SSPQ) was designed to find out students who have low self-concept and who were external in their locus of control orientation while the second instrument (EMARS) was to identify students that will be at risk or prone to examination malpractice. The instruments were subjected to validation at 0.05 level of significance with the validity coefficient at 0.72 and reliability coefficient of 0.68 The treatment package consists of counselling techniques on self-regulatory training which was used in teaching the experimental groups. The research procedure was carried out in three phases of Pre-treatment, treatment and post-treatment phases. The data collected were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics. The mean scores, standard deviations, frequency counts and percentages were computed descriptively while Analysis of Covariance was used for Hypothesis 1 while t –test was used for hypotheses II and III.

Results

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference between the pre – test and post test scores of students exposed to self-regulatory training in Ondo and Ekiti and the control group. The scores of the pre - test and post - test collected were analyzed using Analysis of Covariance and the result is as presented in table 1 below.

Table 1:

Summary of Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) of Pre – test and Post – test scores of Students exposed to Self-Regulatory Training and the Control Group.

Source of Variation	SS	Df	MS	F- cal	F – tab	Sign
Corrected Model	1122.308	3	374.103	67.031	2.60	.000
Intercept	1275.020	1	3240.544	580.631	3.84	.000
Pre - test	1017.648	1	535.464	95.943	3.84	.000
Groups	286.117	2	33.862	6.067	3.00	.003
Error	784.086	176	5.581			
Corrected Total	2059.867	179				
Total	955430.000	180				

P < 0.05

The result in table 1 above indicates the comparison of group that was exposed to self-regulatory training in the two states (Ondo and Ekiti) and the control group. The result of the analysis shows that the F - cal of 6.067 was greater than F- tab of 3.00 at p value of .000. The pre- test covariate also shows a significant difference as F – cal 95.943 was greater than the F – tab 3.84 at P – value .000. Since it was established that there is significant difference in the pre – test and post – test scores of students exposed to self – regulatory training in the two states and the control group, therefore the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between the pre – test and the post - test scores of students exposed to self-regulatory training and control group was rejected.

Hypothesis 2:

The second hypothesis states that there is no significant difference in the attitude towards examination malpractice between the students exposed to self – regulatory training in Ondo and Ekiti State.

Table 2: Summary of t- test comparing the responses on attitude towards examination malpractice between Students exposed to Self-Regulatory Training in Ondo and Ekiti States.

Source	N	\bar{x}	S.D	Df	t-cal	t-tab	Sign
Self-Regulatory Training in Ondo	60	92.00	.000	118	6.815	1.98	.000
Self-Regulatory Training in Ekiti	60	87.67	4.925				

P < 0.05

Table 2 indicates the comparison of the groups exposed to self-regulatory training in the two states. The results show that t – cal 6.815 is greater than t – tab of 1.98 and since the t-cal is greater than t- tab it shows that there is a significant difference in the attitude of those exposed to self – regulatory training treatments in the two states. The results also revealed that those who were exposed to self-regulatory in Ekiti were more responsive to treatment than those exposed to same treatment in Ondo State. Hence the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the attitude towards examination malpractice between students exposed to self – regulatory training in Ondo and Ekiti States was rejected.

Hypothesis 3

The hypothesis states that there is no significant difference in the attitude towards examination malpractice between male and female students exposed of self – regulatory training in Ondo and Ekiti. To find out the solution to the hypothesis the mean scores and the standard deviation was established and the scores were subjected to t – test at 0.05 level of significance as presented below.

Table 3: Summary of t-test Comparison of the responses on attitude towards examination malpractice between male and female students exposed to self - regulatory training in Ondo and Ekiti.

Source	N	\bar{x}	S.D	Df	t-cal	t-tab	Sign
Male	60	99.00	6.40	118	5.995	2.021	
Female	60	92.00	.000				

P < 0.05

The t – test in table 3 revealed that male students exposed to this therapy has a mean score of 99.00 with a standard deviation of 6.40 while female students has a mean score of 92.00 and a standard deviation of .00. Further analysis shows that the t – calculated was 5.995 and the t – table was 2.021 at 0.05 level of significance. The result showed a significant difference since the t – calculated is greater than t – table, hence the hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the attitude towards examination malpractice between male and female students exposed to self – regulatory training was rejected.

Discussion

It was revealed that there was a significant difference in the attitude towards examination malpractice among students exposed to self-regulatory training in the two states when compared with those in the control group. Many of the students believed they cannot perform well unless something is done to aid their performance. This result was corroborated by the work of Miller (2020) who affirmed that low self - control can result in undesirable behaviours like addiction, poor academic performance, deviant sexual behaviour, obesity, criminal activity and can leads to actions that put people at risk. Through self-regulatory training the respondents were assisted to identify some of their wrong attributions on what is leading them to cheating. Some of them attributed their poor performance and cheating habit to factors external to themselves such as evil work of the devil, rivals and their enemies, poor teaching methods from teachers, and influence from peers. The teaching tool can help learners to develop a self-controlled behaviour rather than relying on other factors around them. The result revealed that the treated group was better adjusted in setting goals for effective learning and making effort towards achieving the set goals rather than engaging in examination malpractice. This study aligns with the work of Carver and Scheier's (2000) who found that those who engage in self – regulation are better achievers than their counter parts who are controlled by external factors and that they do this by setting more specific learning goals, using more strategies to learn and adapt, self-monitoring more and more systematically evaluating their progress toward a goal.

Investigation shows that there was a significant difference between students exposed to self–regulatory training in Ondo when compared to those exposed to self – regulatory training in Ekiti state. It was revealed that self–regulatory training is more effective at enhancing negative attitude towards examination malpractice in Ekiti than Ondo. The male respondents are better in self – regulatory training; the findings revealed that the male students can control their behaviour than the female students. However the study also revealed that individual has a limited supply of willpower and when the supply is low self – regulation is not effective the students were therefore encouraged during the interactive session to avoid temptation that may cause what Brehm, Kassim and Fein (2005) called self-regulation fatigue which may eventually make them lose their self-control. Although there was a slight variation in the pre–test and post–test responses of those in control group which may be as a result of extraneous variables like media campaign against examination malpractice. The result still shows that the treated groups have a better adjustment capacity than the control group.

Conclusion

Self-regulatory training is more effective in enhancing negative attitude towards examination malpractice as those exposed to self-regulatory training showed a more responsiveness to treatment than the control group.

Recommendations

Based on the findings the following recommendations were made.

- Counsellors should as matters of urgency attend to the internal and external factors that predispose students to examination malpractice through individual and group counselling, seminars and workshops.
- Government, School Administrators should assist in resuscitating school libraries while counsellors should encourage reading culture through formation book readers club.
- Counsellors should endeavour to motivate, students towards developing self confidence that will lead to effortful self-control which is the motive of self – regulatory training.
- In – service training should be organized for counsellors, so that they can be trained in the use of the counselling intervention techniques. This will assist in reducing the high rate of examination malpractice and other adolescence related problems.
- Guidance and counselling should be included into the school time table and a curriculum should be developed on it, so that counsellors can go to class to teach the moral - related topics that will guide their students rather than staying in an office waiting for only troubled students.
- Teachers and school counsellors should assist students in developing good study habit and the art of note taking. Students' notes can be checked periodically to ensure compliance.
- The treatment packages used in this study are recommended for use by all counsellors to curb the high rate of examination malpractice.

References

- Akinleye, G.A. & Makinde, V. I (2012). Effect of Cognitive Restructuring on Students attitude towards Examination malpractice in Ekiti State. *In Iceland international Conference proceedings. Pp 504- 511*
- Brehm, S.S, Kassin, S.M & Fein, S. (2006): *Social psychology* (6th ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Carver C. S., Scheier M. F. (2012). *Attention and Self-Regulation: A Control-Theory Approach to Human Behaviour*. Berlin: Springer.
- Carver, C.S. & Scheier, M.F. (2000): On the structure of behavioural Self – regulation, In M. Boekaets, P.R Pintrich, & M. Zeidner. *Handbook of self – regulation*, (pp 42 - 80). San Diego: Academic Press.
- Cheung T. T., Gillebaart M., Kroese F., & De Ridder D. T. D. (2014). Why are people with high self-control happier? The effect of trait self-control on happiness as mediated by regulatory focus. *Front. Psychol.* 5:722. 10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00722
- Hofmann W., Lu L., Hmann M., Fisher R. R., Vohs K. D., Baumeister R. F. (2014). Yes, but are they happy? Effects of trait self-control on affective well-being and life satisfaction. *J.Pers.* 82 265–277. 10.1111/jopy.12050
- Lefoka, P.I. (2020) The Prevalence of and Factors Contributing to Assessment Malpractice at the National University of Lesotho. *In Journal of Humanities and Social Science Research. Vol. 3(3) Pp10 – 20.*
- Miller, K. (2020). What is Self – control theory in Psychology? <https://positivepsychology.com/team/kelly-miller/>
- Nyamwange, C., Ondima, P., & Onderi, P. O. (2013). Factors influencing examination cheating among secondary school students: A case of Masaba South District of Kisii County, Kenya. *Elixir Psychology, 56, 13519-13524.*
- Onyibe C.O, Uma, U. U & Ibina, E. (2015). Examination Malpractice in Nigeria: Causes and Effect on National Development. *In Journal of Education and Practice Vol. 6(26) Pp 12 – 17.*
- Obidoa M.A, Onyechi K.C, Okere A.U (2013). Examination Malpractice and Control in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State, Nigeria: Implications for the Counsellor. *In Journal of Education and Practice Vol.4(28) Pp69 - 73*
- Petters, J. S., & Okon, O. (2014). Students' perception of causes and effects of examination malpractice in the Nigerian educational system: The way forward for quality education. *In Procedia - Social and Behavioural Sciences, 114, 125 – 129.*

Vohs K. D., Finkenauer C., & Baumeister R. F. (2011). The sum of friends' and lovers' self-control scores predicts relationship quality. *Soc. Psychol. Pers. Sci.* 2 138–145. 10.1177/1948550610385710