
Cheating in Examination: Perceptions of Stakeholders in Public Secondary Schools, Kenya

¹ Kingi M. Petronilla

¹University of Nairobi

¹kingipetronilla@gmail.com; petronilla@uonbi.ac.ke

ABSTRACT

Academic falsity and lack of discipline has been fraudulent behaviour in many schools over the last decades. The advent of technology has prompted concern over cheating and the impact on the ethical behaviour of the students' academic performance. The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of students' cheating in examination on academic performance in public secondary in Vihiga sub-county, Kenya. The sample size comprised of 8 deputy principals, 87 teachers and 227 students. The study adopted descriptive and correlation design. Stratified random sampling method was used to select the respondents. Questionnaires and scheduled interviews were administered to the respondents. Data obtained was processed and analyzed using Statistical package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. Qualitative data was subjected to descriptive statistics while quantitative data was subjected to Pearson correlation and regression co-efficient analysis. The study findings reveal a significant relationship between student's cheating and academic achievement. The study recommends strict policy on examination procedures and guidance and counseling for students. All stakeholders should work together towards a shared vision of ethics to ensure that examination procedures are followed.

Key terms: Discipline, Examination Cheating: examination-malpractices; Students' academic performance; Public Secondary Schools.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a social factor that is very vital to every society. Through education, knowledge, skills and values are disseminated from one generation to another for the attainment of political and socio-economic advancement (Kindiki, 2009). As revealed by Makokha (2010) secondary education, in the most education system of the world, is the most optimal higher learning that prepares the individual for vocational training and university education.

However, in most countries, the secondary education system is still faced with challenges of indiscipline among learners (Njoroge and Nyabuto, 2014). School management, educators, learners, parents and responsible governments are greatly concerned about mitigating some of these challenges. In Kenya for instance, student discipline is an aspect in students' achievement (Kiprop, 2012).

Discipline is an important aspect of human behavior as it defines character (Skinner, 1985). Discipline as defined by Chabari, (2010) is the training of the mind and character which is aimed at producing self-control, order in behavior and skillfulness. In the perspective of a school structure, a disciplined student is one whose behavior and actions conform to the set rules and regulations of the school (Ali, Dada, Isiaka, & Salmon, 2014). Gitome, Katola, & Nyabwari, (2013) state that discipline goes beyond adhering to school rules and regulation and involves students' potential to discern what is wrong or right. Sound discipline creates a happy, orderly and safe environment where students learn to the best of their abilities. Similarly (Ali, Dada, Isiaka, and Salmon, (2014); Whisman and Hammer, 2014; Ofori, and Achiaa, (2018); Oloyin, Sadiq, & Sulyma. (2019) argue that academic malpractice is a prevailing problem that affects secondary schools. Student's misconduct is believed to interfere with the teaching, learning and consequently leads to school dropout, repetition and poor performance (Mugambi, 2006).

There are different types of school indiscipline that have been demonstrated in secondary among students (Ngwokabuenui, (2015). These may be grouped on the bases of students, society and school-based factors and includes assault, insult, examination

malpractice, mass protest and Vandalism. Vandalism is intentional damaging, violation, and defacement of a private or public property by individuals who do not have ownership of the property (Black, 2002). Also, vandalism can be referred to as willful or malicious destruction disfigurement and injury of any person's property. School vandalism involves destruction of buildings, damaging of furniture, books and sports facilities among others (Merrills, (2009); Vilalta, & Fondevila (2018).

Vandalism may also be evidenced by damaged school walls, broken windows, burning dormitories and school libraries. Students engage in vandalism by defacing and destroying the school infrastructure and equipment leading to the collapse of teaching and learning. School syllabus and schedules may not be completed as planned, leading to poor performance (Chauhan, 2008). This means that teachers and stakeholders spend a lot of time dealing with cases associated with vandalism, which could have been spent in teaching and learning. In South Africa vandalism is common in schools (De Wet, 2004) and it has been linked to lower academic performance by some schools. South Africa, Ziro (2002) argues that vandalism has led to increased destruction of learning facilities.

As stated by Munyiri, (2008), cases of vandalism in some Kenyan secondary schools have led to the destruction of learning materials and school infrastructures. Theuri (2018) notes that schools have had to shut down leading to loss of time which could have been used in learning and teaching.

Other studies show that the issues related to examination cheating globally. In America, McCabe (2005) reports several cases of high profile cheating in examination while Wanderi (2001) states that in India several students were expelled as a result during examination and students banned from taking the examination for three years. In Nigeria studies reveal that parents, some teachers and students participate actively in examination malpractices. According to Gbagolo, (2011); Asinya, (2012) and Okolie, Nwosu, Eneje & Oluka, (2019) students cheat in both National and Regional examinations to achieve higher grades. Harris, (2010) found out that students in schools use mobile phones and computers to copy examinations.

Examination in learning institutions globally play critical role in education system (Makokha, 2010). Through examination, the educators are able to evaluate the learners on various aspects taught in school. Also, examination is used as instrument of assessing the progress of the students and the

results are used for promotion to the next level or placement in higher learning institutions (Andrew, 2003). However, in some schools the reflection of the learner's potential and the effectiveness of examination are never realized due to examination cheating. According to Kamba (2010), examination cheating is an act of trying to acquire high grades in an examination by use of deceptive means. Students who engage in examination cheating end up achieving higher performance than their ability. As a result, such students get placement in institutions of higher learning that are higher than their ability. Such students fail to cope with the demands the allocated courses in universities leading to repetition or dropping from the courses.

In Kenya, similar to other countries, her education sectors has had a long struggle to eradicate examination cheating. In 2013 results of 36 schools were cancelled for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) because of examination irregularities (MOEST, 2014). In 2014 KCSE, the number of counties involved in examination cheating rose to thirty Vihiga County being one of them (MOEST, 2014). Apart from recording higher performance (Njeru, 2012), some scholars have observed that examination cheating leads to poor performance.

However, there is little literature regarding the influence of students' examination cheating and vandalism on academic performance in the public secondary schools in Vihiga Sub-County. The study therefore sought to establish the influence of students cheating in examinations on academic performance in the public secondary schools in Vihiga Sub-County, Kenya.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There have been concerns that following the continued low performance academic performance in public secondary schools in Vihiga sub-County among other sub counties in Vihiga county.

Table 1: Vihiga Sub-County KCSE mean scores.

Sub-County	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Vihiga	5.67	4.75	3.45	3.32	3.95
Emuhaya	5.87	5.34	3.65	3.60	3.93
Luanda	6.45	5.54	3.78	3.34	4.29
Sabatia	6.32	5.12	3.55	3.40	4.48
Hamisi	5.98	5.34	3.82	3.71	4.31

Source: MOEST Vihiga County (2018)

Although there are several variables that may be linked to the deteriorating academic performance of students, this study focused on the possible contribution of academic cheating in examination on academic performance in Vihiga Sub-County public secondary schools.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study purpose was to establish stakeholder perceptions on students' cheating in examination and academic performance in Kenya's Vihiga Sub-County public secondary schools.

A. Objective of the Study

The following objective guided the study:

- i. To determine the influence of students' examination cheating on academic performance in Vihiga Sub-County public secondary schools.

B. Review of Related Literature

Cheating in examination refers to the candidates' act of gaining unjust grades or unjustified favour in examination over other students (Kinuthia, 2009). This means that cheating is attempted or intentional use of illegal material, and information before and during examination to attain standards. Cheating could happen at any place and time, during or before the examination. Having prior knowledge before examination may give students time to thoroughly prepare notes or materials for use during the examination (Ndala, 2006). Such involvement in examination cheating has been related to pressure to obtain high scores and lack of preparedness (Chabari, 2010). According to Achio, Ameko, Kutsanedzie, Alhassan, and Ganaa, (2012) examination malpractices include writings on different items such as on sheets of papers, candidates' bodies, impersonation, hiding materials, and using cell phones.

In China, the entry exams to the universities for graduating high school students are very competitive, for instance, in 2011 among 10.2 million high school graduates who took part in college entrance examination, only 60 percent got placement at the Universities (Njeru, 2012). Therefore, the stiff competition for university vacancies is one of the reasons for cheating in examinations.

Previous studies across the globe reveal that examination cheating is widely spread. For instance, Gelder, (2012) carried out a survey study in the USA on examination cheating among learners. The majority of the students involved in the study agree that they engaged in different forms of cheating in examination. Anderman and Midgley (2004), states that 60 to 75 percent of the students had cheated in their studies while Pratt (2003) found that only 12 percent of the respondent reported never to have cheated in examination. This means that about 88 percent of the respondents had participated in examination cheating at some point in their school life.

Madara & Namango (2016) noted that the majority of students who engaged in examination-malpractice spend most academic hours in non-academic related activities. This was amplified by the fact that institutions did not have clear examination rules and regulations stating the consequences of such as expulsion, suspension, or warning-letter. According to Wong, Yang, Riecke, Cramer, and Neustaedter (2017) use of Smartwatches was a big challenge in academic world.

They, however, found that smartwatches were not effective for cheating on multiple-choice questions and short answers. Teachers fail to prepare students and set examinations adequately. In most cases, teachers repeated the same exam questions which encouraged exam malpractices by getting help from senior students, online libraries or from internet.

C. Methodology

This study used descriptive survey and Correlation research design (Creswell, 2014). Data was collected using a questionnaire and interview schedule. A sample of size of 30% was selected stratified systematic random sampling as suggested by Mugenda and Mugenda (2008). The teachers and head teachers were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with the statements on a five-point likert-type scale whereby 5: strongly agree, 4; Agree, 3: undecided, 2: Disagree, 1: Strongly disagree. Pilot study was carried out in schools outside the study area. The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) was used to transform the likert type of scale data into continuous data that enabled computation of correlation and regression analysis. According to Creswell (2008), a correlation coefficient of between -1.00 to +1.00 is used to measure the degree and strength of relationship between the variables.

Positive value indicates positive relationship; a negative value shows negative relationship while 0.00 correlation coefficient indicates lack absence of linear relationship. The closer the correlation coefficient to 0.00, the weaker the relationship between the variables. The study also adopted internal consistency procedure, through which the researcher used Pearson-moment correlation coefficient. When the r value was equal to +1.00, the two sets were said to be in perfect agreement. An r value equal to -1.00 was said to be in perfect disagreement. A correlation co-efficient (r), of about 0.8 to -0.8, was considered high enough to judge the instrument as reliable for the study. The reliability of reliability of the present study instruments was recorded at the value of 0.7.

This value was within the range and therefore the instruments were reliable. Hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significant using correlation coefficient.

FINDINGS

The study findings have been presented in line with demographic characteristics and study objectives.

Demographic characteristics of the deputy principals and teachers included: gender, age, education and years of experience.

This information aided the study in establishing the influence of students' discipline on academic performance. The findings indicates that majority 56.5% of the study participants were female while 43.5 % of the total respondents were male. This information on gender clearly shows that both female and male took part in the study and therefore, the findings are not subject to gender bias. The study concurs with Ishola, Adeleye, & Tanimola (2018) that gender and age are significant predictors of performance among teachers.

The gender distribution appropriately gave adequate information on students' discipline and academic performance. However, a study by Marcenaro–Gutierrez, Lopez–Agudo and Ropero–García, (2018) revealed gender differences in students' academic performance. They observed that girls are less likely to get low scores than boys. Additionally, they found that boys were more prone to misbehavior than girls.

The study sought the deputy principals' experience in school management in their current station. Half of the deputy principals had served between 1-5 years; a quarter had served between 6-10 years and the other quarter 11-15 years each. The deputy principles had adequate knowledge on handling discipline matters and performance.

This implies that the respondents were spread out in age and the research was not age biased. The findings show that (41.04 %) teachers had teaching experience of 11-20 years. This was followed by (31.0%) who had experience of 1 -10 years, a few (25.3%) had 21-30 years and (2.3%) were above 30 years. This indicates that teachers had adequate teaching experience and have handled several cases dealing with discipline. They also have information on handling discipline in relation to academic performance.

The findings study relates to a study carried out by Abubakar, (2014) who found that experience and self-confidence crucial in discipline management. Teachers with adequate experience have self-confidence and are motivated in enforcing discipline among learners. Other studies have reported poor discipline among learners due to lack the required experience and competencies among teachers. For example, Segwapa, (2008) asserts that many school managers do not have the required skills and competencies in discipline management. This raises the questions of their effectiveness in enforcing discipline among learners.

The study also asked the teachers to give provide their professional qualification. The highest numbers of teachers had bachelor's degree 62(71.3%), masters 15(17.2%) and

diploma 10(11.5%). From the results, all teachers have required professional qualification attained through formal training. The findings concur with Ishola, Adeleye, and Tanimola, (2018) who said that educational and professional qualifications significantly influenced employee's performance. It is therefore important to essential to provide teacher professional development opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge through refresher courses.

The study found that (31.0%) of teachers were aged between 41-50 years. About 28.7% between 20- 30 years, 28.7% between 31-40 years and 11.5% between 51-60 years (11.5 %). Majority of students 148 (65.2 %) were aged between 15-17 suggesting they are in form two and three, therefore were aware about the role of discipline on academic performance. The others are 18-20 years 68(30.0%), above 20 years 8(3.5 %) and lastly 12-14 years 3(1.3 %) which are possibly the form ones with least duration in the school. Thus, all the classes were well represented.

The first study objective sought to establish the influence of examination cheating on students' academic performance. The deputy principals were asked to indicate whether students cheated during the examination and their responses are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Response on Examination Cheating (%)

Response	Deputy principal n=8	Teachers n= 87	Students n= 227
No	87.5	62	71
Yes	12.5	38	29
Total	100	100	100

Table 2 indicates that 7(87.5%) of the deputy principals agreed that there is examination cheating in the schools. This means students use unauthorized means to cheat during examination to achieve higher grades. Similarly, students’ and teachers’ affirmative response on existence of cheating in examinations was at 71% and 62% respectively. This shows that there could still be cases of examination cheating in schools in Vihiga Sub-County. These affirmative percentages are like the high ones reported in other studies (Gelder, 2012; Anderman and Midgley, 2004; Pratt, 2003).

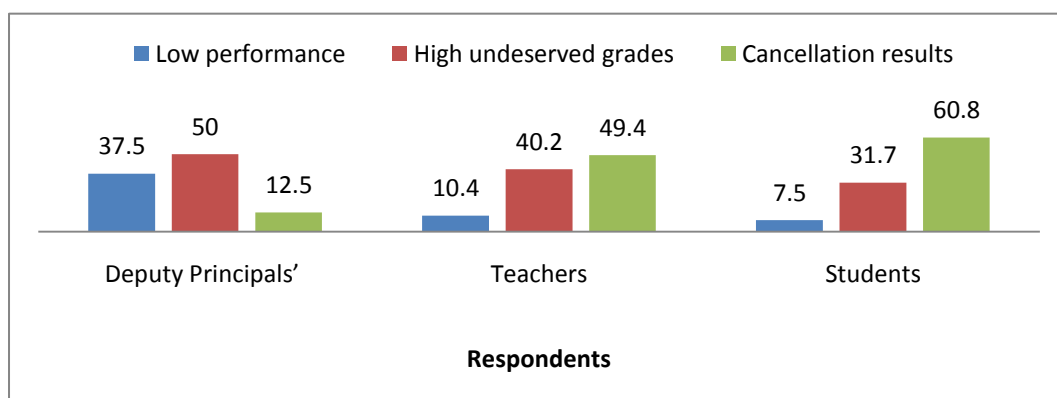
The students were asked if there’s examination cheating in their schools, the responses are given in Figure 2.

As shown in Figure 2, 71% of the respondents agreed that there’s examination cheating in the schools. The respondents were required to rank some of the effects of examination as presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Examination Cheating

Based on the results in Figure 3, the deputy principals clearly indicated that the most common effect of examination cheating on performance is high undeserved grades (50%) followed by cancellation of results (37.5%). The teachers on the other hand indicated that the leading effect of examination cheating is cancellation of results (49.4%) followed by high undeserved grades (40.2%). The students when asked to rank the effect of examination cheating revealed that the leading effect of examination cheating on performance is cancellation of results (60.8%) followed by high undeserved grades (31.7%).

During the interviews with the deputy principals, it was revealed that students who are found cheating during examination had their results cancelled. The affected students were forced to repeat the class and re-reseat the examination. According to one of the respondents, cheating in examination helped students to score high undeserved grades. He states that such students were placed to take courses which were not equivalent to their ability in universities. They later fail to cope with the course forcing them to repeat or drop from it.



The respondent added that some of the students who cheated in examination obtained high grades and secured good jobs. However, he regrets that such people may later become incompetent in their workplace affecting country's economy negatively".

To further identify effect of examination cheating on academic performance the researcher asked the deputy principal to give the KCSE results of their schools from 2014 to 2018 as presented in Table 3.

Table 3: KCSE results Vihiga Sub County

School	Years				
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
A	8.72	-	6.3	5.3	5.9
B	6.2	6.3	4.7	4.5	5.0
C	5.3	6.1	4.0	3.0	3.9
D	6.2	4.9	3.9	3.7	4.1
E	4.1	3.5	2.8	2.4	2.5
F	4.2	4.3	2.6	2.9	3.2
G	6.2	6.3	3.8	3.1	3.4

The reader notices that the results for 2014/2015 are more similar for all schools while different from the 2016 Mean scores. The findings indicate all the schools registered drop 2016 which could be as a result of the strict measures put in place by the government that reduced examination cheating that was rampant in 2014 and 2015. It can be deduced that there were high cases of examination cheating in public secondary schools in Vihiga Sub- County.

The second objective of the study sought to establish the influence of vandalism on academic performance in public secondary schools in the sub-County.

Vandalism involves intentional, purposeful or malicious destruction of school property. Vandalism can be measured through audit of physical properties, structures and other school assets. Learners destroy and burn property including teaching and learning resources, laboratories, libraries, classrooms, textbooks, food staffs, dormitories among others. Additionally, the destruction could pose health risk and death to learners and teachers. Teachers were asked to rate statements on a five-point Likert's scale questionnaire whereby 5 represents Strongly Agree, 4-Agree, 3 -Undecided, 2-Disagree and 1- Strongly Disagree. The findings are presented in the table 4.

DISCUSSIONS

The study establishes that cheating in examinations was widespread and that it influenced students' academic performance. The majority of the respondents agreed that students engaged in examination cheating. The existence of examination cheating is evidenced by the fact students used illegal notes written on papers, copied from books and had notes written on their bodies and clothes. In most cases, a student who is caught cheating does not get the final results or the entire result for the school is cancelled.

These findings are in agreement with Chabari (2010); Madara, & Namango (2016); Wong, Yang, Riecke, Cramer, & Neustaedter (2017) who found that examination cheating among learners was high due to the pressure on student to achieve high grades. Madara and Namango (2016) concluded that the majority of students frequently indulged in examination-malpractice.

This means that cheating, undesirable behavior in general is a way of responding to frustration in the pursuit of a valued goal. Furthermore, Midgley (2004) found that 60 percent of the students in schools had participated in examination cheating. In addition, Dodeen (2012) concludes that examination cheating involved looking at a test paper, using a system of signals, and writing on hands and desks. According to Dodeen, some of the reasons for cheating are lack of syllabus coverage, hard exams, time pressure, and fear of failure. The findings are also in agreement with Njeru (2012) who revealed that students accessed the examination before time and used them to revise getting high undeserved grades.

The study findings also indicate that vandalism has significant effects on the students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Vihiga Sub-County. The study is in agreement with previous studies, for instance, Ofori, and Achiaa, (2018) states that vandalism, arson and theft had adverse effects on students' performance. Such mal practices prevented students from concentrating in class, created tension and insecurity, disrupted lessons and caused contact hours to be used to settle disputes.

They blamed poor teaching and learning in schools on indiscipline behaviours of different forms. The findings are consistent with Okinyo, (2010) findings that unrest leads to the destruction of school infrastructure. Mulenga (2014) also agrees vandalism had adverse effects on desks, chairs, tables, chalkboards, walls, floors, electrical fittings leading to adverse

effects to teaching and learning. Other damage included items which were damaged displays like maps, diagrams, pictures among other things. The loss of learning time may lead to poor syllabus coverage which translates to poor performance by the students during examination. When this happens, students are later on released into institutions of higher learning when they are not fully equipped with required knowledge and skills. Furthermore, the findings Ochieng, (2007) found that damaging of school property leads to suspension of students and sometimes indefinite closure of the affected schools once there is massive vandalism. This eventually (Ochieng, 2007) would lower the students' academic performance, as students are sent home.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study established that the majority of the respondents agreed that the students engaged in examination cheating. This clearly revealed that cheating culture is widespread and is a significant problem in schools. It is important to eliminate the corrupt practice of examination cheating. To address the cheating culture, we may need to look farther than the students, to address the importance of an honesty culture.

It takes the willingness of students, teachers, administration and parents to ensure professionalism in examination administration is not compromised. The challenge is therefore, to put in place effective strategies to prevent examination cheating opportunities and to establish and enforce valuable means of dealing with specific patterns and types of cheating.

Prevention is always better than cure, so examination officers should try to establish an examination atmosphere, both physically and psychologically. Finally, it is worth the academic-fraternity should change, as the availability of new technological-tools has given students more-creative-ways to cheat on examinations, therefore, examination officers need to be aware of techniques used in teaching and even try to be one-step-ahead, pre-empting every-cheaters' moves.

Student hooliganism and cheating have an effect on the students' academic performance. Earlier, it was argued that examination cheating was widespread among students and that it influenced their academic performance. The leading consequence of examination cheating is cancellation of the National examination results. Students also get high undeserved grades because they had access to examination before time, or because they use illegal material to answer the questions. Enforcing academic integrity by limiting the opportunity for academic malpractices should be put effected in cooperation with all-stakeholders in order to combat cheating-menace. The outcome of this study has meaningful implications for both classroom practices and theory surrounding the concept of cheating. Results of this study also suggest that theoretical explanations adjoining the negative-effects of examination cheating should be expanded. The outcomes can also help guide the development and implementation of new policies on academic-integrity and modification of existing-policies reduce chance of cheating in National examinations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends schools to strengthen guidance and counseling in order to address issues causing students to engage in examination mal-practices and hooliganism. All stakeholders should work together towards a shared vision of ethics to ensure that examination procedures are followed. This involves promoting integrity in every aspect of the academic aspect, including vision, mission-statements and core values It would also be in order to conduct comparative-studies on the same-issue between private and public-school in different regions of the country for generalizations to these findings in other parts of the country.

Hooliganism may closely be related to vandalism, which also has implications for examination cheating. This means students will have inadequate opportunity and resources for teaching learning and this will in turn lower their academic performance. Vandalism is likely to be related to unsatisfactory student learning outcomes, a relationship that needs to be further investigated.

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