

ROLES OF ACADEMIC ADVISERS IN PREVENTING EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE AMONG HOME ECONOMICS STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY OF FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH WEST, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study determined the role of academic advisers in preventing examination malpractice among home economics students in South West, Nigeria. Three research questions with corresponding hypothesis guided the study. The study adopted quantitative research design. The population of the study was 116 Home Economics lecturers selected from five Federal universities in South West, Nigeria (UI, UNILAG, OAU, FUNAAB and FUOYE). There was no need for sampling since the population is small and manageable. Data were collected through a self-developed questionnaire titled, "Role of Academic Advising in Preventing Examination Malpractice among Home Economics Students (RAAPEMAHS). The questionnaire was validated by three experts, two from Department of Home Economics Education and one from Department of Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was trial tested on 20 lecturers in University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient was used to analyze the data from the trial testing and the result indicated 0.87 reliability coefficient value indicating the instrument is suitable and reliable. The questionnaire was administered by the researcher with the help of three research assistants. A total of 116 copies of the instrument were administered to respondents in the five institutions. Data collected were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t-test statistics. The findings identified fifteen (15) roles of academic advisers in preventing examination malpractice among Home Economics students in South West, Nigeria. The roles include: educating students on the consequences of examination malpractice and the importance of academic integrity, promoting a culture of honesty and ethical behavior among students, encouraging students to study diligently and prepare well for exams. The result also shown that there was no significant difference (P > 0.05) in the mean responses of male and female Home Economics Lecturers on the roles of academic advisers in preventing examination malpractice among Home Economics students in South West, Nigeria, among others. Based on the findings, the study concluded that effective and functional academic advising in tertiary institutions can be a vital tool in preventing examination malpractice among Home Economics students. The study recommended among others that school management should provide constant training and workshops for academic advisers; and school administration should set up examination malpractice committee at that will be in charge of handling examination malpractice matters and punish the offenders.

Keywords: academic advisers, examination malpractice, home economics students, universities.

Introduction

Examination malpractice is a prevalent issue in Nigeria educational institutions including South West Nigeria (Okeke et al., 2020). It remains a major challenge in Nigerian educational institutions, undermining the integrity of academic assessments (Oladimeji, 2020). The implications of this unethical behaviour can have far-reaching consequences on both individual students and the integrity of the academic institution. Home Economics students, in particular, face



unique challenges that may lead to examination malpractice (Afolabi et al., 2020). Effective academic advising has emerged as a crucial strategy in preventing examination malpractice among students (Ibrahim et al., 2019). Effective academic advising can foster a positive academic environment, promote student engagement, and encourage ethical behaviour which could to prevent examination malpractice (Okeke et al., 2020).

Examination malpractice refers to any fraudulent or illegal means used by an examinee to become successful in an examination. It is any form of dishonest or unethical behavior committed during the process of taking an examination, such as cheating, plagiarism, or collusion. According to Dare (2017), examination malpractice is any deviant act that is perpetrated by a student, candidate or person (aiding a candidate) before, during and after an examination to be declared successful. Also Danga and Danga (2022) posited that the 'mal' in the practice is a Latin word for bad; so examination malpractice means a 'bad' practice applied in an examination to make the examinee earn an unmerited grade. Dike (2021) posited that examination malpractice refers to fraudulent, illegal or crooked way of obtaining success or high grades in examinations, assessment or evaluation of students. It undermines the integrity of the examination system and can lead to invalid results (Emaikwu, 2019). Examination malpractice includes actions such as copying from another student, bringing unauthorized materials into the examination room, communicating with others during the examination, or altering answers after the examination has ended. The issue resulting in examination malpractices is caused by numerous factors.

One of the causes of examination malpractices is pressure to succeed. According to Obasi (2019), students in Nigeria face high expectations from their families, teachers, and society at large to excel in their studies. This pressure can lead some students to cheat to meet these expectations and avoid potential consequences of failure (Ochuko, 2019). Limited access to educational resources such as textbooks, study materials, and qualified teachers can also contribute to examination malpractice among Nigerian students. Students who lack access to these resources may feel disadvantaged compared to their peers and may resort to cheating as a way to level the playing field (Obasi, 2020). Corruption within the education system, including bribery, favoritism, and nepotism, can also fuel examination malpractice among Nigerian students. When students witness or experience corruption at various levels of the education system, they may be more likely to engage in unethical behavior themselves (Okara, 2019). Peer pressure can be a powerful motivator for students to engage in examination malpractice. Students may feel pressured to cheat to keep up with their classmates or to avoid being ostracized for not participating in cheating schemes. This social dynamic can create a culture of cheating within schools and universities (Okechukwu, 2018). If examination malpractice is not controlled, it can lead to several consequences.

Examination malpractice is a serious academic offense that can result in severe consequences for those involved (Efe, 2019). The calamity of examination malpractice is not just the havoc it wrecks in our educational system but the gradual introduction of youths into the practice of fraud. Owing to malpractices in universities, examination results tend to give a false picture of the state of affairs; hence a good number of graduates cannot defend the grades obtained in examinations (Ada, 2020). A crisis situation is bound to develop in the educational sector, if the trend is not prevented.



Malpractices in examinations have become so widespread in Nigeria that many people doubt the quality of graduates from the Nigerian educational system. It has led to the questioning of the validity and reliability of the examinations as well as the authenticity of the results and certificates obtained. According to Nwankwo (2021), the ugly incidence of examination malpractice accounts for the existence of several qualifying examinations in Nigeria such as post-university matriculation aptitude tests, job placement aptitude test, among others to authenticate candidates' certificates. In the bid to curb examination malpractice, the Federal Government of Nigeria enacted laws prohibiting examination malpractice. Despite these measures, the menace continued to occur in virtually all public and institutionally organized examinations. Hence, the need to look inward towards curbing this cankerworm. Instilling a strong sense of ethics and values in students from an early age can help prevent examination malpractice in the long run, and this could be done through effective academic advising carried out by academic advisers.

Academic advisers are mostly academic staff in the teaching departments in tertiary institutions that render the services of academic advising. Academic advising is a process that provides students with guidance and support in navigating their academic journey, setting goals, and making informed decisions about their education (Jimoh, 2019). It involves a collaborative effort between students and advisors to develop strategies for academic success and personal growth. It is a holistic process that considers the academic, personal, and career development of students to help them reach their full potential. According to Dare (2017), academic advising involves building meaningful relationships between students and advisors that foster student engagement and success. The goal of academic advising is to empower students to take ownership of their learning and achieve their educational objectives (Bello et al., 2020). Academic advising occurs in every discipline in tertiary education, including Home Economics Education students. One important aspect of academic advising for home economics students is helping them understand the diverse career opportunities available within the field. Advisors can provide information on job prospects, salary expectations, and the necessary qualifications for specific careers in areas such as nutrition and dietetics, family studies, or fashion design. By working closely with students to explore their interests and strengths, advisors can help them make informed decisions about their academic and professional paths.

In addition to career guidance, academic advisors also assist home economics students in creating a plan of study that aligns with their goals and interests. They help students select appropriate courses, track their progress toward degree completion, and address any academic challenges they may encounter (Conde, 2018). Academic advising also plays a key role in supporting the retention and graduation of students by providing timely and relevant support. Academic advising is a proactive and intentional process that helps students explore their interests, talents, and aspirations to make informed decisions about their academic and career paths (Murawski et al., 2019). Academic advising also helps students connect their academic pursuits to their long-term goals and aspirations, leading to a more fulfilling and purposeful educational experience (Murawski et al., 2019). Proper and effective academic advising could help in controlling examination



malpractice among tertiary institutions in Nigeria including tertiary institutions in South West regions.

South West region of Nigeria comprises six states like Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo. As noted by Efe (2019), examination malpractice is very common in both secondary schools and tertiary institutions in this region and every other of the country. From the random investigation carried out by the researcher, it was observed that the issue of exam malpractice has gone beyond control as most of the exam organizing body directly and indirectly encourages examination malpractices by collecting money from the candidates and schools and thereafter releasing examination questions before the time. There is a need to determine an effective way of addressing examination malpractices. Functional and effective academic advising appears to be a very effective means in addressing the menace of examination malpractices.

Examination malpractice is a prevalent issue in academic institutions worldwide, and Home economic students in South West, Nigeria are not exempted from this problem. Academic advisers play a crucial role in guiding and supporting students, which can potentially help prevent examination malpractice. However, there is a lack of research specifically focused on the roles of academic advisers in addressing this issue in South West, Nigeria. One study by Onyali (2019) highlighted the importance of academic advisers in preventing academic dishonesty and enhancing academic integrity among students. The author further emphasized the need for academic advisers to provide guidance and mentorship to students to help them develop a strong ethical foundation and avoid engaging in examination malpractice. Another study by Efe (2019) explored the factors contributing to examination malpractice among students in Nigeria and suggested that effective academic advising could play a significant role in mitigating this problem. Despite these insights, there is a gap in the existing literature regarding the specific roles of academic advisers in preventing examination malpractice among home economics students in South West, Nigeria. Further researches are needed to explore the potential impact of academic advising strategies on reducing academic dishonesty and promoting ethical behavior among this student population. Hence, this study aimed at determining the role of academic advisers in preventing examination malpractice among Home Economics students in South West, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were postulated for the study

- 1. What are the roles of academic advisers in preventing examination malpractice among Home Economics students in South West, Nigeria?
- 2. What are the strategies Home Economics academic advisers can adopt in advising students in preventing examination malpractice in South West, Nigeria?

Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative research design. It was carried out in five Federal Universities in the South West, Nigeria. The universities are University of Ibadan (UI) Oyo State, University of Lagos (UNILAG), Lagos, Lagos State, Obafemi Awololo University (OAU), Ile-Ife, Osun State, Federal University of Abeokuta (FUNAAB), Abeokuta, Ogun State and Federal University of Oye-



Ekiti (FUOYE), Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State. The population of the study was 116 Home Economics lecturers, 25 male lecturers and 91 female lecturers selected from five federal universities in South West, Nigeria. There was no need for sampling since the population is small and manageable. Data were collected through a self-developed questionnaire titled, "Role of Academic Advising in Preventing Examination Malpractice among Home Economics Students (RAAPEMAHES). The questionnaire was divided into two parts. Part 1 was structured to collect data on personal information about the respondents while Part 2 was divided into 2 different sections (A and B). Each section was designed to collect data for a particular research question. The questionnaire items had a four-point response option of Strongly Agree (S.A), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with corresponding values of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The questionnaire was face validated by three experts, two from the department of home economics and one from the department of measurement and evaluation, all from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, respectively. The validated instrument was trial tested with 20 home economics lecturers in a tertiary institution in South-South, Nigeria. Cronbach Alpha coefficient was used to determine the reliability coefficient and the result yielded a 0.87 value indicating that the instrument is reliable and suitable for the study. The questionnaires were administered by the researcher with the help of three research assistants. A total of 116 copies of the instrument were administered to the respondents in the selected five universities, and copies were retrieved and used for data analysis. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation with a cut-off point of 2.50 used for decision-making, while ttest was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.



Result

Research Question 1: What are the roles of academic advisers in preventing examination malpractice among Home Economics students in South West, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of the responses on the roles of academic advisers in preventing examination malpractice among home economics students

S/N	Item Statement	$\overline{\mathbf{X}}$	SD	Remark
1	Educating students on the consequences of examination malpractice and the importance of academic integrity	2.97	0.90	Agree
2	Promoting a culture of honesty and ethical behavior among students.	3.45	1.18	Agree
3	Encouraging students to study diligently and prepare well for exams.	3.02	1.13	Agree
4	Providing resources and support for students who may be struggling academically.	3.08	1.15	Agree
5	Helping students develop time management and study skills to reduce the temptation to cheat.	2.96	1.20	Agree
6	Encouraging students to ask for help if they are feeling overwhelmed or underprepared for exams	3.05	1.21	Agree
7	Recommending tutoring or peer study groups for students who need extra assistance.	3.07	1.18	Agree
8	Encouraging students to seek academic and mental health support if needed.	3.04	1.17	Agree
9	Monitoring and tracking student progress to identify any potential issues or concerns.	2.88	1.19	Agree
10	Encouraging students to take breaks and practice self- care during exam periods to reduce stress	3.09	1.16	Agree
11	Discussing the risks and consequences of exam malpractice with students individually.	3.06	1.17	Agree
12	Encouraging students to approach exams with a positive attitude and mindset.	2.05	0.95	Agree
13	Working with faculty and staff members to create a supportive and inclusive academic environment.	3.08	1.30	Agree
14	Providing regular updates and communication to students about exam policies and expectations	3.03	1.14	Agree
15	Following up with students after exams to provide feedback and support to them.	2.55	1.18	Agree

Data presented in Table 1 revealed that the mean of the 15-items ranged from 2.55 to 3.45, this showed that all the items had a mean value above the cut-off point of 2.50 which indicated that the respondents (Home Economics Lecturers) agreed that all the 15 items are the roles of academic advisers in preventing examination malpractice among Home Economics students in South West, Nigeria. Table 1 also revealed that each and all the items had their standard deviation ranging from 0.90 to 1.30; this implied that the respondents were not far from the mean and from one another in their responses



Research Question 2: What are the strategies academic advisers can adopt in advising students in preventing examination malpractice in South West, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean rating and standard deviation the strategies home economics academic advisers can adopt in advising students in preventing examination malpractice in South West, Nigeria

S/N	Item Statement	$\overline{\mathbf{X}}$	SD	Remark
1	Conducting workshops on study skills for the students	3.20	1.18	Agree
2	Establishment of Support Systems	3.07	1.16	Agree
3	Setting up exam malpractice committee at departmental levels with students and staff as members	3.01	0.87	Agree
4	Develop suitable sanctions for any-one found guilty of exam malpractice	2.99	0.99	Agree
5	Developing and clarifying examination policies and consequences to students	2.88	1.17	Agree
6	fostering open communication and trust among the students	3.06	1.19	Agree
7	Promoting academic integrity and ethics	3.04	1.12	Agree
8	Providing feedback mechanism for the students	3.09	1.19	Agree
9	Developing study skills and strategies for students	2.88	1.18	Agree
10	Addressing academic difficulties and challenges of students	3.27	1.19	Agree
11	Providing support services and resources	3.35	1.18	Agree
12	Collaborating with educators and institutions	2.90	1.11	Agree
13	Integrating exam malpractice into advising	3.06	1.20	Agree
14	Create channels of communication between lecturers and parents	2.73	0.95	Agree
15	Create and award the performing students in different areas	3.07	1.16	Agree
16	Constant evaluation of the effectiveness of advising strategies	2.53	1.17	Agree
17	Providing the consequences of examination malpractice	3.08	0.81	Agree

Data presented in Table 2 revealed that the mean of the 17-items ranged from 2.53 to 3.35. This showed that each and all of the items had a mean value above the cut-off point of 2.50, which indicated that all the 17 items are the strategies academic advisers can adopt in advising students in preventing examination malpractice in South West, Nigeria. The table also revealed that each and all the items had their standard deviation ranging from 0.81 to 1.20; this implied that the respondents were not far from the mean and they are close to one another in their responses.

Discussion of Findings

The result presented in Table 1 revealed fifteen (15) roles of academic advisers in preventing examination malpractice among Home Economics students in South West, Nigeria. The roles are educating students on the consequences of examination malpractice and the importance of academic integrity, promoting a culture of honesty and ethical behavior among students, encouraging students to study diligently and prepare well for exams, providing resources and support for students who may be struggling academically, helping students develop time management and study skills to reduce the temptation to cheat, encouraging students to ask for help if they are feeling overwhelmed or underprepared for exams, recommending tutoring or peer study groups for students who need extra assistance, encouraging students to seek academic and mental health support if needed, monitoring and tracking student progress to identify any potential



issues or concerns, encouraging students to take breaks and practice self-care during exam periods to reduce stress, discussing the risks and consequences of exam malpractice with students individually, encouraging students to approach exams with a positive attitude and mindset, working with faculty and staff members to create a supportive and inclusive academic environment, providing regular updates and communication to students about exam policies and expectations, and following up with students after exams to provide feedback and support to them.

The finding is in support of Davis et al. (2018) who stated that academic advisers play a crucial role in providing resources and support for students who may be struggling academically. By offering guidance on time management, study skills, and academic planning, academic advisers can help students proactively address academic challenges, reducing the likelihood of resorting to examination malpractice as a solution (Davis et al., 2018). The finding also aligns with Wilson and Rodriguez (2019) who noted that academic advisers can collaborate with faculty members to promote fair assessment practices that discourage examination malpractice. By advocating for transparent grading criteria, diverse assessment methods, and open communication between students and faculty, advisers can help create an environment where cheating is less likely to occur (Wilson & Rodriguez, 2019). The finding is also in line with Onyali (2019) who stated that academic advising plays a significant role in curbing examination malpractice among home economics students. According to the author, they carry out this exercise by ensuring that students are advised properly on the danger inherent in examination malpractice and by giving them good orientation about exam malpractice. Dike (2021) also supported the findings by stating that academic advising plays a significant role in ensuring that students are guided through, and enlightened them more on how to navigate the courses.

The data presented in Table 2 identified seventeen (17) strategies home economics academic advisers can adopt in advising students in preventing examination malpractice in South West, Nigeria. The strategies are: conducting workshops on study skills for the students, establishment of support systems, setting up exam malpractice committee at departmental levels with students and staff as members, develop suitable sanctions for any-one found guilty of exam malpractice, developing and clarifying examination policies and consequences to students, fostering open communication and trust among the students, promoting academic integrity and ethics, providing feedback mechanism for the students, developing study skills and strategies for students, addressing. academic difficulties and challenges of students, providing support services and resources, collaborating with educators and institutions, integrating exam malpractice into advising, create channels of communication between lecturers and parents, create and award best performed students in different areas, constant evaluation of the effectiveness of advising strategies, and providing consequences of examination malpractice.

The findings are in line with Rettinger and Jordan (2018) who contended that academic advisers can advocate for the adoption of strict academic integrity policies within the home economics department to discourage students from resorting to malpractice. They further states that the presence of clear policies on academic integrity serves as a deterrent against cheating in examinations. Also, the finding support Lunsford et al. (2020) who pointed out that academic



advisers can organize workshops and symposium on study skills and time management to help students develop effective study habits and reduce the pressure to cheat during examinations. Efe (2019) demonstrated that students who attended study skills workshops were less likely to engage in academic dishonesty.

Conclusion

This study investigated the roles of academic advising in preventing examination malpractice among Home Economics students in South West, Nigeria. The findings revealed that academic advising plays a significant role in preventing examination malpractice by promoting academic integrity, clarifying examination policies, and fostering open communication. The study further identified strategies Home Economics academic advisers can adopt in advising students in preventing examination malpractice South West, Nigeria which include conducting workshops on study skills for the students, establishment of support systems, setting up exam malpractice committee at departmental levels with students and staff as members, develop suitable sanctions for any-one found guilty of exam malpractice, developing and clarifying examination policies and consequences to students among others. Based on the findings, the study concluded that effective and functional academic advising in tertiary institutions can be a vital tool in preventing examination malpractice among Home Economics students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following are recommended:

- 1. School management should provide proper orientation programmes to students on examination malpractices and the consequences.
- 2. School management should constantly provide training and workshops for academic advisers to enhance the quality of academic advising they provide to students
- 3. School management needs to set up an examination malpractice committee both at departmental, faculty and school levels for easy addressing of exam malpractice issues.

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