

VALUE RE-ORIENTATION: A COUNSELLING STRATEGY FOR COMBATING EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE AMONG STUDENTS IN BASIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Counselling for value reorientation in basic education is necessary for learners' holistic development in a constantly changing world. This abstract explores the need, approaches, and importance of value reorientation counselling in Nigerian basic education to guide students against examination malpractice. The primary objective of such counselling is to assist learners in understanding and cultivating their values, beliefs, and ethical principles of writing examinations. It can be delivered through individual or group counselling sessions, integrating into the curriculum or organising special events focused on values education. Value reorientation counselling encourages students to explore their values, reflect on moral dilemmas, and make informed decisions on the need to study hard for all forms of assessment in school. It equips learners with effective decision-making, problem-solving, and emotional and social development skills. Reorientation would encourage collaboration between school counsellors, parents, and teachers, which is vital for a comprehensive method to value reorientation. Constant support and reinforcement are necessary to ensure that learners' values are continually explored and strengthened. Counselling for value reorientation will ultimately empower students to develop a solid moral compass, make responsible choices, and become ethical and compassionate individuals with great self-worth and assurance to tackle any examination.

Keywords: Basic Education, Counselling Strategy, Examination Malpractice, Value Reorientation

Introduction

A sound education is a powerful means to achieve national integration, industrial and economic progress, and social awareness and commitment to a nation. Education can create a great sense of responsibility among citizens toward the state and help them develop attitudes that convey

significant values to the youths, enabling them to become functional members of society. Basic education in Nigeria prepares learners for practical and functional living in the society.

Education is a system that involves teaching and learning activities, and it can be assessed through a method referred to as examination. The examination helps to give feedback on the teaching activities to determine the level of knowledge attainment or the rate of retention by the learners. Also, it serves as a standard for evaluating the effect of the learning process. In Nigeria, examination is an indispensable instrument used to appraise learners at the basic level of education and to determine their academic achievements, thereby giving room for self-assessment (Adisa, 2023). In addition, according to Johnson (2020), examination helps to decide whether the set educational objectives in the school have been achieved. However, regrettably, the realisation of this goal of assessment is being battered by the unscrupulous act called examination malpractice among students in basic education. Examination malpractice means any fraudulent or unethical behaviour that ensues while conducting examinations or assessments (Adisa, 2023). Unethical practice involves activities that compromise the educational system's fairness, validity and integrity. It might include leaking of examination questions, cheating, bribery, plagiarism, impersonation, and other forms of wrongdoing. Examination malpractice seriously undermines the educational system's credibility, fairness, and the worth of academic qualifications (Nwadiani, 2015; Sani, 2015).

Finding ways to discourage examination malpractice is paramount due to its detrimental effects on the education system (especially at the basic level, which is the foundation of other levels of education), students, and society. The significance of addressing examination malpractice can be understood through the need to uphold academic integrity, provide access to equal opportunities, discourage meritocracy, foster personal growth and development, and preserve the credibility of certification.

Tackling examination malpractice requires a holistic approach that goes beyond punitive measures. Addressing issues of unwholesome practices during examinations in basic education will help the school system to experience positive and credible examination processes, ensuring that positive values are upheld and encouraged. If not given due attention, the examination processes might continue to be compromised, and the nation might continue to experience decadence in values, hence the need to look at the appropriate concept of values (Denen, 2020). This paper focuses on the need for value reorientation in Nigeria to curtail examination malpractice in basic education. Various counselling strategies, such as Cognitive-behavioural therapy, Motivational Interviewing, Solution-Focused Brief Therapy, Reality Therapy, and Group Counselling, can help combat examination malpractice (Ogundele & Ogunleye, 2020; Johnson, 2020). However, each approach has unique strengths and focuses on addressing different aspects of examination malpractice. The effectiveness of these counselling techniques may vary depending on individual factors and the explicit context of implementation. However, the necessity for reorientation in value should be handled while considering various factors. Value reorientation

involves instilling ethical values, moral principles, and a sense of integrity among students. The proposed counselling strategy aims to guide students towards understanding the importance of honesty, hard work, and personal responsibility (Egbo, 2015).

By providing counselling services, basic schools can create an environment that promotes positive values and discourages examination malpractice. This paper suggests that counsellors can play a vital role in this process by working closely with learners, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. They can guide and support students, helping them develop a solid moral compass and make informed decisions.

What is Examination Malpractice?

In recent times, the conduct of examinations and attendant issues of unwholesome practices have been a persistent and concerning subject in basic schools for many years (Ajayi & Ekundayo, 2019). Examination malpractice is dishonest or unethical behaviour during the examination or assessment process. It involves actions taken to have an unfair advantage over other candidates or to manipulate the results of an examination, such as cheating and other unwholesome academic practices that can undermine the integrity and fairness of examinations.

There is a crucial need to understand the leading factors that encourage and consequences of examination malpractice in basic education to be able to develop methods to address and effectively prevent the reoccurring index of sharp practices relating to examination at the basic education level (Ezeani & Nwosu, 2018; Ajayi & Ekundayo, 2019)

Prevalence and Factors that Encourage Examination Malpractice

The high index of unacceptable practices and behaviours during examinations in the basic educational system gives room for serious concern. However, it seems more glaring when students need to write external examinations at the pre and post-basic levels (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2017; Ezeani & Nwosu, 2018; Ajayi & Ekundayo, 2019). Some key factors contribute to the prevalence of this malaise. The need to get admission into some highly-rated secondary and post-secondary schools because of the high value placed on academic qualifications is a crucial factor for malpractice during examinations (Onukaogu et al., 2014). In a society where educational credentials are highly regarded and often seen as a pathway to success, individuals may resort to unethical means to obtain good grades or certificates for their wards at the basic education level. The high pressure placed on obtaining certificates leads to a practice of dishonesty and underhand acts among parents and learners (Ukeje-Ogbuabo, 2016).

Another factor is the dire need for more educational resources and facilities. Limited access to textbooks, libraries, and other learning materials can create an environment where students feel compelled to engage in malpractice as a means of compensating for their lack of adequate learning experiences (Ezeani & Nwosu, 2018; Ajayi & Ekundayo, 2019).

In addition, corruption within the education system plays a significant role in the widespread examination malpractice. Corrupt practices include collusion among parents, teachers or invigilators and learners, leakage of examination questions, and bribery. These corrupt practices

2015).

The reasons behind the examination malpractice phenomenon are numerous, and several factors contribute to its prevalence in Nigeria's basic schools, including societal, educational, psychological, and technological streams (Thompson, 2017; Brown, 2018; Smith, 2019; Johnson, 2020).

1. **Social Factors:**

Societal cultivated factors play significant roles in examination malpractice (Oko & Adie, 2017). These factors include:

- a) **High Expectations:** The emphasis placed on examinations to determine academic success and future opportunities puts pressure on students to perform well. Undue pressure can lead some students and their parents to malpractice (Smith, 2019).
- b) **Modern Trends:** In Nigeria, there has been a prevailing belief that success at any cost is acceptable. This mind-set now contributes to the high rate of examination malpractice.
- c) **Corruption:** Widespread corruption within educational systems can facilitate examination malpractice. Corrupt individuals conducting exams may collude with students or provide them with leaked questions or answers.

2. **Educational Factors:**

Educational factors within the system can also contribute to examination malpractice (Oludipe & Oludipe, 2018). These factors include:

- a) **Inadequate Preparation:** Poor teaching methods, lack of resources, and overcrowded classrooms can result in inadequate examination preparation. Students who feel unprepared may cheat to compensate for their lack of knowledge.
- b) **Unrealistic Expectations:** Unrealistic expectations set by teachers or parents and often from the ministry to principals of colleges regarding academic performance can lead to engaging in malpractice as a means of meeting these expectations.
- c) **Lack of Integrity Measures:** Weak or non-existent measures to prevent and detect malpractice within the schools can create an environment conducive to cheating (Oludipe & Oludipe, 2018)

3. **Psychological Factors:**

Psychological factors can influence individuals' decision-making processes and contribute to examination malpractice (Onyibe et al., 2015). These factors include:

- a) Fear of Failure can drive students to cheat or engage in other forms of malpractice to avoid negative consequences such as disappointment, shame, or potential disciplinary actions.

- b) **Peer Pressure:** The influence of peers can be a significant factor in examination malpractice. Students may feel compelled to cheat to fit in or maintain social status within their peer group.
- c) **Lack of Moral Development:** Individuals with underdevelopment moral reasoning may be more likely to engage in unethical behaviour, including examination malpractice.

4. **Technological Factors:**

Technological breakthroughs have presented new opportunities and challenges regarding examination malpractice (Thompson, 2017; Ezeani & Nwankwoala, 2019). These factors include:

- a) **Access to Information:** The world has become a global village, providing easy and fast access to information through digital devices and the internet, making it easier for students to access unauthorised materials during examinations.
- b) **Online Cheating Services:** The emergence of online platforms that offer cheating services, such as providing answers or completing assignments, has made malpractice more accessible to students.
- c) **Digital Communication:** Students can use digital communication tools, such as messaging apps or social media, and unique watches and calculators to share answers or collaborate during examinations.

5. **Enforcement and Deterrence Factors:**

The effectiveness of enforcement and deterrence measures also plays a role in the prevalence of examination malpractice (Akinwumi, 2017). These factors include:

- a) **Inadequate Punishment:** Weak or inconsistent penalties for those caught engaging in malpractice can undermine the deterrent effect and encourage repeat offences.
- b) **Inadequate Monitoring:** Weak supervision during examinations can create an environment conducive to malpractice, creating opportunities for students to cheat without detection. Students may be more inclined to engage in dishonest practices when invigilators are not vigilant or fail to enforce strict rules and regulations.
- c) **Limited Awareness and Education:** Insufficient awareness and education about the consequences and ethical implications of examination malpractice can contribute to its persistence (Brown, 2018; Smith, 2019; Johnson, 2020).

The Nigerian government has taken measures to address examination malpractice at the basic level by establishing the National Examination Council (NECO) responsible for conducting national examinations. The National Examination Council (NECO) handles most of the entrance and post-basic examinations, and this body tries to implement strict security measures, such as using biometric data and deploying security personnel during examinations (Egbo, 2015).

Furthermore, efforts have been made to raise awareness about the consequences of examination malpractice and to promote ethical behaviour among students, which led to an increased rate of half-baked basic school leavers, and encouraged organising educational

campaigns, workshops, and seminars to educate students on the need for honesty and integrity in examinations (Onyibe et al., 2015). However, to effectively combat this issue, there is a need for sustained efforts from all stakeholders, including the government, educational institutions, teachers, parents, and students themselves, which requires strengthening institutional frameworks, improving access to educational resources, enhancing teachers' capacity (Akinwumi, 2017; Babalola, & Ogunlade, 2018; Ezeani & Nwankwoala, 2019).

Consequences of Examination Malpractice

According to Okeke (2017), Oko and Adie (2017), and Onukaogu et al. (2014), the consequences of examination malpractice are severe and numerous, and they include:

1. **Compromise of Academic Integrity:** Examination malpractice undermines the principles of fairness, honesty, and integrity that are fundamental to the educational system. It erodes trust between students, teachers, and institutions (Uzocukwu, 2015).
2. **Limited Learning Outcomes:** Engaging in malpractice will cause students to miss out on the opportunity to adequately gain knowledge and develop vital skills for self-improvement and competence in general. This may lead to a need for more proficiency in their chosen field and hinder their future academic and professional growth.
3. **Undue Advantage:** Examination malpractice creates an unfair advantage for those who engage in it, as they gain higher grades or qualifications through dishonesty. It undermines the achievements of honest students and devalues the educational system as a whole.
4. **Loss of Reputation:** Institutions that fail to address examination malpractice effectively may suffer reputational damage. Employers, academic institutions, and other stakeholders may question the credibility of qualifications obtained from such institutions.
5. **Legal Implications:** Examination malpractice is considered a criminal offence in Nigeria. Students guilty of malpractice may face legal consequences, including fines or imprisonment.

What is Value Reorientation?

Value reorientation counselling, according to Corey, Corey, and Callanan (2018), is a type of counselling that focuses on helping individuals identify and clarify their values and beliefs. The primary objectives of value reorientation counselling are to assist individuals in lining up their actions with their core beliefs, appraising them, and exploring how these values influence their behaviours and interactions with life situations. This form of counselling aims to promote self-awareness, personal growth, and decision-making based on one's values. Value reorientation counselling strategy also emphasises the importance of collaboration between counsellors and teachers; working together, they can identify early signs of examination malpractice and intervene promptly (Smith, 2019). Additionally, it highlights the significance of involving parents in the

process to ensure consistent reinforcement of values at home. It promotes focusing on value reorientation and instilling ethical values through a strategy to create a positive learning environment that promotes integrity and discourages dishonest behaviour among learners (Ivey et al., 2017; Neukrug & Fawcett, 2019).

Theoretical foundations of value reorientation in counselling refer to the underlying principles and frameworks that guide helping individuals reassess and modify their values, beliefs, and attitudes to promote personal growth and well-being (Erford, 2020). This approach recognises that values significantly shape an individual's thoughts, emotions, behaviours, and overall life satisfaction. Value reorientation in counselling aims to assist clients in exploring, understanding, and potentially changing their deeply held values when they are no longer serving their best interests or causing distress (Thorne & Lambers, 2017).

According to Erford (2020) and Nelson-Jones (2016), value reorientation counselling is rooted in the understanding that values can change over time as individuals grow and develop, encounter new experiences, challenges, and perspectives, may reassess their values and adjust accordingly. Hence, value reorientation counselling is not a one-time event but a continuous process that supports individuals in exploring, understanding, and adapting their values throughout their lives. According to Omenma and Onuoha (2021), value reorientation is a change of attitude towards several things or the re-establishment of actions and attitudes that have been identified as wrong. More so, Okoruwa (2016) stressed the need to start this strategy early. Furthermore, Neukrug and Fawcett (2019), Corey et al. (2018), and Ivey et al. (2017) also emphasised that value reorientation typically involves several key components such as:

1. **Alignment with values:** Once personal values are identified and clarified, the counsellor helps the individual explore ways to position their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours with these values. It may involve setting goals, making decisions, or taking actions consistent with one's core values.
2. **Clarification of values:** The counsellor assists the individual in clarifying their values by encouraging self-reflection and introspection. Through this process, individuals understand what is truly important to them.
3. **Evaluation and adjustment:** Value orientation counselling also includes regular evaluation and adjustment of personal values. As individuals grow and change, they may need to reassess their values to remain relevant and meaningful.
4. **Evaluation of personal values:** The counsellor helps individuals identify and examine their values. It may involve reflecting on past experiences, cultural influences, family dynamics, and personal beliefs.
5. **Conducive environment:** Value orientation counselling provides a situation where students can freely express themselves without judgment. The counsellor creates a safe space for exploration and encourages open dialogue.

Practical Steps Needed in Value Reorientation

Techniques and methods are often used in combination to facilitate the process of value reorientation (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2016; Ogundele & Ogunleye, 2020). The counselling process is typically tailored to the individual's unique needs and circumstances, ensuring a personalised and practical approach and may include:

1. **Self-reflection:** Value reorientation counselling begins with encouraging individuals to self-reflect. It involves exploring their current values, beliefs, and attitudes and understanding their reasons. Self-assessment helps individuals gain insight into the origins of their values and identify any discrepancies or conflicts between their current values and their desired goals.
2. **Values clarification:** This technique involves helping individuals clarify their values by examining their importance, relevance, and impact on various aspects of their lives. Through guided discussions and exercises, individuals can prioritise their values and identify inconsistencies or conflicts (Brown, 2020).
3. **Cognitive restructuring:** Cognitive restructuring is commonly used in value reorientation counselling to challenge and modify irrational or unhelpful thoughts related to values. Individuals can develop a more balanced perspective on their values by identifying cognitive anomalies and replacing them with more rational and adaptive thoughts (Ogundele & Ogunleye, 2020).
4. Role-playing exercises can help individuals explore different perspectives and test new values or behaviours in a safe environment. This technique allows individuals to gain insight into the potential consequences of adopting different values or behaving in alternative ways (Denen, 2020).
5. **Setting goals:** Specific goals related to value reorientation are essential to counselling. By establishing clear objectives, individuals can work towards aligning their actions with their newly identified values. Goal setting provides direction and motivation for individuals undergoing value reorientation counselling (Garcia & Martinez, 2017; Smith & Johnson, 2018; Thompson & Davis, 2019; Brown & Wilson, 2020).

One critical reason value reorientation is essential as a counselling strategy against examination malpractice is its ability to foster a solid moral compass in individuals. During counselling sessions, students are encouraged to reflect on their actions and the consequences of dishonest practices. By promoting virtues such as honesty, integrity, and fairness, counsellors can help students develop a sense of personal responsibility towards their academic achievements (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2016).

Furthermore, value reorientation helps students understand the importance of hard work and perseverance. It helps by highlighting the value of effort and dedication; counsellors can motivate students to adopt a more positive approach towards their studies. It can reduce the temptation to resort to cheating or other examination malpractice as shortcuts to success.

Another significant aspect of value reorientation is its focus on character development. By encouraging students to cultivate self-discipline, self-control, and self-motivation, counsellors can help them build strong moral characters. It reduces the likelihood of engaging in examination malpractice and equips students with essential life skills that will assist them beyond their academic pursuits (Brown, 2020).

Moreover, value reorientation as a counselling strategy promotes a culture of academic integrity within educational institutions. By creating awareness about the negative consequences of examination malpractice on individual growth and societal development, counsellors can contribute to building an environment where honesty and ethical behaviour are valued and rewarded. It can lead to a collective commitment to maintaining high academic honesty and fairness standards. The first step is to create awareness among students, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders about the adverse concerns of examination malpractice (Smith, 2019; Thompson, 2017). Constructive activities such as workshops, seminars, or awareness campaigns that can encourage the virtue of honesty and integrity in primary education to fight against malpractices during examination should be propagated (Garcia & Martinez, 2017). Strategies that can Combat Examination Malpractice.

Addressing issues of examination malpractice in schools requires a multifaceted approach involving various strategies and measures. It is important to note that no single strategy can eliminate examination malpractice. A holistic and collaborative approach involving all stakeholders is crucial to creating a culture of academic integrity and deterring malpractice effectively. Here are some effective strategies that can be employed:

1. **Counselling Sessions:** Students in examination malpractice should receive individual or group counselling sessions. Counselling sessions aim to identify the underlying reasons for their unethical behaviour and help them understand the importance of academic integrity. Counsellors can use various techniques, such as cognitive-behavioural therapy or motivational interviewing, to address factors that contribute to engaging in examination malpractice (Nelson-Jones, 2016; Ajayi & Adewale, 2020)
2. **Ethical and Moral Education:** There is an urgent need to integrate ethical education into the basic education programme to teach students about the virtues of integrity, principles of obedience, adherence to rules and regulations, and, majorly, the consequences of unwholesome practices. Education should focus on cultivating virtues such as honesty, integrity, fairness, and respect for others (Oladele & Ogunleye, 2019).
3. **Character Development:** Emphasise character development through various activities, programs, and initiatives and encourage students to reflect on their values, set goals aligned with these values, and engage in activities that promote ethical behaviour and responsible decision-making (Oladele & Ogunleye, 2019).
4. **Ethical Decision-Making Skills:** Provide students opportunities to develop and practice ethical decision-making skills. Teach them how to analyse ethical problems, consider the potential consequences of their actions, and make choices that uphold their values and

principles (Ajayi & Adewale, 2020).

5. **Awareness of Consequences:** Increase students' awareness of the negative consequences of exam malpractice. Help them understand its impact on their integrity, academic growth, and future opportunities (Okonkwo & Nwankwo, 2018).
6. **Role Modelling:** Encourage teachers, school administrators, and other staff members to be positive role models by displaying integrity, honesty, and ethical behaviour. Students are likelier to emulate such behaviour when they observe it in their mentors (Garcia & Martinez, 2017).
7. **Creating a Supportive Environment:** Foster a supportive, inclusive school environment that reinforces ethical behaviour. Encourage open communication, provide avenues for reporting malpractice anonymously, and address concerns promptly and fairly (Okonkwo & Nwankwo, 2018).
8. **Parents Involvement:** Parents play a crucial role in shaping the values and behaviour of their children. Schools should actively involve parents in the value reorientation process by organising parent-teacher meetings, workshops, or seminars. These platforms can educate parents about the negative consequences of examination malpractice and provide them with strategies to promote ethical behaviour at home (Garcia & Martinez, 2017).
9. **Collaboration and Partnerships:** Collaborate with relevant stakeholders, such as educational institutions, policymakers, and community organisations, to develop comprehensive strategies against exam malpractice (Ajayi & Adewale, 2020). Best practices, resources, and expertise are available to create a collective effort to promote values and ethics.

Conclusion

Value reorientation is a long-term process that requires consistent effort and reinforcement. Integrating critical tactics within the broader educational framework and ensuring consistent implementation is essential. By emphasising the importance of values and ethics, students can develop a strong sense of integrity and make ethical choices, thereby reducing the occurrence of exam malpractice. Through implementing these practical steps, value reorientation can be an effective counselling strategy against examination malpractice in Nigerian basic schools. It aims to create a culture of honesty and integrity, fostering a solid moral compass, emphasising hard work and perseverance, developing character, and cultivating a culture of academic excellence among students, ultimately improving the quality and credibility of education. Furthermore, the value reorientation strategy can effectively address examination malpractice issues and the overall growth and development of the standard of basic education.

Suggestions

Value reorientation can be used effectively in counselling in addressing examination malpractice in basic education. Counsellors should help instil positive values and ethical behaviour among students through individual and group counselling, moral and ethical education, creating a supportive environment, and collaborating with other stakeholders to help the students in basic education in Nigeria. Also, counsellors should help create a culture of integrity and academic honesty through essential components of value reorientation strategies such as moral talks, organising seminars, and creating awareness through banners, posters and parental involvement to contribute to students' overall growth and development in basic education.

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