

# **Socio-Demographic Variables and Examination Malpractices Among Students in Tertiary Institutions in Southwest, Nigeria**

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## **Abstract:**

This study investigated the socio-demographic variables and examination malpractices among students in tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria. The study specifically examined the level of examination malpractices among students in tertiary institutions; and the difference in examination malpractices based on gender, religion, type of institutions and parents' socio-economic status. This study used a descriptive research design of the survey type. The population included all students enrolled in public higher institutions in Southwest Nigeria. The study sampled 2,137 students from nine public tertiary schools using a multistage sampling procedure. To obtain data for the study, a self-designed questionnaire titled "Examination Malpractices Questionnaire (EMQ)" was used. The instrument's validity was established using face and content validity. The instrument's dependability was established using the test re-test approach which yielded reliability coefficient of 0.82. The data derived from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings of this study revealed that the level of examination malpractices was moderate. It was further concluded that gender, religion, type of institutions and parent socio-economic status did not make difference in the involvement of students in examination malpractices. It was recommended among others that management of tertiary institutions should take drastic steps in ensuring that examination malpractices are reduced by dealing with whoever is involved in examination malpractices without fear or favour.

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## Introduction

Examination malpractices in schools have piqued the attention and concern of educators, counsellors, psychologists, researchers, and school administrators. Examination malpractices which have continued to increase in Nigeria seems to be an indication of the growing desperation of students to pass examinations at all cost in order to progress in their educational pursuits. The overall deterioration in Nigerian society as a whole and in the Southwest, developing countries like Nigeria seems to be reflected in this.

Examination is used as a yardstick to determine students' competence and progress, which formally measure their performance in the education sector in many countries, Nigeria inclusive. In Nigerian institutions of higher learning, the grade or quality of examinations appears nevertheless to be stained by examination malpractices and hence constitutes a big challenge for the appropriate authorities. Examination malpractice, which colloquially is referred to as cheating, has spread around the world. In numerous places all over the globe today, academic dishonesty and, in particular, cheating during examinations, have grown and taken on a worrisome dimension. This epidemic has become a serious source of concern in a number of countries across the world, leaving many appalled and speculating about the cause of the crisis.

It appears that the habit of giving out examination questions in advance to students by typists, clerks or even lecturers in exchange for money or sex is worrisome. It is equally very sad to note from the observation of the researcher that the lecturers who are supposed to be role models to students also seem to engage in examination malpractices. It appears many female students are also interested in sex for marks as a number of them desire to go to lecturers begging for marks. Lecturers who are not ready to give marks to the students without taking something from them in return will then ask for sex from female students and money or any other material things from the male students. The researcher observed that some lecturers request for sex to give marks to girls which makes the girls who are not ready to study hard have better grades than those who actually study hard to pass their examinations.

The researcher observed that even though on the issue of sex for grades, female students seem to be more liable, but recently male lecturers seem to engage male students, in homosexuality whereby giving the male students who agree with their evil requests better grades than what they would have ordinarily got by their performances. Recently, it was reported on Radio Nigeria that there were cases of female students in some Universities in Southwest, Nigeria who set traps for their lecturers who asked for sex from them to pass some courses. The news went viral and the managements of such universities have to investigate such cases. Adejumo (2018) reported in Sahara Reporter in Premium Times that a case happened in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria where a lecturer was dismissed for "sex for marks". The news went viral, the management of the university investigated the case. It appears that there are others who did this type of evil and got away with it just because the students in question in most cases needed such to pass their examinations as they are not ready to work for whatever grades they get, and it is those who are ready to do the right thing that exposed the perpetrators of such evil acts.

An ex-beauty queen Anita May Igoni CEO of Miss Port-Harcourt in the Nation newspaper of 9th November (2019) in an interview with one Adeniyi told the whole world her experience about sex for grades in her university. She said “it wasn’t an awesome experience having problems with a particular course for two years. The lecturer wanted me so badly that he would personally bribe invigilators to walk me out of examination hall few minutes into the start of examination, especially in his course. It was really a challenge. My then course Representative had to pretend I was his girlfriend and pleaded with him so badly even lying he engaged me before he later passed me with a C. The experience was really terrible”.

There seems to be so many ways by which examination malpractices are perpetrated - students are found bringing into the examination rooms ‘microchips’ (this is small piece of papers where answers to questions are written or scribbled in tiny ways to be used in examinations to either help remember points or copy answers to questions as the case may be). Some are written on the vital parts of the body while some even write these answers on naira notes or store them on their phones. As a result, maintaining a smooth and equitable examination process in our tertiary institutions seems to be jeopardized. For example, Adenipekun (2004) said that not just the turmoil in Nigeria's educational system but an increased indoctrination of young people into the art of fraud was the tragedy of examination malpractice.

According to observation, many students seem to have succumbed to what is alluded to as examination malpractices after the focus changed from what one should do to paper qualifications. The examination malpractice may be characterized, according to Abdu-Raheem (2019) as any actions undertaken by a person or group of people in violation of set regulations regulating the conduct of the examination. She proceeded by adding that various infractions of the regulations may occur beforehand, before or after examinations by the candidate, associates, lecturers, inspection officers, printers or anyone who are only concerned with changing the marks or grades of the candidate(s). She also noted that question materials must have been bought before an examination, candidates may discuss answers in the course of an examination and marks may be changed after an examination. These findings indicate that examination malpractices may even take place outside the examination room.

According to Onuka and Durowoju (2013), examination malpractice is any action undertaken by a student or community of students with the intent of awarding any of them a higher rating than they will actually obtain based on their own accomplishments. This examination malpractice was classified as any inappropriate act perpetrated by candidates or anyone responsible for administering the examination which clearly violated the regulations governing the conduct and the worth of the examination. Any act perpetrated before, during or after an examination violating the norms guiding appropriate and orderly conduct of the examination is referred to as examination malpractice as mentioned. It was also characterized as an action which aims to have an unfair edge over other candidates, violating norms and guidelines governing the examination for personal benefit of these examinations.

Examination malpractice seems to have become a common phenomenon among students worldwide, but is particularly concerning in Nigeria. This may be due to environmental factor because in some tertiary institutions in the Southwest Nigeria, a lecture room that should

normally be occupied by two hundred (200) to two hundred and fifty (250) students will be packed with close to one thousand (1000) students. If Public Address Systems (PAS) are not made available in such lecture rooms, such environment may not be conducive for learning. Hence the students who are supposed to attend lectures in such lecture rooms may decide to stay away as diseases can be contacted in such an environment. While there have been countless debates on whether examinations can be eliminated from school operations, there has been no alternative examination for evaluating the success of teaching and learning. As a result, examinations continue to be an effective examination in evaluating learning practices in classrooms (Ogunji, 2011).

The extent to which students engage in examination malpractice at higher education institutions tends to be growing highly concerning, troublesome, and threatening to the educational system's well-being (Nsisong, 2013). Leaking question papers, unauthorized persons at examination centers, bribing of examination inspectors, and parents to purchase for their children leaked papers before starting examinations are merely some of the main forms of examination malpractices and fraud detected (Nsisong, 2013).

There seems to be little credibility in the results given to graduates from tertiary institutions as a consequence of examination malpractices infiltrating different layers of our educational system nationally, most notably in Southwest Nigeria. Accusing fingers are being pointed to many quarters on this development in tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria. For example, an increasing number of stakeholders within and outside the academic circle have raised concern on the rapid degeneration of education industry, due to the widespread issues of examination malpractices being witnessed in the system in recent times which perhaps may be due to poor study habits of students in higher institutions. It is indeed a sad reminder of abnormality in our value system as many students prefer to cheat in examinations instead of developing a good and viable study habits.

The Nigerian tertiary institutions appear to be in the throes of examination malpractices due to inability of students to make use of available facilities to improve their study habits. It is perplexing and astounding, but an utter fact to notice that older types of examination malpractice in Nigeria have either dwindled or been deftly supplanted by more advanced and scientific ones, at least according to the researcher's observations. This heinous development is a clear indication of a lack of moral standards and, more importantly, it portends the total destruction of Nigeria's institutions of higher learning unless swift and drastic measures are taken to halt the growing trend of this despicable act that is prevalent at this point in Nigerian history, which can only be accomplished by good study habits (Animasahun, 2013).

In response to the spread of examination malpractices in Nigeria, it appears that various schools, examination bodies and all levels of government have imposed some punitive measures on offenders. Even individuals and groups have been calling for stiffer penalty on perpetrators of this dastardly act. Some long-term steps adopted by school authorities, examination organizations and the government to stop this tidal wave of examination malpractices in Nigeria seem to be unpleasant in their observations of the impartiality, integrity and legality of such investigative fighters (Omemu, 2015).

Examination malpractices include behaving improperly in attempt to achieve an unfair advantage(s) during the educational assessment phase. According to Ukpong (2013),

examination malpractice is a societal blight, but certain citizens now see it as a legitimate and identifiable method of passing an examination. The syndrome has spread to such proportions in the twenty-first century that it has been ingrained in all levels of schooling. Examination malpractices have been granted a variety of terms, one of which is examination cheating. According to Akpan (2016), one of the remote triggers of examination malpractices is an excessive reliance on paper qualifications, which encourages students to cut corners rather than engage in well-planned/good study habits that will help them succeed in examinations. Other contributors to this social evil are the students, because many of them today have poor study habits and are lazy; hence, many look for various ways of making it by all means. For the purpose of this research study, selected moderating variables (gender, religion, parental socio-economic status and type of institution) would be considered to moderate the prediction of students' attitude to examination malpractices in Southwest, Nigeria.

Gender refers to male or female identity's psychological and societal characteristics (Ewumi, 2012). A gender identity is a set of ideas about how men and women may act. Furthermore, Aluya and Blanch (2004) characterized religion as an institutionalized structure of attitudes, values, and practices to which a person may be classified as a participant, adherent, or endorser of a particular collection of doctrines. A person's faith was viewed as synonymous with his or her religion. According to them, religion has been observed to be another contributing determinant of students' attitude to examination malpractices. For example, some students can jettison tests, lectures and go for vigil or special programme that would not allow them to read. Doing this, they can be engaged in examination malpractices. As good as religion is, it can affect students if not practised in a sensible manner.

The social background of the parent is critical in supplying these instructional services, and it seems that a shortage of these resources raises the rate of examination malpractice. This means that affluence of parents seems to influence examination malpractice, as students from such homes in spite of available education facilities at their disposal still turn around to source for good grades through various forms of examination malpractices before, during and after examinations.

Furthermore, Mgboro (2006) was also of the opinion that socio-economic status of parents determines the extent at which their children are involved in examination malpractices. It is observed that parents make several efforts to cut corners for their children's academic progress, thereby giving them an affront not to have good study habit and later engage in examination malpractices as a way of supporting such ungodly efforts. This study investigated the socio-demographic variables and examination malpractices among students in tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria. The study specifically examined:

- i. the level of examination malpractices among students in tertiary institutions; and
- ii. the difference in examination malpractices based on gender, religion, type of institutions and parents' socio-economic status.

### Research Questions

1. What is the level of examination malpractices among students in tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria?

### Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for this study.



1. There is no significant gender difference in examination malpractices.
2. There is no significant difference in examination malpractices among students based on religion.
3. There is no significant difference in examination malpractices based on type of institutions.
4. There is no significant difference in examination malpractices based on their parents' socio-economic status.

## Research Method

This study used a descriptive research design of the survey type. The population included all students enrolled in public higher institutions in Southwest Nigeria. The study sampled 2,137 students from nine public tertiary schools using a multistage sampling procedure. To obtain data for the study, a self-designed questionnaire titled "Examination Malpractices Questionnaire (EMQ)" was employed. It consisted of two sections namely section A and B. Section A of the instrument sought for the following bio-data of the respondents: gender, religion, parental educational, occupational status and type of institution. Section B consisted of 20 items on attitude to examination malpractices. The instrument was prepared using Likert type 4 rating scale which will be scored as follows: Strongly Agree (SA): 4, Agree (A): 3, Disagree (D): 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD): 1.

The instrument's validity was established using face and content validity. The instrument's dependability was established using the test re-test approach. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis was used to correlate the two sets of data collected. The reliability coefficient of 0.82 found was deemed sufficient to establish the instrument's reliability. The researcher administered the instrument individually, assisted by three trained research assistants from each of the States included in the study. The data derived from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The frequency counts, percentages, mean, standard deviation, and chart were used to answer the study questions. t-test analysis was used to test Hypotheses 1 while Analysis of Variance was used to test Hypotheses 2 - 4. All hypotheses were tested at a significance level of 0.05.

## Results

### Research Questions

Question 1: What is the level of examination malpractices among students in tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria?

Respondents' examination malpractice scores were utilized to reply to the question. The answers to questions 1-20 in Section B of the EMQ were visualized using frequency counts, percentages, mean, and standard deviation scores. The mean score and standard deviation of the replies were used to evaluate the extent of examination malpractices (low, moderate, and high). When the standard deviation is taken from the mean score, the low level will be arrived at the low level ( $40.13 - 6.49 = 33.64$ ). The mean score (40.13) was used to assess the degree of examination malpractices, while the mean score plus the standard deviation ( $40.13 + 6.49 = 46.62$ ) was used to assess the degree of examination malpractices. Thus, the low level of examination malpractices is defined as those occurring between 20.00 and 33.64, the moderate level as those occurring between 33.65 and 46.61, and the severe level as those

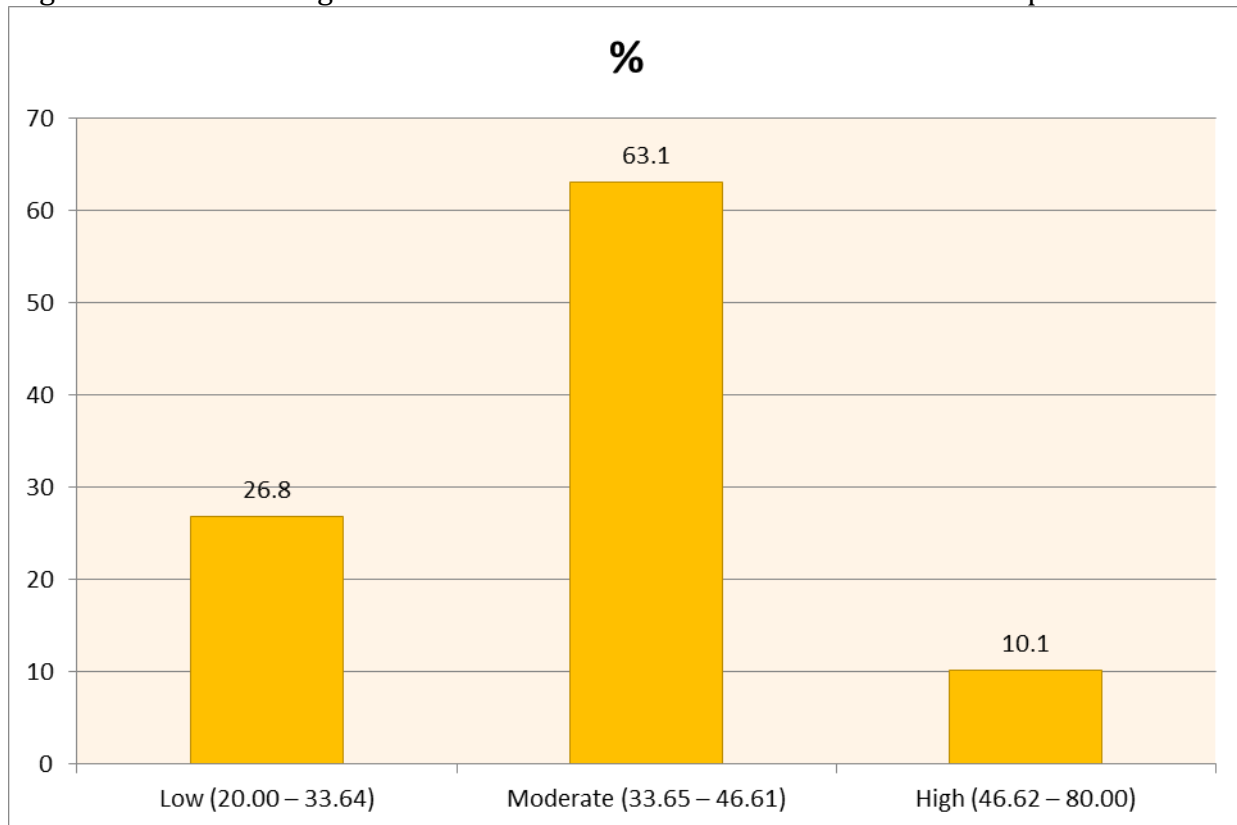


occurring between 46.62 and 80.00. Table 1 summarizes the extent to which examination misconduct occurs in tertiary institutions in Southwest Nigeria.

**Table 1:** Level of examination malpractices in tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria

Level of examination malpractices	No of Respondents	Percentage
Low (20.00 – 33.64)	573	26.8
Moderate (33.65 – 46.61)	1348	63.1
High (46.62 – 80.00)	216	10.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2137</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 showed the level of examination malpractices in tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria. The result showed that out of 2137 respondents, 573 respondents representing 26.8 percent had low level of examination malpractices. Those who had moderate level of examination malpractices were 1342 respondents representing 63.1 percent while 216 respondents representing 10.1 percent had high level of examination malpractices. This showed that the level of examination malpractices in tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria is moderate. Figure 1 further revealed the level of examination malpractices.



**Figure 1:** Bar chart showing the Level of examination malpractices in tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria

### Testing of Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant gender difference in examination malpractices

**Table 2:** Gender difference in examination malpractices

Variations	N	Mean	SD	df	t <sub>cal</sub>	P
Male	1221	40.16	6.50	2135	0.298	0.765
Female	916	40.08	6.48			

P > 0.05

Table 2 shows that the t-cal value of 0.298 is not significant because the P value (0.765) > 0.05. This implies that null hypothesis is not rejected. Hence, there is no significant gender difference in examination malpractices, this means that the examination malpractices of male and female students do not differ.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference in examination malpractices among students based on their religion.

**Table 3:** Religious difference in students' involvement in examination malpractices

Groups	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	136.005	2	68.002	1.616	0.199
Within Groups	89785.134	2134	42.074		
<b>Total</b>	<b>89921.139</b>	<b>2136</b>			

P > 0.05

The result presented in table 3 showed that F-cal value of 1.616 is not significant because the P value (0.199) > 0.05 at 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This implies that there is no significant difference in examination malpractices among students based on their religion.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant difference in examination malpractices based on their type of institutions.

**Table 4:** Difference in examination malpractices based on their type of institutions

Groups	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	10.319	2	5.160	0.122	0.885
Within Groups	89910.820	2134	42.133		
<b>Total</b>	<b>89921.139</b>	<b>2136</b>			

P > 0.05

The result presented in table 4 showed that F-cal value of 0.122 is not significant because the P value (0.885) > 0.05 at 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This implies that there is no significant difference in examination malpractices based on their type of institutions.

**Hypothesis 4:** There is no significant difference in examination malpractices based on their parental economic status.

**Table 5:** Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for difference in examination malpractices based on their parental economic status

Groups	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	63.773	2	31.886	0.757	0.469
Within Groups	89857.366	2134	42.107		

Groups	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	63.773	2	31.886	0.757	0.469
Within Groups	89857.366	2134	42.107		
<b>Total</b>	<b>89921.139</b>	<b>2136</b>			

$P > 0.05$

The result presented in table 5 showed that F-cal value of 0.757 is significant because the P value (0.469)  $> 0.05$  at 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This implies that there is no significant difference in examination malpractices based on their parental economic status.

### Discussion

The study revealed that the level of examination malpractices among students was moderate in tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria. This implies that the students are still involved in examination malpractices to some extent. This is not good for the system and it calls for radical steps against examination malpractices. The probable reason for this finding might be because of the attitude of students to learning. The finding of this study confirmed Rotimi and Omonijo (2014), Omonijo and Nnedum (2012), Omonijo (2011) and Aminullai (2006) reported an average incidence of examination malpractices among the students.

The study revealed that there was no significant gender difference in examination malpractices. It means that students' involvements in examination malpractices have no link with their gender. The reason for this finding might be due to the desperate nature of both male and female students for certificates. This finding is in consonance with Khan and Khan (2011) who reported that there is no significant relationship between gender and involvement of students in examination malpractices. They concluded that both male and female students are involved in examination malpractices on almost equal basis. This could be dangerous to the labour market as inefficient hands with good grades could be employed instead of efficient ones with lower grades.

The finding however contradicted Abdu-Raheem (2017), Rotimi and Omonijo (2014), Omonijo and Nnedum (2012), Omonijo (2011) and Aminullai (2006). Aminullai (2006) confirmed that male students are more involved in examination malpractices than female ones. Omonijo (2011) discovered that female students are afraid of been caught for violating the rules and regulations guiding examinations and been punished. Omonijo and Nnedum (2012) also found that male students involve more in examination malpractices than their female counterparts. Rotimi and Omonijo (2014) further discovered that female students are more involved in examination malpractice than their male counterparts while Abdu-Raheem (2019) found a significant relationship between gender and students' involvement in examination malpractices.

It was also revealed that there was no significant difference in examination malpractices among students based on their religion. The probable reason for this finding might be due to the fact that none of the religious denominations preach in support of examination malpractices. It implies that the religion of the students is not a factor in their involvements in examination malpractices. Olatoye (2007) reported that religion reduces the tendency

towards or incidence of deviant and immoral behaviours such as examination malpractice. In support of this finding, Mulenga (2015) reported no significant relationship between religious commitment and incidence of examination malpractice. Aderogba (2011) also confirmed that there is no religion difference in examination malpractices among students. Based on this finding, religion could not be used as a remedy for examination malpractices.

The study revealed that there was no significant difference in examination malpractices based on their type of institutions. In support of this finding, Olasehinde, et al (2004) found out that there was no difference in examination malpractices based on institutional type. This showed that unless the teaching pattern in the tertiary institutions in the Southwest, Nigeria is reviewed, there might be little or no solution to examination malpractices.

The study also revealed that there was no significant difference in examination malpractices based on their parents' socio-economic status. It implies that parents' socio-economic status did not influence the students' involvements in examination malpractices. The reason for this finding might not be farfetched from the assertion of Ajayi and Ekundayo (2010) who submitted that parents irrespective of their economic status are prepared to spend any amount of money to reimburse the children's way in order to pass examinations at all cost. This finding is indifference to the findings of Ogidefa (2008) and Khan and Khan (2011) who discovered that the rate of involvement of students in examination malpractice does not depend largely on parent's socio-economic status. They concluded that both children of the rich and the poor engage in the practice.

The finding however contradicted Akpan (2016) who found out that the socio-economic status of parents influences the level of examination malpractices among tertiary institutions' students. It was observed by the researcher that when parents are ready to spend any amount to reimburse the children's way in order to pass examinations at all cost, such students' evil days are postponed as they are likely not to be able to do well when they find themselves in the labour market and this will likely affect the society adversely.

### **Conclusion**

Sequel to the findings of this study, it was concluded that the level of examination malpractices was moderate. It was further concluded that gender, religion, type of institutions and parent socio-economic status did not make difference in the involvement of students in examination malpractices.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

1. Management of tertiary institutions should take a drastic steps in ensuring that examination malpractices are reduced by dealing with whoever is involved in examination malpractices without fear or favour.
2. Religion should be incorporated into the curriculum of tertiary institutions in the Southwest, Nigeria as a means of helping students to study hard and shun examination malpractices.
3. Teaching partern should be reviewed in the tertiary institutions in Southwest Nigeria.

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