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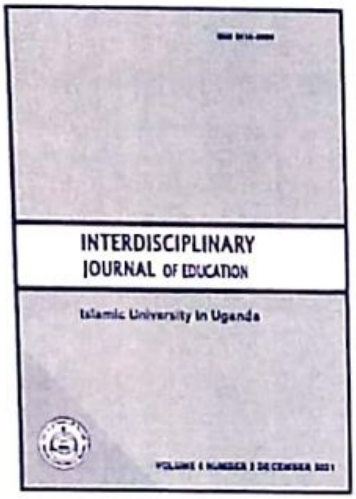

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Prevalence and Causes of Misconduct among University Undergraduates in Ilorin, Nigeria

Abdulrasaq O. Balogun[1], Elizabeth O. Uyanne[2], and Lasbat O. Badamas[3]
[1,2,3] Department of Social Sciences Education, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Abdulrasaq, O. Balogun, University of Ilorin, Nigeria.
Email: balogun.ao@unilorin.edu.ng

Abstract

This study investigated prevalence and causes of misconduct among university undergraduates in Ilorin. It adopted a descriptive survey design and was guided by four research questions. The sample for this study was 300 undergraduates using multistage sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was questionnaire. Frequency count and percentage were used to analyse the questions raised. The findings revealed that misconduct of various degrees is prevalent among university students and that the prime factors such as poverty, negative peer influence, parents' divorce and many more are responsible for illicit behaviour. The outcome of the study further revealed that if the menace still continues it can degenerate into loss of intellectual property and hurt graduates' future employment prospects. It was recommended among others that school authorities and lecturers in higher institutions should intensify efforts in educating students on moral values that will enable them acquire a set of beliefs and values on what is right and wrong which will make them excel in their academic career rather than pursue activities and characters that would not make them relevant in the society.

Keywords: prevalence, causes, misconduct, university, undergraduates

Education is an instrument that society uses to prepare its citizens to lead fruitful lives according to their talents and interests. The educational system must be such that talented individuals have full opportunity to develop their abilities. It must give scope for the training of individuals into leadership positions and concurrently provide for the development of all the vocational abilities needed for the creation of a progressive and democratic society (Bichi, 2017). The quality of education that is imparted to our youths and the significance at which we rate it contributes largely to the formation of the attitudes they carry over into public life. So, the kind of seed sown in educational institutions, the means in which we nurture it and the strength which it imbibes in its various stages of growth will all determine the harvest that the country will reap in the form of its youth. University is viewed as the single and most important industry for the production of high-level workforce in Nigeria (Okoli & Oranusi, 2011).

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The objectives of university education are to raise the logical tone of the society, nurture the public mind, purify the national taste, supply the principles of popular aspirations and give enlargement and sobriety to ideas of the age (Aguh, 2007). To strengthen these ideologies, stakeholders in Nigerian university education sector tend to guard jealously the integrity of the universities and the quality of graduates produced (Olayemi & Oyelekan, 2009). Students of higher institutions have been accused of portraying different types of misconduct like examination malpractice, watching and practicing pornography, violence, dishonesty, disobedience to lecturers and school administration, raping school/class mates, alcohol consumption, confronting and stabbing lecturers in schools, vandalism, cultism, drug abuse, insulting/assaulting, stealing, rioting; among others (Ngwokabuenui, 2015).

Misconduct is a recurring dismal in the fabrics of higher institutions in Nigeria. It is disrespect for school authority, disobedience of set rules and regulations and non-maintenance of established standards of behaviour. School rules are usually associated with classroom management and school discipline. However, rules also define ways of thinking about oneself and the world. Rules are guidelines for actions and for the evaluation of actions in terms of good and bad, or right or wrong, and therefore a part of moral or values education in school (Emaikwu, 2013).

Many factors have been attributed to the menace of students' misconduct in institutions of learning in Nigeria among which are: desire for certificates at all costs, students' poor study habits, peer influence, students' insatiable characters and many more. Tomé et al. (2012) viewed the causes of academic misconduct among students as being the over-reliance on educational certificates as a proportion of ones' knowledge and skills, which has prompted a distraught surge by a great many people for educational certificates through deceptive means. The disjunction between socially acclaimed objectives and the institutionalized methods for accomplishing these objectives, combined with the social setting of extraordinary accentuation on progress objectives without identical accentuation upon institutional methods for achieving these objectives have established a climate that inclines a few students, educators, families and others to academic misconduct. Likewise, Abdulkarim (2005) recognizes the causes to include feelings of dread toward disappointment, being frenzy for certificates, want of guardians or families to have their youngsters in decision callings and university, tension on students to seek after courses which they have no inclination, strain on instructors who need to acquire favours of students and overcrowded sitting arrangement. As indicated by the Onyibe et al. (2015), students' misconduct is brought about by the accompanying variables: quick development and interest for education in Nigeria, a helpless instructing and learning climate, an absence of exceptional instructors who do not have the fundamental instructional methods to grant the substance to the students, and an absence of suitable tangible materials like standard laboratories, libraries, and

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different things. These invariably made students and others to employ different methods or form to perpetuate the evil.

One of the major forms of misconduct among students of higher institutions is examination malpractice. Examination is an organized assessment technique which presents individuals with a series of questions or tasks geared towards ascertaining the individual acquired knowledge and skills (Oduwaiye, 2014). Examination malpractices could be defined as behaviour contrary to a set of expected code of conduct or contrary to a set of ethics and norms exhibited in the course of examination by persons or group of persons. Any act of dishonesty, cheating or improper action carried out before, during or after examination against stipulated examination rules and regulations constitutes examination misconduct (Emaikwu, 2013).

Another form of misconduct is drug abuse. Awoyinfa (2012) argued that the very high rate of drug use and abuse among students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria began from their childhood or early adolescence. The term drug is defined as any substance that when absorbed into a living organism may modify one or more of its physiological functions. The term is generally used in reference to a substance taken for both therapeutic purpose and abused substances (Pemede & Viavonu, 2010).

Cultism is another pressing misconduct among students of higher institution. Ogunbameru and Daodu (2003) defined Secret Cult to be any form of organization whose activities are not only exclusively kept away from the knowledge of others but such activities are carried out at odd hours of the day and they often clash with accepted norms and values of everyday life. Cultism can be seen as a group or association in schools whose membership, admission policy and initiation formalities as well as its mode of operation are done in secret and kept secret. This does not mean that every group in our schools whose business is conducted in at most secrecy is campus cult. Cultism may be referred to as the formation of a group of initiates or adherent round the figure of a god, a saint or even a living being. It may involve the practice of a particular doctrine within the body of religious belief (Pemede & Viavonu, 2010).

Misconduct among students, for example, examination malpractices, copyright infringement and a lot more have grave results on the individuals and establishments of learning, networks and the country at large. Dismissal from school, termination of studentship, loss of position, and absence of self-assurance are impacts and have made a great deal of shame on individuals, families and the country. The blameworthy ones who were not gotten and rebuffed cannot guard the certificates acquired not to talk of conveying at their obligation posts (Onyibe et al., 2015). An institution that becomes notorious in examination malpractice loses international credibility. The implication is that documents or certificates emanating from such institution will be treated with suspicion as is the case of some institutions in Nigeria today. Such country's

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educational institutions are as good as dead as far as international cooperation in education is concerned.

Another consequence of students' misconduct (examination malpractice) is the loss of intellectual property. Intellectual Property results from any individual's inventiveness and ideas. Such freedoms can exist in a book, a brand, a creation, a design or a tune. Scholarly deceptive nature, like literary theft, is what might be compared to taking someone else's property. A unique work (idea, writing, design, art, music, and so forth) made by somebody is the "cash" for that individual and when someone else utilizes it without authorization, the writer loses their protected innovation, acknowledgment and conceivable pay. One of the social consequences of students' misconduct as examined by Cizek and Wollack (2017) is the moral consequences of cheating, including the "propensity framing" nature of cheating and duping, degrading of difficult work, honesty, and decency. The constant idea of cheating demonstrates that people who cheat in scholastic exercises and figure they can pull off it might keep on cheating at work, in everyday life, and in different parts of life. Over the long haul, this disposition can be hurtful not exclusively to the miscreant, yet to every other person impacted by their activities.

Achievement of the goals of tertiary education largely depends on the positive disposition of students in their academic work and the instructional performance of lecturers. It has been realized that students' misconduct in higher institutions in Nigeria has become a cankerworm that has eaten too deep into the students' moral up bring. Students have become uncontrollable and highly disrespectful to themselves, lecturers, school administrators, parents and to the society at large. Hence, this study examined the prevalence and causes of misconduct among university undergraduates in Ilorin. The major purpose of the study was to examine the prevalence and causes of misconduct among university undergraduates in Ilorin. By so doing, the following research questions were raised to achieve the purpose of this study.

1. What are the forms of misconduct common among university undergraduates in Ilorin?
2. What are the causes of misconduct common among university undergraduates in Ilorin?
3. What are the consequences of misconduct among university undergraduates in Ilorin?
4. What are the suggested possible solutions to curb misconduct among university undergraduates in Ilorin?

Methodology

Descriptive research of the survey type was employed for this study. The population for this study consisted of all university undergraduates in higher institutions in Kwara State. The target population was made up of undergraduates in University of Ilorin. Stratified sampling technique was employed to group the respondents based on faculty. The University of Ilorin

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has 15 faculties with a total of 45,000 undergraduates. Simple random sampling technique of fish bowl method was used to select 20 samples from each of the faculty in the University of Ilorin. The respondents for this study were therefore 300 undergraduates. A researcher-developed four Likert rating scale questionnaire was used in data collection for the study. The questionnaire consisted of two sections namely: Section A and B. Section A elicited information on the demographic variables of the respondents, while Section B elicited information on the variables under study.

To ascertain the validity of this instrument, the researcher gave copies to three experts in the Department of Social Sciences Education, University of Ilorin. Their comments and suggestions were used to improve the quality of the instrument. To determine the reliability of this instrument, the researcher adopted a test-retest method, where a questionnaire was administered to twenty (20) respondents of student of Al-Hikmah University which is outside the area of study. Two weeks were allowed between the first and second administration. Both results were compared using Person Product Moment Correlation and a reliability index of 0.83 was obtained. Percentage was used to analyse the research questions raised in this study.

Answering Research Questions

Research Question One:

What are the forms of misconduct among university undergraduates in Ilorin?

Table 1

Forms of Misconducts Among University Undergraduates

S/N	Forms of Misconducts	Agree	Disagree	Rank	Decision
1	Examination dishonesty/malpractice is the commonest form of misconduct among students.	248 (82.7%)	52 (17.3%)	1st	Agreed
2.	Drug abuse is a very pressing form of misconduct among the early age and adults.	219 (73%)	91 (27%)	3rd	Agreed
3.	Most tertiary students involve in cult activities on campus.	147 (49%)	153 (51%)	5th	Disagree
4.	Students plagiarize all the time to have their ways when conducting research.	197 (65.7%)	103 (34.3%)	4th	Agreed
5.	Students steals other pupils' property as a form of misconduct	249 (83%)	51 (17%)	2nd	Agreed

Table 1 reveals that among the forms of misconduct prevalent in the tertiary institution in Kwara State, examination dishonesty/examination malpractice was ranked 1st, stealing others' property was ranked 2nd, drug abuse ranked 3rd, plagiarism ranked 4th, while cultism was ranked the last. This implies that examination malpractice / dishonesty, theft, drug abuse and plagiarism were the prevalent misconducts common among students of tertiary institution in Kwara State.

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Research Question Two:
What are the perceived causes of misconduct among university undergraduates in Ilorin?

Table 2
Perceived Causes of Misconduct Among University Undergraduates

S/N	Causes of Misconducts	Agree	Disagree	Rank	Decision
1	Poverty	268 (89.3%)	32 (10.7%)	1st	Agreed
2.	Peer Influence/ Pressure	266 (88.7%)	24 (11.3%)	2nd	Agreed
3.	Students' being Insatiable	153 (51%)	147 (49%)	5th	Agree
4.	Divorce of Parents	235 (78.3%)	65 (21.7%)	3rd	Agreed
5.	Single Parenthood	201 (67%)	99 (33%)	4th	Agreed

Data in Table 2 shows various causes of misconducts among undergraduates in Kwara State as perceived by students. This is reflected in the responses of the respondents on various causes of misconducts. This means that poverty, peer influence/ pressure, divorce of parents, and single parenthood are among the causes of misconducts among undergraduates in Kwara State.

Research Question Three:
What are the perceived consequences of misconduct among university undergraduates in Ilorin?

Table 3
Consequences of Misconducts Among University Undergraduates

S/N	Consequences of Misconducts	Agree	Disagree	Rank	Decision
1	Misconducts often lead to loss of lives and properties	188 (62.7%)	112 (37.3%)	4th	Agreed
2.	Misconducts lead to poor educational performance	231 (77%)	69 (23%)	3rd	Agreed
3.	Misconduct leads to the loss of studentship	162 (54%)	138 (46%)	5th	Agreed
4.	Loss of intellectual property	237 (79%)	63 (21%)	2nd	Agreed
5.	Misconduct could hurt future graduates' employment prospects	263 (87.7%)	37 (12.3%)	1st	Agreed

From Table 3, it reveals the various perceived consequences of misconduct among university undergraduates. Hurting of future graduates' employment prospects was ranked 1st, followed by loss of intellectual property (2nd), poor educational performance (3rd), loss of lives and properties (4th) and the loss of studentship was considered the least. The result revealed that engaging in misconduct can hurt future graduates' employment prospects, loss of intellectual property and poor educational performance among others.

Research Question Four
What are the suggested possible solutions to curb misconduct among university undergraduates in Ilorin?

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Table 4

Possible Solutions to Curb Misconducts Among University Undergraduates

S/N	Solutions to Curb Misconducts	Agree	Disagree	Rank	Decision
1	Moral education	279 (93%)	21 (7%)	1st	Agreed
2.	Involvement of students in making rules and regulations	227 (75.7%)	73 (24.3%)	2nd	Agreed
3.	Value re-orientation	102 (34%)	198 (66%)	5th	Agreed
4.	High school supervision and counselling	193 (64.3%)	103 (35.7%)	4th	Agreed
5.	Ensure enforceable rules and regulation	224 (74.7%)	76 (25.3%)	3rd	Agreed

Table 4 reveals that majority of university undergraduates identified moral education which was ranked 1st as the most viable solution to students' misconduct in higher institutions, followed by involvement of students in making rules and regulations in the school (2nd), the next is ensuring of enforceable rules and regulations (3rd), ranked 4th is high school supervision and counselling and the last is value re-orientation. This indicates that university undergraduates sampled considered the whole items as probable solutions to students' misconduct in higher institutions of learning. Solutions included moral education, involvement of students in decision making and regulations, value re-orientation, high school supervision and counselling and ensuring enforceable rules and regulations.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that there were various forms of misconduct in higher institutions in Kwara State. The outcome of the study revealed that examination malpractice/ examination dishonesty, plagiarism, drug abuse and stealing of other students' properties were the prevalent misconducts common among students of tertiary institutions in Kwara State. This finding is in line with Oduwaiye (2014) who asserted that one of the major forms of misconduct among students of higher institution is examination malpractice. In a similar vein, Emaikwu (2013) stressed that any act of dishonesty, cheating or improper action carried out before, during or after examination against stipulated examination rules and regulations constitutes examination misconduct.

Another finding of this study revealed that there were various causes of misconduct among undergraduates in higher institutions in Kwara State. Among factors identified to be responsible for various forms of misconduct among undergraduates include: peer influence/pressure, poverty, divorce of parents, single parenthood and student insatiable. This finding corroborates the outcome of the finding of Abdulkarim (2005) and Tomé et al. (2012) who found out that there is direct relationship between students' peer group influence and adolescent risk behaviour. The study concluded that the bad influence of peer groups is more associated with the involvement in risk behaviours, while the good influence is more related to good conduct.

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Another finding of this study revealed that there were various consequences of misconducts among undergraduates in higher institutions in Ilorin. The outcome implies that involvement of undergraduates in any form of misconduct can lead to hurting future graduates' employment prospects, loss of intellectual property and poor educational performance etc. This finding is in tandem with the assertion of Onyibe et al. (2015) who asserted that the common pace of bank disappointments, breakdown of structures, financial harm, defacement, seizing/prisoner taking for emancipate, drug dealing, counterfeit medication assembling and deals are pragmatic impacts of moral debauchery, exuding from examination negligence. Impacts of examination extortion are shown in the filling stations, houses of worship, homes, medical clinics, markets and all over the place. Haladu (2003) was of the opinion that future leaders who have been prepared through an educational system portrayed by scholastic extortion and untruthfulness, will absolutely show this deceitful conduct in any association they may track down themselves. Also the result of the finding is in line with that of Blankenship and Whitley (2000) which confirm that students who involve in dishonest act such as plagiarism and examination malpractice in the academic discourse, especially undergraduate students tend to demonstrate irregular behaviours during their professional life and vice versa, thereby, resulting into loss of intellectual property. Similarly, the study of Harris (2004) revealed that engagement of students in any form of academic dishonesty could have serious consequences on them, as they not only ruin the reputation of the school, but also lead to the loss of chances for other educational opportunities in the future.

The last finding of this study revealed that moral leadership education, involvement of students in decision making and regulations, value re-orientation, high school supervision and counselling and ensuring enforceable rules and regulations were identified as effective strategies for curbing misconduct among undergraduates in higher institutions. This finding supports that of Devlin and Gray (2007) which revealed that one of the solutions to misconducts in higher institutions is that the management of higher learning institutions should take the lead in examining particular or primary reasons for plagiarism among their students and institute anti-plagiarism policy which will strengthen the reading and writing skills of the students. In addition, Ramzan et al. (2012) advised that there is the need for more opportunities to increase the university students' level of awareness about misconduct and advising students on using anti-plagiarism software such as Turnitin to detect plagiarism in their papers before submission. Emenalo (2016) also proposed that one of the possible solutions to misconducts in higher education institutions is to reinforce the teaching of research method and academic discourse and related rules and regulations.

Conclusion

Considering the fact that misconduct is a major concern that affects teaching and learning process in higher institutions in Nigeria and that student

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misconduct is in one way or the other associated with irregular behaviours, it is indeed imperative to investigate causes and consequences of misconduct among university students in Ilorin because the menace has brought the implication that student involvement in various misconduct has consequential effects on their future employment prospects, loss of intellectual properties, loss of academic integrity and poor educational performance. The study concluded that more efforts should be made to address the problem of students' misconduct so as to enhance the culture of creativity and quality education.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it was therefore recommended among others that:

1. Students of higher institutions should emulate virtues that would make them excel in their academic career rather than pursue activities and characters that would not make them relevant in the society.
2. School authorities and lecturers in higher institutions should intensify effort in educating students on moral values as this makes them to acquire a set of beliefs and values on what is right and wrong. These categories of beliefs will guide the students' intentions, mental attitude and behaviours to act in accordance with school rules and regulations.
3. School administrators and lecturers should exercise good moral leadership in schools.
4. Student advisers should as a matter of fact adopt strategies to help them avoid negative peer pressure. The strategies such as giving attention to students on how they feel about situations, explaining to them to have secret codes of communicating unpleasant issues to level advisers and parents and always keeping friends with similar values and beliefs.
5. Lecturers and parents should demonstrate good examples to students since they are their role models in order to copy good behaviour from them.
6. School religious bodies should continually intensify efforts on moral training of students so as to equip them with good moral training.

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