

Perceived Social Support and Social Media Addiction as Predictors of Tendency to Engage in Examination Misconduct among Undergraduates

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*One of the assumptions of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) is that external factors (subjective norms) may shape individual behavioural intentions. Based on this assumption, this study was carried out to find if perceived social support and social media addiction predict tendency to engage in examination misconduct. One hundred and eighty (180) participants comprising 112 females and 62 males, aged between 18-40 years with a mean age of 22.77 years and standard deviation of 3.61 were involved in the study. These participants were undergraduates from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Three instruments were used in the study. They include: Examination Malpractice Questionnaire (EMQ), Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), and Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS). Two investigations were made in the study using hierarchical multiple regression analysis. The first investigation led to the findings that social support (family, friends and significant others) jointly predicted tendency to engage in examination misconduct positively and significantly, $\beta (3, 175) = .107^{**}$. The first findings revealed also that friends' social support predicted tendency to engage in examination misconduct negatively and significantly, $\beta = -.253^*$ while significant others' social support predicted tendency to engage in examination misconduct positively and significantly, $\beta = .416^{**}$. It was also revealed that family social support predicted tendency to engage in examination misconduct negatively but not significantly, $\beta = -.047$. The second investigation led to the findings that social media addiction significantly predicted tendency to engage in examination misconduct, $\beta (1, 174) = .048^*$. This indicated that social support and social media addiction predicted tendency to engage in examination misconduct. The findings may have implications for planning, understanding and designing programs for prevention of examination malpractice. It was recommended that school management should institute workshops and symposium each semester on perceived social support and social media addiction with respect to examination misconduct.*

Keywords: Tendency to engage in examination misconduct, perceived social support, social media addiction

Introduction

Nigerian students' involvement in different forms of examination misconduct, especially as regards collaborative copying, use of microchips, impersonation and smuggling of answer scripts into the examination halls, increases on a daily basis (Eneh & Eneh, 2014; Onyibe, Uma & Ibina, 2014 & Anzene, 2014). This conflicts with the major aims and objectives of establishing educational institutions which involve the training of the mind

and character for acquisition of knowledge; theoretical and practical skills, creation and communication of new ideas (Nanna, 1997; Aaron, 1992). Therefore, literature has shown that education should be the best legacy individuals or any nation could leave behind for her citizens or generations to come (Obi-Nwosu, Nwokeji and Osayi, 2014).

Unfortunately, evidence from Nigerian society and institutions of learning show that many students

are involved in examination misconduct in one way or the other (Amadi & Opuiyo, 2018; Akinrefon, Ikpah, Bamigbala & Adeniyi, 2016). The implication of these incidences of examination misconducts include the fact that the standard of education will decline, which will affect the general development of the nation, both politically and economically. Given these consequences of high incidence of examination misconduct in the society, it has become necessary for research to explore the possible factors that could increase or decrease the tendency to engage in examination misconduct, especially among the students.

The possible factors can be based on the paradigm in the field of behavioural sciences and law which states that every action or behaviour must be motivated or intended (*actus reus*). Logically, one can conclude that understanding the factors (external) that can propel intention for actions such as the tendency to engage in examination misconduct would be a step to understanding how examination misconduct can be managed.

Thus, in this research, external factors (perceived social support and social media addiction) and their contribution to the understanding of the tendency to engage in examination misconduct were examined. The variable that contributed most to the tendency to engage in examination misconduct was also revealed.

Examination Malpractice Act of Nigeria (1999) as cited by Asante-Kyei and Nduro (2014) defined examination misconduct as any act of omission or commission by a person who in anticipation of, before, during or after any examination fraudulently secures any unfair advantage for him or herself, or any other person in such a manner that contravenes the examination rules and regulations to the extent of undermining the validity, reliability, authenticity of the examination and ultimately the integrity of the certificate issued. Obi-Nwosu, Nwokeji and Osayi (2014) citing Ukpei, Ndifon and Enuokoha (2012) defined examination misconduct as a deliberate action by examiner or examinee which violates examination rules and places a candidate at an unfair advantage or disadvantage. It is any form of abuse of process and rules at any stage from setting of examination questions to the

release of results. Therefore, any illegal form of obtaining an answer to examination questions from any other source other than the intellect of the candidate is referred to as examination misconduct (Obi-Nwosu *et al.*, 2014). So, examination misconduct is any deliberate act of wrong doing by academic authorities, students and parents during, before or after an examination to give a student an unwarranted upper hand in the assessment or evaluation process.

Obi-Nwosu *et al.* (2014) defines tendency to engage in examination misconduct as a person's inclination or likelihood to behave improperly during examination and to break the rules governing examination.

The first variable of interest in this study is perceived social support. Onyishi *et al.* (2012) defined social support as the comfort given to one by the family, friends, co-workers and others who assist one. Onyishi *et al.* (2012) stated also that perceived social support is the perceived function and quality of social relationship such as availability of help or support received. Duci and Tahsini (2012) also defines social support as feeling that one is cared for by, and has assistance available from other people, and that one is part of a supportive social network. Therefore, these support resources can be emotional (e.g., nurture), informational (e.g., advice) or companionship (e.g., sense of belonging). It is the perception that one has assistance available. It is the actual received assistance, or degree to which a person is integrated in the social network.

Furthermore, according to literature, social support is being studied in relationships with positive psychology (Psychological wellbeing) and not in relationships with negative variables (Brown, 2016). Again, most public discourse regarding the possible implications of social support policies on crime in the United States and the resulting policies contradicted the academic literature which posits that providing support decreases the necessity of criminal activity, thus reducing the likelihood of crime (Brown, 2016). Brown's findings may be applicable in Nigeria, and there is need to study perceived social support and tendency to engage in examination misconduct in order to expand further the concept of perceived social support and which type of perceived social support (family, friends

and significant others) have the strongest predictive power on tendency to engage in examination misconduct.

Another variable of interest in this study is social media addiction. APA (2019) defined addiction as a complex condition, a brain disease that is manifested by compulsive substance use despite its harmful consequences. People with addiction (severe substance use disorder) have an intense focus on using a certain substance, such as alcohol or drugs to the point that it takes over their life. They keep using substances even when they know it will cause problems. Pavlicek (2013) defined social media addiction as a situation in which one regularly has an urge to use social media excessively. Walker (2019) also referred to social media addiction as someone spending too much time on using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other forms of social media.

Therefore, social media addiction could be seen as a compulsion to use social media excessively. This manifests in actions such as constantly checking of WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Facebook status update or stalking people's profiles on Facebook for hours to the extent that the person's behaviour or habit conflicts with every day responsibilities such as family, school, work and other social obligations. Therefore, in this study, the relationship among perceived social support, social media addiction and tendency to engage in examination misconduct was examined.

Statement of the problem

Nigeria is society in which certificate determines employment and placements in high positions without regards to experience and knowledge. Owing to these problems, many parents, guardians and teachers most of the time encourage their wards to engage in one form of examination misconducts or the other (Ojo & Olumuyiwa, 2011). Many institutions of learning in Nigeria have adopted many approaches to stop examination misconduct ranging from expulsion to suspension and even jail terms; yet the problems are on the increase. Based on the above problems, there is need to investigate other possible predisposing external factors that may help in understanding the reason for the tendency to engage in examination misconduct and workable approaches to reduce this menace.

Theoretical framework

This study is based on media system dependency theory by Ball-Rokeach and DeFluer (1976) and theory of planned behaviour by Ajzen (1991). These two theories unified all the variables and tried to explain how each variable is linked to another in this study.

The basic assumption of media system dependency theory is that media ties together the interaction of broad social system, mass media and individual into a comprehensive explanation of media effects. In the context of this study, social media ties together the interaction of social system (perceived social support) and its effects on individuals' behaviours (tendency to engage in examination misconduct/social media addiction).

On the other hand, the basic assumption of theory of planned behaviour is that attitude towards the behaviour (beliefs about behaviour), subjective norms (beliefs about others' attitude toward behaviour) and perceived behavioural control (beliefs to perform behaviour) together shape an individual's behavioural intention (tendency to engage in examination misconduct/social media addiction). In the context of this study, subjective norm component of theory of planned behaviour unified all the variables in this study. Subjective norm is an individual's perception about the particular behaviour (social media addiction/tendency to engage in examination misconduct) which is influenced by the judgment (perceived social support) of significant others, friends, spouses, family and peers (Amjad and Wood, 2009)

Empirically, Amjad and Wood (2009) investigated the role of beliefs about the acceptability of aggression (normative beliefs) against Jews in determining who could join extremist group. The first finding in the study showed that normative beliefs about aggression against Jews strongly predicted whether a participant would join an extremist group or not. Again, Shao (2018) conducted a study on why we click 'like' (Clicking behaviour) on *we chat*. By using the theory of reasoned action and gratification theory as theoretical basis; the underlying factors behind the 'like' button were explored in this study. Data from an online survey from 255 participants collected was analysed. The result revealed that

both users' attitude and subjective norms were positively related to users' actual "like" clicking behaviour. Moreover, Keller and Miller (2015) conducted a research using theory of planned behaviour to predict crime reporting intent. Nine hundred and eighty-five (985) participants were used in the study. Findings revealed that theory of planned behaviour (attitude, social norms and perceived behavioural control) significantly predicted intent to file a crime report. The research also showed that social norms predicted intent to file a crime report thereby confirming the finding of Amjad and Wood (2009).

Hypotheses

Thus, two hypotheses were postulated in this study. The first hypothesis stated that perceived social support (family, friends and significant others) will significantly predict tendency to engage in examination misconduct. The second hypothesis stated that social media addiction will significantly predict tendency to engage in examination misconduct.

Method

Participants

Using convenient, purposive and simple random sampling techniques, one hundred and eighty (180) undergraduates were used as participants in the study. They consisted of 112 females and 62 males from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Their ages ranged from 18-40 years with a mean age of 22.10 and standard deviation of 1.62.

Instruments

Three instruments were used in the study. The instruments include: examination malpractice questionnaire (EMQ) by Alutu and Aluede (2006). This is a 24 item questionnaire which measures the tendency to engage in examination misconduct. Scoring pattern ranges from 1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The scale was found by Obi-Nwosu *et al.* (2014) to have high divergent validity of $-.186^*$ and the present researcher found Cronbach alpha reliability of .74. The second instrument is a multidimensional scale of perceived social support (MSPSS) by Zimet *et al.* (1988). This is a 12 item scale which measures family, friends and significant others' social support. The scoring

pattern of the scale ranges from 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree. The scale was found by Onyishi *et al.* (2012) to have predictive validity of $p < .01$ by using MSPSS to predict life satisfaction of prison workers. Reliability of the scale was also obtained by Onyishi *et al.* (2012) by reporting internal consistencies of the subscales (Cronbach Alpha); family .78, friends .76 and significant others .70. The last instrument is social media addiction scale by Sahin (2018). This is a 29 item scale which measures social media addiction (virtual tolerance, virtual communication, virtual problem and virtual information). Higher scores indicate level of social media addiction. The scoring pattern of the scale ranges from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The present researcher conducted a pilot test on social media addiction and obtained Cronbach alpha reliability of .87.

Procedure

Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from the Department of Psychology, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Mixed sampling procedure which adopted convenient, purposive and simple random sampling were used to select the participants at different stages. Purposive sampling was used in the first stage to select undergraduates. This is because students who were involved in examination misconduct would be invited to appear before an examination misconduct committee after each semester examinations. Convenient sampling was used in selecting Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka (NAU) while simple random sampling was used in selecting Faculties and Departments. Five Faculties were randomly selected from NAU because the University is large and the Faculties are located at different locations. Two Departments were selected from each of the selected Faculties. The selected Faculties and Departments were Management Sciences (Accountancy and Marketing), Social Sciences (Sociology and Economics), Arts (History and Philosophy), Environmental (Quantity Surveying and Fine & Applied Arts) and Physical Sciences (Geology and Computer Science). Three sets of instruments were administered to Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka undergraduates after obtaining informed consent and explaining the purpose of the study to them at

their different lecture halls. The participants were assured of utmost confidentiality of their responses. The participants were specifically instructed not to indicate their names. This was done to increase the participants' level of compliance in responding to the questionnaire. They were encouraged to be honest in their responses to the questionnaire. The instruments were administered with the help of trained research assistants, and course representatives in the selected departments. It took approximately 40 minutes to complete the

questionnaire. Two hundred and Fifty (250) instruments were distributed while two hundred and twenty (220) were returned, but only one hundred and eighty were correctly filled by the participant. These were used for data analysis.

Design and statistics

A predictive design was adopted in the study. Hierarchical multiple regression was used for data analysis.

Results

Table I: Zero order correlation coefficient matrix showing tendency to engage in examination misconduct, social support and social media addiction

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
TEM	1				
FAS	.076	1			
FRS	-.033	.259**	1		
Sign	.247**	.456**	.542**	1	
SMAS	.169*	.011	-.041	-.114	1

** P< .01, * P< .05

TEM = Tendency to engage in examination Misconduct, FAS = Family social support, FRS =

Friends social support, Sign = significant others social support, SMAS = Social media addiction

Table II: Table of hierarchical multiple regression analysis showing tendency to engage in examination misconduct, social support and social media addiction

Variable	R ²	df1(df2)	F	STD	B
Model1	.112**	3(174)	7.35		
TEM					
FAS				.410	-.047
FRS				.403	-.253*
Sign				.427	.416**
Model 11	.053**	4(173)	8.61		
FAS				.399	-.067
FRS				.392	-.266*
Sign				.419	.459**
SMA				.038	.234**

** P< .01, * P< .05 Dependent Variable: Tendency to engage in examination malpractice

TEM = Tendency to engage in examination misconduct, FAS = Family social support, FRS = Friends social support, Sign = significant others, social support SMA = Social media addiction

From table II above, the first finding revealed that perceived social support (family, friends and significant others) jointly predicted tendency to engage in examination misconduct significantly among undergraduates. The finding revealed also that significant others' social support significantly predicted tendency to engage in examination

misconduct positively among undergraduates, while friends' social support significantly predicted tendency to engage in examination misconduct negatively among undergraduates. The second finding of the study also revealed that social media addiction significantly predicted tendency to

engage in examination misconduct positively among undergraduates.

Discussion

This study investigated perceived social support and social media addiction as predictors of tendency to engage in examination misconduct among undergraduates. Two hypotheses were tested and the findings were discussed.

The first finding revealed that perceived social support (family, friends and significant others) jointly predicted tendency to engage in examination misconduct significantly. This means that social support contributed 11% variances in the prediction of tendency to engage in examination misconduct. The result revealed also that friends' social support significantly predicted tendency to engage in examination misconduct negatively. This means that as perceived social support (friends) increases, tendency to engage in examination misconduct decreases. The results revealed also that significant others' social support significantly predicted tendency to engage in examination misconduct positively. This indicates that increase in perceived social support (significant others) determined increase in tendency to engage in examination misconduct while decrease in perceived social support (significant others) determined decrease in tendency to engage in examination misconduct. Therefore, the first finding showed also that while friends' social support significantly predicted tendency to engage in examination misconduct negatively; significant others' social support significantly predicted tendency to engage in examination misconduct positively, while family social support predicted tendency to engage in examination misconduct negatively but not significantly. One of the theories of planned behaviour assumptions that external factors (subjective norms) may shape individual intention supported the finding of this study. In the context of this research, social support and social media addiction are regarded as external factors. Amjad and Wood's (2009) finding on normative beliefs also related with this finding. Amjad and Wood's (2009) study investigated the role of beliefs about acceptability of aggression (normative beliefs) against Jews in determining who would join extremist group. The finding showed that

normative beliefs about aggression against the Jews strongly predicted whether youths would join an extremist group or not. So this means that normative beliefs of undergraduates can influence the tendency to engage in different forms of examination misconduct.

Keller *et al.* (2015) also relates with this finding. Keller and Miller (2015) conducted a research using theory of planned behaviour to predict crime reporting intent. Their findings revealed that theory of planned behaviour (attitude, social norm and perceived behavioural control) was significantly predicted with the intent to file a crime report. Keller and Miller's (2015) finding revealed also that social norm predicted intent to file a crime report more than the other factors of the theory of planned behaviour. This showed that theory of planned behaviour may influence tendency to engage in examination misconduct. Moreover, Keller and Miller's (2015) finding is also related to the results of this study as a tendency to engage in examination misconduct presupposes an intention to engage in the act of examination malpractices.

Furthermore, the second finding in this study revealed that social media addiction significantly predicted tendency to engage in examination misconduct. This showed that while social media addiction increases, tendency to engage in examination misconduct equally increases and when social media addiction decreases, the tendency to engage in examination misconduct equally decreases. The implication of this finding is that significant others' social support predicted tendency to engage in examination misconduct more than social media addiction and perceived social support (friends and family).

This second finding is related to media system dependency theory. In the context of this study, media system dependency theory means that social media addiction ties together the undergraduates and the social media and this militates against the individuals' interest in studying their books thereby resulting in students' involvement in examination misconduct during examination in order to pass.

Moreover, the finding of Obarisiagbon (2016) also supported this present finding. He conducted qualitative and quantitative study with 300 participants on social media and the incidence of examination misconduct among undergraduates.

The analysed data revealed that incidence of examination misconduct has risen as a result of the use of WhatsApp and social networking sites. Ezeabii (2019) whose findings also relates with this, conducted a study on the influence of social media on academic performance. The finding from the study revealed that social media influence students' academic performance positively and negatively.

The second finding in this study corroborates existing literatures on social media addiction as a predictor of examination misconduct. This showed that social media addiction militates against undergraduates studying their books as they ought to, rather they pay much attention to social media like: Facebook, WhatsApp, LinkedIn and others.

Implication of the study

This results from this study implies that perceived social support (significant others) and social media addiction positively and significantly predicted tendency to engage in examination misconduct. The findings revealed also that perceived social support (significant others) has more predictive power compared to perceived social support (friends and family) and social media addiction. This has implications on policy making. This is because the results may have implications for understanding, planning and designing programmes for intervention and prevention of examination misconduct. Policy makers should put the variables into consideration as one of the predictors of the tendency to engage in examination misconduct.

Recommendations

Further research effort should focus in-depth on other internal factors that are likely to cause tendency to engage in examination misconduct. Disciplinary measures should be implemented irrespective of who is involved in examination misconduct. It is recommended also that school management should institute workshops and symposiums each semester on perceived social support and social media addiction with respect to examination misconduct. Finally, parents, guardians and significant others should be informed of the dangers of encouraging their children or wards to engage in examination misconducts.

Limitations of the study

The limitations of the study include the small size of the sample selected for the study due to the time frame for the conduct of the research. Another limitation is that experimental design was not utilised in data collection for the study. Owing to this it lacks temporality of measures and causality was not inferred.

Conclusion

The results have implication for policy makers who work in school managements and the ministry of education. This implies that social support and social media addiction are essential factors in predicting tendency to engage in examination misconduct. Therefore, social support (family, friends and significant others) and social media addiction should be encouraged as factors that are likely to increase or reduce tendency to engage in examination misconduct. The findings from this research will encourage researchers to explore other possible predicting variables that may contribute positively or negatively in predicting tendency to engage in examination misconduct. This is because understanding variables that are related to having a tendency to engage in examination misconduct will be of help to those who are interested in solving the problem.

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