

The Causes of Malpractices in Examinations at School and Board Examinations Stage as Perceived by Senior Secondary School Students

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Abstract: *The paper is the result of an attempt to study the causes of malpractices in examinations at school stage as perceived by senior secondary school students. The problem of malpractices in examinations is a very serious issue and is prevalent at all the stages of education and can be witnessed everywhere – in rural and urban areas, in towns and metropolitan cities, in government and private schools, in poor and affluent students and among less and more intelligent students. Still the issue has not attracted many researchers in India. In the present case, the causes of malpractices have been studied under four categories viz., student related causes, teacher related causes, examination/education system related causes and miscellaneous causes. The results of the study may help the stakeholders to have a deep insight into the wide spread and serious problem.*

Key Words: *Malpractices in Examinations, Senior Secondary School Students,*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Almost all of us have read in newspapers or heard from the radio and television or observed through interaction with students, teachers and other members of the society about examination malpractices. Examination malpractice is one of those significant problems that are challenging the education system now-a-days. It is anything that is done wrongly before, during and even after the examination. It occurs both in internal and external examinations. Examination malpractice means massive and unprecedented abuse of rules and regulations pertaining to internal and public examinations, beginning from setting of questions through the taking of the examinations, their marking and grading to the release of the results and the issuance of certificates. Reasons for its prevalence are traceable to many factors including inadequate funding of schools, laxity in prosecuting offenders, inability of students to cope with school work, students' inadequate preparation and strong desire to pass at all costs, sitting arrangement of students during examinations, too much emphasis on certificates and non-completion of subject syllabuses (Ayinde, 2012).

Some students remain absent from the school owing to one or the other reason and do not do their work appropriately. Some of the schools do not have enough facilities needed for effective teaching and learning. There are no appropriate and sufficient teaching aids in the schools. In some schools there are no adequate laboratories. Hence, teachers teach science subjects only theoretically. Some of the schools do not have libraries and the students fail to find additional information from the library. They have to rely on prescribed books only. All these factors lead to ineffective teaching and learning. This, in turn, leads the students to involve themselves in malpractices. The students who pass in this way face difficulties in making it a success once they get promoted to the next class and many of them fail to cope with tertiary education. These students retard the progress of the whole class because the teacher has to repeat the work done. It is natural to assume that the attainment of those children who are frequently absent is, as a result, lower than their regularly attending peers (Sibisi, 1989).

Tambawal (2013) has listed the following causes of malpractices in examinations:

- High stakes of examinations: Success in an examination can have profound, immediate and long term impact on a candidate's life. In many developing countries like Nigeria, success in examinations and secondary school graduation represents the whole avenue for poor students to secure a non-menial job. Many parents are seen to resort to various corrupt practices to ensure that their children "PASS" the public examination.
- The status of the school and teachers: In many instances, the reputation of school and teachers depends upon the success of students in public examinations. This is particularly true where official or un-official school position in external examinations is published. There is also the problem of prizes awarded to winning schools or individual subject teachers which triggers malpractice from both school administrators and teachers.

- Personality disposition: Some students are more prone to cheating than others, because they are either lazy or dubious.
- Desire of some parents to place their children at lucrative jobs: Some parents would blindly want their children to get into lucrative courses like medicine, accountancy, etc. As such parents would collide with any person who can at any cost get their children the required credits.
- Inadequate school facilities and teachers: Textbooks shortages, inadequate training of teachers, teachers' absence from work, teachers lacking subject matter competency, strikes and frequent schools closure are common features of education system in developing countries like ours. Parents and students may perceive conditions of learning to be so inadequate that they have little option than resort to unfair means to increase the likelihood of the student to pass the examination.
- Inadequacies of the examinations: Where the standard aimed at is too high or obscure, teachers and students may lose confidence in their abilities to master the material. In such instance, students may resort to smuggling materials such as textbooks and notes in the examination hall.
- Location of examination Centres: Remote centres tend to receive examination materials in advance, thus increasing the opportunity of gaining access to question papers. Due to distance or remoteness of the centres, proper supervision cannot be done as a result any corrupt practice can be committed.
- Low salary levels: Salary levels of teachers, examination officials and examination supervisors are frequently below the poverty line. In such instances bribes from parents may become irresistible.
- Respect for certificate: The society regards possession of certificate as Alfa and Omega where an individual is only recognized if he possesses a certain certificate, but the professional skills are not recognized.
- Threats and intimidation from parents: Parents especially of wards from private schools and specialized schools, threaten proprietors of withdrawal of children or closure of schools if their children do not achieve desired results.

In view of the fact that no worthwhile study has been conducted in India on any aspect of malpractices in examinations, the present piece of research was undertaken.

2. Objective of the Study:

The following objective was formulated for the present study:

To identify the causes of malpractices in examinations at school and board examinations stage as perceived by students in terms of the following categories:

- a. Student Related Causes
- b. Teacher Related Causes
- c. Examination/Education System Related Causes
- d. Miscellaneous Causes

3. Method:

The objectives laid down for the study at hand conform to all the characteristics of descriptive method. Hence, descriptive method of research was used in the present study.

3.1 Sample

The State of Himachal Pradesh has twelve districts. Out of these, the following five districts were selected randomly viz., Solan, Kullu, Shimla, Lahaul & Spiti and Kangra. In the second stage, ten Senior Secondary Schools each from four districts viz., Solan, Kullu, Shimla and Kangra were chosen randomly. Owing to low enrolment, twelve schools were taken from the district of Lahaul & Spiti. It is worth mentioning that whole of Lahaul & Spiti district falls in tribal belt where the population density is just two per square kilometre. In the third stage, thirty senior secondary school students from each school were taken randomly except for the district of Lahaul & Spiti where the number of students differed in accordance with the strength of students in the school. It may be pointed out that due to low enrolment the procedure of randomization could not be applied in the district of Lahaul & Spiti. Here all the students present in the school were included in the sample. The total sample comprised of 1500 students.

3.2 Tool Used

The instrument used to collect data from students for this study was a scale titled “Examination Malpractices Scale” having four parts, viz., a. Student-Related Causes, b. Teacher-Related Causes, c. Examination/Education-Related Causes and d. Miscellaneous Causes.

3.3 Operational Definitions of Specific Terms

A few specific terms have been used in the text a number of times. The operational meanings of these terms are given below.

3.4 Malpractices in Examination: Malpractice in examination is a deliberate wrong doing contrary to official examination rules designed to place a candidate at an unfair advantage or disadvantage.

- **Causes:** Causes refer to factors or reasons which compel, allure or drive a student to indulge in malpractices in examinations.
- **Perceived:** The word ‘perceived’ mainly used in ‘objectives’ refers to ‘observed’, ‘noticed’ ‘recognized’ or ‘made out’.
- **Senior Secondary School Students:** Senior Secondary School Students refer to the students studying in class XI and class XII in Government Senior Secondary Schools of Himachal Pradesh.

3.5 Delimitations of the Study

The study was delimited to five districts of Himachal Pradesh to be selected randomly.

4. RESULTS:

a. Student-Related Causes

The responses of senior secondary school students in terms of frequencies for fifteen items for student-related causes with respect to malpractices in examinations are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Responses of senior secondary school students in terms of frequencies for fifteen items for student-related causes with respect to malpractices in examinations along with χ^2 values

FACTORS RELATED TO STUDENT							
5 = Strongly Agree; 4 = Agree; 3= Uncertain; 2 = Disagree; 1 = Strongly Disagree							
S. No.	Items	5	4	3	2	1	χ^2
1	Some students indulge in examination malpractices as they are prone to high stress, anxiety, tension and lack of confidence in testing situations.	420	481	362	161	76	401.67**
2	Some students indulge in examination malpractices in order to make themselves eligible for employment.	320	776	191	124	89	1047.85**
3	Some students indulge in examination malpractices in order to make themselves eligible for admission in a good school/college/professional course.	341	498	401	166	94	371.59**
4	Some students fall for examination malpractices due to laxity in invigilation during examination.	682	503	170	78	67	1025.35**
5	Some students are motivated to indulge in examination malpractices under peer influence.	335	498	253	102	312	273.29**
6	Some students indulge in examination malpractices due to general copying atmosphere that prevails during examination.	366	524	175	255	180	288.61**
7	Some students indulge in examination malpractices due to inadequate preparation for examinations.	584	475	324	65	52	761.95**
8	Some students indulge in examination malpractices due to poor academic ability (low intelligence, inadequate entry behaviour etc.)	312	418	413	284	73	262.07**

9	Some students indulge in examination malpractices as they are not genuinely interested in studies but somehow wish to pass examination.	556	480	153	257	54	606.37**
10	Low attendance (Chronic Absenteeism) compels some students to indulge in examination malpractices.	515	644	223	83	35	959.35**
11	Bad habits like drug abuse, sexual promiscuity and truancy compel some students to indulge in examination malpractices.	615	433	85	64	303	729.48**
12	Some students indulge in examination malpractices as a particular course of study is not of their interest.	398	473	308	251	70	316.33**
13	Some students indulge in examination malpractices due to pressure from parents to score good marks.	400	592	288	119	101	559.23**
14	Fear of failure in examination leads to examination malpractices.	847	446	128	31	48	1619.91**
15	High percentage of marks scored by some students lures mediocre students in to examination malpractices.	328	498	396	185	93	350.93**

** Significant at 0.01 level of confidence

Interpretation

It is revealed from Table 1 that χ^2 value is significant at 0.01 level of confidence for all the fifteen items studying student-related causes with respect to malpractices in examinations. This indicates that the responses of senior secondary school students in terms of frequencies for strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree and strongly disagree differ significantly for all the fifteen items. The scrutiny of Table 1 indicates that the students have responded more favourably to strongly agree and agree options for all the fifteen items. However, in order to get a clearer picture, the responses for 'strongly agree & agree' and 'disagree & strongly disagree' are added and the following scenario emerges.

Table 2: Added frequencies for 'strongly agree & agree' and 'disagree & strongly disagree' based upon Table 1

Item No.	Strongly Agree+Agree	Uncertain	Disagree+Strongly Disagree
1	901	362	237
2	1096	191	213
3	839	401	260
4	1185	170	145
5	833	253	414
6	890	175	435
7	1059	324	117
8	730	413	357
9	1036	153	311
10	1159	223	118
11	1048	85	367
12	871	308	321
13	992	288	220
14	1293	128	79
15	826	396	278

Table 2 shows that the number of responses added for 'strongly agree & agree' is larger for all the items in comparison to responses added for 'disagree & strongly disagree'. This indicates that senior secondary school students view all the student-related causes as important with respect to malpractices in examinations. However, the following five student-related causes have been viewed as most important by senior secondary school students.

Item No.	Most Important Student-Related Causes Perceived by Teachers
14	Fear of failure in examination leads to examination malpractices.
4	Some students fall for examination malpractices due to laxity in invigilation during examination.
10	Low attendance (Chronic Absenteeism) compels some students to indulge in examination malpractices.
2	Some students indulge in examination malpractices in order to make themselves eligible for employment.
7	Some students indulge in examination malpractices due to inadequate preparation for examinations.

b. Teacher-Related Causes

The responses of senior secondary school students in terms of frequencies for nine items for teacher related causes with respect to malpractices in examinations are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Responses of senior secondary school students in terms of frequencies for nine items for teacher-related causes with respect to malpractices in examinations along with χ^2 values

FACTORS RELATED TO TEACHER							
5 = Strongly Agree; 4 = Agree; 3= Uncertain; 2 = Disagree; 1 = Strongly Disagree							
Item No.	Items	5	4	3	2	1	χ^2
1	Inadequate training and incompetence of some teachers compels students to indulge in examination malpractices.	247	363	453	211	226	145.28**
2	Inability of some teachers to complete their syllabus due to different reasons compels students to adopt examination malpractices.	203	551	312	238	196	290.71**
3	Teachers themselves encourage malpractices in examinations due to pressure from department and society to show good results as well as for their own reputation.	304	234	489	209	264	165.57**
4	Teachers themselves encourage malpractices due to heavy workload in school.	211	253	382	390	264	87.05**
5	Teachers encourage malpractices in examinations in order to attract students for private tuition.	196	220	367	386	331	100.21**
6	Appointment of local teachers as invigilators inhibits them to be strict due to acquaintances.	205	313	456	369	157	195.08**
7	When local teachers are appointed as invigilators they tend to or are forced to please influential persons.	159	283	627	250	181	479.02**
8	Due to low salary, especially in private schools, teachers become prone to favours or bribery in return for help in examinations.	306	277	233	350	334	29.03**
9.	Discrimination of /against students by teachers in the classroom leads them to indulge in examination malpractices.	191	292	294	389	334	70.19**

** Significant at 0.01 level of confidence

Interpretation

It is revealed from Table 3 that χ^2 value is significant at 0.01 level of confidence for all the nine items studying teacher-related causes with respect to malpractices in examinations. This indicates that the responses of senior secondary school students in terms of frequencies for strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree and strongly disagree differ significantly for all the nine items. The scrutiny of Table 3 indicates that the students have responded more favourably

to strongly agree & agree options for item numbers 1, 2, 3 & 7 and have responded more favourably to strongly disagree & disagree options for item numbers 4, 5, 6, 8 & 9. However, in order to get a clearer picture, the responses for 'strongly agree & agree' and 'disagree & strongly disagree' are added and the following scenario emerges.

Table 4: Added frequencies for 'strongly agree & agree' and 'disagree & strongly disagree' based upon Table 3

Item No.	Strongly Agree+Agree	Uncertain	Disagree+Strongly Disagree
1	610	453	437
2	754	312	434
3	538	489	473
4	464	382	654
5	416	367	717
6	518	456	526
7	442	627	431
8	583	233	684
9	483	294	723

Table 3.4 shows that the number of responses added for 'strongly agree & agree' is larger for four items in comparison to responses added for 'disagree & strongly disagree'. Further, the number of responses added for 'strongly disagree & disagree' is larger for five items in comparison to responses added for 'strongly agree & agree'. This indicates that senior secondary school students view the following four teacher-related causes as most important with respect to malpractices in examinations.

Item No.	Most Important Teacher-Related Causes Perceived by Students
2	Inability of some teachers to complete their syllabus due to different reasons compels students to adopt examination malpractices.
1	Inadequate training and incompetence of some teachers compels students to indulge in examination malpractices.
3	Teachers themselves encourage malpractices in examinations due to pressure from department and society to show good results as well as for their own reputation.
7	When local teachers are appointed as invigilators they tend to or are forced to please influential persons.

On the other hand, most of the senior secondary school students reject altogether the following five teacher-related causes as factors for malpractices in examinations.

Item No.	Least Important Teacher-Related Causes Perceived by Students
8	Due to low salary, especially in private schools, teachers become prone to favours or bribery in return for help in examinations.
6	Appointment of local teachers as invigilators inhibits them to be strict due to acquaintances.
9	Discrimination of /against students by teachers in the classroom leads them to indulge in examination malpractices.
4	Teachers themselves encourage malpractices due to heavy workload in school.
5	Teachers encourage malpractices in examinations in order to attract students for private tuition.

c. Examination/Education System Related Causes

The responses of senior secondary school students in terms of frequencies for eight items for examination/education system-related causes with respect to malpractices in examinations are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Responses of senior secondary school students in terms of frequencies for eight items for examination/education system-related causes with respect to malpractices in examinations along with χ^2 values

FACTORS RELATED TO EXAMINATION/EDUCATION SYSTEM							
5 = Strongly Agree; 4 = Agree; 3= Uncertain; 2 = Disagree; 1 = Strongly Disagree							
Item No.	Item	5	4	3	2	1	χ^2
1	The defective examination system prepares background for examination malpractices.	292	556	421	139	92	498.09**
2	The answers of the questions asked in the examination are directly available in help books which persuade the students to adopt malpractices.	439	479	348	152	82	410.31**
3	The present day education fails to provide job security, hence meaninglessness of the system encourages copying in examination.	301	563	329	226	81	411.49**
4	Over emphasis on certificates over skills and competence gives rise to examination malpractices.	334	528	335	173	130	331.31**
5	Lack of sufficient number of teachers compels students to indulge in examination malpractices.	333	544	275	197	151	313.53**
6	Inadequate teaching-learning facilities such as classrooms, libraries and laboratories compel students to indulge in examination malpractices.	327	267	373	280	253	32.52**
7	Students do not get proper attention due to over-crowded classes. As a result they are compelled to indulge in examination malpractices.	546	337	206	154	257	312.95**
8.	Lenient policy of the Board of School Education against the students caught while cheating encourages other students to indulge in examination malpractices.	555	333	229	202	181	316.04**

** Significant at 0.01 level of confidence

Interpretation

It is revealed from Table 5 that χ^2 value is significant at 0.01 level of confidence for all the eight items studying examination/education system-related causes with respect to malpractices in examinations. This indicates that the responses of senior secondary school students in terms of frequencies for strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree and strongly disagree differ significantly for all the eight items. The scrutiny of Table 5 indicates that the students have responded more favourably to strongly agree and agree options for all the eight items. However, in order to get a clearer picture, the responses for 'strongly agree & agree' and 'disagree & strongly disagree' are added and the following scenario emerges.

Table 6: Added frequencies for 'strongly agree & agree' and 'disagree & strongly disagree' based upon Table 3.5

Item No.	Strongly Agree+Agree	Uncertain	Disagree+Strongly Disagree
1	848	421	231
2	918	348	234
3	864	329	307
4	862	335	303
5	877	275	348
6	594	373	533
7	883	206	411
8	888	229	383

Table 6 shows that the number of responses added for 'strongly agree & agree' is larger for all the items in comparison to responses added for 'disagree & strongly disagree'. This indicates that senior secondary school students view all the examination/education system-related causes as important with respect to malpractices in examinations. However, the following five examination/education system-related causes have been viewed as most important by senior secondary school students.

Item No.	Most Important Examination/Education System-Related Causes Perceived by Students
2	The answers of the questions asked in the examination are directly available in help books which persuade the students to adopt malpractices.
8	Lenient policy of the Board of School Education against the students caught while cheating encourages other students to indulge in examination malpractices.
7	Students do not get proper attention due to over-crowded classes. As a result they are compelled to indulge in examination malpractices.
5	Lack of sufficient number of teachers compels students to indulge in examination malpractices.
3	The present day education fails to provide job security, hence meaninglessness of the system encourages copying in examination.

Miscellaneous Causes

The responses of senior secondary school students in terms of frequencies for ten items for miscellaneous causes with respect to malpractices in examinations are presented in Table 3.7.

Table 7: Responses of senior secondary school students in terms of frequencies for ten items for miscellaneous causes with respect to malpractices in examinations along with χ^2 values

MISCELLANEOUS FACTORS							
5 = Strongly Agree; 4 = Agree; 3= Uncertain; 2 = Disagree; 1 = Strongly Disagree							
Item No.	Items	5	4	3	2	1	χ^2
1	Societal expectations for educational qualification puts pressure on students to indulge in examination malpractices	472	500	262	146	120	423.81**
2	Lack of appropriate punishment measures for external perpetrators of examination malpractices leads to increase in examination malpractices.	490	409	348	129	124	368.34**
3	Connivance of schools especially private ones to give good results to attract parents and students leads to examination malpractices.	520	348	287	191	154	280.23**
4	Students are already aware that the school/teachers /parents will assist them in malpractices.	197	534	300	216	253	248.77**
5	Examination centres located in remote areas provide an opportunity for malpractices due to poor supervision by authorities.	478	455	221	210	136	323.15**
6	Parents especially of wards from private schools, threaten proprietors of withdrawal if their children do not bring excellent results.	518	324	358	164	136	322.85**
7	Parental undue expectations from their wards to get high scores compel the students to indulge in malpractices in examinations (the expectations arise primarily due to social prestige/further admission).	318	532	297	209	144	289.25**

8	Lack of proper monitoring/supervision of their wards by parents prompts the students to indulge in examination malpractices.	344	339	521	174	122	332.86**
9	Poor moral upbringing of some youth by parents leads them to indulge in examination malpractices.	427	418	340	164	151	241.17**
10	Interference of local leaders like Pradhan or political persons forces the school principal/teachers to support/ignore malpractices in examinations.	326	227	525	181	241	247.57**

** Significant at 0.01 level of confidence

Interpretation

It is revealed from Table 7 that χ^2 value is significant at 0.01 level of confidence for all the ten items studying miscellaneous causes with respect to malpractices in examinations. This indicates that the responses of senior secondary school students in terms of frequencies for strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree and strongly disagree differ significantly for all the ten items. The scrutiny of Table 7 indicates that the students have responded more favourably to strongly agree and agree options for all the ten items. However, in order to get a clearer picture, the responses for 'strongly agree & agree' and 'disagree & strongly disagree' are added and the following scenario emerges.

Table 8: Added frequencies for 'strongly agree & agree' and 'disagree & strongly disagree' based upon Table 7

Item No.	Strongly Agree+Agree	Uncertain	Disagree+Strongly Disagree
1	972	262	266
2	899	348	253
3	868	287	345
4	731	300	469
5	933	221	346
6	842	358	300
7	850	297	353
8	683	521	296
9	845	340	315
10	553	525	422

Table 8 shows that the number of responses added for 'strongly agree & agree' is larger for all the ten items in comparison to responses added for 'disagree & strongly disagree'. This indicates that senior secondary school students view all the ten miscellaneous causes as important with respect to malpractices in examinations. However, the following five miscellaneous causes have been viewed as most important by senior secondary school students.

Item No.	Most Important Miscellaneous Causes Perceived by Students
1	Societal expectations for educational qualification puts pressure on students to indulge in examination malpractices
5	Examination centres located in remote areas provide an opportunity for malpractices due to poor supervision by authorities.
2	Lack of appropriate punishment measures for external perpetrators of examination malpractices leads to increase in examination malpractices.
3	Connivance of schools especially private ones to give good results to attract parents and students leads to examination malpractices.
7	Parental undue expectations from their wards to get high scores compel the students to indulge in malpractices in examinations (the expectations arise primarily due to social prestige/further admission).

The results of the study reveal different causes which lead to malpractices in school examinations. The results are expected to help all the stakeholders viz., parents, teachers, headmasters, principals, administrators and policy planners to have a deep insight into the problem and further devise measures and strategies to curb the problem of malpractices in examinations

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