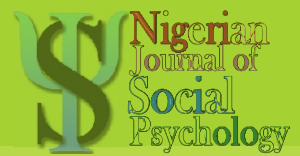


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# Perceived Social Support and Social Media Addiction as Predictors of Tendency to Engage in Examination Malpractice among Undergraduates

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## Abstract

*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, the study examined whether perceived social support and social media addiction predict a tendency to engage in examination malpractice. One hundred and eighty (180) participants comprising of 112 females and 68 males, aged between 18-42 years with a mean age of 22.77 years and a 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. The instruments include: Examination Malpractice Questionnaire (EMQ), Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), and Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS). Two findings were made in the study using hierarchical multiple regression analysis. The first finding revealed that social support (Family, Friends and significant others) jointly predicted the tendency to engage in examination malpractice positively and significantly,  $\beta (3, 175) = .107^{**}$ . The first finding revealed also that friends social support predicted a tendency to engage in examination malpractice negatively and significantly,  $\beta = -.253^*$  while significant others social support predicted a tendency to engage in examination malpractice positively and significantly,  $\beta = .416^{**}$ . The first finding revealed also that family social support predicted a tendency to engage in examination malpractice negatively but not significant,  $\beta = -.047$ . The second finding revealed that social media addiction significantly predicted a tendency to engage in examination malpractice,  $\beta (1, 174) = .048^*$ . This indicated that social support and social media addiction predicted a tendency to engage in examination malpractice. 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 symposiums each semester on perceived social support and social media addiction concerning examination malpractice.*

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

## Introduction

Nigeria is a place where certificate determines employment and placements in higher positions without regard to experience and knowledge. Owing to these problems, many parents, guardians and teachers most of the time encouraged their wards to engage in one form of examination malpractice or the other (Ojo & Olumuyiwa, 2011). These examination malpractices involve collaborative copying, the use of microchips, impersonation, and the smuggling of answer scripts into the examination halls (Eneh & Eneh, 2014, Onyibe, et al.,

2014 & Anzene, 2014). Many institutions of learning in Nigeria have adopted many approaches to stop examination malpractices ranging from expulsion, suspension and even jail terms, yet the problems are on the increase.

This conflicts with the major aims and objectives of establishing education institutions which involve the training of the mind and character for the 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, et al., 2014). Unfortunately, evidence from Nigerian society and institutions of learning shows that many students are involved in examination malpractices in one way or the other (Amadi & Opiuyo, 2018; Akinrefon, et al., 2016). The implication of these high incidences of examination malpractices includes 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 the high incidence of examination malpractice in society, it has become necessary for research to explore the possible predisposing factors that could increase or decrease the tendency to engage in examination malpractice and workable approaches to reduce this menace.

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 malpractice would be a step to understanding how the tendency to engage in examination malpractices can be managed. The above assertion is in agreement with the theory of planned behavior (Azen, 1991). The basic assumption of the theory of planned behaviour states that attitude towards the behavior (i.e. beliefs about a behaviour), subjective norms (beliefs about others' attitude towards a behaviour) and perceived behavioural control (beliefs to perform a behaviour) together shape an individual's behavioural intention (tendency to engage in examination malpractice or social media addiction). In the context of this study, the subjective norm component of the theory of planned behaviour unified all the variables in this study. Keller and Miller (2015) conducted research using the theory of planned behaviour to predict crime reporting intent. Nine hundred and eighty-five (985) participants were used in the study. The result of the finding revealed that the 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 confirming the finding of Amjad and Wood (2009).

Examination Malpractice Act of Nigeria (1999) as cited by Asante-Kyei and Nduro (2014) defined examination malpractice 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 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, et al., (2014) citing Ukpei, et al., (2012) defined examination malpractice as a deliberate action by an examiner or examinee that violates examination rules and places a candidate at an unfair advantage or disadvantage, any form of abuse of process and rules at any stage from the 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 brain of

the candidate is referred to as examination malpractice (Obi-Nwosu et al, 2014). So, examination malpractice is any deliberate act of wrongdoing 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. Therefore, Obi-Nwosu et al (2014) defined the tendency to engage in examination malpractice as a person's inclination or likelihood to behave improperly during the examination and to break the rules governing the examination.

Thus, the present research looked at external factors (perceived social support and social media addiction) and examined their contribution to the understanding of the tendency to engage in examination malpractice. This research also revealed the variable that contributed most to the tendency to engage in examination malpractice.

The first variable of interest in this study is perceived social support. Perceived social support is the comfort given to one by family, friends, co-workers and others who assist one (Onyishi, et al., 2012 as cited in Mabia, et al., 2019). The researchers stated also that perceived social support is the perceived function and quality of social relationships such as the availability of help or support received. Duci and Tahsini (2012) also defined 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., nurturance), informational (e.g., advice) or companionship (e.g., sense of belonging). The authors explained further that social support can be seen as the perception that one has assistance available, the actual received assistance, or the degree to which a person is integrated into the social network.

Furthermore, according to the literature, social support is being studied in relationship with positive psychology (Psychological wellbeing) and not in relationship 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 finding may be applicable in Nigeria, and there is a need to study perceived social support and the tendency to engage in examination malpractice 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 the tendency to engage in examination malpractice. Moreover, the above variable agrees with Amjad and Wood (2009) finding which stated that Subjective norm is an individual's perception of a particular behaviour that is influenced by the judgment of significant others, friends, spouses, family and peers. Amjad and Wood (2009) investigated the role of beliefs about the acceptability of aggression (normative beliefs) against Jews in determining who could join extremist groups. 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.

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 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 one with an urge to use social media excessively. Walker (2019) also referred to social media addiction as someone

spending too much time 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 by constantly checking 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 everyday responsibilities such as family, school, work and other social obligations. Therefore, the present study looked into the relationship among perceived social support, social media addiction and the tendency to engage in examination malpractice.

This variable is in agreement with media system dependency theory by Ball-Rokeach and Defluer (1976). The basic assumption of media system dependency theory is that media ties together the interaction of broad social system, mass media and individuals into a comprehensive explanation of media effects. In the context of this study, social media ties together the interaction of the social system (perceived social support) and its effects on individuals' behaviours (tendency to engage in examination malpractices and social media addiction). Again, Ezeabii, et al., (2019) conducted a study on the influence of social media on academic performance. The finding of the study revealed that social media influence students' academic performance positively and negatively. Moreover, Obarisiagbon (2016) conducted qualitative and quantitative studies with 300 participants on social media and the incidence of examination misconduct among undergraduates. The analyzed data revealed that the incidence of examination misconduct has risen as a result of the use of whatsapp and social networking sites. The purpose of this study is to investigate to what extent Perceived social support (family, friends, & significant others) and social media addiction will predict examination malpractices. First, it is hypothesized that perceived social support (family, friends and significant others) will significantly predict the tendency to engage in examination malpractice. Second, it is hypothesised that social media addiction will significantly predict the tendency to engage in examination malpractice.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Using a convenient and purposive sampling method, one hundred and eighty (180) undergraduates were used for the study. They consist of 112 females and 68 males from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Their age ranged from 18-40 years with a mean age of 22.10 and a standard deviation of 1.62.

### **Instruments**

Three instruments were used in the study. The instruments include the examination malpractice questionnaire (EMQ) by Alutu and Aluede (2006). This is a 24-item questionnaire that measures the tendency to engage in examination malpractice. The scoring pattern ranges from 1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The scale has been 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 multidimensional scale of perceived social support (MSPSS) by Zimet et al (1988). This is a 12-item scale that 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 has been found by Onyishi et al (2012) to have predictive validity of  $p < .01$  by using MSPSS to predict the 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) was; family  $.78$ , friends  $.76$  and significant others  $.70$ . The present researcher reported Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of family,  $.89$ , friends,  $.77$ , significant others  $.74$ . The last instrument is

social media addiction scale by Sahin (2018). This is a 29-item scale that measures social media addiction (virtual tolerance, virtual communication, virtual problem and virtual information). Higher scores indicate the 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

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 given assurances regarding the 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 took approximately 40 minutes to complete. Only one hundred and eighty correctly filled questionnaires by the participants were used for data analysis.

### Design/statistics

The study adopted a correlational design. Hierarchical multiple regression was used for data analysis.

### Result

**Table 1:** Zero order correlation coefficient matrix showing Tendency to Engage in Examination Malpractice, 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 malpractice, FAS = Family social support, FRS = Friends social support, Sign = significant others social support, SMAS = Social media addiction

**Table II:** Summary Table of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis showing Tendency to Engage in Examination Malpractice, social support and Social Media Addiction

Variable	R <sup>2</sup>	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**
SMAS				.038	.234**

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

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

From table II above, the first finding revealed that perceived social support (family, Friends and significant others) jointly predicted the tendency to engage in examination malpractice significantly among undergraduates. The finding revealed also that significant others social support significantly predicted the tendency to engage in examination malpractice positively among undergraduates, while friends social support significantly predicted the tendency to engage in examination malpractice negatively among undergraduates. The second finding of the study also revealed that social media addiction significantly predicted a tendency to engage in examination malpractice positively among undergraduates.

## Discussion

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

The first finding revealed that perceived social support (family, friends and significant others) jointly predicted a tendency to engage in examination malpractice significantly. This means that social support contributed 11% variances in the prediction of a tendency to engage in examination malpractice. The result revealed also that friends' social support significantly predicted a tendency to engage in examination malpractice negatively. This means that as perceived social support (friends) increases the tendency to engage in examination malpractice decreases. The result revealed also that significant others social support significantly predicted the tendency to engage in examination malpractice positively. This indicates that an increase in perceived social support (significant others) determined an increase in the tendency to engage in examination malpractice while a decrease in perceived social support (significant others) determined a decrease in the tendency to engage in examination malpractice. Therefore, first, the finding showed also that while friends social support negatively and significantly predicted the tendency to engage in examination malpractice, significant others social support positively and significantly predicted the tendency to engage in examination malpractice while family social support predicted the tendency to commit crime negatively but not significantly.

The theory of planned behaviour subset (subjective norms) assumptions that external factors may shape individual intention supported the finding of this study. In the context of this research social support is regarded as an external factor. Amjad and Wood's (2009) 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 the normative beliefs of undergraduates can influence them in involving themselves in the tendency to engage in examination malpractices. Again, Keller and Miller (2015) finding is also related to this

present finding. The result of the finding revealed that the theory of planned behaviour (attitude, social norm and perceived behavioural control) significantly predicted intent to file a crime report. The finding revealed also that social norm predicted intent to file a crime report more than the other factors of the theory of planned behaviour (Keller & Miller, 2015). This showed that the theory of planned behaviour may influence the tendency to engage in examination malpractice.

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

This second finding is related to the 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 which militates against the individuals studying their books which leads to engagement in examination malpractices during examination to pass. Moreover, the finding of Obarisiagbon (2016) also supported this present finding. The finding revealed that the incidence of examination misconduct has risen as a result of the use of WhatsApp and social networking sites. Again, Ezeabii, et al., (2019) finding also related to this finding. The finding of the study revealed that social media influence students' academic performance positively and negatively. This second finding revealed also in support of existing literature that social media addiction predicted examination malpractice. This showed that social media addiction militates against undergraduates from studying their books as they ought to, rather they pay more attention to social media like facebook, WhatsApp, linkedin and others.

### **Implication of the study**

This study implies that perceived social support (significant others) and social media addiction positively and significantly predicted the tendency to engage in examination malpractice while friends social support significantly and negatively predicted the tendency to engage in exam malpractice. 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 finding also has implications for policymakers. This is because the results may have implications for understanding, planning and designing programs for intervention and prevention of examination malpractices. Policymakers should put the variables into consideration as one of the predictors of a tendency to engage in examination malpractice.

### **Recommendations**

Research efforts should focus in-depth on the issue of a tendency to engage in examination malpractice and find out other internal factors that are likely to influence the tendency to engage in examination malpractice. Again, disciplinary measures should be implemented irrespective of who is involved in examination malpractice. It was recommended also that school management should institute workshops and symposiums each semester on perceived social support and social media addiction concerning examination malpractice. Finally,



parents, guardians and significant others should be informed of the dangers of encouraging their children or wards to engage in examination malpractices.

### **Limitations of the study**

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

### **Conclusion**

The results have implications for policymakers who work in school management and the Ministry of Education. This implies that social support and social media addiction are essential factors in predicting the tendency to engage in examination malpractice. Therefore, social support (friends and significant others) and social media addiction should be encouraged as factors that are likely to increase or reduce the tendency to engage in examination malpractice. The findings in this research are hoped to encourage researchers to explore other possible predicting variables that may contribute positively or negatively in predicting the tendency to engage in examination malpractice. This is because understanding variables that are related to the tendency to engage in examination malpractice will be of help to those who are interested in solving the problem.

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## *Indexing*

