



# SELF ESTEEM AS CORRELATE OF EXAMINATION CHEATING BEHAVIOUR (ECB) AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN DELTA STATE.

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## **Abstract**

This study examined self-esteem and examination cheating behaviour among secondary school students in Delta State. The study was guided by three research questions and hypotheses. Theoretical and empirical literatures were reviewed. The design for this study is ex-post, it is correlational in nature. The sample size for the study was 381 secondary school students selected from 25 Local Government of Delta state. The instrument for the study is a questionnaire titled self-esteem and examination cheating behaviour. The instrument has face, content and constructs validity through expert judgement and factor analysis. The reliability index is 0.91 for Examination Cheating and 0.75 for self-esteem. Regression statistics was used to analyse the data. The result revealed that self-esteem do not predict examination cheating behaviour among secondary school learners in Delta State. Also gender and age did not moderate the association between self-esteem and ECB. The study recommended that efforts should be made by guidance counsellors, teachers and parents to improve the self-esteem of the students in order to reduce their examination cheating behaviour, rather those that will influence them negatively into indulging in social vices such as examination cheating behaviour.

**Keywords|:** self-esteem, examination, cheating, behaviour, and students

## **Introduction**

Education which is the progressing method of teaching and learning that is appraised using examinations after the learning period. Is a means by which individuals develop according to their personal needs, talents and potentials? Education at the early years is geared towards basic achievement of interpersonal communication and literacy skills, whereas, at the later stage education is geared toward the acquisition of knowledge and the skills needed by individuals to create value and to developed livelihood. Therefore, people can have education to satisfy their innate curiosity, out of interest in specific programme, course, subject or skill for personal development. Education can't be over looked by any nation that wants to develop to its fullness. Ifijeh, Micheal Onuoha, Ilogho and Osinulu (2015) describe education as method through which the students acquire knowledge and realize their potentialities and used them for self-actualization. Therefore, some of the major purposes of education are

knowledge acquisition and realization of potentials. In order to assess and evaluate the achievement of the educational objectives effectively, we need valid and reliable tool for assessments. This is because according to Suleman (2015) the outcome of an educational system depends upon the effectiveness of its examination system because is a fundamental component of teaching learning process.

Observations and reports shown that success in academic performance has become a herculean task to accomplish by students in recent eras. If examination is valid, trustworthy and free of Examination Cheating Behaviour (ECB), which involves illegal process of overcoming failure in examination, it will achieve the goal of producing sound and reliable students. Examination cheating behavior is the behaviour that does not comply with stated assessment, requirements and other institutional policies that students involved to gain undue benefit in their assessment (Guthrie 2019). Okey and Ewa (2019), Examination cheating behaviour (ECB) is inextricably connected to corruption as it involves any fraudulent act that gives learners the benefit to get unmerited grades before, during and after examination. Thus, according to Petters and Okon (2014) is posing a big challenge to our present contemporary society. This is because most of our students in both secondary and tertiary institutions are no longer serious with their studies. The reason been that they believe that humoring in ECB is a way to their success. They no longer have faith in hard work with the saying education is scam. They feel ECB is a sort of brain support. This indicates that ECB is a method that helps their memory in examinations. Examination cheating behaviour remained a perennial problem in our educational system.

In fact, Suleman (2015) described examination-cheating behaviour as a national cancer that can only be treated via cooperation among all parties involved in the education system. Participation in this act makes the students to develop knowledge and skills illicitly, motivated by the quest to also prove his or her ability to acquire knowledge, paper qualification and to excel in academics at all cost (Bitrus, 2013). Cheating in the context of testing is obtaining something valuable by use of deceit or fraud and violating the rules of examination dishonestly. Rusdi, Hussein, Rahman, Noordin, & Aziz, (2019). Cheating in academic activities is a dishonest act. Students cheat to avoid failing a subject or receiving a bad grade. Ede (2021) explained ECB as an improper or illegal conduct by a candidate during examination with the aim of passing the examination. Tinibu (2017) noted that examination cheating behaviour is academic dishonesty or academic fraud which involves any type of cheating on the part of either students or staff during examination. Oko and Adie (2016) assert that examination cheating behaviour is any thoughtful act of wrong doing, contrary to the rules of examinations intended to give a candidate an undue advantage. Oko et al further noted that illegal actions students take during examinations aimed at making good grades through cutting corners is termed cheating.

The World Bank Group (as cited in Naliaka, Odera & Poipoi, 2015) defined cheating in public examinations as a deliberate act of wrong doing contrary to official examination rules that are designed to place a candidate at an unfair advantage. To support this phenomenon, a powerful analysis suggests that academic cheating can be viewed from a number of theoretical and disciplinary perspectives (Bashir & Singh, 2018). Indeed, it is operationalized and conceptualized from the lens of education (Bashir & Bala, 2018a; Bashir & Singh, 2018); Rusdi, Hussein, Rahman, Noordin, and Abd Aziz, (2019) defined ECB as a behavior or set of behaviour that led to the misrepresentation of students' work. The study is, an attempt to find out the extent to which self-esteem can predict examination cheating behaviour (ECB) among secondary school students.

Self-esteem involves an approach of consent to shows the degree which the individual trusts thyself to be able, capable, successful, and worth. Self-esteem, in essence, can be defined as a person's assessment of their own deservingness as represented in their attitudes towards themselves (Lawrence, 2016). Self-esteem is the "personal overall feeling of self-worth as opposed to specific self-esteem that refers to a person's feeling of self-worth in regard to a specific activity or skill. This term refers to students confident and who has a realistically positive view of themselves and of their abilities. The researchers defined Self-esteem as a personal evaluation or assessment of self-worth. Self-esteem reflects a person's overall emotional evaluation of his or her own worth. It is a judgment of oneself as well as an altitude towards the self. Self-esteem encompasses beliefs (for example, "I am competent" "I am worthy) and emotions like "triumph, despair, pride and shame" (Hewitt, 2014).

Self-esteem plays important role in learners' academic performance, it also influences students' decision to engage in academic dishonesty. Santrock (2016) found that when self-esteem is high, students are more likely to be engaged in difficult tasks and their commitment levels are high. Scholars has argued that students with high self-esteem tend to persist more since they think they can meet their academic goals and are therefore less likely to engage in academic dishonesty. Santrock (2016) found that students with difficulties in achievement of academic goals will likely cheat. Anderman (2017) revealed that learners who engross in academic cheating, involve themselves in self-defeating behaviour such as giving excuses or relating none achievement to other

circumstances other than their ability. Self-esteem has strong influence on academic cheating behaviours (Chen, Gully, & Eden, 2014). Differential drive and decision-making that relate to academic cheating are explained by factors, particularly self-esteem (Chen, Gully & Eden, 2014). Nwokolo and Oguzie (2021) observed that self-esteem which is the opinion or belief a person has about himself/herself influence his behaviours, for example in examination and consequently affects his/her performance and achievements. They opined that self-esteem is a big determinant of one's actions and behaviour including engagement in cheating in examination. Houser et al. (2016) presented evidence that parents were more honest in front of their daughters than in front of their sons. Chowdhury et al. (2021) argued that men lie more than women when an unexpected opportunity arises to do so. Nieken and Dato, 2016; Grosch and Rau, 2017; Abeler et al., 2019; Benistant et al., (2021) revealed that there were more radically dishonest men than women.

### Statement of the Problem

The problem of ECB cannot be over looked because the rate at which students at various levels of education indulge in examination cheating behaviour (ECB) is worrisome. The effects of such behaviour on candidates, parents, examination bodies, educational system and the society at large are varied and enormous. It raises questions about the validity and credibility of the certificates awarded by Nigerian examination bodies. It is capable of impairing the efficacy of our labour force because it promotes mediocrity and this may result in producing individuals who are mentally and morally ineffective in public offices or work positions. The problem of this study therefore, is to what extent will self-esteem predict examination cheating behaviour (ECB) among secondary school students in Delta State?

### RESEARCH QUESTION

1. What is the extent of relationship between self-esteem and Examination cheating behaviour (ECB) among Secondary School Students in Delta State?
2. To what extent can gender moderate the relationship between self-esteem and examination cheating behaviour (ECB) among Secondary School Students in Delta State?
3. To what extent can age moderate the relationship between self-esteem and examination cheating behaviour (ECB) among Secondary School Students in Delta State?

### Hypotheses

- Ho1. There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and Examination cheating behaviour (ECB) among Secondary School Students in Delta State
- Ho2. There is no significant moderating impact of gender on the relationship between self-esteem and examination cheating behaviour (ECB) among Secondary School Students in Delta State
- Ho3. There is no significant moderating impact of age on the relationship between self-esteem and examination cheating behaviour (ECB) among Secondary School Students in Delta State.

### METHOD

This study employed the correlational method of ex-post facto research design. The target populace are public senior secondary school students in Delta State. There are 452 public secondary schools in Delta State with a total of 72,854 senior secondary school students in Delta State. The sample size comprised 381 senior secondary school students. The choice of the sample size is made on the recommendation of Gill, Johnson and Clark (2010). The multi-stage sampling method was used to select the sample. At first, the researcher selected one school from each Local Government Area of Delta State, making a total of 25 schools. This was done through simple random sampling technique. Then the researcher used proportionate stratified and convenience sampling technique to select students from each selected school.

The Instrument of the study was the questionnaire titled "self-esteem and Examination cheating behaviour (SEECB)." The instrument has two sections (section A and B). Section A contains the biographical information about gender of the students, class of study, location and age. Section B is divided into two sub-scales measuring self-esteem and Examination cheating behaviour. Examination cheating behaviour has 25 items, and self-esteem has 5 items. For scoring purpose, a likert type rating scale of four (4) response options of "strongly agree" (SA), "agree" (A), "disagree" (D), and "strongly disagree" (SD), was adopted in scoring. The positive word items in the questionnaire were score 4, 3, 2, and 1. While all negative items were scored 1, 2, 3, and 4 respectively.

The instrument was giving to experts for correction purpose; some items were amended to suit the respondent on self-esteem and examination cheating behaviour among secondary school students in Delta state. The face validity of the instrument was considered adequate by expert judgement. For content and construct validity of the instrument factor analysis was used. The principal component analysis was used to estimate the content validity. The extraction method, the total cumulative variance was obtained as expressing the content



validity of the instrument. The values indicate the percentage or amount of contribution made to the Examination Cheating Behaviour of 64.09%, and Self-Esteem 51.78%. These values are the content validity of the total number of items that measuring the variables domain which also indicated the percentage or amount of contribution made to the self-esteem and examination cheating behaviour that explains the total cumulative variance.

However, the construct validity was estimated by using the rotated factor loading matrixes. The Eigen values were used to select factors that genuinely measures similar constructs. The items in the instrument that measures psychological traits had loading matrixes that ranged between 0.52-0.83 for examination cheating behaviour, 0.56-0.84 and 0.52-0.83 for self-esteem. The range of rotated factor loading matrixes is high. Hence, the instrument construction was valid. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained by using Cronbach's alpha for estimating internal consistency of the instrument. This yielded for the Examination Cheating Behaviour Scale  $\alpha = 0.91$  and Self-Esteem = 0.75. Hence, the scales are reliable.

The questionnaire was administered by the researcher personally and was retrieved immediately, to ensure all copies of questionnaires were retrieved. It abetted the researcher to explain necessary aspects of the questionnaire to the respondents. The statistical tool that was used to analyze data collected was Pearson's Correlation and Coefficient of determination was used in answering research questions 1 and 3 while multiple correlation and coefficient determination was used to answer research question 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7. In testing the null hypotheses, the researcher used linear regression to test for hypotheses 1, and 3 while multiple regression was used in testing hypotheses 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7. All the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

## Result

**Research Questions 1:** What is the extent relationship between self-esteem and examination cheating behaviour (ECB) among secondary school students in Delta State?

**Table 1: Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis and coefficient of determination on self-esteem and examination cheating behaviour (ECB) among secondary school students.**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	r <sup>2</sup>	r%
Self-Esteem	369	15.58	5.56	.038	.001	-.001
Examination Cheating Behaviour	369	59.42	29.31			

Independent Variable: Self-esteem, Dependent Variable: Examination Cheating Behaviour.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistical output and the simple correlation results. Self-Esteem had Mean of 15.58, SD of 5.56 while examination cheating behaviour had Mean of 59.42, SD of 29.31. The  $r$  – value of .038 revealed a positive linear relationship between self-esteem and examination cheating behaviour (ECB) among secondary school students.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and examination cheating behaviour (ECB) among secondary school students in Delta State.

**Table 2: Regression Analysis of the relationship between self-esteem and examination cheating behaviour (ECB) among secondary school students.**

Model	Sum of square	Df	Mean square	F	Sig
Regression	464.80	1	464.80	.540	.463
Residual	315719.3	367	860.27		
Total	316184.0	368			
Variables in Equation					
	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized	t	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	62.573	4.550		13.752	.000
Self-Esteem	-.202	.275	-.038	-.735	.463

$P \geq 0.05$  level of significance;  $N = 369$

Table 2 shows the F – value of .540 and a P – value of .463. Testing the null hypothesis of an alpha level of 0.05, the P – value of .463 was greater than the alpha level of 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis was accepted. Thus, *there is no significant relationship between self-esteem and examination cheating behaviour (ECB) among secondary school students in Delta State.*

**Research Questions 2:** To what extent can gender moderate the relationship between self-esteem and examination cheating behaviour (ECB) among secondary school students in Delta State?

**Table 3: Multiple Correlation Analysis of gender in the relationship between self-esteem and examination cheating behaviour (ECB) among secondary school students.**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	r <sup>2</sup>	r%
Gender	369	1.57	.496	.038	.001	-.001
Self-Esteem	369	15.58	5.557			
Examination Cheating Behaviour	369	59.42	29.31			

Moderator Variable: Gender, Independent Variable: Self-Esteem, Dependent Variable: Examination Cheating Behaviour.

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistical output and the simple correlation results. Gender had Mean of 1.57, SD of .496, self-esteem had Mean of 15.558, SD of 5.557 while examination cheating behaviour had Mean of 59.42, SD of 29.31. The r – value of .038 revealed *a positive relationship of moderator variable of gender in the relationship between self-esteem and examination cheating behaviour (ECB) among secondary school students.*

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant moderating impact of gender in the relationship between self-esteem and examination cheating behaviour (ECB) among secondary school students in Delta State.

**Table 4: Multiple Regression Analysis of gender in the relationship between self-esteem and examination cheating behaviour (ECB) among secondary school students.**

Model	Sum of square	Df	Mean square	F	Sig
Regression	464.80	1	464.80	.540	.463
Residual	315719.3	367	860.27		
Total	316184.0	368			
Variables in Equation					
	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized	t	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	62.573	4.550		13.752	.000
Self-Esteem	-.202	.275	-.038	-.735	.463
Gender			-.044	-.839	.402

$P \geq 0.05$  level of significance; N = 369

Table 20 shows the F of .540 and a P – value of .463. Testing the null hypothesis of an alpha level of 0.05, the P – value of .463 was greater than the alpha level of 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis was accepted. Thus, *there is no significant moderating impact of gender in the relationship between self-esteem and examination cheating behaviour (ECB) among secondary school students in Delta State.*

**Research Questions 3:** To what extent can age moderate the relationship between self-esteem and examination cheating behaviour (ECB) among secondary school students in Delta State?

**Table 5: Multiple Correlation Analysis of age in the relationship between self-esteem and examination cheating behaviour (ECB) among secondary school students.**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	r <sup>2</sup>	r%
Age	369	1.57	.50	.038	.001	-.001
Self-Esteem	369	15.58	5.58			
Examination Cheating Behaviour	369	59.42	29.31			

Moderator Variable: Age, Independent Variable: Self-Esteem, Dependent Variable: Examination Cheating Behaviour.

Table 5 presents the descriptive statistical output and the simple correlation results. Age had Mean of 1.57, SD of .495, self-esteem had Mean of 15.58, SD of 5.57 while examination cheating behaviour had Mean of 59.42, SD of 29.31. The  $r$  – value of .038 revealed a *positive relationship of moderator variable of age in the relationship between self-esteem and examination cheating behaviour (ECB) among secondary school students.*

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant moderating impact of age in the relationship between self-esteem and examination cheating behaviour (ECB) among secondary school students in Delta State.

**Table 6: Multiple Regression Analysis of age in the relationship between self-esteem and examination cheating behaviour (ECB) among secondary school students.**

Model	Sum of square	Df	Mean square	F	Sig
Regression	464.80	1	464.80	.540	.463
Residual	315719.3	367	860.27		
Total	316184.0	368			
<b>Variables in Equation</b>					
	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized	t	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	62.573	4.550		13.752	.000
Self-Esteem	-.202	.275	-.038	-.735	.463
Age			0.55	1.048	.295

$P \geq 0.05$  level of significance;  $N = 369$

Table 6 shows the  $F$  of .540 and a  $P$  – value of .463. Testing the null hypothesis of an alpha level of 0.05, the  $P$  - value of .463 was greater than the alpha level of 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis was accepted. Thus, *there is no significant moderating impact of age in the relationship between self-esteem and examination cheating behaviour (ECB) among secondary school students in Delta State.*

## DISCUSSION

### Relationship between Self-Esteem and Examination Cheating Behaviour (ECB) among Secondary School Students in Delta State

The first finding showed that there is no significant relationship between self-esteem and examination cheating behaviour (ECB) among Secondary School Students in Delta State and that self-esteem predict 0.1% variability in examination cheating behaviour (ECB) among Secondary School Students in Delta State. This finding implies that self-esteem doesn't predict examination cheating behaviour among secondary school students involved in the study.

The above finding disagrees with that of Murdock and Stephens (2006), who showed that there is a more nuanced relationship between wrongdoing and self-worth and that a person is more likely to assign external and unstable causes for his own action in order to maintain self-esteem. In this way self-esteem will not be diminish. In a review of reasons to cheat offered by students in pharmacology, out of twenty-two themes only two were internal attribution, the rest were all external (Murdock, & Stephens, 2006). In contrast, the feeling of mastery is more distinct and directly linked to internal drive, self-involvement in the job, and the need for comprehension.



As a result, pupils who have achieved a high degree of competence are incongruent with cheating (Stephens & Gehlbach, 2006).

### **Moderating Impact of Gender on the Relationship between Self-Esteem and Examination Cheating Behaviour (ECB) among Secondary School Students in Delta State**

Revealed that there is no significant moderating impact of gender on the relationship between self-esteem and examination cheating behaviour (ECB) among Secondary School Students in Delta State. This finding implies that no matter the gender of the students, the influence of self-esteem on examination cheating behaviour among them remain the same.

previous empirical study had reports that were comparable (Teodorescu, & Andrei, 2009).). Chapman and Lupton (2004) found no sex difference in academic cheating in Hong-Kong students' population and more males cheating than females in United States students, with both categories stating that their mates use fraud more often than themselves. The finding however is at variance with Omonijo and Nnedum (2012b), who found that male students are more involved in cheating habit than their female counterparts.

### **Moderating Impact of Age on the Relationship between Self-Esteem and Examination Cheating Behaviour (ECB) among Secondary School Students in Delta State**

The finding revealed that there is no significant moderating impact of age exists on the relationship between self-esteem and examination cheating behaviour (ECB) among Secondary School Learners in Delta State. It means that age is not a necessary factor when it comes to the influence of self-esteem on the examination cheating behaviour (ECB) of secondary school students involved in the study. The possible reason for this finding may be how individuals change as they age. In other words, as the students age and progress in their classes, the influence of self-esteem on their involvement in examination cheating behaviour may likely change.

The above finding agrees with Dada (2014), who discovered no significant relationship between age of learners and their involvement in examination malpractice.

The finding however disagrees with Abdu-Raheem (2016), whose finding revealed that age may count against students to misbehave in schools. The researcher further found that students that are too young may not be able to cope academically, socially, psychologically and morally. Such students may resort to examination cheating and other acts of unruliness like cultism, stealing, rape, disobedience to school authority, absence from classroom and destruction of school property. The finding also disagrees with Olowonirejuaro and Akande (2005), who asserted that age counts in involvement of students in examination malpractices. They observed that parents used lighter discipline and were relaxed with second and later children. They also noted that the last born in the family are over-pampered and assigned to fewer responsibilities than the elderly ones. As a result, there is possibility of learners that lack discipline to be involved in examination malpractices.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that self-esteem has no influence involvement in examination cheating behaviour among secondary school learners. Gender, Location and Age did not moderate the relationships that exist between self-esteem and examination cheating behaviour.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Arising from the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Guidance counsellors, teachers, parents and guardians should make efforts to improve the self-esteem of the learners in order to condense their involvement in examination cheating behaviour
2. There should be no gender, age and location bias in educating students on self-esteem development as it revealed that the influence of self-esteem on the learners is the same for students both in gender, age and location.

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