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**THE INFLUENCE OF STUDENTS' VICARIOUS LEARNING  
COMPONENT OF SELF-EFFICACY ON EXAMINATION  
MALPRACTICES AMONG STUDENTS IN UNIVERSITIES  
IN KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA****Kaindio Mauta Peter, Dr. Anne Muiru & Dr. Reuben Kenei****Abstract**

*The university examination malpractice in Kenya have been rising since the first university started in 1970. One of the main factor is students' vicarious learning component of self-efficacy on examination malpractices. The purpose of this study was to investigate the possible influence of students' self-efficacy on examination malpractices among undergraduate students in Universities within Kiambu County. The study was guided by three theories namely; social cognitive learning (SCLT) theory, the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) and the theory of Neutralization. The study employed mixed methods approach. The research designs used were survey and ex post facto. The target population was all the 183,760 undergraduates' students, lecturers and University administrators from Universities within the County of Kiambu. A total of 15 lectures and 45 students were selected from one private university and one public university for the purpose of piloting. The data collected from the pilot exercise, was used to compute Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient which was found to be  $r = 0.856$ , hence the instruments were reliable. The quantitative data obtained was analyzed using SPSS version 25, and was presented in descriptive statistics inform of frequencies and percentages. Inferential statistics in form of linear regression was used to test the relationship between independent and dependent variables in each objective. Linear Regression Results were presented in model summary tables, ANOVA tables and coefficient tables.*

**Key words:** *Influence, Vicarious, Learning, Malpractices and Students*

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## **Introduction**

University examinations provide criteria for selection for higher learning, job placements, promotion and certification. For university examinations to perform these functions, the examinations administered must be valid and reliable, Ruto, Kipkoech & Rambaei, (2011). At the University of Missouri in USA (Kansas City), University examinations are meant to assess students' skills and knowledge acquired in the course of their training. One of the main factors is the influence of students' vicarious learning component of self-efficacy on examination malpractices among students.

A study in Delta state of Nigeria concluded that students' vicarious learning plays a significant part in determining the students' acquisition of examination malpractices behaviour. Andeman & Murdock (2007) argued that approval or disapproval by peers over a particular behaviour would determine whether the university students engage in that behaviour.

Samuel in (2003) suggested that role of communities in influencing the examination malpractices, the researcher pointed out the great role played by social persuasion in encouraging and abetting examination malpractices. There is direct correlation between the peers' attitude towards examination malpractices and the actual individual behaviour. The researcher found out that the group perception about the examination malpractices determined whether the member of that group would engage himself into it. It was concluded that peer persuasion is key determinant of behaviour change. The examination malpractices at the university level is becoming worse due to the fact that university staff, plan and collaborate with students and parents to perpetuate the behaviour, Olatunbosun (2009).

Njoku, Nwachukwu & Isama (2018) carried a study on how students' anxiety may influence examination malpractices, in the universities of South-East Asia. The population of the study comprised all the government universities in the South - East geopolitical zone. The sample size of 240 students was selected from the department of psychology. The primary instrument for data collection was a set of structured questionnaire and rating scale. Findings revealed that anxiety influence students' examination malpractice and their emotional stability. The study showed a significant relationship between students' emotions, examination malpractices, and actual students' behaviour.

Sabella (2012), and Harrison (2012), showed that increasing students' self-esteem increases their academic accomplishment while Ryan & Deci (2000) demonstrated that better academic performance requires both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. From the background, it can be concluded that the studies on the influence of students' self-efficacy on examination malpractices has not been adequately done. It was against this background that the researcher investigated the influence of students' self-efficacy beliefs on examination malpractices in selected universities in Kiambu County.

## **Statement of the Problem**

A valid examination is an important tool for monitoring and evaluation of an education system. It is an instrument for testing students' cognitive abilities and skills they have acquired during their schooling. It is also an important instrument for selection of graduates into job market and for further studies. The Kenyan government and University managements are concerned that examination malpractices has become norm rather than the exception. Many Universities have acknowledged frequent examination malpractices by their students. If the trend is not checked, the purpose of examinations will not be realized and students will graduate with good grades that don't reflect the

knowledge and skills they were intended to acquire. Eventually the quality of professional services will be substandard and hence affecting the realization of the national goals. The effort to reduce examination malpractices has mainly focused on examination security, administration and consequences. The effort to reduce examination malpractices seem not to be effective. Many studies on students' self-efficacy have mainly focused on its influence on academic performance but none has investigated its possible influence on examination malpractices. For this reason the study investigated the possible influence of university students' self-efficacy on examination malpractices in Universities within Kiambu County, Kenya.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of students' self-efficacy on examination malpractices among undergraduate students in universities in Kiambu County, Kenya.

### **Objectives of the Study**

To investigate the influence of students' vicarious learning component of self-efficacy on examination malpractices among students in universities in Kiambu County, Kenya.

### **Underling theory**

#### **Influence of Students' Vicarious Learning on Examination Malpractices**

Students acquire behaviour to engage in examination malpractices through vicarious learning experiences, which is about learning through observation and repeating the observed behaviours, as the study below endeavor to demonstrate. Miranda & Freire, (2011) carried a study at Delta state of Nigeria to demonstrate how examination malpractices can be acquired through vicarious learning. The sample for this study was 1000 (7.8%) of 12,883 total teaching staff from 453 public secondary. The cluster sampling method was used to group Delta State into senatorial districts. The simple random sampling was use to select the participants from public secondary school in the rural and urban areas. The inferential statistics used for the purpose of generalizing the findings were Pearson product moment correlation coefficient and t-test. The study revealed that the role of the following stakeholders were significant toward examination malpractices; teachers, supervisors, leaders, and the school managers.

The study also showed that the societal tendency of valuing certificates as the only means of getting a good job encourages examination malpractices. The modern society prefers paper qualification and not the skills and knowledge an individual has acquired, and for this reason, a student would go to any extent to obtain good certificates. Respect for those who pass examination, not minding the means they used, encourage examination malpractice. The societal respect for scam artist, pen robbers, and political thieves indirectly encourage examination malpractice.

Henningsen, Valde, & Denbow (2013) in their academic paper, argued that examination malpractices are accepted by university students since they perceived it normal and it didn't fall in the category of activities that are morally unacceptable. This idea was reinforced by the facts that the older students showed them on how to cheat in the examination. It was like training to acquire essential skills by their seniors on how to survive in the world of academia. Those students who acquired those skills of examination malpractices were generous to pass the skills and attitudes through observation and repletion.

Smith (2005) in his research demonstrated that the established school norms and morals influenced greatly the level of examination malpractices. This argument about the influence of morality on examination malpractices was based on the work of Bushway & Nash (1977). According to this scholar, the moral tone of the institution influences the moral character of the students and hence the incidences of examination malpractices. Smith (2005) did a study on the influence of students' punishments on examination malpractices. The analyzed data was able to show that the

level of students' punishment when they are caught and frequency of examination malpractices are not related. The scholar advocated for some moderate punishment and more of moral inculcation and promotion of honest and hard work in schools. Maheshwari (2011) in India argued that examination malpractices must be viewed as another type of corruption so that the strategies normally employed in combating the corruption by the government can be employed.

People can develop high or low self-efficacy vicariously through other people's performances. A person can watch someone in a similar position perform, and then compare his own competence with the other individual's competence (Bandura, 1977). If a person sees someone similar to them succeed, it can increase their self-efficacy. However, the opposite is also true; seeing someone similar fail can lower self-efficacy. Increase in self-efficacy example: Mentoring programs, where one individual is paired with someone on a similar career path who will be successful at raising the individual's self-efficacy beliefs. This is even further strengthened if both have a similar skill set, so a person can see first-hand what they may achieve. Decrease in self-efficacy example: Smoking cessation program, where, if individuals witness several people fail to quit, they may worry about their own chances of success, leading to low self-efficacy for quitting, or a weight-loss program where others do not achieve the results you are hoping for.

### **Research Methodology**

Mixed methodology was used in the study. This study collected quantitative data from university students and lecturers using self-reporting questionnaires. An interview guide was used to collect qualitative data through oral interview from university administrators. The mixed methodology was appropriate for this research since the data that was collected was qualitative and quantitative. The survey research design describes this study very well because the data was collected from a sample of students, lecturers and university administrators (various respondents). The questionnaires were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data was collected through oral interview. Data analysis was done and generalization done from the stated hypotheses.

The study was carried out in selected universities in Kiambu County. Where 375 respondents who participated were divided into six categories namely; examination administrators (2.7%), academic staff (5.3%), postgraduate students (4.5%), fourth year students (16%), third year students (25.1%), second year students (26.7%) and first year students (19.7%).

The simple random sampling technique was used to select one private university and one public university from the six universities that were targeted. The public universities were two namely; Kenyatta University and Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology and therefore the probability of picking any of them were 50%. The private universities in the sample were four and therefore the probability of picking any one of them through simple random sampling technique was 25%. One university was randomly picked from the public university category and one university was picked randomly from the private universities category too.

Yamane (1967) formula was used to assist the researcher to approximate the respondents' sample size.

Data collection was done with a researcher's constructed instruments on a five-point Likert rating scale. It included the students' questionnaire, lecturers' questionnaire and interview guide for university administrators. Piloting of the Research Instruments was used to ensure high validity, reliability, dependability and credibility of the instruments. To ensure the instruments are reliable, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was worked out from the pilot data that was generated.

## Finding

### Influence of Students “Vicarious Learning on Examination Malpractices in selected Universities in Kiambu County”

In the table 1 it revealed that 31.4% strongly disagreed that consequences imposed on students who engaged in examination malpractices discouraged others from engaging in the vice and 30.5% disagreed that university students learnt past behaviors of examination malpractices through listening to adults who went through university education. 31.2% agreed that observing at a distance how other students are successfully cheating in examination, influenced others to engage in examination malpractices while 24.4% disagreed that examination malpractices skills and knowledge were passed on to new university students by others who successfully cheated in their past examinations.

**Table 1: Students Ratings of the Influence of Students’ Vicarious Learning on Examination Malpractices**

	SD		D		N		A		SA	
	F	%	f	%	F	%	f	%	F	%
Consequences imposed on students who engage in examination malpractices discourage others from engaging in vice.	174	31.4	96	17.3	34	6.1	100	18.1	150	27.1
Students learn past behaviors of examination malpractices by listening to adults who went through university education.	88	15.9	169	30.5	114	20.6	121	21.8	62	11.2
Observing at a distance other students how they are successfully cheating in examination influences others to engage in examination malpractices.	72	13.0	107	19.3	110	19.9	173	31.2	92	16.6
Through observation, the skills of examination malpractices and knowledge are passed on to new university students from other students who successfully cheated in their past examinations.	106	19.1	135	24.4	119	21.5	118	21.3	76	13.7
Students are motivated to engage in examination malpractices since they wrongly learn through friends that those students who score very high grades must have cheated in their examination.	127	22.9	122	22.0	142	25.6	112	20.2	51	9.2
Listening to other students on how they cheated in the examination successfully is the cause of examination malpractices at the university.	108	19.5	104	18.8	108	19.5	136	24.5	98	17.7

In table 2 it revealed that 38.8% strongly disagreed that consequences imposed on students who engaged in examination malpractices discouraged others from engaging in examination malpractices while 28.6% disagreed that students learnt past behaviors of examination malpractices through listening to adults who went through university education. 24.5% agreed that observing at a distance how other students are successfully cheating in examination, influenced others to engage in examination malpractices. 34.7% disagreed that examination malpractice skills and knowledge were passed on to new university students by senior students who successfully cheated in their past examinations. 28.69% disagreed that students were motivated to engage in examination malpractices since they wrongly learnt through friends that those students who scored very high grades must have cheated in their examination while 22.4% disagreed that listening to other students on how they cheated in the examination successfully was the cause of examination malpractices at the universities in Kiambu County.

**Table 2: Lecturers’ Ratings of the Influence of Students’ Vicarious Learning on Examination Malpractices**

	SD		D		N		A		SA	
	f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
Consequences imposed on students who engage in examination malpractices discourages others from engaging in examination malpractices.	38	38.8	22	22.4	16	16.3	12	12.2	10	10.2
Students learn past behaviors of examination malpractices through listening to adults who went through university education.	22	22.4	28	28.6	30	30.6	12	12.2	6	6.1
Observing at a distance how other students are successfully cheating in examination influences others to engage in examination malpractices.	22	22.4	14	14.3	32	32.7	24	24.5	6	6.1
Examination malpractices skills and knowledge are passed on to new university students by senior students who successfully cheated in their past examinations.	14	14.3	34	34.7	28	28.6	16	16.3	6	6.1
Students are motivated to engage in examination malpractices since they wrongly learn through friends that those students who score very high grades must have cheated in their examination.	14	14.3	28	28.6	36	36.7	16	16.3	4	4.1
Listening to other students on how they cheated in their examinations successfully is the cause of examination malpractices at the universities	12	12.2	22	22.4	26	26.5	16	16.3	22	22.4

The table 3 below shows the each parameter with its respective coefficient parameter towards the contribution examination malpractice based on the vicarious learning. It shows that students’ vicarious learning experiences and examination malpractices exist a statistical significant relationship since the p-value of  $p = 0.000$  was lower than  $p = 0.05$ . Therefore it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between students’ vicarious learning and examination malpractices among undergraduate students from both public and private universities in Kiambu County, Kenya.

**Table 3: Regression equation on the Influence of Students’ Vicarious Learning on Examination Malpractices**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients			
	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.
1 (Constant) ( $\beta_0$ )	1.893	.117	16.235	.000
Consequences imposed on students who engage in examination malpractices deter others from cheating in exams ( $x_1$ )	.050	.021	2.387	.017
Students who retain their past behaviours of cheating in examination engage in examination malpractices in this university ( $x_2$ )	.061	.027	2.296	.022

Attentively observing how other students successfully cheat in examination influences other students to engage in examination malpractices ( $x_3$ )	.108	.028	3.903	.000
Students with ability to reproduce what they saw other students who successfully cheat do in the past and are able to successfully repeat such cheating behaviours engage in examination malpractices in this campus ( $x_4$ )	.019	.028	.696	.487
Through motivation-reinforcement, students who observe others successfully cheat and score As in their exams are more likely to engage in examination malpractices as they were able to see the cheats pass exams instead of failing ( $x_5$ )	.075	.026	2.868	.004
Change in behaviour to conform to those of learners who cheat in exams influences examination malpractices among undergraduate learners ( $x_6$ )	.040	.024	1.700	.090

The regression equation of examination malpractice based on the Vicarious Learning was represented as below with their respective coefficient.

$$y = 1.893 + 0.05x_1 + 0.06x_2 + 0.108x_3 + 0.019\beta_4 + 0.075x_5 + 0.04x_6 + \varepsilon$$

Where;

- x1 = Consequences imposed on students who engage in examination malpractices deter others from cheating in exams.
- X2 = Students who retain their past behaviours of cheating in examination engage in examination malpractices in this university
- X3 = Attentively observing how other students successfully cheat in examination influences other students to engage in examination malpractices
- X4 = Students with ability to reproduce what they saw other students who successfully cheat do in the past and are able to successfully repeat such cheating behaviours engage in examination malpractices in this campus
- X5 = Through motivation-reinforcement, students who observe others successfully cheat and score As in their exams are more likely to engage in examination malpractices as they were able to see the cheats pass exams instead of failing
- X6 = Change in behaviour to conform to those of learners who cheat in exams influences examination malpractices among undergraduate learners

An interview was done to assess whether some students engaged in examination malpractices because they previously observed their colleagues cheat; the interviewees stated that;

*“Engagement in examination malpractices is a learnt behaviour. With time, students learn that their colleagues cheat and they too learn that some few lecturers are not strict in examination supervision, hence they engage in examination cheating” (2 University Administrators).*

*“Observing other students successfully cheat and pass in examinations, act as motivation to engage in examination malpractices. The likelihood of examination malpractices among university students decrease when those who cheated are caught and punished and the examination supervision is thorough. The punishment given must be known to other students”. (2 University Administrators)*

*“Examination malpractices are a learnt behaviour which mainly occurs through observations or hearing peers talking about how they successfully cheated. Through observation and listening, students learn and acquire skills and tricks of examination malpractices in this institution” (3 University Administrators)*

*“Examination malpractices are common among first year and second year university students. Mostly, the examination cheating behaviour was learnt and encouraged in their primary schools”. (1 Faculty Administrators)*

The study sought information from the interviewees on how motivation from students who successfully cheated in their examinations and got good grades, influenced other students to engage in examination malpractices, and their responses showed that;

*“It is true that students who engaged themselves in examination malpractices and were not caught, and passed well in their examinations, are more likely to engage again in the vice. This is because they got motivated by the former successful students who cheated, got good grades and eventually good job” (3 University Administrators)*

*“When student successfully cheat in the examination due to fear of failing, and passes well in that examination and there are no consequences, there is a possibility of motivating others to engage in examination malpractices” (3 University Administrators).*

## **Conclusion**

Students' vicarious learning experiences on examination malpractices to some extent influenced examination malpractices. The consequences of examination malpractices on students who engaged in examination malpractices did not discourage others from engaging in examination malpractices. Observing at a distance on how other students were successfully cheating in examination influenced others to engage in examination malpractices.

## **Recommendation**

Universities must come up with ways on how to demonstrate to students the consequences of examination malpractices at the student's individual. This is because the study showed those students' vicarious learning influence examination malpractices significantly. For example, the study established that those students who observed at a distance how others are successfully cheating in examination eventually adopted the behaviour. Others learnt vicariously how the role models are succeeding in life after engaging in illegal deals, significantly influenced university students to engage in examination malpractices.



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