

# Locus of control as a predictor of examination cheating among secondary school students

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**ABSTRACT:** The present study investigated the relationship between Locus of control and examination cheating among Kenyan secondary school students. This study used a Sequential Explanatory design. The target population was 51,900 students in Kisumu County within 153 public secondary schools categorized as 2 National secondary schools, 21 extra county schools, and 130 county and sub-county schools. A simple random sampling technique was used to determine sample size which comprised of 380 respondents since the study was confined within specific ecological boundary which was public secondary schools. Data collection instruments included questionnaires, for general data collection from the respondents and in-depth interview schedules for one to one interview of respondents. The finding of the study shows that there was statistically significant positive correlation [ $F(2, 357) = 28.639, p < .05$ ] between Locus of control and overall perceived level of exams cheating. It is evident from the model that student Locus of control level accounted for 16.0%, as signified by coefficient  $R^2 = .160$ , of the variation in perceived level of examinations cheating among students in secondary schools. Locus of control as a personal determinant of examination cheating had statistically significant influence on examinations cheating among the secondary schools students. The calculated effect size ( $\eta^2 = .160$ ) indicate that there was quite a substantial amount of variance in level of examinations cheating caused by variability in the levels of Locus of control of the students. This suggests that 16.0% of the variance in the perceived exams cheating was accounted for by the Locus of control of the secondary school students, when other variables were controlled. This finding corroborates to the fact that there was statistical significant difference ( $P < 0.05$ , in all cases) among the types of locus of

control in regards to their perceived level of exams cheating. Hence, it was concluded that students' locus of control has significant influence on the students involvement in exams cheating. School heads to emphasize on the use of Continuous Assessment of students by schools and examination boards to determine student success or failure in common examinations so as to build their locus of control because the study reported that students with external locus of control cheat more in exams than those with internal locus of control.

**Key words:** Internal locus of control; External locus of control; Locus of control examination cheating; Kenyan; secondary school students; self-esteem; self confidence.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Examination cheating is not only a problem in Kenya but also a worldwide phenomenon. According to Cizek (2003), cheating in examination can be defined as "fraud, dishonesty or deceit in academic assignment or using, or attempting to use, or assisting in academic assignment or using, or attempting to use, or assisting others in using materials that are inappropriate or prohibited in context of the academic assignment in question. According to Barkely (2009) study in USA, students always prefer shortcut in achieving their grades and maintaining their sense of personal integrity or otherwise, rather than investing their time and effort on serious academic work and this prevalence of academic dishonesty has gravening effects at personal, school, home or community levels. Examination cheating according to McCabe and Pavella (2006) in USA is due to academic integrity in examination handling which is so much compromised that something ought to be done. Examination malpractice is a deliberate move which is well planned and organized by the parents,

peers and executed by the students (Candidates) according to Kisamore, Stone, and Jahawar (2009).

Cheating means: deprived of some things valuable by use of deceit or fraud such as cheating in school assignment, writing on palms as indicators of low self-efficacy, (Christine, Graven, Gary & Rydall, 2015). Thorough adherence to the examination rules is enough to raise the learners self-efficacy and hence to stamp out the act of examination cheating (Anderman & Murdock, 2007). However, the most preferred deterrents to discourage cheating in classrooms were: - the use of different forms of tests by teachers, giving information to students by teachers why they should not cheat and thorough invigilation and watching of students as they take exams and also that moral development is a long term strategy to stamping out examination cheating and recommended that students need to be developed morally in order to avoid cheating (Davis, Drinan & Gallant ,2012, Happed & Jennings,2008).

Parents look for short cut for their children by giving them synthesized notes and impersonation support given that most of the impersonations are propagated by the parents or home factors where one may use his or her siblings to impersonate them, (Fasasi, 2008) while in a separate study in USA, Kisamore, Stone and Jahawar (2009) emphasized that cheating is normally allowed by the parents and also supported the idea of parents pressurizing their children to do well thus there are parents who even encourage their children to copy the work of the brighter pupils in order to pass a test or examinations. The study further showed that methods or ways involved in exam cheating may be so many but the fact remains that whether it is one or more it's unacceptable to use ulterior methods to do or pass examination. Bandura (1986) asserted that low self efficacy among students is one of the main factors determining examination cheating in schools. Adeyemi (2010) confirmed that interaction with peers who have inclination to examination cheating can also lead to examination malpractice.

The study was guided by the Theory of Planned Behaviour. The theory of Planned Behaviour is a theory about the link between beliefs and behaviour which was proposed by Ajzen, (1991) to improve on the predictive power of the theory of reasoned action by including perceived behavioural control, relations among beliefs, attitudes, behavioral intentions and behaviours in various fields.(Stone, 2009). Theory of reasoned action was an invention by Fishbein and Ajzen in (1975), which explains that there is a high correlation of attitudes and subjective norms

to behavioural intention and subsequently to behaviour (Ajzen, & Fishbein, 2005). This theory also states that expectations such as motivation, performance, feelings, and behavioral reactions are always not spontaneous but planned.

Literature on Locus of control and examination cheating exists. For example, In USA, Beauchamp, and Murdock, (2009) revealed that 78% of the students admitted to have cheated or assisted someone to cheat in tests or examinations. Gideon (2007)revealed that the two traits that combine and account for a statistically and practically significant proportion of variance in academic cheating were lack of effort and need for high excitement seeking. McCabe, Trevino and Butterfield (2012)revealed that students cheat mainly because of low self-efficacy, or rather because others do it. Majority of the respondents concurred that they cheat because of the influence of friends and some due to external Locus of control. In USA Davis, Drian, and Gallant, (2012) revealed that high school students with high intelligence( internal locus of control) cheated less than students with lower intelligence (external locus of control) on I.Q tests. In another study by Christopher, (2012) at Minnesota State University Mankato revealed that high specific self – efficacy or internal locus of control in individuals is less likely to cheat while both levels – general self-efficacy (G.S.E) and specific self-efficacy (SSE) predict lower rates of cheating overall. The study further revealed that general self efficacy positively correlates with cheating while specific self efficacy does not predict cheating.Chudzika and Zupala (2014) in a survey carried out in Poland, where a sample of 285 students were sampled using purposive sampling technique revealed that; the locus of central justice sensitivity, and some individual ethical philosophical dimensions are significant predictors for accepting dishonest behaviour in examinations.

A study carried out by Grimes and Razek (2006), in Belarus; Croatia, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Russia, Ukraine and USA on determinants of cheating by high school students revealed that Significant determinants were personal beliefs about ethics and social acceptability of cheating and various attributes of classroom, environment.Scanica (2016) revealed that one of the determinants of examination cheating among students is the writing strategies that are so obscure which they pass to one another due to low self-efficacy. The students capitalize on the lack of strict invigilators and supervisors of the examinations. Low efficacious students always find it challenging to tackle examinations within the

time limit and so they resort to depend on the more efficacious colleagues who help them to cheat, (Scanica, 2016). A study carried out by Bayindira, Ozel and Bakir, (2013) in Kutaya, Turkey indicated that the major determinant of examination cheating among students is lack of confidence in their memory, level and low self-efficacy. Kisamore, Stone and Jahawar, (2007), found out that there is a relationship between individual situational factors and misconduct such as examination malpractice or poor academic integrity. Ugodulunwa, (2011) further confirmed that attitude of students in examination cheating is significant in levels of study which include: Interaction, effect of gender and religion, course of study. The study observed that the way students interact with their peers determines their attitude towards learning and also behaviour during examinations which may lead to cheating in examination and so Behavioural and attitudinal factors among students determine students' participation in cheating in examination. A study was carried out by Afokasade, Airate, Suleiman (2014) in Lagos state, Nigeria revealed that the main reason that made the students to cheat was lack of self confidence. Ong'ong'a and Akaranga (2013) study clarified that students involvement in examination malpractices was mainly due to personal motivation which is self-efficacy and these personal factors are due to inadequate preparation and the desire to pass at all costs.

In Kenya, there is evidence of cheating as indicated by the number of examination results canceled by KNEC. It is evident that each year has cases of exam cancelation. It can be noted from the table that the peaks of exam cheating cases are in the year 2011, 2013, and 2015 while the rest of the years (2012, 2014, and 2016) have been registering reduction in number of examination cheating cases. This is an indicator that some attempts are made to try to eliminate the vice of examination cheating but the culprits always try to invent new cheating tactics every time they are discovered. The present study investigated the relationship between levels of Locus of control examination cheating among Kenyan secondary school students.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a Sequential Explanatory design in Mixed Methods approach whose characteristics is collection and analysis of quantitative data followed by collection and analysis of qualitative data (Onueghbuzie & Mayo 2013). Its purpose is to use qualitative data to help explain the results or findings by quantitative data. It explores, explains and interprets the phenomenon

under study using both quantitative and qualitative information. The target population was 51,900 students in Kisumu County within 153 public secondary schools categorized as 2 National secondary schools, 21 extra county schools, and 130 county and sub-county schools with a total student population of 51,900 in Kisumu County (MOEST 2014). A simple random sampling technique was used to determine sample size which comprised of 380 respondents since the study was confined within specific ecological boundary which was public secondary schools. Data collection instruments included questionnaires, for general data collection from the respondents and in-depth interview schedules for one to one interview of respondents. To ensure that data collection instrument is valid, the instruments were pre-tested in one of the selected schools using a reasonable number of respondents. Experts from Department of Psychology and Educational Foundations of Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology were consulted about the content validity of instrument, ambiguity of question items and their relevancy. To ascertain the reliability of the instruments, a pretest (pilot) study was carried out in one of the schools within the county which was not part of the study. Quantitative data was analyzed by descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. In addition, Creswell (2014) highlights the analysis steps in qualitative analysis to include; Preliminary exploration of data by reading through it several times, coding data by segmenting and labeling of text, using codes to develop themes by aggregating similar codes together and connecting the interrelated themes.

## III. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

From the findings of the study it was established that locus of control of the student have a considerable influence (average score=2.93) on exams cheating. The items, "My friends assist me to cheat" and "I can cheat if am convinced to do so" received the highest ratings from the respondents at average mean of 3.42, with more than a half 188(52.2%) of the students who were sampled for the survey accepting that their friends assist them to cheat and 194 (53.9%) others indicating that they can cheat if they are convinced to do so. Equally, on whether the students have self-confidence to do exams without cheating, about seven out of ten 253 (70.3%) of the respondents agreed that they lack self-confidence to take exams without cheating. In addition, the findings of the study revealed that majority of the students always feel that they don't have what it takes to pass exams, as was confirmed by 194

(53.9%) the students who took part in this survey. Equally, although 100 (27.8%) of the students indicated that they feel so confident that they cannot cheat in exams, 124 (34.4%) of them said they cannot do without cheating during exams, which translated to mean average influence of 2.46. This was supported by Chudzika and Zupala (2014) study which revealed that; the locus of central justice sensitivity, and some individual ethical philosophical dimensions are significant predictors for accepting dishonest behaviour in examinations. A fact that was thought otherwise by Maheshwari (2011) who revealed that the malpractices in examination were majorly accelerated by the students themselves because they want to achieve success, proved by the emphasis placed on the academic certificates, by both educational institutions and the state.

On the contrary, although 92 (25.6%) of the students held a strong notion that examination is so competitive and so cheating can help one to pass it and (external locus of control), more than a fifth 80 (22.2%) others believed that despite the fact that examinations are always competitive, one can still pass it without cheating (internal locus of control). This is true according to Ugodulunwa, (2011) who confirmed that attitude of students in examination cheating is significant in levels of study which include: -Interaction, effect of gender and religion, course of study and observed that the

way students interact with their peers determines their attitude towards learning and also behaviour during examinations which may lead to cheating in examination and so Behavioural and attitudinal factors among students determine students' participation in cheating in examination. The study further noted that students can only cheat when influenced by ecological factors such as peer influence, self efficacy and pressure from 'More Knowledge Others (MKO)' according to Vygotsky (1878).

To further investigate whether there was any statistical relationship between Locus of control and exams cheating, the null hypothesis was tested. To establish whether a statistical relationship exist between students' locus of control and indulgence in exams cheating, a one-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used. The information from the Locus of Control Questionnaire helped the researcher to group student respondents into three dimensions of locus of control. Using the scale 1-5, the students were grouped according their scores: Internal locus of control ( $\leq 2.80$ ), intermediate locus control (2.81-3.80) and external locus of control ( $\geq 3.81$ ). A descriptive statistics was computed to show the comparison of perceived exams cheating among three dimensions of locus of control, as shown in Table 4.14.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Scores by Types of Locus Control on Indulgence in Exams Cheating**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Internal	100	2.5060	.58046	.05805	2.3908	2.6212
Intermediate	208	2.9149	.49638	.03442	2.8470	2.9828
External	52	3.0769	.44529	.06175	2.9530	3.2009
Total	360	2.8247	.55261	.02913	2.7674	2.8820

Table 1, indicates that students with external locus of control had the highest score (mean = 3.08, standard deviation = .46 and standard error = .06) of indulgence to exams cheating and internal locus of control had the least level (mean = 2.51, standard deviation = .58 and

standard error = .06) in exams cheating. Further, the study determined whether the results indicated in Table 4.14 were statistically significantly different through ANOVA test. The results of the ANOVA analysis are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: ANOVA Results: Types of Locus of Control**

**Exams Cheating**

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	15.157	2	7.579	28.639	.000
Within Groups	94.473	357	.265		
Total	109.630	359			

The results indicate that there is a significant difference in the level of perceived level of exams cheating among students with different locus control. The ANOVA results has confirmed that there was a statistically significant difference [F (2, 357) =28.639, p<.05] in students' involvement in exams cheating scores for the three locus of control. This shows that student's locus control has significant influence on perceived level of exams cheating. Consequently, given the fact

that significance difference was established, it was necessary to further find out which group was significantly different from which other group. This was done by use of a Post-Hoc test using the Tukey HSD test which was viable. The statistical significance of the differences between each pair of groups is provided in the Table 3 of multiple comparisons, which gives the results of the Post-Hoc tests.

**Table 3: Multiple Comparisons- Post-Hoc Test**

Dependent Variable: Exams Cheating

Tukey HSD

(I) Control (Binned)	Locus of Control (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Internal	Intermediate	-.40890*	.06260	.000	-.5562	-.2616
	External	-.57092*	.08795	.000	-.7779	-.3639
Intermediate	Internal	.40890*	.06260	.000	.2616	.5562
	External	-.16202	.07976	.106	-.3497	.0257
External	Internal	.57092*	.08795	.000	.3639	.7779
	Intermediate	.16202	.07976	.106	-.0257	.3497

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 3 indicate that the perceived level of examinations cheating among the students who exhibited internal locus control was significantly lower (M = 2.51, SD = .58) than were those in both the intermediate locus of control (M = 2.91, SD = .49), p <.05 and in the external locus of control (M = 3.07, SD = .44), p <.05. This indicates that the difference in mean of the perceived level of exams cheating among the different groups of locus of control are significantly (p<.05) different from each other, except between intermediate and external locus of control which statistical significant difference was not established. The perceived exams cheating for the students who exhibited external locus of control had the highest score, meaning they were more involved in exams cheating than the other two. This was in agreement with Scanica (2016) study which revealed that one of the determinants of examination cheating among students is the writing strategies that are so obscure which they pass to one another. The students capitalize on the lack of strict invigilators and supervisors of the examinations because Low efficacious students always find it challenging to tackle examinations within the time limit and so they resort to depend on the more efficacious colleagues who help them to cheat, which is an external control.

**Evaluation of the effect size**

The effect size calculated using Eta squared was .160, indicating that a fairly respectable proportion of variance of the perceived level of exams cheating (dependent variable) was explained by the independent variables (students' locus of control). This finding corroborates to the fact that there was statistical significance difference (P< 0.05, in all cases) among the types of locus of control in regards to their perceived level of exams cheating. Hence, it was concluded that students' locus of control has significant influence on the students involvement in exams cheating.

Locus of control was also observed as theme during the in-depth interview, since most of the respondents gave credence to it. It emerged from the analysis that several students cheat due to low self-efficacy. Their expressions were found to be related to locus of control and accounted for the largest number of responses. It was established that teachers' influence and syllabus coverage accounted for several responses which was slightly higher than technology, exam management and parental influence which were also significantly observed by the respondents. The responses or expressions by the various respondents gave indications that locus of control is a determinant to

examination cheating given that most of respondents gave expressions:

Cheating in exams is caused by lack of trust on self. The students who cheat always feel that they can't make it on their own. They even don't trust the ability of their teachers and they feel that their school is substandard in teaching. (Parent. 1)

Examination cheating is mainly among students who don't work hard in school and therefore are not advantaged when it comes to tackling challenging or difficult problems.

(Teacher. 4)

The expressions from Parent 1 and Teacher 4 denote how locus of control as a determinant to examination cheating in schools, is a key factor to be considered. The respondents from the study indicate that self efficacy is not only a personal determinant but also a school determinant. They observed that students who lack confidence in themselves, on their teacher and in their schools are always prone to fall prey to exams irregularities or cheating. Self efficacy according to Pristin and Michael (2014) applies not only to the students but also to the teachers and the schools. A school therefore should put the confidence in their students that they can make it when they are there and also that they have the best teachers. Similarly, Christopher (2012) study in USA revealed that, High specific self – efficacy in individuals is less likely cheat. But both levels – general self-efficacy (G.S.E) and specific self-efficacy (SSE) predict lower rates of cheating overall. Christopher (2012), finally confirms that self-efficacy reflects the belief that a person is able to successfully perform a task, even though he noted that self-efficacy beliefs are not necessarily accurate as an individual's confidence in being able to perform effectively does not mean that the individual is actually able to do so.

“Students will always cheat because examination is difficult and the pass mark is high. Those who understand the subject or question are used to assist those who don't understand. This is cheating by both, the ones assisted and the ones assisting.”(Student 2)

The views of Student 2 shows that those involved in cheating are not only those with external locus of control but also those with internal locus of control. Those with external locus of control influence those with internal locus of control to give them assistance; hence both are involved in cheating.

Those students with better knowledge of the questions will always find a better way of passing the answers to those who don't, while those

who don't know device a better method of receiving the past answers. (Student. 5)

The statement by Student 5 indicates that cheating has been perceived as a tool by students with external locus of control to pass exams and not those with internal locus of control or highly efficacious ones. The findings are in tandem with a study by McCabe et.al, (2012) in USA, who revealed that students cheat because of the influence of friends and low self-efficacy. Afokasade (2014) also carried out a study in Lagos, Nigeria and found out that: - students with external or internal locus of control o get involved in cheating while taking advantage of laxity in supervision and invigilation. This study was also given support by a study in Ethiopia by Uti, A (2012), who revealed that parental involvement had a high influence on students' self-efficacy and locus of control. Another respondent also reported;

Cheating is not good and also the ministry agents discourage it at all costs. The only worry we have is that those who cheat are smarter than us and use very complicated means that we can't easily get. We have always sounded alarm that those caught cheating would face dire consequences but this has never stopped, those who cheat are jut clever people or students.(County Education Officer. 1)

The Education officer 1 expression is an indicator that examination cheating is mainly done by more efficacious students than the rest. The officer points out the I.Q of the examination cheating and conceals that they can't match than this statement is given support by Ong'ong'a and Akaranga (2013) which revealed that those student involved in cheating use very well prepared notes which fit well with the questions given. They also use accurate methods that even the supervisors and invigilators cannot match. This shows that there is a significant relationship between locus of control as a personal factor and examination cheating among students. The findings echoed studies such as Stumber (2009) and Mularidharan and Venkatesh (2009) who came up with several candid studies on examination cheating. Stumber (2009) observed that cheating is mainly personal though can be influenced by peers.

Students cheat so much, because they feel that what comes from “outside” is the right thing to be done and also because they are not confident with what they have they can't stand on their own – they have low self esteem (Teacher I).

The respondent, Teacher 1 is a teacher who feels that a student will only cheat when they have no confidence in what they have or know. A student who has confidence in the knowledge they

posses will always be ready to do exams without cheating. In self esteem the learner is expected to take the task without promoting and this one applies even to examinations (McCabe, Trevino (2012). The verbatim expressions from the interviews by respondents therefore showed that External locus of control as a personal determinant of examination cheating was a key determinant of examination cheating as follows:

I can't stop cheating as long as my friends or others cheat; I cheat because they encourage me to do so, since those who cheat are the ones who get better courses. My colleagues who have cheated in exams have always got better performance; therefore they encourage me to do so. (Student 1)

The views of Student 1 are an indicator that cheating among students is mainly influenced by others and mainly their friends. The External locus of control is an external pressure that compels the student to cheat in examinations. External locus of control presented itself clearly with a significant number of respondents supporting it which is quite significant.

"I always want to be independent but my friends always follow me to make me do their will they involve me in their actions and hence I cheat in exams because of them." (Student 1)

The Student 1 further narrated his feelings about the information of friends. The respondent could not manage himself or herself hence his actions were determined by friends which means that the individuals may want to be independent especially in doing examinations but they are forced to cheat having been influenced by their peers. (Paul, Grimes, and Jan, 2006) while McCabe and Trevino, (2012) a firmid that students cheat because they lack principles and are unable to think independently.

I cheat because; there is no any other better way of passing exams.

I have to be sure that I have given the correct answer to any questions.

Most of the answers are from the examiners or marking scheme so are more accurate, to use that using my own brain (Student 2)

The response is from student 2 who feels that what is prepared prior to examination is always accurate and should be used if one wants to be sure of passing, this is an example of external locus of control. The expression by the above respondent is an indicator that the above student cannot tackle any examination with confidence unless he/she receives an external support this is an indication of external locus of control. This was also supported

by Finn and Michael, (2014) who found out that cheating is more likely among lower achieving students when they do not identify with school than among higher achieving students with low level of academic achievement. This was confirmed that adherence to teachers' instructions and behaviour has a direct bearing to students' behaviour towards cheating in examinations in schools.

We cheat because our friends also cheat and encourage us to do so.

When they succeed in cheating they roll down the syndrome to us citing the benefits there in.' as long as our friends cheat and successfully overcome the challenges, I also must cheat and succeed like them so as to narrow their chances of occupying my chance (Student 4).

The response from student 4 indicates that students have the influence of their fellow students within the schools that encourage them to cheat. However much the teachers or examination council may try to eradicate the act by imposing severe legislation on the offenders, the syndrome may end because it is the external pressure among students who influence the act.

Students cheat much when influenced by fellow students or peers than when influenced by teachers, parents or principals. The teacher s will always want their students to pass exams out of sheer hard work from both the student and the teacher though they are often overcome by circumstances that prevail.(Head teacher 2).

The respondent, Head teacher 2 is a principal of one of the schools under study and affirms that external pressure is so strong that it has a direct bearing on the behaviour of individuals and that's why it can influence examination cheating among the students in secondary schools. Youths can be prompted by their peers to behave in a manner that does not show independent thinking and this may also prompt the act of self deception or even cheating (McCabe, Trevino & Butterfield, 2012). External locus of control is a factor among the youths that accounts for their un-ethical behaviours presenting vividly in examination cheating, (Ong'ong'a &Akaranga, 2013).

#### IV. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

The main Personal determinant of examination cheating tendencies was observed aslevels of locus of control among students. It emerged prominently that most of the students cheat due to low self efficacy and External locus of control according the data collected from the respondents. The study finally concluded that examination cheating is more prominent in students

with external locus of control than in those with internal locus of control and that locus of control is a factor that can't be avoided as determinant of examination cheating tendencies among secondary school students. External locus of control was revealed as the external influences that lead to examination cheating. This was more attributed to those with low self esteem and low self confidence than those with high self esteem and self confidence. The Ministry of Education to establish or initiate an aspect of Moral and Ethical behaviour Development in schools to enhance teacher and student commitment to examination ethics since the study revealed that there is significant relationship between teachers influence on examination cheating.

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