

# **INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND SCHOOL CLIMATE ON EXAMINATION CHEATING BEHAVIOUR OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN OYO, OYO STATE, NIGERIA**

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## **Abstract**

Examination Cheating Behaviour is not a new practice among students. Despite the efforts made by researchers to curb this ugly trend of examination cheating behaviour, the problem is still significantly present. Therefore, this study examined the influence of social media and school climate on the examination cheating behaviour of secondary school students in Oyo, Oyo State, Nigeria. The study utilized a descriptive research design of the survey type. The population consisted of all public secondary school students in Oyo township, Oyo State, Nigeria. Three hundred (300) students were selected as the study sample using a multistage sampling technique. In the first stage, six (6) public secondary schools were systematically chosen from the three local governments in Oyo township to represent the study population. In the second stage, fifty (50) students were randomly selected from each of the six (6) secondary schools, resulting in a total sample of three hundred (300) secondary school students. The study instruments were adapted and pilot-tested. The instrument's reliability yielded a coefficient of 0.75, indicating that it was statistically reliable. Data were analyzed using simple percentages, charts, and T-tests to assess the three hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. Specifically, the first hypothesis that there is no significant difference between male and female students in their perceptions of the influence of social media on their cheating behaviour was rejected, as the calculated T-value of 3.03 exceeded the critical T-value of 1.96 at the 0.05 significance level. Based on the findings, several recommendations were made, including the need for education stakeholders to focus on students' moral development, enabling them to distinguish right from wrong.

## **Introduction**

Education is a powerful tool that a nation may bestow onto its citizens, as it fosters comprehensive growth. Consequently, evaluation is essential to enhance educational standards or assess the extent of student knowledge and the degree of retention or accomplishment of academic instruction during the teaching and learning processes. The educational system is intricately linked to evaluation and assessment. During assessment and evaluation, certain pupils exert additional effort to achieve success. Cheating has persistently plagued academic environments, and with technological advancements like cell phones and increased pressure on students to achieve high scores for admission into prestigious universities, it has escalated into an epidemic. The ethical fabric of society today regards cheating with diminished disdain. A substantial body of studies has shown the increasing issue of cheating among undergraduate students. Despite the emphasis on academic integrity in higher education, cheating is prevalent. The proliferation of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, examination fraud, and transcript forgery, is increasingly evident at numerous colleges. Academic dishonesty is prevalent among numerous students. Akpama and Edet (2009) indicated that cheating in Nigeria's public examinations is worrying. This issue has resulted in the nullification of outcomes and the closure of educational institutions, significantly diminishing educational standards. Several innocent pupils are subjected to penalties and experience frustration. Since the late 1980s, numerous schools have engaged in various malpractices. Cheating can manifest in various forms, such as inscribing notes on concealed paper between fabric folds, creating a cheat sheet on a desk or palm, or consulting guidebooks or notebooks during an examination. In conjunction with technological advancement, mobile phones can serve as a medium for cheating by storing cheat data in their memory or transmitting answers via SMS (short message service) during examinations. In contemporary contexts, cheating encompasses acquiring, disseminating, or utilising information, resources, notes, study aids, or other unauthorised devices in an academic setting. Ahmadi (2012) identified the causes of student cheating as inadequate preparation, time constraints, negligence, and soft penalties. He noted that common cheating methods included plagiarism and conversing with others during examinations.

Students often engage in academic dishonesty to achieve passing grades and satisfy parental and educational expectations. Parental and educator pressure and inadequate time management contribute to academic dishonesty. Teacher pressure has been shown to elevate the likelihood of academic dishonesty. This issue is escalating among adolescents globally (Sarita, 2015).

Cheating encompasses using crib notes, duplicating answers, or disseminating examination material. Various methods have emerged, such as concealing notes in toilet tanks or within the brims of baseball caps, sleeves, thighs, or cleavage. The capacity for information storage in devices like graphing calculators, pagers, and cell phones has expanded since the information revolution. While students have always surreptitiously observed adjacent examinations, some overtly assist others in cheating. Covert signalling techniques exist for communicating responses to peers, such as coded sneezes, pencil tapping, or high-frequency sounds, which are imperceptible to most educators. Occasionally, certain students employ intricate signals, such as hand or foot gestures, to communicate responses (e.g., one tap on foot for "A," two taps for "B"). Cheating refers to acquiring valuable items by deception or fraudulence. Writing on palms during a school task signals low self-efficacy (Christine, Graven, Gary, Davis, Murray & Rydall 2015). Strict compliance with examination regulations can enhance learners' self-efficacy and eliminate examination cheating (Anderman & Murdock, 2007).

The most favoured deterrents to mitigate cheating in classrooms included the implementation of varied test formats by educators, providing students with rationale against cheating, rigorous supervision during examinations, and the assertion that moral development serves as a long-term strategy to eradicate examination dishonesty, emphasising the necessity for students to cultivate moral integrity to prevent cheating (Davis, Drinan & Gallant, 2012; Happel & Jennings, 2008). The dilemma of examination cheating is a worldwide concern, prevalent across all educational levels, particularly among secondary and postsecondary students. Several variables regarding their influence and link with cheating behaviour have been examined in examinations.

The prevalence of examination cheating escalates when offenders are not adequately penalised. Academic dishonesty constitutes stealing. Nevertheless, most perpetrators in academic environments evade legal and judicial repercussions. Schools, instead, implement their methods for addressing such offenders. This has not dissuaded academic dishonesty, as evidenced by the elevated prevalence stated in newspapers (Adebayo, 2011).

Several attempts at reducing examination cheating were foiled. Neither high nor low moral development significantly influenced cheating under low or high-threat-high supervision conditions. Very few participants at either moral development level cheated under the high-risk condition, while many did under the low-risk condition.

The rampant utilisation of social media, especially WhatsApp and Facebook, by virtually everyone, but more so by students, has enhanced and multiplied examination malpractice. Social media refers to Internet and mobile-based technologies that enable interactive communication between individuals, organisations, and communities. These human interaction technologies on the web are internet-mediated. The Web 2.0-related software tracks all social exchanges and interactions between individuals, organisations, and communities that take place online (Dominick, 2009). The ability of the users to create, interpret, reorganise and circulate the content defines social media. The notion lets users create and share experiences, information, and ideas using the Internet and World Wide Web.

Social media combines past and evolving technology and features to build online global platforms for engagement and exchange, creating a new way of life and new voices through interpersonal communication channels. Due to greater access to the Internet and other social networking devices, these new voices have become worldwide news outlets. Social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and handheld mobile apps, including Blackberry and WhatsApp, give voice to previously voiceless individuals and groups who are now strong voices. University undergraduates are the dominant users of these social media networks. Social networking platforms are used to perpetuate and commit exam misconduct and vices. Another external aspect students may point to as a reason for cheating is the school atmosphere.

Quality and character of school life are called school atmosphere. Students', parents', and staff's school experiences shape the school environment, which includes norms, goals, values, interpersonal interactions, teaching and learning strategies, and organisational structures. It may reduce risk and build resilience for disadvantaged students (Hopson & Lee, 2011). The literature shows that a pleasant school atmosphere improves student outcomes, including closing the achievement gap between kids of colour and White pupils. School climate refers to the features and characteristics of the school environment that students, instructors, and staff experience. Most theorists concur that school climate includes goals, values, norms, interpersonal relationships,

teaching and learning methods, and the school's organisational and physical structure. Positive school climates include supportive and caring relationships between students, teachers, and administrators, physical and emotional safety, and an encouraging focus on learning. After failing to enforce laws or become careless, the school climate may encourage kids to indulge in social vices. It argues that a society that glorifies cheating causes school exam cheating. Exam misconduct has spread to all schools, including the religious ones (Cornelius-Ukpepi, Ndifon & Enuokoha, 2012). State, private, independent and catholic schools all suffer dishonour during board investigations of academic malpractice, argue the authors. Thus, the morality of the school may encourage exam cheating. According to Smith (2005), the moral climate of a school might affect the amount of cheating. A good emotional tone in the classroom and advice not to cheat before taking a test reduced cheating. Exam cheaters may have been punished multiple times or not at all. Moderate discipline may help kids internalise morality and be more honest in school. Some educational climates encourage risk-taking. This depends on staff and student discipline. Examination malpractices in all its forms have ravaged Nigeria's education system.

Students do many things to acquire unfair grades. Some female students seduce their teachers, while males utilise money or threats. These groups prioritise passing the exam regardless of means. Examination malpractice is a big issue in internal and external exams, according to former education minister Mrs Oby Ezekwesili. She noted that Nigerian post-primary exit test authorities cancel hundreds of thousands of results annually due to misconduct, wasting billions of Naira (Vanguard, 2008). It is no longer news in newspapers because WAEC, NECO, and JAMB revoke results for examination malpractice in almost every external exam. Researchers (Longdet and Manguwat, 2006 and Mgbodile, 2010) have written about this evil's burden on many hearts. This study examines the threat from a behavioural science standpoint of cheating's behavioural aspect. Few studies have examined how social media and school climate affect secondary school students' exam cheating. This study is designed to investigate the influence of social media and school climate on the examination of cheating behaviour of secondary school students in Oyo, Oyo State, Nigeria.

**Statement of the Problem** The secondary school student conceals their examination cheating activity behind many justifications. If those aspects remain unclear, certain negative repercussions of the threat may persistently impact the educational system adversely. Examination malpractices

undermine an institution's academic reputation and integrity. Recently, schools have been closed due to examination malpractices, and some have been delisted from the roster of institutions eligible to conduct external examinations. All stakeholders in education experience the adverse effects over an extended duration. It resulted in the emergence of untrained graduates who, in turn, compromised the country's integrity on the global stage. Societal disdain for victims and institutions that participated in such practices led to declining enrolment at these schools. This study examined the impact of social media and school climate on the examination cheating behaviour of secondary school pupils in Oyo, Oyo State, Nigeria, as uncontrolled cheating could undermine academic integrity. Cheating pertains to acts and must be examined from behavioral viewpoints. Based on this, this study is designed to investigate the influence of social media and school climate on examination cheating behaviour of secondary school students in Oyo, Oyo state, Nigeria.

### **Hypotheses**

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Male and female students do not differ significantly in their perception of the influence of social media on their cheating behaviour.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** Social media's influence on cheating behaviour among junior and senior secondary school students does not differ significantly.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** Rural and urban secondary school students do not differ significantly in their perceptions of social media's influence on their cheating behaviour.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The major purpose of the study is to investigate the influence of social media and school climate on examination cheating behaviour of secondary school students in Oyo, Oyo state, Nigeria.

1. To ascertain the influence of social media on examination cheating behaviour of secondary school students in Oyo Township.
2. To determine the influence of school climate on examination cheating behaviour of secondary school students in Oyo Township.
3. To find out the influence of gender on examination cheating behaviour of secondary school students in Oyo Township.

### **Review of Related Literatures**

**Social Media Influence and Examination Cheating Behaviour**

Zahid, Ahmad, Syed, and Faisal (2016) investigated the impact of social media use on the academic performance of university and college students. Random sampling identified 300 students. Data was gathered through a questionnaire. The results indicate that social media had a positive impact. Tamayo and Dela Cruz (2014) investigated the impact of social media usage on student performance. The research indicated that social media usage impedes student learning and attendance. A scatter plot indicated a link between the variables from the inquiry. Academic performance and social media are interconnected. Students' excessive use of social media may adversely affect their academic performance and classroom engagement.

Mingle and Adams (2015) discovered that social media usage may result in deteriorated handwriting, spelling deficiencies, class absences, delayed assignment submissions, addiction, and restricted study time. Adverse effects are seen in alterations to social lifestyles or cultural ideas. As noted by Mingle and Adams (2015), social media modifies educational environments and student conduct.

Investigate Risk-Taking Behaviour about Cheating Cheung and Wu (2012) posited that a risk-taking personality predicts cheating among university students. The research analysed the cheating risk factors among 205 university students in Macao. The independent variables were risk-taking, academic self-concept, and teacher autonomy support. Scores for cheating, DOSPERT, academic self-concept, and perceived autonomy support were utilised. Various regression analysis models indicated that academic self-concept, ethical risk-taking, and financial risk-taking predicted cheating, with ethical and financial risk-taking exhibiting greater predictive strength.

**Methodology**

The study employed a descriptive survey methodology for efficient data collection. The population consisted of all public secondary school pupils in Oyo township, Oyo State, Nigeria, distributed throughout three local governments: Oyo East, Oyo West, and Atiba. A multistage sample technique was employed; in the first stage, six public secondary schools were systematically chosen from all local governments to represent the secondary schools in Oyo Township. In the second stage, fifty (50) secondary school students were randomly chosen from each of the six (6) secondary schools, resulting in a total sample of three hundred (300) secondary school students. The study instruments were modified and pilot tested; sections A and B. Section A contained



demographic data of the respondents, whereas Section B included items that assessed dependent and independent variables. The response scale varied from Strongly Agree = 5 to Strongly Disagree = 1. A five-point Likert scale was employed. The instrument's reliability produced a coefficient of 0.75.

Before administering the questionnaire, the researcher secured consent from the principals or heads of the selected schools. Then, the instrument was distributed to the respondents and subsequently collected. The respondents were allotted sufficient time and afforded the opportunity to inquire about any item they found unclear. The acquired data was systematically arranged, structured, and evaluated using basic percentages, charts, and T-tests.

## Results

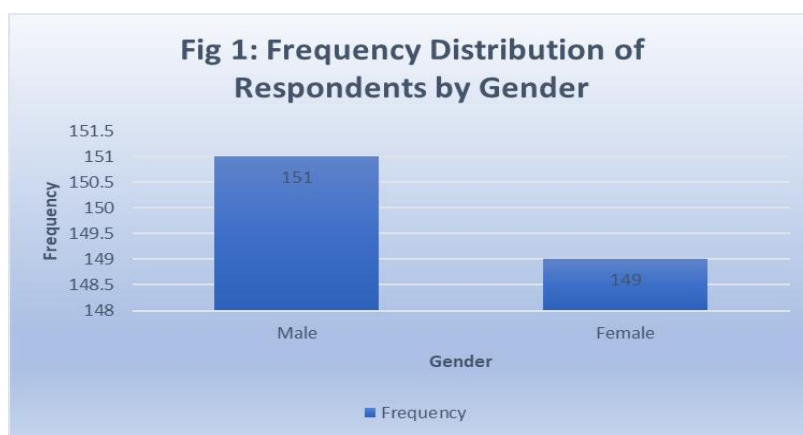
### Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This segment presents the descriptive statistics of gender, and class.

**Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Gender**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage %
Male	151	51.1
Female	149	48.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 1 indicates that 51.1% of the respondents were male, whilst 48.9% were female. This suggests a higher participation rate of males in this study than females.

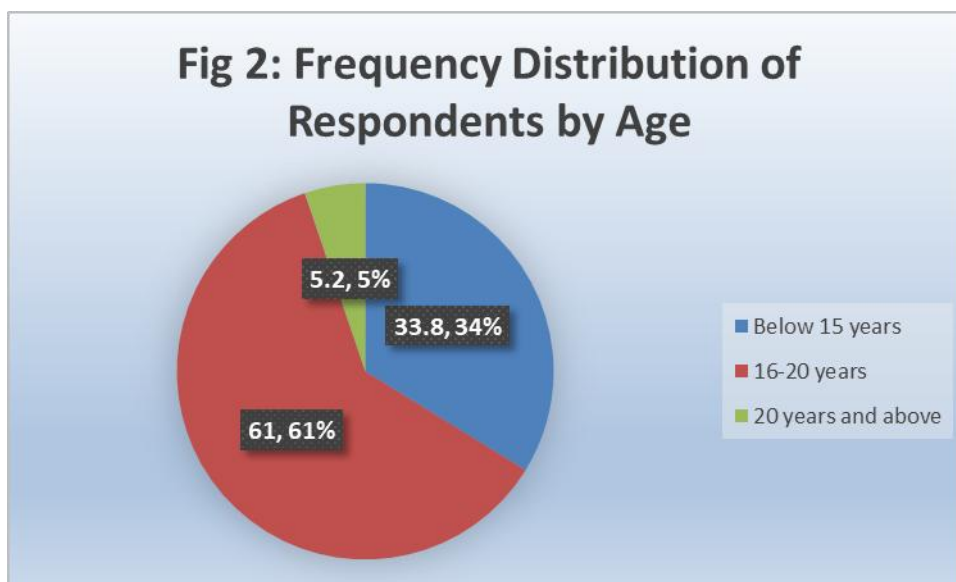


**Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Age**



Age	Frequency	Percentage
Below 15 years	103	33.8
16-20 years	181	61.0
20 years and above	16	5.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 2 indicates that 61.0% of respondents are aged 16-20, 33.8% are below 15, and 5.2% are 20 years and older. This indicates that the majority of responses are aged between 16 and 20 years.



### Hypothesis Testing

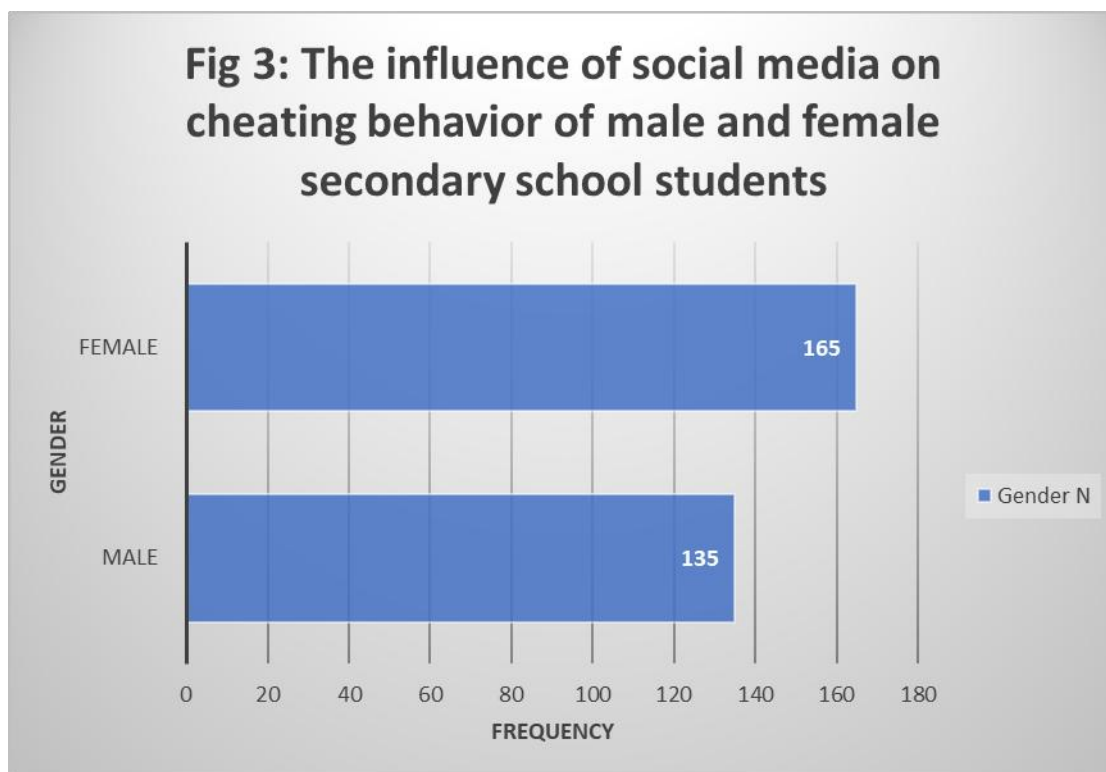
**H01:** Male and female students do not differ significantly in their perception on the influence of social media on their cheating behavior.

Table 3: T-test result summary showing the difference in the influence of social media on the cheating behaviour of male and female secondary school students.

Variables	Gender N	M.D	S.D	Df.	Cal.t. value	Crit. t. value	Sig.
Male	135	73.28	9.76	298	3.03	1.96	0.05
Female	165	58.12	11.81				

The results from Table 3 demonstrated that the hypothesis positing no significant difference between male and female students in their perceptions of social media's impact on cheating

behaviour was rejected. The computed t-value of 3.03 surpassed the critical table value of 1.96 at the 0.05 alpha significance level. This indicates that students' gender substantially affects the influence of social media on their cheating behaviour.



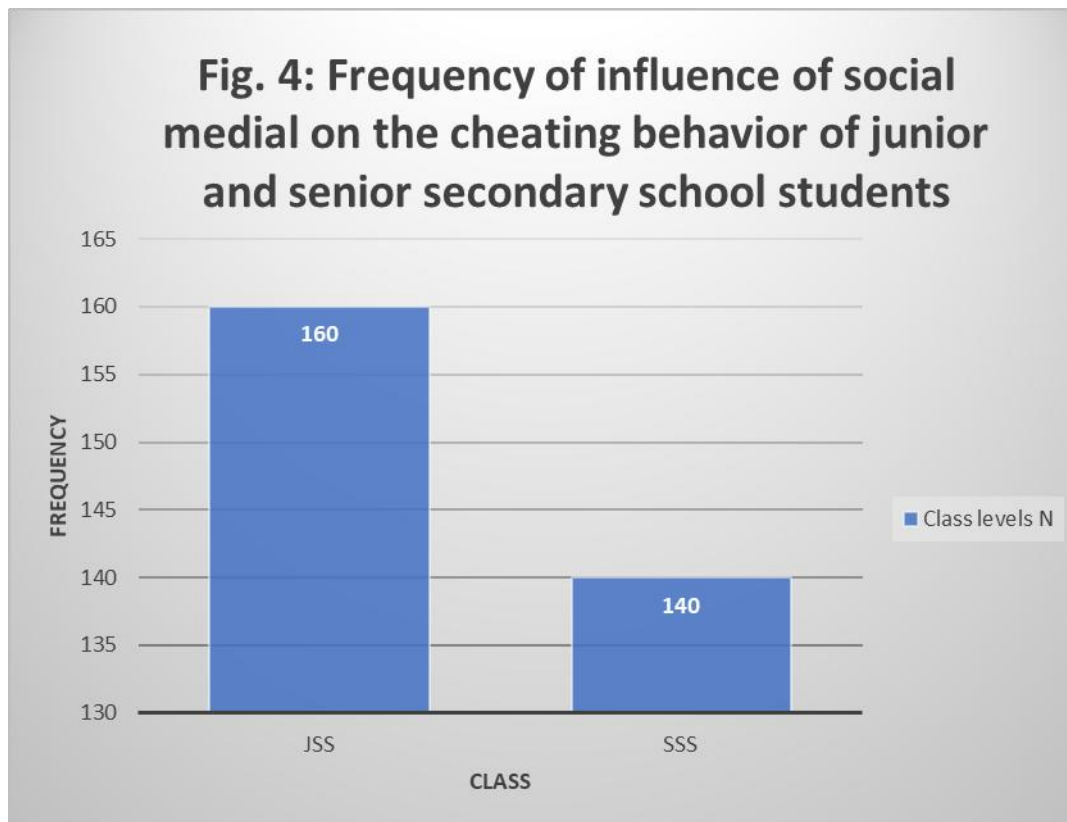
Ho2: Junior and senior secondary school students do not differ significantly on the influence of social media on their cheating behavior

Table 4: T-test result showing difference in the influence of social medial on the cheating behavior of junior and senior secondary school students.

Variables	Class levels N	M.D.	S.D.	Df.	Cal.t. value	Crit.t. value	Sig.
JSS	160	80.51	9.72	298	2.51	1.96	0.05
SSS	140	50.32	6.18				

Table 4 shows that the hypothesis positing no significant difference between junior and senior secondary school students concerning the impact of social media on their cheating behaviour was rejected, as the computed t-value of 2.51 surpassed the critical t-value of 1.96 at the 0.05 alpha

significance level. This suggests that the educational level of secondary school students considerably affects the sociological notions associated with their cheating activity.



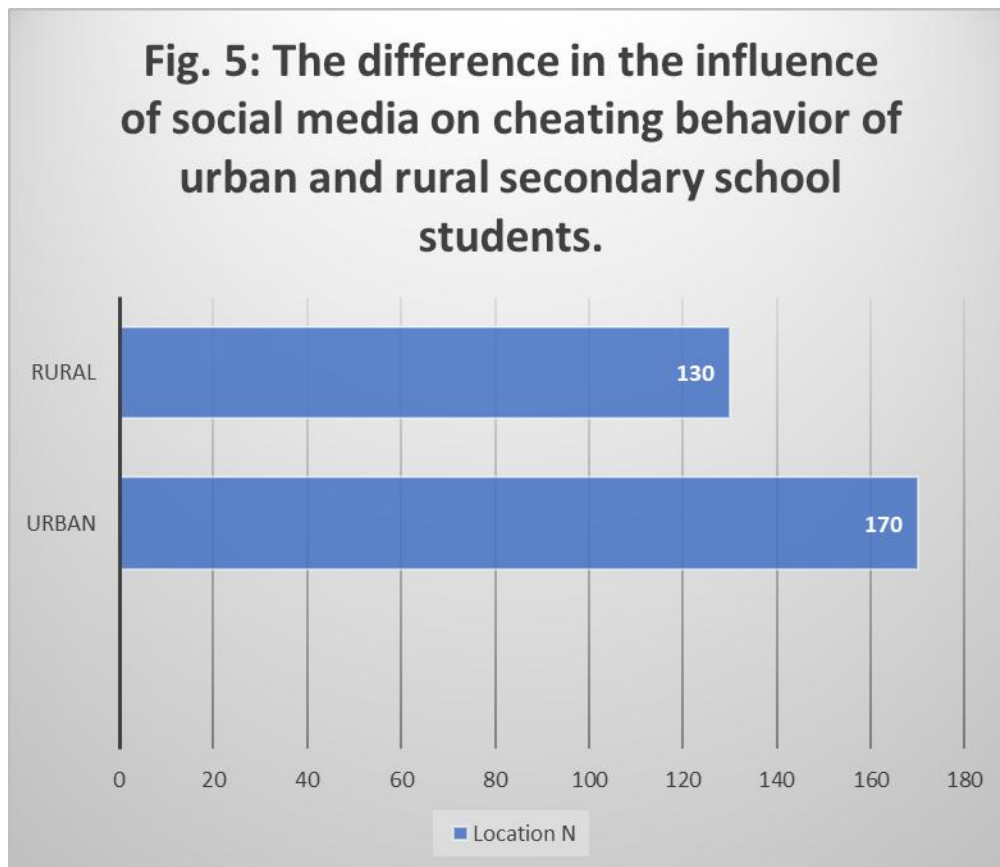
Ho3: Urban and rural secondary school students do not differ significantly in the influence of social media on their cheating behavior.

Table 5: T-test result showing the difference in the influence of social media on cheating behavior of urban and rural secondary school students.

Variables	Location N	M.D.	S.D.	Df.	Cal.t.value	Crit.t. value	Sig.
Urban	170	65.36	12.61	298	1.91	1.71	0.05
Rural	130	43.21	9.32				

The results from Table 5 indicate a substantial difference in how social media influences the cheating behaviour of urban and rural secondary school pupils since the computed t-value of 1.91 exceeds the critical t-value of 1.71 at the 0.05 significance level. This signifies that the hypothesis

that urban and rural secondary school pupils do not differ significantly in the impact of social media on their cheating behaviour was rejected.



## Discussion

The hypothesis one posited that male and female students do not significantly differ in their perceptions of social media's influence on cheating, was rejected due to evidence indicating a significant difference between students' examination cheating behaviour and social media. This aligns with Hensley's (2013) and Jereb's (2017) asserting that gender is a prevalent signal of dishonesty. Men exhibit a higher frequency of infidelity than women, indicating that gender influences cheating behaviour (Gibson et al., 2008; Modin, 2017).

The outcome of hypothesis two, which posits that junior and senior secondary school students do not significantly differ in the influence of social media on their cheating behaviour, indicated a significant positive correlation between students' examination cheating behaviour and class level. The results indicate that increased students' class level considerably influences examination

cheating behaviour. This aligns with Rourke et al. (2010), who asserted that cheating becomes normalised when a permissive culture develops due to a change in student attitudes; as students increasingly perceive their peers as cheating, the perception of blameworthiness and moral wrongdoing diminishes, a phenomenon exacerbated by social media influence.

The hypothesis three asserts that urban and rural secondary school students do not significantly differ in the impact of social media on their cheating behaviour was rejected. This indicates a significant difference in the influence of social media on the cheating behaviour of urban and rural secondary school students. This aligns with Obe (2004), who asserted that the geographical location of schools (rural versus urban) influences secondary students' cheating behaviour, as many urban students have access to technological devices and social media tools that facilitate dishonest practices.

### **Conclusion**

Studies have revealed that various circumstances impact students' test cheating behaviour, and the outcomes of this study have also demonstrated the extent of the damage it does. The dishonest conduct of pupils has rendered it unfeasible for examiners to assess their competency due to the compromised evaluation methods. Research on the impact of social media and socioeconomic status indicates that proactive engagement from parents and educators can mitigate students' social media misuse, significantly contributing to academic dishonesty during examinations. The class level and age of students influence the extent of their engagement in examination cheating behaviour.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. The education stakeholders should develop students' morals to differentiate right from wrong.
2. Secondary school authorities should create a climate that frowns strongly on cheating behaviour and discourages a positive attitude towards examination cheating behaviour.
3. A working system that provides punishment proportionally to the various examination cheating behaviours should be implemented.

4. Frequent counselling sessions should be organised periodically for students at all levels in secondary schools.
5. Teachers and parents should periodically be offered orientation and re-orientation programmes, such as talk shows, seminars and workshops, on the negative implications of cheating behaviour in schools and society.
6. Parents and guardians should instil discipline in their children so that they can become good ambassadors of their respective families.

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