



Influence of Students' Societal Expectations on Academic Dishonesty in Public Secondary Schools in Makueni County, Kenya

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Abstract: Academic dishonesty in public secondary schools is a growing concern, influenced by various factors, including societal expectations. This paper examines how societal pressures and expectations contribute to academic dishonesty among students in public secondary schools in Makueni County, Kenya. This study was informed by Psychosocial Dynamic Theory and Theory of Planned Behaviour. The study used mixed method concurrent triangulation model that combined linear regression model and phenomenology. The sample size was 802 which consisted of 750 students sampled randomly, 25 principals and 25 teachers sampled purposively. There was 1 SCDE and 1 CDE purposively sampled. The research tools utilized were questionnaires for principals, teachers and students, and interviews for SCDEs and the County Director of Education. Inferential statistics were analyzed through linear regression and presented through tables while qualitative data was analyzed thematically and presented through narration and verbatim citations. The study findings were that societal expectations significantly influenced academic dishonesty, suggesting the need for a multifaceted approach to addressing this issue. The study recommended that parents and schools should cease from exerting exceeding pressure on academic performance of learners as it may be detrimental to their well-being and a catalyst to academic dishonesty.

Keywords: Academic dishonesty, Examinations, Influence, Public secondary schools, Students' Societal expectations

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1. Introduction

Academic dishonesty in Kenyan secondary schools emerged as a significant challenge, undermining the credibility and integrity of the education system. This dishonesty, which included cheating during examinations, plagiarism, and falsification of academic records, reflected not only individual choices but also broader societal influences. Among these influences, societal expectations played a pivotal role in shaping students' behavior.

In Kenya, education was often viewed as a critical pathway to upward social mobility. Academic success, particularly in national examinations like the Kenya Certificate of

Secondary Education (KCSE), was considered a measure of both individual and institutional achievement (Orodho, 2014). High examination scores opened doors to scholarships, enrollment in prestigious universities, and better career prospects, creating immense pressure on students to excel. This results-oriented culture often prioritized grades over the actual acquisition of knowledge, driving some students to engage in dishonest practices (Mweu & Nyaga, 2021).

Parents and communities also exerted significant pressure on students to meet societal expectations of academic excellence. Families often made substantial financial investments in their children's education, including extra tuition or enrollment in private and public schools, with the

expectation of excellent results. When students failed to meet these expectations, they faced criticism, disappointment, or even punitive actions, which pushed them towards academic dishonesty as a means of avoiding failure (Nyamwange et al., 2019).

Schools and teachers were not exempted from societal pressures. Many secondary schools strived to achieve high rankings in national league tables to attract more students, funding, and reputation. This institutional pressure led to unethical practices, including the organization of cheating syndicates, where students were encouraged or aided to cheat during examinations (Ombaka & Nyamwange, 2019). In some cases, teachers and administrators felt compelled to compromise examination integrity to meet unrealistic institutional goals.

Cultural norms further exacerbated the issue. Kenyan society tended to celebrate success stories without always scrutinizing the methods used to achieve them. The culture of "results at all costs" normalized unethical practices among students (Ngunjiri, 2020). Additionally, technological advancements, such as smartphones and internet access, facilitated cheating by making it easier for students to access unauthorized materials or plagiarize (Wachira et al., 2022).

While the government and education stakeholders implemented measures to curb academic dishonesty, such as stricter examination monitoring and penalties for offenders, the problem persisted. This suggested that addressing academic dishonesty requires a deeper understanding of the societal pressures that influenced student behavior. Research on this topic in the Kenyan context remains limited, necessitating a comprehensive examination of the interplay between societal expectations and academic dishonesty.

Regarding the Republic of Kenya, the rate at which academic dishonesty occurred in the educational system was highly disturbing. Annual examination results reports had indicated that academic dishonesty was rampant in Kenya with some schools and students' examination results being cancelled every year. The *Daily Nation* (2015) reported Chavakali and Kisii high schools as among the five national schools whose 2014 KCSE results were cancelled due to academic dishonesty. At Chavakali, English and Mathematics results for 307 candidates were cancelled. At Kisii High school, results for 145 out of 323 were cancelled after they cheated in English and History examinations. Reports of cancellation of examination results for candidates have been recorded after the release of KCSE results every year.

Public examinations in Kenya were so fiercely competitive, candidates, school administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders have resorted to unethical tactics to

improve their performance. The importance placed on exams may be the main factor contributing to academic dishonesty in the Kenyan environment. Examination scores in Kenya played a significant role in determining admission to colleges and universities as well as access to the employment market. It is essential that objectivity and fairness be the top priorities in the distribution of these places given the fierce rivalry for spots. Any procedure that jeopardizes the fairness and objectivity of exams must be discovered, and if at all feasible, stamped out (Kagete, 2018). He further found that there were a number of things that tempt students to cheat on examinations. The most frequent ones include intense rivalry, inadequate preparation on the part of applicants and teachers, bad invigilation and administration, pressure to pass exams and pass with good results, and poor examination facilities.

Ondima, Onderi and Nyamwange (2013) studied academic dishonesty amongst learners in Kisii. The findings were that stiff competition and poor preparation for examinations made students practice academic dishonesty. Musyoka (2015) in a study on students' perceptions on cheating in national examinations in Kitui County, Kenya, used 99 learners and 20 teachers in the sample. Descriptive survey design was used. The findings were that students with low self-concept had negative feelings about themselves and were likely to engage in exam fraudulence practices.

In Makueni County, cases of academic dishonesty had been reported continuously for several years. In the year 2015, Makueni County had the highest number of candidates who were involved in academic dishonesty in the KCSE examination. The students whose examination results were cancelled were 382 from 22 centers in Makueni County (*Daily Nation*, 2016). In 2017, a total of 113 students had their examination results cancelled and in 2019, Makueni County was among the counties that were under scrutiny for examination dishonesty in KCSE. During 2021 KCSE examinations, a police officer and three teachers were traced circulating leaked Kiswahili paper 2 examination which originated from Ngungi secondary school in Mbooni East sub county in Makueni County. Out of 42 candidates who wrote KCSE in 2021 at St. Patrick's Kyamatheka secondary school in Makueni county, only 5 got their results in full while the remaining 37 got Y grades in Kiswahili. In the same year, the results of all the candidates in Nduluni secondary school in Makueni county were cancelled. The students confessed to having sneaked into the examination hall with written answers stuffed inside belts linings, ties and underwear. In Two Travelers Oasis Center secondary school in Makueni county, 2 students were arrested with a chemistry paper in their phones (Makueni County Education Report, 2021). Therefore, research on the psychosocial factors which could lead to academic dishonesty was necessary to

address the alarming rate of examination cheating in Makueni County.

Nyiva (2020) in her study on effects of professional code of conduct on examination management in schools in Makueni, used a cross-section survey design to determine if the professional code had an impact on how tests were managed in schools in Makueni. The outcomes indicated that there was a significant association between the code of conduct and exam management in schools. It was recommended that the Ministry of Education should scrutinize behaviour of teachers for efficient administration of examinations. However, the study did not address societal expectations on academic dishonesty which the current study addressed.

Moreover, Bifwoli and Momanyi (2020) used a descriptive research design to study academic dishonesty in Makueni County and found out that there was academic dishonesty which was rampant in the county. The researchers identified factors influencing cheating as pressure to get jobs, laziness, and poor self-image. Makau (2017) in a study on factors influencing management of examinations in Makueni County reported that improper preparation for examinations by students, absence of learning skills, congestion of examination halls, weak supervision and lack of essential facilities were factors contributing to academic dishonesty among secondary school students in Makueni County. Despite the tough measures meted out on academic dishonesty by KNEC and the Ministry of Education which included cancellation of the results, suspension from sitting the KCSE for three years, a jail term of not less than five years and huge penalties, academic dishonesty seems to persist in Makueni County.

There is already rather a large literature on academic dishonesty globally and locally, much of it reporting some of the motives that give rise to the behavior and others focus on the correlates and remedies for the vice. Some factors advanced on the widespread of academic dishonesty in Makueni County, Kenya included improper preparation for examinations by students, lack of mastering skills, congestion in exam halls, improper supervision of examinations, lack of essential facilities, and lack of self-confidence in examination (Makau, 2017).

However, most of the studies done in Makueni County were either on psychological, physical or environmental factors influencing academic dishonesty. None of the studies has investigated students' societal expectations in Makueni county hence the research gap that this study addressed. The studies done also employed mainly the descriptive survey research design and survey procedure in gathering facts. Subsequently, the survey method is fundamentally subjective, and the results founded on the method should be believed with caution. This study, however, used mixed methodology design that combined

linear regression and phenomenological methods. This work examined the influence students' societal expectations on academic dishonesty in Makueni county, hence filling the research gap. The study explored the influence of students' societal expectations on academic dishonesty in public secondary schools in Makueni County, Kenya as the research objective.

2. Literature Review

Society plays a key role in the students' behaviour in institutions. The influence of societal expectations of students on academic dishonesty has not been fully researched. Daumiller and Janke (2019) observed that the Ghanaian government was full of nepotism and corruption which posed a serious threat to the education system. They found that dishonesty in learning institutions was reflecting the wider corrosion of moral behaviors in the society that supported self-centeredness. That study did not address school norms which was a research gap for the current study.

Students who do not pass examinations were termed as failures in the society. The parents and guardians insisted that their kids should succeed in exams come what may. This put students in a lot of pressure hence they had no option except to be involved in academic dishonesty (Hendy & Montargot, 2021). Some parents were even ready to bribe education officials since they badly wanted their kids to obtain high grades in examinations. Sinha (2016) found out that parental pressure might have made learners dishonest. Parents wanted the best from their children. They wanted their children to attend the best universities and secure the most respectable jobs in modern society. When students were burdened with such high expectations, they faced anxiety and fear of failing, hence they engaged in academic dishonesty. The current study confirmed or refuted the findings of these studies by use of a different population of learners in Makueni.

According to Masa and Mila (2017) parents had a very significant part in their children's behaviour and academic performance in the institutions. Frequently, a number of parents did not give essential resources that enabled their kids learn and when they were not performing up to their anticipation, the parents started pressurizing them, blaming the teachers or opted to the deceitful ways to assist the kids pass exams. Concurring with this opinion, Goodall and Vorhaus (2010) stated that some parents offered cash to the instructors to support their kids succeed in internal examinations, hence catapulting the academic dishonesty. Those studies did not clearly indicate how societal set norms influenced academic dishonesty which was a research gap for the current study.

Azuka and Oyaziwo (2017) in their study found out that most of the learners thought that their involvement in academic dishonesty was a common incidence, which was hard to eliminate because it was reflected in the society. Society viewed students who did not pass in their examinations as failures leaving the students with no option but to get entangled in academic deceit so as to succeed. They observed that learners who failed their examinations faced stigmatization from the society. The current study went further to reveal how the societal expectations influenced academic dishonesty by use of a mixed methodology approach which none of the reviewed studies had used.

In Kenya, societal expectations often prioritize academic excellence as a pathway to social mobility and economic success. High societal pressure for good grades encouraged academic dishonesty as a means to meet these expectations. Nyakundi (2018) highlighted that the "culture of success at all costs" instilled by families and communities contributed significantly to the normalization of cheating in schools. The societal glorification of academic achievement often overlooked the importance of the integrity behind those achievements (Mutuku, 2020).

Family expectations played a pivotal role in shaping students' attitudes toward education. A study by Wanyama and Ndegwa (2019) revealed that parents often demanded high academic performance without adequately considering the challenges students faced, inadvertently encouraging dishonest practices. Some parents even complied in providing resources such as pre-prepared answers during exams, reflecting a broader societal tolerance for dishonesty as long as it yielded results (Karanja et al., 2021).

The institutional culture within Kenyan schools also reflected broader societal values, often failing to address academic dishonesty adequately. Mbugua and Mwangi (2017) noted that some schools focused more on achieving high rankings in national examinations than on fostering ethical academic practices. Weak policies and inconsistent enforcement created an environment where dishonesty thrived without significant repercussions (Omondi, 2020).

The societal emphasis on academic success had far-reaching implications. Academic dishonesty undermined the credibility of Kenya's education system and affected students' preparedness for higher education and the workforce. Moreover, it perpetuated a culture of corruption and dishonesty, as students carried these values into their professional lives (Mugambi & Wanyeki, 2021).

The interplay between societal expectations and academic dishonesty among Makueni County public secondary schools was an issue that required a multifaceted approach, including fostering ethical values, reducing undue pressure

on students, and implementing stricter policies to deter misconduct.

2.1 Theoretical Literature Review

The investigation was directed by Psychosocial Dynamic Theory and Theory of Planned Behaviour. The theories addressed students' psychosocial factors (independent variable) and academic dishonesty (dependent variable) respectively.

2.1.1 Psychosocial Dynamic Theory

Sigmund Freud's (1901) psychosocial dynamic theory of personality emphasized the role of unconscious psychological conflicts in shaping behavior and personality. Dynamic interactions among central parts of the mind are believed to progress through five different psychosexual stages of development. They are the oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital stages. During each stage, sexual energy (libido) is expressed in different ways and through different parts of the body. Freud also believed that all pressure was due to the build-up of libido (sexual energy) and that all pleasure came from its discharge.

According to Freud, personality also develops from the interactions among three central structures of the human mind: the id, ego, and superego. Conflicts among these three structures and efforts to find balance among them determine how human beings behave and approach the world. What balance human beings did strike in any given situation determines how they would resolve the conflict between two overarching behavioral predispositions: biological aggressive and pleasure-seeking energies versus socialized internal control over those energies. The id, the most primitive of the three structures, is concerned with immediate satisfaction of basic needs and impulses. It works on pleasure principle. The superego is concerned with social and morals rules, conscience or moral compass. It grows as a child learns what their culture considers right and wrong. In contrast to the primitive id and the moral superego, the ego is the balanced, practical part of our personality. It is less primitive than the id and is partly conscious and partly unconscious. Its work is to balance the demands of the id and superego in the practical context of reality.

Freud believed that the id, ego, and superego are in constant conflict and that adult personality and behavior are rooted in the results of these internal struggles throughout childhood. He believed that a person who has a strong ego has a healthy personality and that imbalances in this system can lead to use of defense mechanisms. The defense mechanisms work by altering id structure of mind desires into tolerable forms or by blockage of these impulses.

2.1.2 Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) contends that behaviours accepted by an individual are determined by: attitudes toward the behavior, personal norms related to the attitudes of those around us and the perceived control over that behavior. Attitudes towards a specific behavior reflect personally held beliefs regarding that behavior and its consequences. Attitudes result from an individual's past experiences and from the assessment of possible positive and negative outcome of the behavior. Personal norms result from socially determined ways in which a given behavior is construed, which provide an indication of whether referent others might view it as appropriate or inappropriate. Perceived behavioral control concerns the personal appraisal of the level of difficulty associated with performing a given behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Perceived behavioral control is important in the process of deciding to engage in a specific behavior. According to Ajzen (1991) attitudes, personal norms, and perceived behavioral control determine the individual's behavioral intentions to be involved in such behavior in the future.

TPB is founded on the belief that persons make rational and coherent choices to engage in specific behaviours by assessing the information available to them. The performance of a behaviour is determined by the person's intention to engage in it. This means the value a person places on the behaviour, the ease with which the behaviour can be performed, the views of significant others and the perception of the behaviour is within their control. Behavioral beliefs usually result in positive or negative attitude toward a specific behavior, normative beliefs result in social pressure or personal norms, and control beliefs trigger perceived behavioral control. Usually, the greater the favorable behavior, personal norm, and perceived control, the stronger the person's intention to perform the behavior in question.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study was grounded on the two theories mentioned earlier namely: the Psychosocial Dynamic Theory and the Theory of Planned Behaviour. These theories addressed the independent and dependent variables. The independent variable was *students' societal expectations* and the dependent variable was *academic dishonesty*.

2.1.1 Psychosocial Dynamic Theory

The Psychosocial Dynamic Theory was used to inform the independent variable, while the Theory of Planned Behaviour informed the dependent variable. The

Psychosocial Dynamic theory focuses on the events that occur in childhood life that influence the behavior of a person in adulthood. The unconscious thoughts and feelings move to the conscious mind and determine the behavior of an adult. The dynamic interaction between the id, ego, superego, and the outside world forms the basis of human behavior, according to the theory. When the ego is threatened, the person uses defense mechanisms to distort the impulses into acceptable forms of behaviour or block the impulses. This theory applies to this study in that students use defense mechanisms to avoid failure in examinations by engaging in academic dishonesty. The students are pressured by societal expectations to engage in academic dishonesty. The pressure to engage in academic dishonesty is the interaction and imbalance between the id, ego, and superego. Students with a threatened ego in examinations use defense mechanisms to avoid failure hence engage in academic dishonesty. Multon, Brown and Lent (2012) used psychosocial dynamic theory in their study on the relationship between psychosocial beliefs to academic outcomes to study meta-analysis of academic dishonesty.

2.1.2 Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

TPB states that an individual chooses to partake in behavior based on their beliefs about the integrity and their expectation that the act provides positive results. These beliefs and expectations constitute three paradigms of TPB. First, attitudes toward behavior, which originate from earlier individual experiences and appraisals on whether the act would cause positive and negative results. Secondly, personal norms resulting from the social setting and indications of whether others judge it as appropriate or inappropriate behavior and the social pressure to participate or not participate in the behaviour. Lastly, the level of perceived behavioral control which refers to the perception of the ease or difficulty in engaging in the behavior. These three paradigms affect the intention of someone in behaving and the level of control over circumstances that can prevent individuals from engaging in such behaviour.

This theory applies to this study in that students make logical and reasoned decision to engage in academic dishonesty. They intentionally decide to engage in academic dishonesty with an expectation of achieving good grades. If students have observed others cheating or they have cheated successfully in the past, they are likely to engage in academic dishonesty. Students whose peers approve of cheating are likely to engage in academic dishonesty. Students who view academic dishonesty as an act that would result in avoiding failure in examinations are likely to engage in academic dishonesty. Agata and Abby (2015) used the Theory of Planned Behaviour in their study

to investigate academic cheating in a cross-cultural comparison.

3. Methodology

The study examined how students' societal expectations influenced academic dishonesty public secondary school students in Makueni County using mixed methodology approach which utilized both non-numerical and numerical approaches. Mixed methodology provided the researcher with different choices of design involving a range of sequential and concurrent strategies. The study applied the concurrent triangulation model that combined linear regression and phenomenology methods.

The targeted participants were 79,122. This consisted of 75,000 students, 3,865 teachers, 250 principals, 6 SCDEs and 1 CDE. The study targeted all public secondary school students, teachers, and principals, SCDEs and the CDE in Makueni County. This was informed by statistics indicating that most academic dishonesty occurred in public schools (Makueni County Enrolment Returns, 2016). Makueni County has 6 constituencies namely, Kaiti, Kibwezi East, Kibwezi West, Kilome, Makueni and Mbooni. The county has two hundred and fifty (250) public secondary schools. These schools have a total population of 75,000 students. The County has 3,865 secondary school teachers and 250 principals (Makueni County Enrolment Returns, 2018). The study also targeted the six (6) SCDEs and 1 CDE in the county. There were 802 participants in the sample which included 750 students selected randomly, 25 principals purposively sampled, 25 form three class teachers purposively sampled, 1 CDE and 1 SCDE purposively sampled.

The study used interviews and questionnaires for data collection. Quantitative and qualitative information were gathered by closed-ended questionnaires and interviews respectively. The study used Likert-type scale questionnaires to assemble quantitative information from students, form three class teachers and principals as per the objective of the study. Interviewing schedules were utilized to gather qualitative information from the SCDE and the CDE. The research instruments were verified through piloting which was similar to the pre-testing. The

instruments were given to selected persons, who were equivalent to 10% of the study sample. Validity of the quantitative tools were ensured through close guidance by the supervisors and peers during the development of the research instruments. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to test the content, face, and construct validity of the instruments. Items were written to cover all areas of the constructs for all the instruments. The input from these people were used to improve on the content and construction of the instruments. Internal consistency reliability method was used to determine the reliability for questionnaires. Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient was used to calculate the reliability. Test-retest method was used to determine reliability for academic dishonesty questionnaire. A construct composite reliability coefficient (Cronbach alpha) of 0.7 or above, for all the constructs, was considered to be adequate for this study. The researcher used triangulation method to establish credibility and conducted an inquiry audit to establish dependability of the instruments.

Descriptive data was analyzed using frequencies and percentages and presented through tables and figures. Inferential statistics was analyzed through linear regression and presented through tables while qualitative data was analyzed thematically and presented through narration and verbatim citations. Ethical considerations were observed to avoid causing harm as a result of publishing the results of the research. The purpose of integrity in the study was to guarantee that nobody was hurt or suffered adverse consequences from study activities.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Descriptive Statistics Analysis on the Influence of Students' Societal Expectations on Academic Dishonesty

The principals and teachers were asked to fill the questionnaire. The information was put into consideration reflecting the indicators for independent and dependent variables. The results were tabularized and made available in Table 1

Table 1: Principals' and Teachers' Responses on Students' Societal Expectations on Academic Dishonesty

Students' societal expectations statements		SD	D	U	A	SA
Some students cheat due to allegations of inadequate classroom notes and materials from teachers hence write answers on desks and their clothes	N %	11 30.6%	13 36.1%	2 5.6%	7 19.4%	3 8.3%
The practice of the society elevating cheating students as smart drives the habit of cheating in exams by writing answers on desks and their clothes	N %	3 8.3%	8 22.2%	6 16.7%	11 30.6%	8 22.2%
Students cheat in exams since everybody is cheating in the society and thus, write answers on desks and their clothes	N %	10 27.8%	6 16.7%	2 5.6%	11 30.6%	7 19.4%
Students cheat in exams due to the perceptions that grades are better than learning and that is why they write answers on desks and on their clothes	N %	2 5.6%	4 11.1%	4 11.1%	18 50.0%	8 22.2%
Sometimes parents perpetuate examination cheating since they do not condemn the vice making students write answers on desks and their clothes	N %	2 5.6%	5 13.9%	2 5.6%	21 58.3%	6 16.7%
Parents' pressure and demands for quality grades irrespective of the means drive the cheating habit by writing answers on desks and clothes	N %	1 2.8%	4 11.1%	2 5.6%	19 52.8%	10 27.8%
Students engage in cheating since the parents were also cheaters when they were students and that is why they write answers on desks and their clothes	N %	9 25.0%	9 25.0%	9 25.0%	7 19.4%	2 5.6%
The cheating vice is driven by the fact that schools are not tough on cheating and that is why students write answers on desks and their clothes	N %	8 22.2%	13 36.1%	4 11.1%	10 27.8%	1 2.8%
School related pressure to perform well in examinations perpetuate the cheating habit by writing answers on desks and their clothes	N %	0 0.0%	3 8.3%	6 16.7%	23 63.9%	4 11.1%

Source: Field Data (2022)

From the table, the principals and teachers did not agree that some students cheated due to claims of insufficient classroom notes and materials from teachers hence wrote answers on the desks and their clothes as per 24 (66.7 %) with 10 (27.8 %) significantly agreeing and 2 (5.6 %) did not make decision. Thus, this could not be a reason for the candidates to be dishonest in exams. The participants defended teachers and infrastructure and showed that there was keen teaching and learning in the schools. No doubt, any good school would make sure that the candidates were well prepared and everything required was put in place. The way teachers work as per their training is adequate evidence that they do a good job since no teacher would like to be associated with failure. However, there could be some few schools that do not properly prepare their

candidates and especially concerning the learning materials.

It was agreeable that the practice of the society of elevating cheating students as smart, drove the habit of dishonesty in exams, by writing answers on desks and their clothes as agreed by 19 (52.8 %) and significantly denied by 11 (30.6 %) with 6 (16.7 %) not making any decision. The denying percentage which was more than thirty percent could not be ignored by the investigator. While there was evidence of the society compromising with vice of academic dishonesty, the denying percentage indicated that there was a change in the society to avoid academic dishonesty. Even the undecided percentage painted a picture of some honesty in the community. Most likely this change could have been

catapulted by the punishment meted on the candidates who practice dishonesty in the schools during examinations.

It was slightly agreed that students cheated in exams since everybody was cheating in the society and thus, wrote answers on desks and their clothes as agreed by 18 (50.0 %) with another significant figure of 16 (44.4 %) disagreeing and only 2 (5.6 %) did not make decision. The denying percentage was not ignored. The element in the society that academic dishonesty was almost acceptable and it almost became an acceptable practice was seen in the fifty percent of the participants. Comparatively, more than forty-four percent painted a picture of care and caution in academic dishonesty. This means that though cheating could be seen as acceptable by the society, there was fear especially due to the harsh punitive measures taken against the culprits.

It was acceptable that students cheated in exams due to the perceptions that grades were better than learning and that is why they wrote answers on desks and on their clothes as agreed by the majority of 26 (72.2 %) and denied by 6 (16.7 %) with 4 (11.1 %) making no decision. The importance of marks, grades and passing of exams was seen in these responses. The motive behind academic dishonesty must have been the issue of doing well disregarding the correct process. This means that the end justified the means. It seemed that the madness of exam success as if it was the only way a candidate could find livelihood was prevalent in the society as it was seen from the responses from the principals and teachers.

There was unanimous agreement that sometimes parents perpetuated examination cheating since they did not condemn the vice making students write answers on desks and their clothes as seen and accepted by 27 (75.0 %) and disagreed by 7 (19.4 %) with 2 (5.6 %) who did not make decision. From these responses, candidates, knowingly or unknowingly, consciously or unconsciously were driven into exam cheating due to the attitude of their parents who, of course, were part of the society. The parents may not have minded the means and ways their children used to acquire good exam results. The participants seemed to say that academic dishonesty could have been tolerated so long as there was good performance. That was the way the society would seem to go in essence.

Parents' pressure and demands for quality grades irrespective of the means drove the cheating habit by writing answers on desks and clothes as agreed by 29 (80.6 %) with 5 (13.9 %) disagreeing and 2 (5.6 %) did not make decision. The demand for good results was not hidden as per the participants. That demand negatively motivated the candidates to cheat in exams. Candidates and schools are known by the grades they obtain. This has driven some societies into the vice of academic dishonesty. Students

find themselves cheating at any available opportunity to ensure that they have pleased their parents and the entire community.

The fact that students engaged in cheating since the parents were also cheaters when they were students and that was why they wrote answers on desks and on their clothes was disagreed by 18 (50.0 %) of the participants and agreed by 9 (25.0 %) and similar number of 9 (25.0 %) could not make decision. When half of the participants disagree and a quarter agree and another quarter fail to decide, it leaves a lot to be desired. An element of inherited academic dishonesty could be seen from the fifty percent. However, the rest of fifty percent sharing between agreement and undecided has an information that means that there was still fear in committing the crime of cheating among the candidates. From the results, the vice could have taken a perennial stand for quite some time though there could have been a gradual change to optimism that the practice of the vice was lessening significantly.

The fact that cheating vice was driven by the fact that schools were not tough on cheating and that was why students wrote answers on desks and on their clothes was disagreed by 21 (58.3 %) and agreed by 11 (30.6 %) with only 4 (11.1 %) who did not decide. Though it seemed that institutions from where candidates took their exams prevented dishonesty, there was still more than thirty percent of the participants who could not be ignored since they hinted that schools could collaborate with their candidates in cheating. This is to say, one reason for academic dishonesty was that institutions failed to comply with examination regulations.

School related pressure to perform well in examinations perpetuated the cheating habit by writing answers on desks and their clothes as agreed by 27 (75.0 %) and disagreed by 3 (8.3 %) and 6 (16.7 %) could not make decision. Every institution presenting candidates must wish to obtain good results. This is good but not when the results are obtained through dishonesty. Cases are known whereby students have been forced to repeat classes before they come to form four. The government has always been against repeating classes, but it happens as a clandestine motive of achieving excellent results.

The findings from this table have equivalent in other findings. Such findings are for example, the findings of Daumiller as well as Janke (2019). From their findings, it was established that the society had a significant part to play in the candidates' character. It was seen that the government of Ghana was full of partiality and dishonesty which postured a grave hazard to the schooling system. It was unfortunately discovered that deceitfulness in the schools amongst the candidates reflected the broader deterioration of ethical manners in the society that

reinforced selfishness. The conclusion was that the academic dishonesty found among the candidates was not just a school issue but it was an issue supported up by the society within which schools and students operated.

Students' Responses in Students' Societal Expectations on Academic Dishonesty

Again, regarding students' societal expectations, data was collected by the researcher from the students who filled the questionnaire. The outcomes were computed and offered in Table 2.

Table 2: Students' Responses in Students' Societal Expectations on Academic Dishonesty

Students' societal expectations statements		SD	D	U	A	SA
The society respects students with quality grades as smart hence the need to cheat by writing answers on desks and their clothes	N	300	140	58	67	166
	%	41.0%	19.2%	7.9%	9.2%	22.7%
I cheat in exams by writing answers on desks and my clothes since everybody is cheating in the society	N	445	175	44	32	35
	%	60.9%	23.9%	6.0%	4.4%	4.8%
I cheat in exams since grades are better than learning so I write answers on desks and my clothes	N	420	159	44	31	77
	%	57.5%	21.8%	6.0%	4.2%	10.5%
My parents are not tough on examination cheating so I can write answers on desks and my clothes	N	475	134	44	43	35
	%	65.0%	18.3%	6.0%	5.9%	4.8%
My parents demand that I get quality grades even if it is by writing answers on desks and my clothes	N	387	124	70	65	85
	%	52.9%	17.0%	9.6%	8.9%	11.6%
My parents were cheaters when they were students so I can do the same by writing answers on desks and my clothes	N	535	102	60	18	16
	%	73.2%	14.0%	8.2%	2.5%	2.2%
The school is not tough on cheating during exams so I can write answers on desks and my clothes	N	468	122	40	39	62
	%	64.0%	16.7%	5.5%	5.3%	8.5%
I have a lot of pressure from the school to pass exams, hence I can write answers on desks and my clothes	N	341	172	51	69	98
	%	46.6%	23.5%	7.0%	9.4%	13.4%
My teachers were cheaters when they were students so I can cheat by writing answers on desks and my clothes	N	444	101	92	32	62
	%	60.7%	13.8%	12.6%	4.4%	8.5%

Source: Field Data (2022)

It was not agreeable that the society respected students with quality grades as smart hence the need to cheat by writing answers on desks and their clothes as disagreed by 440 (60.2 %) and 233 (31.9 %) agreed with 58 (7.9 %) making no decision. There was no doubt that respect for smart students was seen by more than thirty-one percent of the participants. It obviously meant that the small majority were defending themselves against the issue of exam cheating. There is no society that does not respect bright candidates. So, the participants did not want to be associated with academic dishonesty in the schools.

The students denied that they cheated in exams by writing answers on desks and their clothes since everybody was cheating in the society as seen in the responses of 620 (84.8 %) who disagreed and only 67 (9.2 %) agreeing with another 44 (6.0 %) who did not make any decision. This was defense against the peer pressure behaviour which is proven to exist psychologically. In a situation whereby

peers were cheating, there was likelihood of cheating amongst the candidates. No student would cheat and accept they did it.

The fact that students cheated in exams since grades were better than learning, so they wrote answers on desks and my clothes was not agreeable by the majority of 579 (79.2 %) who were on the disagreement side with 108 (14.8 %) agreeing and 44 (6.0 %) making no decision. The major aim of the practice of academic dishonesty must be good results. If they can be dishonest and pass well, the better. Again, this was seen as defense from the side of the participants so that they could look honest. However, the degree of honesty could be credited to more than twenty percent who agreed and the undecided lot. Not all candidates embraced academic dishonesty so to speak.

The fact that parents were not tough on examination cheating, so students could write answers on desks and on

their clothes was not agreeable by the majority of 609 (83.3 %) who vehemently denied this. There was another number 78 (10.7 %) who agreed with 44 (6.0 %) making no decision. The outcomes indicated toughness of parents in matters of exam cheating. In essence the teachers would be more concerned about this matter than the parents. Nevertheless, the parents are looked at from the lens of the society, being part and parcel of the same. The investigator had in mind that these were the candidates speaking their mind and of course being defensive on the whole issue. The participants denied the fact that their parents demanded that they get quality grades even if it was by writing answers on desks and their clothes as seen in the responses of 511 (69.9 %) yet agreed by 150 (20.5 %) with another 70 (9.6 %) who failed to make any decision. While it was seen that most parents may not have demanded good grades hence causing academic dishonesty, there were more than twenty percent of the students on agreement with nearly ten percent who failed to make decision. The element of demand for good results still lingers amongst the candidates though not so much. Even though the majority denied it, at least some dishonesty could be shown. This indicated the presence of the vice amongst the schools that were investigated.

The statement that parents were cheaters when they were students so the participants could do the same by writing answers on desks and their clothes was denied strongly by 637 (87.1 %) with only 34 (4.7 %) in agreement and another 60 (8.2 %) making no decision. Parents were termed as members of the larger society. The debate was on whether society condoned the vice of academic dishonesty. Elsewhere in this study, it has been seen that there was an element of condoning exam cheating amongst the community members even though it was not the majority. As a matter of fact, students were not expected to unveil the secrets of their parents even if they knew them. It might not have been easy for them to know if their parents cheated or not since these were secrets that were hidden for life.

The issue of schools not being tough on cheating during exams so participants could write answers on desks and their clothes was not acceptable according to the majority of 590 (80.7 %) who disagreed with only 101 (13.8 %) in agreement and another 40 (5.5 %) who did not make any decision. For fear of exam results being cancelled, it seemed that schools were keen on exam cheating issues. Thus, academic dishonesty may not have been encouraged by the institutions.

The participants denied that they had a lot of pressure from the school to pass exams, hence they could write answers on desks and on their clothes as seen in the majority of 513 (70.2 %) with 167 (22.8 %) agreeing and another 51 (7.0 %) who failed to make any decision. This suggested that if dishonesty occurred, it must not have been the fault of schools demanding good grades.

The fact that teachers were cheaters when they were students so students could cheat by writing answers on desks and their clothes was not agreeable as seen in the majority of students who were 545 (74.6 %) who disagreed and only 94 (12.9 %) could agree with this statement and only 92 (12.6 %) failed to make decision. The teachers in this case were part and parcel of the community from which the candidates came. The teachers may not have entertained cheating in the county although it happened. The results depicted honest teachers who would not advise their students to cheat in exams, possibly because they never did that themselves and it was against the examination ethics.

These findings correlate with Sinha (2016) who showed that parents have a very significant part in their children's behaviour and overall academic performance. The findings also agree with Daumiller and Janke (2019) observation that academic dishonesty in learning institutions was reflecting the wider corrosion of moral behaviors in the society that supported self-centeredness.

4.2 Inferential Statistics in Students' Societal Expectations on Academic Dishonesty

This section discusses the inferential statistics of students' societal expectations and academic dishonesty. The discussion is in terms of reliability analysis, linear regression analysis and linear regression model.

Results of linear regression model of societal expectations and academic dishonesty

The results of the linear regression model were significant, $F(1,729) = 480.80, p < .001, R^2 = .40$, indicating that approximately 39.74% of the variance in academic dishonesty is explainable by societal expectations. This indicates that on average, a one-unit increase of societal expectations will increase the value of academic dishonesty by 0.62 units. Table 3 summarizes the results of the regression model. The model becomes:

Academic dishonesty = 0.59 + 0.62*Societal expectations

Table 3: Linear regression results for societal expectations and academic dishonesty

Variable	B	SE	95.00% CI	B	T	P
(Intercept)	0.59	0.06	[0.48, 0.71]	0.00	10.19	< .001
Societal expectations	0.62	0.03	[0.56, 0.67]	0.63	21.93	< .001

Note. Results: $F(1,729) = 480.80, p < .001, R^2 = .40$

Source: Field Data (2022)

The inferential statistics outcomes had similar findings in many other research. One such study was by investigators Hendy and Montargot (2021). These researchers established that candidates who failed to score high grades and marks were labeled as disappointments in the society they lived in. Society which included parents and guardians maintained that their children must prosper in examinations at any cost. This saw candidates put in a lot of pressure, henceforth they had no choice but to be entangled in examination fraudulence. They further found that some societies and parents were even prepared to induce and offer bribes to education officials since they desperately wanted their children to attain high marks in examinations.

4.3 Thematic Analysis in Students' Societal Expectations on Academic Dishonesty

During the interviews with the education officers, they did not agree that candidates had no conducive infrastructure. They did not agree that teaching notes and teaching aids were inadequate as one officer had this to say, *"The issues of classes, teaching notes and teaching aids do not appear to be reasons for academic dishonesty. The government has made sure that teaching and learning atmosphere was up to date. If it were the case of the new CBC, then I would say the new system has a myriad of challenges"* (EO1).

In one way or another, the community could have catapulted exam cheating knowingly or unknowingly. Candidates who did well were congratulated. The society did not care how the candidates achieved the good results as one officer said, *"Sometimes we worship good grades and we are proud of candidates who pass well. However, nobody cares to check if the grades were achieved out of exam cheating. Even if academic dishonesty occurred, it was acceptable since it was not noticed. Actually, it seemed that the end justified the means"* (EO2).

The candidates must have been propelled by peer pressure to cheat in exams. They could write answers wherever they could read them during the exams as one officer noted, *"There is always the issue of peer pressure. Good students can even be lured to academic dishonesty in exams by*

putting answers on desks or on their clothes. This is a very unfortunate situation" (EO1).

To score high marks in exams is the dream of every candidate. Nobody recognizes any student who scores poorly in exams. It seems that schooling is all about passing exams, failure to which candidates become discouraged as one officer said,

"The anxiety of passing and scoring good grades has been the sickness in our candidates. This has become a temptation for them to be dishonest in the exams if at all an opportunity arises. This has to be discouraged totally and that is why with CBC such things will be alleviated. Candidates in CBC will follow their line of competencies only. All students may not score good grades as they wish. They should not be dishonest in exams in the endeavour to score what they wish to score" (EO2).

It has been noted that the society and especially parents encourage academic dishonesty by bribing for better marks for their children. The best thing for the parents to do is keep off exam business as one officer said,

"We are not comfortable with parents who indulge themselves in academic dishonesty. Parents should pay attention to their roles. Such responsibilities have nothing to do with exams. They should not buy fake exams for their children as this may increase academic dishonesty among the schools" (EO1).

The worst thing a parent can do to their children is to demand excellent results. Candidates score marks and grades as per their capability. To overstretch any candidate into performing better is like to tell them to cheat, as one officer observed,

"Demands for quality performance can cause damage to students consequently causing academic dishonesty. Let each candidate score as per their ability and capability. The best way to measure any candidate is to examine previous performance in school. A candidate who has been a "D" material will never change to an "A" material all over sudden no matter what may happen" (EO2).

It may not make sense to say that students imitate their teachers' academic dishonesty when also they were students. Teachers may not tell students that they were cheaters as one officer said,

“It is not easy to know teachers who cheated in exams during their student lifetime. It is never written on their faces that they cheated. Probably, probably teachers make academic dishonesty their routine, then it could be the reason that they did the same when they were candidates. Notably, teachers were in different schools during their student hood. Some of these schools might have encouraged academic dishonesty. However, it is unlikely for them to train their candidates to cheat and if they do and are caught, the consequences will not be celebrated” (EO1).

Generally, schools have been tough in exam cheating to avoid the cruel cancellation of the results. It makes no sense for a candidate to waste four years in secondary school only for the results to be cancelled. One officer warned, *“If schools want to waste the lives of the candidates, then let them cheat and be caught. This type of risk is useless. Nevertheless, the majority of schools prepare their candidates adequately and avoid this business of cheating in exams” (EO2).*

Unfortunately, some schools have been forcing students to repeat so that they could selfishly produce better results. This kind of practice may propel cheating as one officer said, *“It is illegal for schools to force students to repeat classes. Students should be left to continue to the next class without conditions. This kind of pressure not only causes academic dishonesty but also suicidal thoughts among the students” (EO1).*

The findings of this objective concurred with Azuka and Oyaziwo (2017) that most of the learners thought that their involvement in academic dishonesty was a common incidence, which will be hard to eliminate because it is reflected in society. The implication is that society viewed students who do not pass their examinations as failures leaving the students with the tendency to get involved in academic dishonesty in order to succeed.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study concluded that societal expectations significantly predicted academic dishonesty. The study findings indicated that approximately 39.74% of the variance in academic dishonesty is explainable by societal expectations among students in public secondary schools in Makueni county. This indicates that parents, teachers and other education stakeholders should realize that exerting exceeding expectations on academic performance of learners may be detrimental to their well-being and are catalyst to academic dishonesty. Society should cease to view students who do not pass examinations as failures in

order to lessen the tendency to get involved in academic dishonesty. The influence of students’ societal expectations on academic dishonesty in public secondary schools in Makueni county, Kenya highlighted the significant impact of cultural norms, family pressure, peer influence, and institutional policies on students' ethical behavior. Societal emphasis on academic achievement as a determinant of success has fostered a culture where dishonest practices are increasingly normalized. Family and community pressures, combined with weak enforcement of academic integrity, further exacerbate this problem. These findings underscore the urgent need to address the underlying societal and institutional factors contributing to academic dishonesty, as the issue undermines the credibility of the education system and perpetuates unethical practices into adulthood. By addressing the societal, familial, and institutional dimensions of academic dishonesty, stakeholders can work collaboratively to promote an educational environment that values integrity and holistic development over performance metrics alone.

5.2 Recommendations

Grounded on the study results, the following recommendations were made:

1. Schools should integrate programs that emphasize the importance of academic integrity and ethical behavior. This includes incorporating lessons on ethics into the curriculum and fostering a culture of honesty through co-curricular activities.
2. Stakeholders, including parents and community leaders, should be educated on the adverse effects of academic dishonesty. Workshops and seminars can help realign societal expectations to prioritize character development over mere academic success.
3. The Ministry of Education should enforce stricter guidelines on academic integrity, ensuring that schools implement clear policies to detect and address cheating. Regular training for teachers and examination officers on upholding these standards is essential.
4. Policies that reduce the high stakes associated with national examinations, such as continuous assessment tests contributing to final grades, could alleviate the pressure on students to engage in dishonest practices.
5. Schools should encourage student-led initiatives, such as peer mentorship programs, to foster a positive academic culture. Recognizing and rewarding ethical behavior among students can reinforce the value of honesty.

6. Continuous research should be conducted to assess the effectiveness of interventions and monitor emerging trends in academic dishonesty. Collaboration between policymakers, educators, and researchers is crucial for sustainable solutions.

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