

PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF EXPOSURE TO DIGITAL PSEUDO VALUES ON EROSION OF TRADITIONAL ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AMONG PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ENUGU SOUTH LGA

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Abstract

The study examined the influence of digital pseudo values on academic integrity among students in public secondary schools in Enugu South Local Government Area. The research addressed four key questions, employing a descriptive survey design. A population of 2,847 students from public secondary schools in Enugu South Local Government Area was considered, with a sample of 600 selected through multistage sampling technique. Data collection utilized a researcher-developed questionnaire which was validated by three experts and tested for internal consistency using Cronbach Alpha. Mean and standard deviation scores were used to analyze the collected data. Findings indicated that digital pseudo values, namely AI-grism, efemeral ownership, collaborative teaching, and efficiency over effort, significantly influence academic integrity among secondary school students in Enugu South Local Government Area. The study concluded that digital pseudo values pose a substantial obstacle to academic integrity in the region. It was recommended among others that school administrators should integrate digital ethics and academic integrity modules into the existing civic education and computer studies curriculum to counter the influence of digital pseudo values. This includes structured lessons on responsive AI use, authentic learning, and value for effort, and equipping students with ethical decision-making skills. This would provide a framework for ethical academic behavior and enhance students' commitment to honest scholarship.

Keywords: Digital Pseudo Values, Academic Integrity, AI-grism, Efemeral Ownership, Collaborative Teaching, Efficiency Over Effort

Introduction

Education is the deliberate and systematic process through which individuals acquire knowledge, skills, competencies, values, and attitudes necessary for personal fulfilment and effective participation in society. It is the foundation for individual empowerment, economic productivity, social mobility, and sustainable national development. Its relevance according to Offiah and Chikeluba (2025) lies in shaping critical thinkers, fostering innovation, reducing poverty, promoting civic responsibility, and preserving cultural heritage while equipping citizens to adapt to a

swift dynamic global landscape. Beyond literacy and numeracy, education cultivates discipline, moral reasoning, creativity, and problem-solving abilities that drive progress in science, technology, governance, and community life. In Nigeria, the formal system is organized into three broad categories: primary, secondary, and tertiary education, with each serving a distinct developmental goal from foundational learning to professional specialization. Primary education builds basic cognitive and social skills for young children, tertiary education provides advanced training and research for career expertise, while linking them together is the secondary school.

The importance of secondary school can never be over emphasized, as it consolidates basic literacy and numeracy, nurtures critical thinking. It also builds vocational and entrepreneurial skills even as it instills civic values, which helps to prepare youths for tertiary education, workforce entry, and responsible citizenship. As rightly stated by Offor and Offiah (2023), secondary education shapes character, discipline, and national consciousness while bridging the gap between childhood learning and adult productivity. Its relevance is that this stage equips adolescents with scientific inquiry, technological competence, and moral reasoning needed for sustainable development. There are two categories of secondary school education in Nigeria: the basic level, Junior Secondary School JSS 1–3, which strengthens core subjects and introduces prevocational training, and the senior level, Senior Secondary School SSS 1–3, which drives specialization across academic and technical tracks. Secondary school students are mainly adolescents and they usually emulate different kinds of attitude, norms, values that seem to affect academic integrity

Academic integrity is the ethical foundation that sustains honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage in all teaching, learning, and assessment activities. The International Center for Alairaji *et al.* (2022) defined it as “a commitment, even in the face of adversity, to six fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage” which should guide the behavior of students, teachers, and institutions. This definition emphasizes that integrity is not just rule-following but a value-driven choice that must be upheld despite pressure to cut corners. Similarly, Al-Nuaimi and Uzun (2023) posited that academic integrity involves adherence to ethical standards in scholarship, requiring learners to produce authentic work, give proper credit to sources, avoid falsification of data, and reject any form of cheating, collusion, or misrepresentation of competence. Their view frames integrity as both personal character and academic practice, linking what students believe with what they submit. Operationally, in the context of this study, academic integrity refers to the degree to which public secondary school students in Enugu South LGA demonstrate honesty and personal accountability by completing

assignments without unauthorized assistance, submitting original work rather than AI-generated or copied contents, acknowledging all sources used, refusing to share or receive answers during tests, and taking responsibility for their learning outcomes instead of outsourcing tasks to peers or digital tools. It is measured by behaviors such as proper citation, avoidance of plagiarism, independent test-taking, and rejection of “expo” groups or ghostwritten projects.

Academic integrity is necessary in secondary school for several critical reasons. First, it preserves the validity of assessment. This means that grades and certificates can reflect true competence as they are earned through personal effort. As rightly stated by Amzalag *et al.* (2021), when students bypass learning, the school system produces graduates who lack the industry their documents claim. Secondly, integrity builds moral and civic character during adolescence, a stage Baran and Jonason (2020) argued is highly susceptible to peer influence and norm formation. Habits of honesty formed at this level is transferred to tertiary institutions and the workplace. This reduces future corruption and professional misconduct. Thirdly, academic integrity protects instructional quality. Teachers rely on authentic students output to diagnose learning gaps. When work is copied or AI-generated, feedback becomes meaningless and remediation fails. Fourthly, it sustains equity, by ensuring that hardworking students are not disadvantaged by peers who gain marks through dishonest means. Finally, it upholds public trust in education, which is essential for national development, employer's confidence, and parental investment in schooling. Academic integrity appears to be eroded because of so many factors affecting teaching and learning in secondary school, and one of such factors appears to be digital pseudo values.

Digital pseudo values refer to the distorted norms, attitudes, and behavioral codes that are promoted, normalized, and rewarded within online environments but contradict traditional ethical and academic standards upheld in formal education. They are “values” only in appearance, because they mimic social validation while undermining integrity, discipline, and authentic achievement. Buccioli *et al.* (2020) defined digital pseudo values as “a set of online-driven beliefs that prioritize virality, instant gratification, shortcut culture, and visibility over competence, honesty, and process, thereby reshaping adolescents’ perception of success.” This definition highlights how social media metrics like likes, shares, and follower counts become substitute measures of worth, replacing effort-based accomplishment. Similarly, Chirumamilla *et al.* (2020) posited that digital pseudo values are “the uncritical adoption of internet norms that glorify result without process, visibility without substance, and speed without mastery, leading young users to internalize fraud,

plagiarism, and impersonation as acceptable strategies for academic and social advancement.” Here, the emphasis is on the moral dissonance created when online spaces reward deception or unearned outcomes. These definitions reveal three core features of digital pseudo values. First is distortion of merit: online platforms often celebrate outcomes—grades, awards, and aesthetics—without interrogating how they were obtained. Students therefore learn that the “win” matters more than the method. Second is normalization of shortcuts: tutorials on “how to pass without reading,” AI tools marketed to “write your assignment in seconds,” and Telegram/WhatsApp groups selling “expo” all present dishonesty as smart or efficient. Third is peer amplification: algorithms and influencer culture spread these practices rapidly, making them appear as dominant adolescent norms rather than deviant acts. Operationally, in the context of this research, digital pseudo values are defined as the extent to which public secondary school students in Enugu South LGA accept and practice online-originated beliefs that: a) equate success with visibility and grades rather than learning; b) endorse using AI chatbots, content spinners, or paid writers to complete schoolwork; c) view sharing leaked exam questions or copying from “solved” online posts as normal help; d) consider time spent on substance-free content creation or clout-chasing more worthwhile than study; and e) rationalize plagiarism and impersonation because “everyone does it online.” It is measured by students’ agreement with statements like “It is smart to use AI to do assignments if teachers can’t detect it,” and by observed behaviors such as submitting identical online-sourced essays, joining exam-malpractice forums, or valuing TikTok fame over classroom participation. The relevance of clarifying digital pseudo values lies in their direct threat to academic integrity. As rightly stated by Chory and Offstein (2018), adolescents are at a stage of identity formation where external validation strongly shapes internal standards. When the digital ecosystem rewards faked competence, students import those standards into school. This creates a value conflict: teachers promote process, originality, and delayed gratification, while online spaces promote results, replication, and instant reward. The clash erodes the moral foundation on which academic integrity stands. Thus, digital pseudo values do not merely coexist with schooling; they compete with and often displace the discipline, patience, and honesty required for genuine learning, making them a critical variable in understanding why academic integrity appears to be eroded among secondary school students today.

Digital pseudo values are the distorted, online-born codes of conduct that adolescents absorb from algorithm-driven platforms and then carry into classrooms, where they clash with traditional academic ethics. As rightly stated by Curtis *et al.*

(2021), these values gain power because they reward visibility, speed, and outcomes while ignoring process, honesty, and mastery. Among the most pervasive types undermining secondary school learning today are AI-grism, ephemera ownership, collaborative cheating, and efficiency over effort. Together they rewire what students consider smart, normal, and successful. AI-grism describes the pseudo value that treats artificial intelligence not as a study aid but as a ghostwriter whose output can be submitted as personal work. It is the belief that prompting a chatbot to write an essay on photosynthesis or solve Mathematics questions and show steps are equivalent to learning, probably because the end product looks correct. Curtis and Vardanega (2019) argued that AI-grism thrives on two digital myths: first, that undetectable is ethical, and second, that speed equals intelligence. In practice, a JSS 3 student who cannot define osmosis will upload a textbook page to an AI app, receive a polished definition, and copy it verbatim into her note, believing she has done the assignment. The value here is not technological fluency but substitution. This is because grade is pursued and the thinking is discarded. AI-grism is affirmed by the rise of “AI homework” TikTok tutorials that teach students how to rephrase chatbot answers to beat plagiarism checkers. The damage is layered. Cognitively, the student loses retrieval practice and problem-solving stamina. Morally, she learns that authorship is negotiable. Institutionally, teachers receive scripts that mask learning gaps so much that remedial teaching never happens. Therefore, AI-grism converts a powerful learning tool into a pipeline for credentialing without competence.

Ephemera ownership is the pseudo value that treats temporary, surface-level digital products like stories, reels, streaks, and trending audio as personal property and as proof of status that should translate into academic or social reward. It stems from platforms where contents disappear in twenty-four hours yet confers immediate clout. A Senior Secondary School student may spend three hours scripting a fifteen-second “study with me” reel, adding lo-fi music and aesthetic overlays, then feel entitled to high marks because the video shows she is serious, while the actual note remains empty. The value distortion is clear as effort is redirected from substance to packaging, and ownership is claimed over vibes rather than knowledge. Ephemera ownership also appears in academic aesthetic culture, where students curate images of highlighters and iPads but plagiarize the essay underneath. As rightly stated by Daumiller and Janke (2020), adolescents seek identity through visible markers, and when digital culture equates identity with curated moments, the library is replaced by the ring light. The classroom consequence becomes a misplaced priority. Learners as result defend their brand instead of their thesis, and they protest low scores by citing

follower counts, not rubric criteria. In short, ephemera ownership teaches that to be seen studying is more valuable than to have studied.

Collaborative cheating explains academic dishonesty as community by turning WhatsApp groups, Telegram channels, and Discord servers into factories for shared answers. The pseudo value here is that helping each other nullifies wrongdoing, and that makes equal fairness possible. Consider the SSS 2 Physics Expo group with six hundred members. Ten minutes into a test, a student photographs the questions, drops them in the group, and stronger peers or paid solvers upload worked solutions. Within minutes, identical answers circulate. Members call it collaboration, not malpractice, because everyone benefits and no one is left behind. This is affirmed by Davis *et al.* (2019), who noted that digital platforms collapse geography and guilt, making cheating look like peer support. The normalization is so strong that students who refuse to share are labeled selfish or “ITK”. Collaborative cheating also includes group assignments where one person prompts AI, another edits, and the rest submit the file with a slang to mask fraud, eroding personal accountability and making detection harder for teachers. Over time, students internalize that competence as collective and portable, so that individual study becomes unnecessary.

Efficiency over effort is the pseudo value that elevates time saving rather than skill gained. It celebrates hacks, summaries, and assumptions that promise maximum marks for minimum cognitive load. On YouTube, “Pass WAEC without Reading” videos with five hundred thousand views teaching students to memorize patterns of past questions, use mnemonics from leaked runs, or deploy apps that solve equations from a camera snap. The underlying message is that struggling with material is outdated and smart students find workarounds. An example is the JSS 1 learner who uses Photomath to complete thirty Mathematics questions in five minutes, submits them, and scores thirty over thirty, yet cannot add fractions without the app a week later. The teacher, sees perfect homework and moves on, unaware that learning never occurred. This pseudo value is dangerous because it mimics a workplace virtue, efficiency, but strips it of the prerequisite of mastery. As rightly stated by Dutta and Smita (2020), efficiency without effort produces credential inflation, where certificates no longer signal capability. In adolescents, it also weakens or frustrates tolerance, and when a task cannot be hacked, they disengage, labeling it too hard rather than persisting. These four types rarely appear in isolation. A student may use AI-grism to generate an essay and claim ephemera ownership by posting a grind reel about it. He can distribute it through collaborative cheating groups, and justify all three under efficiency over effort. The result is a self-reinforcing ecosystem where dishonest behaviors are relabeled as digital savvy. The classroom impact is

measurable as original thought declines with assessment losing diagnostic power, and teachers' moral authority weakens because the internet says this is normal. Unless educators isolate and counter these specific values, the moral foundation on which school depends will keep shifting, and that shift will continue to shape academic integrity.

AI-grism is the first digital pseudo value reshaping how secondary school students understand learning, and its influence on academic integrity is both subtle and sweeping. It begins the moment a student decides that prompting a chatbot to "write my essay on drug abuse" or "solve these simultaneous equations with steps" can be useful in doing homework. As rightly stated by Offor, Nwaru and Offiah (2024), AI-grism replaces cognition with commands, so much that the student's brain is bypassed while the grade is still collected. In a JSS 2 English class in Enugu, a teacher may receive twenty good essays on "My School" that all used the same three idioms, identical paragraph structure, and peculiar concluding lines about "citadel of learning" but none of the writers explained what a metaphor is when asked orally. The integrity breach is not just plagiarism; it is authorship displacement. The student believes she has worked because she typed a prompt, waited ten seconds, and copied the output. Over time, this erodes the basic contract of schooling where assessment measures personal understanding. When AI-grism becomes routine, teachers lose diagnostic data. They cannot tell whether low performance reflects poor teaching, a learning disability, or simply outsourcing. Consequently, remediation never happens, and students advance with hollow grades (Ferguson *et al.*, 2021). The long-term impact on academic integrity is structural in that certificates are beginning to certify prompt engineering instead of subject mastery. As a result employers, universities, and parents are left holding credentials that no longer predict competence. Thus AI-grism does not just bend rules, it rewrites the meaning of achievement.

Efemeral ownership, the second pseudo value, attacks academic integrity from a different angle by convincing students that appearance is achievement and that visibility should be graded. This value is born on platforms where a fifteen-second reel of arranged textbooks get more likes than a term of consistent study. A Senior Secondary School student may spend an entire evening designing a "study with me" video: ambient rain sound, timed Pomodoro captions, and a neatly annotated Chemistry note that she does not understand. She posts it, gains two thousand views, and walks into class expecting validation. When the teacher scores her actual test at 32%, she argues that her "dedication" is obvious from her page. As affirmed by Ferguson *et al.* (2022), adolescents fuse identity with display. So ephemera ownership teaches students that curating the aesthetic of diligence should carry the same weight

as demonstrating diligence. The influence on academic integrity is two folds. First, it shifts effort from cognitive processing to content production, suggesting that a student's energy is spent on lighting and transitions rather than on memorizing the periodic table. Second, it creates entitlement friction. Learners begin to dispute grades not by referencing rubrics but by citing social metrics. They say, "But my video went viral," as though peer attention is peer review. When schools do not explicitly separate brand from brainwork, ephemera ownership quietly redefines fairness. Students who plagiarize but present beautifully feel wronged when penalized, and those who study quietly feel invisible. Over time, the moral clarity around original work blurs, because the loudest performance, not the truest learning, seems to win.

Collaborative teaching, as students now practice it online, is the third force and perhaps the most socially defended threat to academic integrity. The label itself reveals the distortion. What was once "exam malpractice" is now "group help" in WhatsApp and Telegram fora. The mechanism is simple and fast. Ten minutes into a Civic Education test, a photo of the question paper enters an SSS 1 group of 400 members. A university undergraduate or paid "solver" types answers, and within minutes, identical scripts are circulated. Participants call it collaboration because everyone gets the solution and "no one is left behind." Gottardello and Karabag (2022) noted that digital platforms collapse both distance and guilt, so students experience cheating as community service. The impact on academic integrity is systemic. First, it destroys score validity. A 90% average no longer distinguishes the prepared from the connected. Second, it punishes honesty, because the student who refuses to share is labeled selfish and may be ostracized. Third, it promotes misconduct. One breach helps hundreds, so the risk-reward ratio tilts heavily toward cheating. Teachers, faced with 60 identical answers, often feel powerless to fail everyone and may normalize the inflated grades. Consequently, the school's entire assessment culture drifts. When collaboration is redefined as collusion, personal accountability dies. Students enter WAEC and NECO believing that success depends on network access rather than night reading, and that belief follows them into university, where contract cheating sites simply replace the Telegram group.

Efficiency over effort, the fourth pseudo value, finishes the work of the first three by making shortcuts a virtue. It is the doctrine that any method that saves time is smarter than the method that builds skill. YouTube channels titled "Pass Biology without Reading" or "Mathematics Hacks for Dummies" receive millions of views from secondary students who are taught to memorize question patterns, use camera-math apps, and bank on "expo." A JSS 3 learner can complete 40 exercises in six minutes with Photomath, submit them, and earn full marks, yet cannot simplify $1/2 +$

1/3 without the app a week later. As rightly stated by Gronauer and Diepold (2022), efficiency without effort produces inflated credential. This is because the paper is “A1” while person is empty. The influence on academic integrity is therefore corrosive. When speed is idolized, struggle is stigmatized. Students begin to see revision, drafting, and practice as wasteful because they are not instantly rewarded. They disengage from tasks that cannot be hacked, labeling them “too hard” or “not relevant,” while they lobby teachers to “make it easier” instead of rising to the standard. Assessment becomes a game of finding leaks and loops, not demonstrating learning. Over time, the school’s moral language changes. Teachers hear, “Why should I suffer when there is an app?” and parents ask, “Can you not just give us the runs?” In that situation, academic integrity is not merely broken; it is renegotiated to mean “getting the grade with the least friction.” Taken together, AI-grism, efemeral ownership, collaborative teaching, and efficiency over effort constitute an interlocking system that redefines success for adolescents. One supplies the ghost written product, another supplies the social reward, the third supplies distribution, and the last supplies the justification. The result is a generation that can perform competence but cannot possess it. If secondary schools do not identify, teach against, and assess beyond these pseudo values, the very idea of earned merit will continue to fade, and with it, the credibility on integrity stands will be destroyed.

Over the years, educational stakeholders in Nigeria have rolled out a wide range of interventions to protect academic integrity in secondary schools, yet the problem has persisted and, in some ways, mutated because the digital environment keeps changing the rules of engagement. Government agencies, school administrators, teacher unions, parents’ associations, civil society groups, and even technology companies have all attempted reforms, and each effort has left traces of progress alongside fresh loopholes that students quickly learn to exploit. The earliest and most visible response came from the Federal Ministry of Education and examination bodies such as the West African Examinations Council and the National Examinations Council, who tightened examination logistics after the mass malpractice scandals of the late 1990 and early 2000. WAEC introduced customised question papers, serialized objective answer sheets, and photo-embossed certificates to make impersonation harder. By 2015, both WAEC and NECO began deploying biometric verification and CCTV in designated centers during the May/June and November/December diets. In Enugu State, the Ministry of Education launched “Operation Show Your Identity” in 2017, where supervisors matched students’ faces with school ID cards and state-issued exam slips before entry. As rightly stated by Hurst *et al.* (2022), these measures reduced the old pattern of “machineries” who

wrote exams for entire classes, yet they could not stop the newer pattern of real candidates photographing questions and circulating them through WhatsApp within ten minutes of start time. The integrity breach simply moved from the gate to the desk. Schools themselves adopted internal policies to complement national rules. Many public and private secondary schools instituted honour codes, beginning around 2010 which require students and parents to sign pledges against cheating at the start of each session. In Enugu South LGA, Community Secondary School Ugwuaji introduced a “Clear Desk Policy” in 2018. The school diallowed phones, smart watches, and allowed only transparent bags in exam halls, with teachers conducting body searches supervised by PTA representatives. Some schools installed signal jammers during tests, while others invested in plagiarism software like Turnitin for continuous assessment essays. The Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria ran nationwide workshops between 2016 and 2020 on ethics and assessment design, encouraging open-book tests, oral defenses, and project-based tasks to make copying useless. In the words of Krou *et al.* (2021), these pedagogical shifts improved learning in pilot schools, but the majority of underfunded public schools could not sustain the extra workload. A teacher handling 85 students per class reverted to multiple-choice tests that are easy to mark but also easy to leak.

The situation seems pathetic in secondary schools in Enugu State, where the erosion of academic integrity has moved from occasional misconduct to a culture that now threatens the very essence of schooling. Across public schools in Enugu South LGA, classrooms that were once spaces for struggle, questioning, and gradual mastery are increasingly becoming arenas for performance without process, where grades are pursued through shortcuts and visibility rather than study and understanding. Teachers are helplessly submitting termly results that look impressive on paper, yet when the same students are asked to defend their work orally or solve a variant of a homework problem, the gap between score and performance becomes unfortunately alarming. As rightly stated by Reyneke *et al.* (2021), certificates are beginning to misrepresent competence, and employers as well as higher institutions are quietly losing confidence in what secondary school qualifications actually reflect.

The unsatisfactory state of things is visible in daily routines. Many adolescents now equate success with access to “expo” groups, AI-generated essays, or polished reels that mimic diligence, while the labor of reading, drafting, and revising is dismissed as outdated. Continuous assessment tasks meant to track learning are routinely outsourced to older siblings, paid writers, or chatbots, and the submissions are so uniform that teachers can no longer use them to diagnose weakness. During internal and external examinations, phones are smuggled despite bans, questions are

photographed within minutes, and solutions circulate through Telegram and WhatsApp before invigilators complete the first row. Students who resist these practices are mocked as “ITK” and socially isolated, so the peer environment itself punishes honesty. According to Saleh and Meccawy (2021), the result is a value reversal where cheating is reframed as smart collaboration, and effort is treated as evidence of being “unexposed.” Parents, under pressure for admission and job prospects, often reinforce the breach by funding “special centers” while publicly condemning malpractice, creating a moral contradiction that adolescents internalize quickly. School administrators, already overstretched by large class sizes and poor funding, lack the tools to detect AI-grism or trace digital collusion. So sanctions become inconsistent and eventually rare. The cumulative effect is that academic integrity is not merely broken; it is being redefined by digital pseudo values that reward speed over substance and visibility over veracity. If this study is not conducted, the consequences will compound quietly but severely as the diagnostic function of assessment will continue to collapse, meaning teachers will keep promoting students whose foundational gaps remain hidden until they reach tertiary institutions or the workforce, where remediation is costly and sometimes impossible. Second, the social contract between schools and society will weaken further, as the public begins to treat secondary school certificates as formalities rather than proof of learning, which will depress investment in public education and widen inequality between those who can buy real competence and those who can only buy grades. Third, the adolescents themselves will carry distorted work ethics into adulthood, normalizing falsification, misrepresentation, and outsourcing as legitimate strategies. This therefore feeds the broader cycles with corruption and low productivity. However, timely intervention through reform can still redirect the trend by mapping how AI-grism, efemeral ownership, collaborative teaching, and efficiency can be used to enhance effort specifically influence academic integrity among secondary school students in Enugu South LGA.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. In what ways does AI-grism influence academic integrity in secondary schools in Enugu South Local Government Area?
2. In what ways does efemeral ownership influence academic integrity in secondary schools in Enugu South Local Government Area?
3. In what ways does collaborative teaching influence academic integrity in secondary schools in Enugu South Local Government Area?

4. In what ways does efficiency over effort influence academic integrity in secondary schools in Enugu South Local Government Area?

Method

This study adopted a descriptive survey design to investigate the influence of digital pseudo values on academic integrity in public secondary schools in Enugu South Local Government Area. The population consisted of 4,286 students in public secondary schools in the area, who are directly exposed to the digital environment that promotes AI-grism, efemeral ownership, collaborative teaching, and efficiency over effort. The study has a sample size of 600 students selected through multistage sampling which targets schools that reflect the diverse academic and socio-economic characteristics of the area. Three public secondary schools — Community Secondary School Ugwuaji, Government Secondary School Akwuke, and Urban Girls' Secondary School Idaw River — were purposively selected based on student population and reported cases of technology-related malpractice. From each school, four classes were randomly selected and from each class, two arms were randomly selected. Finally, 25 students were randomly selected from each arm, resulting in a total of 600 students. The distribution of the sample was done evenly across the three schools, with 200 students selected from each institution. A structured questionnaire, titled Digital Pseudo Values and Academic Integrity Questionnaire, was used to collect data. The questionnaire contained 40 items, with 10 items designed for each research question. The questionnaire was validated by three experts — two in Sociology of Education and one in Philosophy of Education — all in the Department of Educational Foundations, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Its reliability was tested using trial testing with 30 students from two public secondary schools in Enugu North Local Government Area. Cronbach Alpha Analysis yielded reliability coefficients of 0.79, 0.82, 0.80, and 0.84 for the four research questions, respectively. The researcher and 9 research assistants distributed the questionnaires to the selected students in Enugu South Local Government Area over a period of three weeks. The on-the-spot data collection method ensured that all questionnaires were retrieved. Data analysis was conducted using mean and standard deviation, given the four-point rating scale used in the study. A cutoff point of 2.50 was established to determine positive or negative responses.

Results

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on the Influence of AI-grism on Academic Integrity in Secondary Schools in Enugu South Local Government Area

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remark
1	I submit assignments generated by AI tools without modification because they give correct answers	3.12	0.76	Agreed
2	Using AI to write my essays is the same as doing the work myself since I typed the prompt	2.95	0.81	Agreed
3	I believe teachers cannot detect AI-written homework, so it is safe to submit	3.21	0.69	Agreed
4	I prefer AI apps for solving mathematics problems because they save time and show steps	3.34	0.65	Agreed
5	I feel guilty when I turn in AI-generated work as mine	1.87	0.88	Disagreed
6	Watching TikTok videos on how to rephrase AI answers helps me avoid plagiarism checks	2.88	0.79	Agreed
7	I learn better when I use AI to explain topics than when I read my textbooks	2.63	0.84	Agreed
8	AI-grism has made me less confident to write without digital help	2.71	0.82	Agreed
9	I see nothing wrong with using AI for homework since everyone in my class does it	2.59	0.86	Agreed
10	I would still use AI to do assignments even if the school banned it	2.54	0.91	Agreed
	Cluster Mean	2.78	0.80	Agreed

Table 1 indicated that AI-grism influences academic integrity, with a cluster mean of 2.78 above the 2.50 cutoff. Nine of ten items were agreed to, showing students regularly submit AI work, feel no guilt, and believe it is undetectable. Low standard deviations reflected consistent views across the 600 respondents.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on the Influence of Efemeral Ownership on Academic Integrity in Secondary Schools in Enugu South Local Government Area

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remark
1	I value likes and comments on my academic posts more than the actual grades I get	2.87	0.78	Agreed
2	Posting my assignment online to show I am “working” is more important than completing it well	2.61	0.83	Agreed
3	I feel successful when my study routine trends, even if I did not understand the topic	2.74	0.79	Agreed
4	Aesthetically pleasing notes for Instagram matter more to me than content mastery	2.55	0.86	Agreed
5	I rush through reading so I can record a “study with me” video	2.68	0.80	Agreed

6	My followers' approval influences what subjects I claim to study	2.41	0.90	Disagreed
7	I delete academic posts that get low engagement because they make me look dull	2.52	0.85	Agreed
8	Looking studious online is more important than being studious offline	2.49	0.88	Disagreed
9	I sometimes fake reading sessions for content but skip the actual study	2.66	0.82	Agreed
10	Visibility of effort online has replaced proof of learning for me	2.70	0.81	Agreed
	Cluster Mean	2.62	0.83	Agreed

Table 2 showed efemeral ownership influences academic integrity with a cluster mean of 2.62. Eight items exceeded the 2.50 benchmark, indicating students prioritized digital visibility, aesthetics, and engagement over actual learning. Standard deviations suggest moderate agreement, meaning transient online validation now competes with substantive academic work for many respondents.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on the Influence of Collaborative Teaching on Academic Integrity in Secondary Schools in Enugu South Local Government Area

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remark
1	Sharing answers in our class WhatsApp group during tests is normal teamwork	3.05	0.74	Agreed
2	I expect my friends to send me solutions once they finish their exam	2.92	0.77	Agreed
3	Group members who refuse to share answers are called selfish	2.81	0.80	Agreed
4	We use Telegram channels to distribute external exam "expo" before papers start	3.18	0.68	Agreed
5	Helping others cheat is a form of collaboration and not wrong	2.64	0.84	Agreed
6	I feel pressured to contribute leaked questions to my group	2.73	0.81	Agreed
7	Our class believes passing together matters more than how we pass	3.09	0.72	Agreed
8	Teachers know we share but cannot stop all the group chats	2.88	0.76	Agreed
9	I would lose friends if I refused to join answer-sharing groups	2.57	0.87	Agreed
10	Collaborative cheating is now part of school culture	2.96	0.75	Agreed
	Cluster Mean	2.88	0.77	Agreed

Table 3 revealed collaborative teaching strongly influences academic integrity, with a cluster mean of 2.88. All ten items were agreed to, showing answer-sharing is normalized as teamwork. Low standard deviations indicated widespread consensus.

The data confirm digital group platforms have reframed cheating as collective support, making honest students face social exclusion.

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on the Influence of Efficiency over Effort on Academic Integrity in Secondary Schools in Enugu South Local Government Area

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remark
1	The fastest way to complete homework is the best way, regardless of method	3.11	0.70	Agreed
2	I choose shortcuts that give marks even if I do not learn the material	2.94	0.76	Agreed
3	Spending long hours studying is outdated when answers are online	2.82	0.79	Agreed
4	I admire classmates who get high scores with minimal effort	3.03	0.72	Agreed
5	Understanding can come later; passing now is what matters	2.69	0.83	Agreed
6	I feel wasting time on drafts when copy-and-paste works	2.58	0.85	Agreed
7	Teachers care about correct answers, not how we got them	2.75	0.80	Agreed
8	Smart students are those who work less and score more	2.90	0.77	Agreed
9	I avoid difficult problems and search for solved versions instead	2.66	0.82	Agreed
10	Effort without high grades is meaningless to me	2.53	0.86	Agreed
	Cluster Mean	2.80	0.79	Agreed

Table 4 showed efficiency over effort influenced academic integrity with a cluster mean of 2.80. All items scored above 2.50, meaning students prioritized shortcuts, quick results, and minimal cognitive work. Consistent standard deviations reflect broad agreement. The value shift rewarded speed over process, eroding the link between effort, learning, and grades.

Discussion

The findings of the study unveiled the way and manners digital pseudo values influence academic integrity among students in public secondary schools in Enugu South Local Government Area. The findings of the study for research question one revealed that AI-grism influence of academic integrity among secondary school students in Enugu South Local Government Area. The implication is that students regard AI-generated work as equivalent to personal effort and feel little or no guilt

submitting it. The cluster mean for AI-grism is 2.78 with standard deviation of 0.80, suggesting that learners consistently engage in and 10.4236 the use of AI tools for assignments and tests. The results of this research are in agreement Waltzer and Dahl (2023) that when AI is accessed without clear ethical instruction, students' perception of cheating shifts because the technology obscures the boundary between assistance and substitution. Differently stated, the findings of this study contradict the result by Yazici *et al.* (2023) which states that students still experience moral restraint when using AI for schoolwork. The outcome of this assertion could be explained by differences in digital exposure, peer influence, and the absence of school policies on AI use in the present study area.

The second findings of the study showed that efemeral ownership influenced academic integrity among secondary school students. This is because learners prioritized online visibility, aesthetic presentation, and social engagement of study activities over actual understanding. The cluster mean of 2.62 with standard deviation of 0.83 indicated agreement that the performance of learning for digital audiences now competes with mastery as a measure of success. The result of this study therefore adds to the existing studies on how social media metrics reshape academic motivation. The findings of this research is supported by Aniagolu (2023) that efemeral ownership encourages students to value the appearance of effort, leading to rushed or faked study sessions that satisfy online followers but undermine genuine learning.

In addition, the findings of the study show that collaborative teaching as a digital pseudo value has the strongest influence on academic integrity, with a cluster mean of 2.88. This is because all items measuring group-based sharing of answers through WhatsApp and Telegram were agreed to by respondents. This analysis clearly agrees with studies by Alairaji *et al.* (2022) and Baran and Jonason (2020) who revealed that when answer-sharing is framed as teamwork and enforced through peer pressure, students interpret refusal to participate as disloyalty rather than ethical behavior. The fourth findings of the study revealed that efficiency over effort influences academic integrity by promoting speed, shortcuts, and minimal cognitive

investment. Accordingly, the result of this research indicated that students equate academic smartness with obtaining high grades through the fastest means, as each item recorded a mean score above 2.50. This result is supported by Bucciol *et al.* (2020) and Chirumamilla *et al.* (2020) that a culture of instant results driven by copy-paste practices and online solution sites conditions students to view prolonged effort as inefficient and unnecessary.

There appears to be validity threats in this study and one of such threat is social desirability bias as students may have underreported or overreported their involvement in behaviors related to academic integrity. The researchers addressed this issue by ensuring anonymity of the questionnaire and informing respondents that there were no right or wrong answers. The second threat is selection bias because the three schools were purposively selected based on reported cases of technology-related malpractice. The researchers addressed this threat by employing random selection of classes, arms, and students within each school to improve representativeness.

The outcome of this research immensely contributes to the existing literature as it provides empirical evidence that digital pseudo values are active determinants of academic integrity among secondary school students, rather than peripheral influences. However, there is no research without limitation, the first to know is that the study was limited to public secondary schools in Enugu South Local Government Area, which may affect the generalization of findings to private schools or other areas with different levels of digital access. Also, the study relied solely on self-report questionnaires and hence, future researchers are encouraged to adopt mixed methods, including interviews and observation, to further validate the influence of digital pseudo values on students' actual academic behavior.

Conclusion

This descriptive study investigated the influence of digital pseudo values on academic integrity of students. The objectives of this study were to determine the influence of AI-grism on academic integrity among secondary school students in Enugu South Local Government Area, the influence of efemeral ownership on

academic integrity among secondary school students in Enugu South Local Government Area, the influence of collaborative teaching on academic integrity among secondary school students in Enugu South Local Government Area, and the influence of efficiency over effort on academic integrity among secondary school students in Enugu South Local Government Area. The findings of this research agree that digital pseudo values undermine learners' adherence to academic integrity principles. Hence, when digital pseudo values are internalized by students, more particularly in a technology-driven setting, it makes students to have positive perception about shortcuts and group-based misconduct and the attitude towards personal effort and honesty becomes weaker. This is because all four digital pseudo values recorded cluster means above the cutoff point of 2.50 as students who participated in the study agreed that AI-grism, efemeral ownership, collaborative teaching, and efficiency over effort shape how they approach assignments, tests, and learning tasks. Learners reported agreement regarding the use of AI tools, prioritization of online visibility, normalization of answer-sharing, and preference for speed over process, as they indicated that these practices improve their grades and social standing. Digital pseudo values are generally regarded as a framework that redefines academic success for students in educational institutions more particularly in digitally exposed settings. Thus, digital pseudo values make students have positive attitude and feelings about expedient academic behaviors and it motivates them to bypass effortful learning. Based on the results of this research, it is recommended that teachers and administrators in educational institutions should design clear policies and interventions to counter the influence of digital pseudo values on secondary school students' academic integrity. Therefore, teachers may impact the way and manner students learn by giving them activities that will motivate them to value originality, process-based assessment, and private mastery over digital performance in their day-to-day academic tasks. When this is achieved, secondary school students will get the ethical orientation and study habits that are required for academic integrity now and in the long run. It is important for educational institutions to provide teachers

with adequate training and tools for them to detect and address AI-grism, performative study, and group-based misconduct in classrooms effectively. There is need for curriculum planners to incorporate digital ethics and academic integrity education into civic and computer studies to reshape students' value system. Researchers who will carry out similar study in the future could address some existing gap in this study by investigating the long-term impact of digital pseudo values, more particularly, in the aspect of examination behavior and post-secondary academic practices, to foster better understanding of academic integrity via digital culture. Secondly, researches that focus on cross-cultural and cross-institutional could be conducted to validate the influence of digital pseudo values in different settings. In addition, the development and evaluation of school-based integrity programs that directly counter AI-grism, efemeral ownership, collaborative teaching, and efficiency over effort optimizes intervention for academic integrity. Moreover, when digital pseudo values are studied based on different populations such as school administrators, teachers and parents, as well as strategies to ensure ethical digital use in school environment, stakeholders in education would gain knowledge and insight the more.

Implications for Educational Development

The results of this research show that digital pseudo values are significant factors undermining academic integrity among students in public secondary schools. Consequently, administrators of the curriculum as well as teachers can utilize integrity-focused instructional strategies to counter the influence of AI-grism, efemeral ownership, collaborative teaching, and efficiency over effort on students' academic behavior. This implies that teachers may adopt assessment practices that emphasize process, originality, and individual accountability in providing students learning experiences that reduce reliance on AI tools and answer-sharing platforms, as students will be able to develop effort-based study habits and internalize ethical standards at their own pace. These integrity-focused strategies may be designed by educational stakeholders in such a way and manner that they cater for the digital realities of students and also provide them with adequate opportunities for reflection

on authorship and effort. When this is achieved, teachers will have more time and resources to offer more individualized attention to learners' ethical development. This shows that explicit teaching of digital ethics and academic integrity is useful in classrooms that are adequately exposed to technology. The second pedagogical implication of this research is that curriculum administrators should ensure digital ethics content, more particularly, modules on responsible AI use and authentic online learning, should be utilized to supplement traditional approaches for character education in secondary schools as critical evaluation of digital norms and peer pressure can be facilitated via classroom activities within the school setting. This will go a long way in allowing learners to practise academic honesty whenever they engage with digital tools. Hence, curriculum administrators should ensure that students are given extra support regarding ethical decision-making and teachers who adopt integrity-based pedagogy will benefit more in that regard.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations are made:

1. School administrators should integrate digital ethics and academic integrity modules into the existing Civic Education and Computer Studies curriculum by allocating at least one period per week for structured lessons, case studies, and debates on AI-grism, efemeral ownership, collaborative teaching, and efficiency over effort to systematically reduce students' rationalization of academic misconduct.
2. The Ministry of Education should organize termly professional development workshops for teachers on detecting and managing technology-enabled malpractice, with emphasis on identifying AI-generated work, monitoring digital group platforms, and designing process-based assessments to address the identified influence of digital pseudo values on academic integrity.
3. School heads should implement clear policies on the use of AI tools and mobile devices during assignments and tests by restricting unsupervised access and introducing plagiarism-check routines, since undetectable AI use and

normalization of answer-sharing were found to moderate students' engagement in academic dishonesty.

4. Teachers should be encouraged to adopt authentic assessment strategies that reward effort, drafts, and in-class performance, ensuring that evaluation methods used are relevant to students' learning processes to weaken the appeal of shortcuts and performative study behaviors driven by efficiency over effort.
5. Curriculum planners should develop and distribute a teacher's guide on academic integrity education that aligns instructional activities with specific ethical objectives such as originality, accountability, and value for effort, so that implementation remains purposeful and measurable across public secondary schools.
6. Educational stakeholders should conduct periodic monitoring and student-feedback sessions where teachers and guidance counselors can discuss challenges and successes in promoting academic integrity, and document best practices for replication. This can help to sustain ethical awareness and personal responsibility which are shown to be undermined by digital pseudo values.

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