

Parental Educational Level, Family Size and Students' Attitude towards Examination Malpractice

Nnyenkpa Ntui Anyin, Ph.D

*Department of Guidance and Counselling
University of Calabar, Calabar*

Bernard Diwa Otu, Ph.D

*Department of Educational Foundations
University of Calabar, Calabar*



Abstract

The study investigated parental educational level, family size and attitude to examination malpractice among senior secondary school students in Southern Educational Zone of Cross River State. It adopted ex post facto research and was guided by two null hypotheses. A sample of one thousand (1000) students was randomly selected for the study. A questionnaire, which was both face and content validated, was the main instrument used for data collection. The reliability co-efficient was found to be 0.86, established through split-half reliability method. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was the statistical analysis technique adopted to test the hypotheses under study. All hypotheses were subjected to testing at 0.05 level of significance. The results of the analysis revealed that parental educational level and family size, significantly influence students' attitude towards examination malpractice in southern educational zone of Cross River State. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that government, School Educational Board and non-governmental organizations should assist in providing schools with necessary learning facilities to improve upon the present teaching/learning situation.

Keywords: Parental, educational, family-size, attitude, examination, malpractice

Introduction

In Cross River State today, examinations are becoming ends in themselves rather than means to an end. Examinations have become the sole determinants of the student's academic progress and promotion to higher educational levels. Examinations are major instruments of social mobility and promotions. Maduka (2001) sees undue emphasis placed on certificate as one of the causes of examination malpractice in Nigeria. According to him, paper qualification and certificates serve as means of getting well-paid jobs and achievement of social status.

As a result of this trend, morality, and honesty have been thrown to the dogs, in a desperate attempt to pass examination and obtain certificates; so long as emphasis is not on an individual's performance, but on the paper certificate obtained. Many holders of certificates cannot practically defend them through their performance. With reference to the unfortunate issue of examination malpractice among Senior Secondary School students, it can be deduced that all the efforts so far made to curb examination malpractice in Cross River State do not seem to eradicate it. The alarming rate of increase in examination malpractice in secondary schools in Nigeria calls for concern from all stakeholders in the education sector.

Lilly (2002) asserts that criminal behaviours are easily learnt and transmitted from one generation to another in the process of social interaction. Lilly (2002) also opines that all behaviours are as a result of socialization by means of interactions. Crime flourishes in lawless milieus; in these environments, survival of the fittest syndrome holds sway. Nigeria seems to be turning into a lawless country, where laws on examination malpractice are no longer having effect on culprits. This is manifested in the way in which culprits who know their ways go scot-free time without number (Ojo & Adeyemi, 2007).

Most of the students who indulge in examination malpractice do so because they interact with those who indulge in it, such as their classmates (Amalaha, 2009). This is prevalent in school environments where students are easily influenced by their colleagues or peer group. In the home, many parents often socialize their children to criminality. Thus, parents are trainers of children at home, they pass instructions to them which they must obey. Oyedepo (2010) asserts that learners are biological raw materials which training from parents and teachers can turn to assets.

The students' inability to apply good study habits creates opportunities for tension and anxiety which reduce the level of students' effectiveness in the process of acquiring knowledge, ideas and skills. Evidence abounds that students do not prepare adequately for examinations, especially as regards studying the recommended texts. Many students resort to fabrication of ideas when they cannot provide the required responses to the questions, thus, avoiding certain sections of examination (Oyedepo, 2010).

Inadequate preparation for examinations, students not taking their studies seriously, being lazy and indolent, and also hoping on fraudulent means to make it without hard-work, with the support of unscrupulous parents and a corrupt system of national life, are the root causes of examination malpractice. Students' involvement in examination malpractice is as a result of lack of confidence in themselves, because of inadequate preparation. Students' test anxiety has been found to be responsible for their involvement in examination malpractice. Test anxiety is in part a result of society

related factor acting on the students which include students' concern about grades, fear of failure and the importance attached to certificates.

Jimoh (2009) emphasizes on success (goals), irrespective of the means employed in achieving these goals which have pressurized students to use illegitimate procedures in achieving success in examinations. He asserts that the Nigerian value systems have placed emphasis on certificates because of their transformational power. Examination malpractice has dominated the school system so much that the products of the system prefer to flaunt certificates and credentials rather than knowledge, skill and competence. Consequently students engage in short-cut means of acquiring these certificates during examinations.

The introduction of the Global System of Mobile Communication (GSM) in the country has revolutionized examination malpractice in the school system. The emergence of this technological device has brought about new approaches to dishonest conducts during examinations. A lot of academic information is stored in handsets for direct use in examination halls for onward transfer via SMS to other students anywhere in the country. Ekpo (1991) carried out a study to determine the relationship between parents' educational background and examination malpractice using a sampled of 538 students randomly sampled from the population area. An analysis of the data shows that there is no significant relationship between parents' educational background and examination cheating tendency of students.

In his study on parents' participation in examination malpractice in external examinations, Umezuruike (2006) used a sample size of 300 parents randomly drawn from a population of 3,040 registered parents of Okigwe Government Parent Teachers Associations (PTA) in Imo State, Nigeria. Data were gathered with a structured questionnaire and analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and t-test. The result revealed that parents participate in examination malpractice in different ways.

Obo (2008) agrees that the most significant reason for parents' involvement in examination malpractice is to cover up or protect the academic weakness of their children. That gender of parents was not a determining factor for the parents' opinion on participation in examination malpractice. Parents are major stakeholders in the education industry, and play active role in sustaining qualitative education or otherwise.

It is pertinent to state that students' academic disposition might often be influenced by the actions/activities of their parents. According to Onyechere (2005), Anyadioha (2003) and Maduabum (2004), when parents participate in examination malpractice, the tendency is to encourage poor attitude to learning amongst students. Anyadioha

(2003) further opined that some parents not only encourage their wards/students in their ugly trend but go along bribing the supervisors and reputable examination bodies in the wake of final examinations especially at the secondary schools.

Umezieruke's result agreed with earlier studies which indicted parents as examination malpractioners (Okoye, 1995; Onyechere, 1996; Ali, 1997; Mkpa & Nwaboh, 2004; Erukoha, 2005). The awareness of students that their parents participate directly or indirectly in examination malpractice will make them not to take their studies seriously. The resultant effect will be poor attitude to learning, poor preparation for examinations, and decline in morality, indiscipline and fraudulent practices.

Obo (2008) further opined that parents who participate in examination malpractice will hardly provide learning materials for their children since good result will be obtained at all cost. The results got through such means do not reflect the academic ability of the affected children; hence, the main objective of examination remains defeated as the student merely parades paper qualification without any practical relevance/application.

Otu (2009) agrees that achievement motivation of students could be as a result of parental pressure to succeed or peer group influence. Nenty (1988) opines that pressure to succeed from parents relates directly and significantly with students' tendency to indulge in examination malpractice. Parental pressure toward achievement is related to great academic success, but may result in greater motivation to indulge in examination malpractice when the student is of limited intellectual ability (Biehler, 1998).

Nenty (1988) reports that parental pressures to succeed have been observed to correlate directly and significantly with students' tendency to cheat. Garrison and Gamson (1993) noted that cheating begins at home with parental pressure and continues with little or no disapproval from peers at school. It is reinforced by the need to be socially accepted. He noted that pressure comes from home where high premium is placed on academic performance.

Benson and Thompson (1987) posited that family size affects academic performance of children. They found out that children who come from small families are more likely to adopt desirable values and attitudes than those who come from larger families. They also pointed out that parents who have fewer children tend to devote more time and attention to each individual child. They concluded that children from larger families tend to be less motivated to do well in school than those with fewer children.

Zajonc et al (1980) undertook a study of the relationship between family size and academic achievement of adolescents in secondary schools. His result showed a decrease in mean achievement scores as family size increases. This may be as a result of deficiencies in parental care or support and encouragement to children in large families.

Markus, Smith and Moreland (1995) in his study of 100 families found out that children's level of academic performance are greatly influenced by family size as well as birth order. According to Schocter (1990), children from smaller families perform better in their test scores than children from larger families. According to Ralph and Tannenbaum as presented by Odey (1998), students with record of successful academic achievement tend to come from monogamous homes with higher socio-economic and educational background.

Uko (1990) feels that large families are good in that the children get involved in their parents' businesses helping them in their business endeavour and increasing their income. But this does not support educational advancement because such children cannot find time to study and so involve themselves in examination malpractice. Berk (1991) found some relationship between family size and intelligent quotient. In a study by Onyeabe (1977), family size was negatively related to achievement in Nigerian school children. Awoyemi (1986) discovered substantial relationship between the number of children in the family and children's academic performance. A research carried out by Ochuema and Esu (1999) found that family size and socio-economic status of parents greatly influenced the academic performance of primary school pupils by linking records of marriage, birth and divorce. Christenser as presented by Odey (1998) was able to show that children from monogamous homes were more likely to perform better at school. This, he explained, has to do with large family size resulting from polygamy to the extent that equal attention may not be given to all children.

Frazer (1993) was convinced that the larger the family size, the lower the intelligence of its members. This is because the family members may be too many for the little income that comes into the family. As a result of the poor income, children may not have good food that may supply the required nutrients for physical and intellectual growth.

Love (1992) observed that as the size of the family increases so the scores of intelligence decrease. This according to him is as a result of lack of care on the part of parents; large families, according to him, contributed more towards backwardness. Goldberg (1989) asserted that it is not a question of large or small families that determines the academic performance of youngsters in school but that within a given socio-economic stratum, a family's attitude towards their occupational status has a

great influence on the academic achievement expectations of the same, than actual class membership. Also, in her conclusion, the author explained that since there is always the existence of rivalry (at times unhealthy) between children from separate mothers of large families, there will still be a competitive spirit in the children, this can spur them into greater academic achievements since each group of children will want to prove some superiority over others.

Hypotheses

Ho1: There is no significant influence of parental educational level on students' attitude towards examination malpractice.

Ho2: There is no significant influence of family size on students' attitude towards examination malpractice.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study is the ex-post facto design. The design, ex-post facto is suitable for this study because the researchers have no direct control over the independent variables since they have already occurred in the population. The population of this study comprised all senior secondary school students in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State. In sampling the participants for the study, stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used. Simple random sampling was used to select twenty percent (20%) of the senior secondary II (SSII) students for the study sample. From this process, one thousand (1000) students were randomly selected; four hundred (400) males and six hundred (600) females, were randomly selected for the study. The same number of copies of the questionnaire and examination malpractice inventory was used for analysis. The schools were mixed schools.

The main instrument used for data collection was the Parental educational level, Family size and Examination Malpractices Questionnaire (PELFSEMQ) designed by the researchers. The instrument was divided into two sections A and B. Section A was designed to measure Parental educational level and Family size, while section B was a 20 item four points modified likert scale type to measure examination malpractices. The face validity was established by using experts in Measurement and Evaluation in the Faculty of Education who vetted the items developed. To determine the reliability of the research instrument (questionnaire), a trial test was done using fifty (50) students drawn from the population area. Split-half method of reliability was used to determine the reliability estimate of the instrument. The reliability coefficient was found to be 0.90 which shows that the reliability coefficient is high enough. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was the statistical analysis technique used to test the hypotheses under study.

Presentation of results

Ho1: There is no significant influence of parental educational level on students' attitude towards examination malpractice.

The independent variable in this hypothesis is parental educational level which is categorized into three (primary-1, secondary-2 and tertiary-3); while the dependent variable is students' attitude towards examination malpractice. To test this hypothesis, students' attitude towards examination malpractice from parents with primary, secondary and tertiary educational levels was compared using One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The result of the analysis is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary data and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the influence of parental educational level and students' examination malpractice behaviour (N=1000)

Parental educational level	N	\bar{x}	SD		
Primary – 1	185	60.81	6.03		
Secondary – 2	234	63.09	8.06		
Tertiary – 3	581	61.84	5.50		
Total	1000	61.94	6.32		
Source of variance	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig.
Between group	553.498	2	276.749	7.006*	.000
Within group	39382.902	997	39.501		
Total	39936.400	199			

* Significant at the 0.05 level, df=2;997.

The result in Table 1 reveals that the calculated F-value of 7.006 is higher than the critical F-value of 3.00 at .05 level of significance with 2 and 997 degrees of freedom. With this result the null hypothesis that parental educational level has no significant influence on students' examination malpractice behaviour was rejected. This result therefore implies that parental educational level significantly influence students' examination malpractice behaviour. Since parental educational level has a significant influence on students' malpractice behaviour in examination, a further pattern of influence was explored using Fisher's Least Significant Difference (LSD) multiple comparison analysis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Fisher's least significant difference (LSD) multiple comparison analysis of the influence of parental educational level on students' malpractice behaviour in examination

Parental educational level	N	Primary 300	Secondary 480	Tertiary 220
Primary	185	60.81 ^a	-2.29 ^b	-1.0602
Secondary	234	-3.70 ^c	63.09	1.25
Tertiary	581	-1.96	2.57	61.84
MSW=39.501				

* Significant at .05 level, critical $t=1.96$, $df=998$.

a = Group means are placed along the diagonal

b = Difference between Group means are placed above diagonal

c = Fisher's t-values are placed below the diagonal

* = Significance at 0.05 level.

The significant Fisher's t-value of 2.57 indicates that students' malpractice behaviour in examination when their parents are from tertiary educational level (mean = 61.84) is significantly different from students' malpractice behaviour in examination when their parental educational level is secondary (mean = 63.09). The significant Fisher's t-value of -3.70 and -1.96 indicates that students malpractice behaviour in examination when their parental educational level is either tertiary (mean = 61.84) or secondary (mean = 63.09) are significantly different from the students' examination malpractice behaviour when their parental educational level is primary (mean = 60.81).

Ho2: There is no significant influence of family size on students' attitude towards examination malpractice.

The independent variable in this hypothesis is family size which is categorized into three (small-1, average-2 and large-3); while the dependent variable is students' attitude towards examination malpractice. To test this hypothesis, examination malpractice behaviours of students from small, average and large family size were compared using One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The result of the analysis is presented in Table 3.

The result in Table 3 reveals that the calculated F-value of 79.032 is higher than the critical F-value of 3.00 at .05 level of significance with 2 and 997 degrees of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis that family size has no significant influence on students' malpractice behaviour in examination was rejected.

Table 3: Summary data and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the influence of family size on students’ malpractice behaviour in examination (N=1000)

Family size					
	N	\bar{x}	SD		
Small – 1	285	59.33	7.14		
Average – 2	462	61.53	5.65		
Large – 3	253	65.63	4.58		
Total	1000	61.94	6.32		
Source of variance	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig.
Between group	5465.064	2	2732.532	79.032*	.000
Within group	34471.336	997	34.575		
Total	39936.400	999			

* Significant at the 0.05 level, critical F=3.00, df=2;997.

This result therefore implies that, family size significantly influence students’ malpractice behaviour in examination. Since family size has a significant influence on students’ malpractice behaviour in examination, a further pattern of influence was explored using Fisher’s least significant difference (LSD) multiple comparison analysis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Fishers’ least significant difference (LSD) multiple comparison analysis of the influence of family size on students’ malpractice behaviour in examination

Family size	N	Small 285	Average 462	Large 253
Small	285	59.33a	-2.20b	-6.30
Average	462	-4.97c	61.53	-4.1
Large	253	-12.41	-8.92	65.63
MSW=34.575				

* Significant at .05 level, critical t=1.96, df=998.

a = Group means are placed along the diagonal

b = Difference between Group means are placed above diagonal

c = Fisher’s t-values are placed below the diagonal

* = Significance at 0.05 level.

The significant Fisher’s t-value of -8.92 indicates that students’ malpractice behaviour in examination when they are from large family size (mean = 65.63) is significantly different from students’ malpractice behaviour in examination when their family size is average (mean = 61.53). The significant Fisher’s t-value of -4.97 and -12.41

indicates that students' malpractice behaviour in examination when their family size is either large (mean = 65.63) or average (mean =61.53) are significantly different from the students' malpractice behaviour examination when their family size is small (mean = 59.33).

Discussion of findings

The result from the first hypothesis reveals that there is a significant influence of parental educational level on students' attitude towards examination malpractice. The finding of this hypothesis is in line with view of Obo (2008) who observed that the most significant reason for parents' involvement in examination malpractice is to cover up or protect the academic weakness of their children. Gender of parents was not a determining factor for the parents' opinion on participation in examination malpractice. Parents are major stakeholders in education industry and play active role in sustaining qualitative education or otherwise. Anyadioha (2003) also opined that some parents not only encourage their wards/students in the ugly trend but go along bribing the supervisors and examination bodies in the wake of final examinations especially at the secondary schools.

The result from the second hypothesis reveals that there is a significant influence of family size on students' attitude towards examination malpractice. Uko (1990) asserted that large families are good in that the children get involved in their parents' businesses, helping them in their business endeavours, thus increasing their income. But this does not support educational advancement because such children cannot find time to study. Berk (1991) found some relationship between family size and intelligent quotient. In a study by Onyeabe (1977) family size was negatively related to achievement in Nigerian school children.

Awoyemi (1986) discovered substantial relationship between the number of children in the family and children's academic performance. A research carried out by Ochuema and Esu (1999) found out that family size and socio-economic status of parents greatly influenced the academic performance of primary school pupils by linking records of marriage, birth and divorce. Christenser as presented by Odey (1998) was able to show that children from polygamous homes were more than twice likely to perform poorly at school. This he explained has to do with large family size resulting from polygamy to the extent that equal attention may not be given to all the children.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that parental educational level and family size significantly influence students' attitude towards examination malpractice.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that:

- 1) Counsellors should discuss results at seminars organized by the authority and regularly organise parents' teachers association (PTA) meeting where school/examination related problems could be discussed. This is to create awareness for parents, counsellors, teachers, school and other stakeholders in education on the prevailing incidence of examination malpractice status.
- 2) Examination ethics code of conduct should be produced and distributed in schools and education offices. This should spell out duties and responsibilities as well as penalties needed for the conduct of examination in secondary schools.
- 3) Examination ethics clubs should also be formed in our secondary schools.

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