

***Parental Socio-Economic Status, Parental Occupation and Students' Attitude
towards Examination Malpractice***

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Abstract

This study adopted ex post facto design to investigate parental socio-economic background, parental occupation and attitude to examination malpractice among senior secondary school students in Calabar Educational Zone of Cross River State. It was guided by two null hypotheses. A sample of one thousand (1000) students was randomly selected through the simple random sampling technique. A validated questionnaire was used for data collection. The reliability estimates of the instrument, established through split-half reliability method, range from 0.70-0.83. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The results of the analysis revealed that, parental socio-economic status and parental occupation significantly influence students' attitude towards examination malpractice in southern educational zone of Cross River State. Based on the results and findings of the study, it was recommended that parents should not encourage malpractice behaviour among students by sponsoring them financially.

Keywords: Parental, socio-economic, occupation, attitude, examination, malpractice

Introduction

Education is the bedrock of development of every nation, but unfortunately education in Nigeria is plagued by the 'monster' called examination malpractice. The phenomenon of examination malpractice is seriously posing a great threat to the survival, and sustainability of good and quality education; it is one of the greatest challenges to the Nation's educational system. Examination malpractice is an illegal or unacceptable behaviour by a candidate in a formal test of his/her knowledge or ability in a particular subject. Amalaha (2009) sees examination malpractice as a socially undesirable behaviour exhibited by students. Kibler (2003) defines examination malpractice as a form of cheating and plagiarism that involves students

giving or receiving unauthorized assistance in an academic exercise or receiving credit for work that is not their own.

Examination malpractice is neither a recent phenomenon nor is it peculiar to Nigeria alone. However the alarming rate of its increase in Nigeria calls for novel ways to redress the situation. Examination malpractice has become a cankerworm which has eaten deep into the fabrics of Nigerian educational system from the primary to the tertiary level of the educational system. The menace of examination malpractice has made the conduct of secondary school education examination in Nigeria, and Cross River State in particular to be a huge mockery, as cheating, fraud and cutting corners have continued unabated in the school system. Many dimensions of examination malpractice have been observed in Nigeria. According to Mwadiani (2005), examination malpractice in Nigeria manifests in a variety of forms which include:

- i. Leakage – having access to the question before examination date.
- ii. Impersonation – writing an examination for another person.
- iii. External assistance – individuals who are not examination candidates giving unauthorized assistance to candidates. This includes using electronic gadgets to get answers from other people.
- iv. Smuggling of “foreign materials” – this is perhaps the most common form of examination malpractice. It is the introduction of unauthorized materials (e.g. notebooks, “crib notes,” charts and answer booklets complete with answers) into the examination hall. Materials are frequently smuggled in pants, shoes and bags. It is also information written on parts of the body to aid someone in the examination.
- v. Copying – reproduction of another candidate’s work with or without permission.
- vi. Collusion – unauthorized sharing of information between candidates, usually by exchanging notes or scripts. Colluding with teachers or invigilators for assistance on answering questions.
- vii. Intimidation – examination officials including supervisors and markers of papers are often physically threatened.
- viii. Substitution of scripts – replacing answer sheets handed out during the course of the examination with ones written outside the center before, during or after the examination.
- ix. Improper assignment – Deliberate placing of candidates in centres under the supervision of corrupt examination supervisors. These are called special centres.
- x. Deliberate alteration of scores designed to inflate a candidate’s original score.

Despite stringent legislations, and other measures like cancellation of examination results, outright expulsion of students from schools and institutions, aimed at curbing the recurring examination malpractice, more and more sophisticated forms of these endemic practices continue with impunity. Obo (2008) asserts that inspite of the

genuine efforts by the state government, and perhaps some education stakeholders (teachers, school administrators, school proprietors, parents and employers of labour) in the eradication of examination malpractice in the state, there seems to be no significant improvement in the eradication of examination malpractice in the State Secondary School System.

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. Tolofari (2006) sees As a result of this trend, morality and honesty have been thrown to the dogs, as the focus is to pass examination and obtain certificates so long as emphasis is not on an individual's competence, 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.

Eze (2008) also asserts that students no longer burn the midnight candle or take any extra effort to come out in flying colours because necessary arrangements would have been made by parents with the connivance of invigilators to ensure a 'sound' Certificate for their children. It is no surprise any more for students to change from their school to schools and environments conducive for all forms of examination fraud. Students have not only lost confidence in themselves, but are in a state of hopelessness because they already have a mindset that unless one goes through the short cuts, one cannot pass examinations.

In his study on the relationship between socio-economic status of parents, and children's cheating tendency, Otu (2009) also observed that students whose parents are highly educated tend to cheat in examination than their counterparts whose parents have low level of education. He further reveals that students from broken homes or single parents show greater tendency to cheat in examination than their counterparts from stable homes.

Otu (2009) in his study found an inverse significant relationship between attitude to study and tendency to cheat in examination. Based on these findings, children from high socio-economic background with good study habits will be expected to show fewer tendencies to indulge in examination malpractice than those from low socio-economic background that are likely to have poor educational facilities and poor study habits. Contrary to the above, Enu (2002) observes that there is a significant positive

relationship between parental socio-economic background and cheating tendency. This indicates that the higher the socio-economic status of students' parents, the higher the students' tendency to cheat in examinations. Parental socio-economic status was found to influence students' attitude to study and the tendency to cheat in examination. Educational facilities in high socio-economic background, parental pressure and assistance could help children develop high achievement motivation and good study habits, and hence less tendency to indulge in examination malpractice.

Onyigbuo (2005) opines that pressure to succeed from parents relates directly and significantly with student's tendency to indulge in examination malpractice. Accordingly, some parents are said to be the worse culprits. They procure leaked question papers for their children. They buy-over supervisors and invigilators so that these officers may turn blind eyes to their children's examination offences. Some go the extra length of influencing their children's scores at examination headquarters. Some procure forged General Certificate Examination (GCE) results and certificates with which their children gain admission into tertiary institutions. It is pertinent to state that students' academic disposition might often be influenced by the actions/activities of their parents. According to Anyadioha (2009) and Maduabum (2004), when parents participate in examination malpractice, the tendency is to encourage poor attitude to learning amongst students. There is competition for prestigious as well as lucrative occupations between the rich and the poor families. According to the authors, while the rich families aspire to maintain the status quo by encouraging their children to train for the prestigious and lucrative positions, most of the poor families put in most of their resources on their children to see that they rise out of the poverty that has engulfed them.

Onyejiaku (1987) observed that there is competition for prestigious as well as lucrative occupations between the rich and the poor families. According to him, while the rich families aspire to maintain the status quo by encouraging their children to train for the prestigious and lucrative positions, most of the poor families put in most of their resources on their children to see that they rise out of the poverty that has engulfed them.

Parental occupation has a significant role to play in the academic attainment of their children. This is done by ensuring that the learning materials needed by the children are provided at the appropriate time and ensure that children take their studies seriously. Most often, parents mount pressure on the children so much that they always look for means of pleasing their parents which culminate in examination malpractice.

Whitley, Bichlmeier and Jones (2002) reported that academic dishonesty such as cheating and plagiarism was higher among students who feel pressured to succeed.

This implies that when students feel pressured to succeed at all cost, and cannot make it through hard work, the end result is cheating in order to stay on in school.

Idika (2004) pointed out that children are simply modelling what they see go on in the society. They may have seen their parents use money to secure admission, jobs and buy favour from other people, either for themselves or for the students. This may make them to adopt same lifestyle as being worthwhile in examination malpractice. A person's perception of himself emerges from reflected appraisal of other people. When parents are loving and comforting, the child develops positive feelings about himself. When the child enters school, the approval or disapproval of his teachers and peers become important to his self-concept. When a teacher criticizes and belittles his effort, the student develops a sense of inferiority. This affects his attitude towards school work, study and this influences academic performance. Students' tendency to cheat in examination comes from their daily academic performance. He further observes that the belief that success is due to external factors does not encourage one to make effort to succeed. Akpan (2000) is of the view that a child who enjoys a sense of security from his home through being loved by parents will acquire the ability to cope more adequately with task of classroom learning and other problems he encounters at school. Essien (2003) held that parents from high socio-economic class provide their children with conducive home environment, good food, play ground and psychological needs that help them to adjust socially, while the adolescent from low socio-economic homes do not adjust socially, probably because their homes are unstable, their means of livelihood are hardly available and as such they become pugnacious, withdrawn and socially maladjusted. Parents are major stakeholders in education industry and play active role in sustaining qualitative education. The involvement of parents in examination malpractice in schools has some serious negative effects in the school system. It is a serious act of omission and commission and this does not go well for educational development. Edukugho (2006) observes the penchant of parents to buy leaked, 'live', papers in advance for their children before the sitting of examination. According to him, many parents derive joy and satisfaction when their children or wards come home with undeserved results or certificates conducted by public examination bodies like West African Examination Council (WAEC) and the National Examination Council (NECO).

Hypothesis

Ho1: There is no significant influence of parental socio-economic background on students' attitude towards examination malpractice.

Ho2: There is no significant influence of parental occupation 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 researcher has 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 Calabar Education Zone. In sampling the participants for the study, stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used. First, the schools were stratified into urban and rural schools based on their local government areas. One of the researchers closed his eyes and picked one folded piece of paper from each of the twelve (12) baskets, and the twelve (12) schools needed emerged from this process.

In each of the twelve (12) schools selected, 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 was used for analysis. The schools were mixed schools.

The main instrument used for data collection was the Socio-Economic Background, and Examination Malpractices Questionnaire (SEBEMQ) designed by the researchers. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section 'A' was designed to collect the respondents' personal data such as gender, age, parental occupation, among others. Section 'B' measures parental socio-economic background; while Section C is 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. 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 ranges from 0.90-0.94 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 socio-economic background on students' attitude towards examination malpractice.

The Independent variable in this hypothesis is parental socio-economic background which is categorized into three (low-1, average-2 and high-3); while the dependent variable is students' attitude towards examination malpractice. To test this hypothesis,

attitude towards examination malpractice of students from low, average and high socio-economic background were compared using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The result of the analysis is presented in Table 1. The result in Table 1 reveals that the calculated F-value of 95.481 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 socio-economic background has no significant influence on students' attitude towards examination malpractice was rejected. This therefore implies that parental socio-economic background significantly influenced students' malpractice behaviour in examination.

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

Socio-economic background	n	\bar{x}	SD		
Low – 1	300	59.33	7.14		
Average – 2	480	61.54	5.63		
High – 3	220	66.36	3.76		
Total	1000	61.94	6.32		
Source of variation	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig
Between group	6419.658	2	3209.829	95.481*	.000
Within group	33516.742	997	33.618		
Total	39936.400	999			

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

Since parental socio-economic background 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.

The significant Fisher's t-value of -10.21 indicates that students' malpractice behaviour in examination when their parents are from high socio-economic background (mean = 66.36) is significantly different from students' malpractice behaviour in examination when their parental socio-economic background is average (mean = 61.54). The significant Fisher's t-value of -5.16 and -13.64 indicates that students malpractice behaviour in examination when their parents' socio-economic background is either High (mean = 66.36) or average (mean = 61.54) are significantly different from the students' malpractice behaviour in examination when their parental socio-economic background is low (mean = 59.33).

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

Socio-economic status	N	Low 300	Average 480	High 220
Low	300	59.33 ^a	-2.20 ^b	-7.02
Average	480	-5.16 ^c	61.54	-4.82
High	220	-13.64	-10.21	66.36
MSW=33.618				

- * 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.

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

The Independent variable in this hypothesis is parental occupation which is categorized into three (farming -1, civil servant-2 and business -3); while the dependent variable is examination malpractice. To test this hypothesis, examination malpractice of students from farming, civil servant and business parental occupation were compared using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The result of the analysis is presented in Table 3.

Table 3 reveals that the calculated F-value of 8.890 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 occupation has no significant influence on students' malpractice behaviour in examination was rejected. This result therefore implies that parental occupation significantly influence students' malpractice behaviour in examination. Since parental occupation 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 3: Summary data and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the influence of parental occupation and students' malpractice behaviour in examination (N=1000)

Parental occupation	N	\bar{x}	SD		
Farming – 1	160	60.50	6.00		
Civil servant– 2	240	63.17	8.04		
Business – 3	600	61.83	5.49		
Total	1000	61.94	6.32		
Source of variation	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig.
Between group	699.733	2	349.867	8.890*	.000
Within group	39236.667	997	39.355		
Total	39936.400	999			

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

Table 4: Fisher's least significant difference (LSD) multiple comparison analysis of the influence of parental occupation on students' malpractice behaviour in examination

Parental occupation	N	Farming 160	Civil servant 240	Business 600
Farming	160	60.50 ^a	-2.66 ^b	-1.32
Civil servant	240	-4.16 ^c	63.17	1.34
Business	600	-2.37	2.80	61.83
MSW=39.355				

* 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 2.80 indicates that students' malpractice behaviour in examination when their parents are from business occupation (mean = 61.83) is significantly different from students' malpractice behaviour in examination when their parental occupation is civil service (mean = 63.17). The significant Fisher's t-value of -4.16 and -2.37 indicates that students' malpractice behaviour in examination when their parental occupation is either business (mean = 66.36) or civil service (mean = 61.54) are significantly different from the students' malpractice behaviour in examination when their parental occupation is farming (mean = 60.50).

Discussion of findings

The result of the first hypothesis shows that parental socio-economic background significantly influenced students' malpractice attitude in examination. The finding of this hypothesis is in line with the study of Horrocks (1990) who in his study noted that children from high socio-economic background exhibit less examination malpractice tendency than those from lower socio-economic background. He further stressed that parents from the former group have higher expectations for their children than parents from the latter. However, Child (1997) supports that children from high socio-economic background may show fewer tendencies to cheat, only if parents set realistic goals for them. Unrealistic goals set by parents and met with failure will result in tension. Such children, in order to achieve the expected goals and please their parents may cheat more to avoid parental criticism or punishment.

Udom's (1998) study shows that students with parents from different socio-economic backgrounds differ significantly on self-reported tendency to cheat. Students from high socio-economic background parents exhibit the highest tendency to indulge in examination malpractice because of high expectation from parents, followed by those from low socio-economic background. Children from the middle class show the least tendency to indulge in examination malpractice.

Nenty (1991) in his study observed that there is a significant relationship between socio-economic index and students' tendency to cheat in examination. The result indicates that the higher the socio-economic background of parents, the more the tendency to cheat in examination. Factors related to parental socio-economic background that influence examination malpractice include parental educational background, disciplinary level used by parents, parental pressure for success, unstable home situations, parental influence on self-concept of children and parental examples.

The result of the second hypothesis reveals that there is a significant influence of parental occupation on students' attitude towards examination malpractice. The finding of this hypothesis is in line with the view of Onyejiaku (1987) who observed that there is competition for prestigious as well as lucrative occupations between the rich and the poor families. According to him, while the rich families aspire to maintain the status quo by encouraging their children to train for the prestigious and lucrative positions, most of the poor families put in most of their resources on their children to see that they rise out of the poverty that has engulfed them. Parental occupation has a significant role to play in the academic attainment of the children. This is done by ensuring that the learning materials needed by the children are provided at the appropriate time, and ensuring that children take their studies seriously. Most often, parents mount pressure on the children so much that they always look for means of pleasing their parents which culminate in examination malpractice.

Whitley et al (2002) also observed that academic dishonesty such as cheating, and plagiarism was higher among students who feel pressured to succeed. This implies that when students feel pressured to succeed at all cost and cannot make it through hard work, the end result is cheating in order to stay on in school. Ali (1997) also observed that children are simply modelling what they see go on in the society. They may have seen their parents use money to secure admission, jobs and buy favour from other people, either for themselves or for the students. This may make them to adopt same lifestyle as being worthwhile in examination malpractice.

Conclusion

Based on the results and findings of the study, it was concluded that parental socio-economic status and parental occupation significantly influence students' attitude towards examination malpractice.

Recommendations

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

- 1) Parents should not encourage malpractice behaviour among students by sponsoring them financially.
- 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 secondary schools.

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