

***Parents' Variables and Examination Malpractice among Secondary School Students  
in Bekwarra Local Government Area, Cross River State***

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**Abstract**

*This study sought to find out if parents' variables have any significant influence on examination malpractice among secondary school students in Bekwarra Local Government Area, Cross River State. Two research questions and two research hypotheses were formulated and tested using independent t-test, at 0.05 level of significance. Survey inferential research design was adopted for the study. A sample size of two hundred (200) students was selected, through purposive and systematic random sampling technique, who responded to the Parents' Variables and Examination Malpractice Questionnaire (PVEMQ). The findings revealed that parents' family type and parents' socio-economic status has a significant influence on examination malpractice among secondary school students in Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State. The study recommended that parents should be given orientation on the consequences of examination malpractice and why they should encourage their children to study hard and avoid examination malpractices in schools.*

**Keywords:** parents, family, type, socio-economic, examination, malpractice

**Introduction**

Examination malpractice has been a rampant phenomenon in recent times in most educational institutions in Nigeria. The problem of examination malpractice has become a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigerian educational system. Cheating in examination and other forms of examination malpractice has become the easiest way for students to excel academically. In recent times, studies by Jega (2006), Whitley and Keith-Spiegel (2002) and Asinya (2012) have shown that so many students prefer engaging themselves in one form of examination malpractice or the other just to

make sure that they pass their examination at all cost, not minding the effects of their actions in the overall interest of the individual, society and the educational system.

Examination is defined as a formal test of one's knowledge or ability in a particular area of study especially by means of answering questions or practical exercises. It is through examination that students are evaluated or tested to find out the quality of knowledge they have acquired within a specific period. These examinations could be either internal, external, oral, written or a combination of these. Continuous assessment scores, terminal, semester, annual or promotion examinations, including common entrance examinations for admission into secondary schools, school certificate examinations which are conducted by West African Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO), Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examinations (UTME) conducted by Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB), including National Teacher's Institute (NTI) and National Business and Technical Examinations Board (NABTEB) that conducts examination for teachers and technicians respectively (Anzene, 2014). Although, students' performance in examination may not be the true reflection of their ability, however till date, examination still remains the best tool for an objective assessment and evaluation of what a learner has achieved after a period of schooling/training. In fact, it is the most reliable indicator used to determine the extent of students' performance in a given training.

Based on this, students engage in all sorts of malpractices to ensure that they succeed in examinations, sometimes with the assistance of teachers, other significant persons in the school system and parents. Examination malpractice can be defined as an illegal or unethical behaviour by somebody in the process of testing an examinee's ability or knowledge. It can also be seen as an illegal means through which a student devises to enable him/her pass an examination. Vogel, Wade and Hacker (2007) defined examination malpractice as any irregular behaviour exhibited by a candidate or anybody charged with the conduct of examination before, during and after the examination which contravenes the rules and regulations governing the conduct of such examinations. Ruqqayatu (2010) also defined examination malpractice as an illegal act committed by a single student or in collaboration with others like fellow students, parents, teachers, invigilators, supervisors, computer operators, secretarial staff and anybody or group of people, before, during and after examination in order to obtain undeserved marks or grade.

The incidence of examination malpractice has witnessed increasing trend and this is invariably due to many factors. Asinya (2012) posits that the root cause of malpractice is poor funding of education, which manifest in poor salary for teachers who always seek ways to make ends meet. Obe (2005) posits that poor preparation by candidates during examinations and the compromising attitude of the entire society are responsible for examination malpractice. Jega (2006) sees crave for certificates which are gateways to successful lives, economic conditions where certificates will lift individuals and families out of impoverishment as one of the reasons. He also finds political factors where quota

system brings in poor quality students into school, and in order to move along with others, they get into all manner of examination malpractices to meet up with others. Other factors include unhealthy competition among students, poor facilities, crowded examination halls, and parental support and pressures. Many parents do everything to see that their wards do not fail in schools. Others pile pressure on their wards to succeed. Confirming this, Whitley and Keith-Spiegel (2002), Ikura (2004), Offorma (2006), Agbajor (2011), and Ekanem and Uchendu (2011) reported that parents encourage and assist their wards through examination malpractices and that examination malpractices such as cheating and plagiarism were higher among students who feel pressured by parents to succeed. This implies that when students feel pressured to succeed at all cost and cannot make it through hard work; they resort to cheating in order to succeed in school. There is no doubt that parents today not only influence but encourage student's engagements in examination malpractice. This is because every parent wants the child to succeed in school and acquire the relevant certificate the society today is expecting from school graduands. This study will concentrate on parental variables such as family type and parental socio-economic status and their influence on examination malpractice.

Based on family type, a lot of studies have been carried out. In their studies, Olubadewo and Ogwu (2005) found out that children spend 87 percent of their time out of school under the influence of parents. As a result, parents have greater influence on their children/wards and make most decisions for them. In recent times, the changing nature of the family types affects students' access to school. Because of this change in family type, Van-Voorhis (2003) was forced to believe that the number of single parent families has increased to a total of 9.7 million in America, almost all headed by women. This is likely to be more in Africa and Nigeria in particular. Okobiah (2003) also lent a voice to this trend by positing that more than half of the children born today will spend the best part of their childhood years in a one parent home. Here, children in this situation lack parental love, care, affection and motivation. Under these conditions of diminishing parental care, love and affection, children tend to become bored, moody and restless and feel misunderstood; these reactions lead to increase in behaviours that irritate their parents leading to lack of affection, care, love and motivation socially and educationally. As a result, these children tend to display anti-social vices including examination malpractice since they do not normally stay in school to study and attain school success.

Mallum (2003) asserted that the family unit is a system in which no element can act independently; hence, the action of one individual demands the reaction of the other in the unit. Therefore, the absence of one element affects the functioning of the other elements. Single parenting implies that the family does not function properly because of the absence of the other parent which may adversely results to frustration, school drop-out and examination malpractice. Mau and Bikos (2000) also found that children from divorced families are more likely to have academic problems than children in non-divorced families. Children in this situation most often have social and relationship problems; they are always found in solitary places finding it difficult to mix and

associate freely with peers both in school and at home. Vitro in Smith (2005) found that cheaters generally have parents who punish them severely or not at all. The author's result suggested that a moderate degree of discipline results in children who internalize moral values and are more honest in their school work.

Socio-economic status refers to the parental status and attainment in the society. This has to do with some variables such as parental occupation, income level and educational attainment. Research has shown that parents' socio-economic status influence examination malpractice. Studies by Enu (2000), Habiba (2001), Agbor (2003), Adenikpekun (2004), and Eze (2010), agreed that socio-economic status of parents supports and influences student's involvement in examination malpractices. Furthermore, Udom's (2008) study found that students from different socio-economic background differ significantly on self-reported tendency to cheat. Children 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 cheat in examinations.

On the other hand, Christiana (2008) noted that children from high socio-economic background exhibit less examination malpractice tendencies than those from lower socio-economic background. According to her, parents of high socio-economic status take their children to schools with better organization, good academic environment and more qualified teachers where the students will stand the chance of more intellectual preparedness, high academic self-efficacy and better academic performance; therefore, less likely to indulge in examination malpractice. Supporting her, Ukpepi and Ndifon (2012) suggest that children from higher socio-economic status may show tendencies of examination malpractices only if parents set unrealistic 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 to avoid parent's criticism (pressure). Thus generally, parent's socio-economic status supports and influence student's involvement in examination malpractices.

### **Statement of the problem**

Over the years, the conduct of examination by the West African Examination Council (WAEC), National Examination Council (NECO), National Business and Technical Examinations Board (NABTEB), and Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) has been trailed with the incidents of examination malpractices and various organizational, administrative and bureaucratic irregularities. This has also become the fate of most internal examinations in many institutions of learning in Nigeria, from primary through secondary to tertiary institutions. It is even more disturbing that some examination centres are now called "magic centres" or "special centres" where students that are able to pay the cost given to them by the owners of these centres are guaranteed automatic success in examinations. In fact, examination malpractice has attained a frightening and sophisticated proportion and has become so widespread that there is

virtually no examination within or outside the formal school system and at whatever level that has not experienced one form of malpractice or the other. The incidence of examination malpractice is common everywhere and every examination season witnesses the emergence of new ingenious way of cheating.

Today, semantics like “expo”, “ekpo”, “brain support”, “micro-chips”, “brain assistance”, “sorting”, and “cooperation fees” are current trends used to address materials and items used to influence students’ examination results. This trend has taken a serious toll on Nigeria’s educational system, with a debilitating effect on Nigeria and her social and economic system. It is therefore disturbing to know that the incidence of examination malpractice has contributed to the fallen standard of education in Nigeria; this is because, most students have adopted cheating tendencies in examination with the support of either the teachers, school administrators, parents or other support staff so as to acquire a certificate to qualify them in the society and not for self-emancipation. It is on this basis that this study investigated how parents’ variables influence examination malpractice among secondary school students in some selected secondary schools in Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State.

### **Purpose of the study**

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of parents’ variables on examination malpractice among secondary school students in Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State. The specific purposes for which this study seeks to achieve include:

- iv. To examine if the parents’ family type will influence examination malpractice among secondary school students.
- v. To examine how parents’ socio-economic status influence examination malpractice among students in secondary schools.

### **Research questions**

In the quest to find answers to the problems of this study, the following research questions were posed:

- vi. To what extent does the parent’s family type influence examination malpractice among secondary school students?
- vii. To what extent does the parents’ socio-economic status influence examination malpractice among secondary school students?

### **Hypotheses**

**Ho1:** Parent’s family type does not significantly influence examination malpractice among secondary school students in Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State.

**Ho2:** Parents’ socio-economic status does not significantly influence examination malpractice among secondary school students in Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State.

## **Methodology**

The research design adopted for this study was the survey inferential research design. The survey inferential research design involves a selection of a representative fraction of a larger population for in-depth study whereby results from such a sampled representative can be used to make valid generalization about the entire population.

The study area is Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State. Bekwarra Local Government Area is one of the 18 Local Government Areas that make up Cross River State. The Local Government Area is located at the northern extreme of Cross River State, Nigeria. According to the Secondary Education Board nominal roll (2016), Bekwarra has seven government owned public secondary schools with a population of five thousand, eight hundred and sixty two (5,862) students and about one hundred and twenty eight (128) teachers. (Cross River State Secondary Education Board Nominal Roll, 2016).

The study focused on public secondary schools in Bekwarra Local Government Area. The sampling technique adopted for this study was the purposive and simple random sampling techniques. This first started with the random sampling of five out of seven secondary schools and then purposively selecting SS3 students from other students. The choice of SS3 students is because of their level of exposure. The sample size for the study comprised 200 male and female SS3 students from the five selected secondary schools in Bekwarra Local Government Area. The sampling technique used in the selection of forty SS3 students per school was the systematic random sampling technique. This was done using the school register where all the SS3 students' names were listed from the register and assigned numbers. The first forty students with even numbers were picked to form the sample frame. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed by the researchers titled "Parents' Variables and Examination Malpractice Questionnaire" (PVEMQ) made up of two sections. Section A elicits information based on respondents' demographic data while section B elicits information based on the sub-variables under study. The questionnaire response options include; Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The questionnaire was validated by two specialists in Measurement and Evaluation and a senior counsellor in the Department of Guidance and counselling in Federal College of Education, Obudu and had a reliability index of .75. Independent t-test was used to test the hypotheses.

## **Presentation of results**

**Research question 1:** To what extent does the parent's family type influence examination malpractice among secondary school students?

**Table 1:** Mean ratings of respondents on influence of parents’ family type on examination malpractice among secondary school students

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	Mean	REMARK
1.	As a student from intact home and single parent, my parents educate me well as such I do not involve myself in examination malpractice.	81	58	36	25	200	2.96	Agreed
2.	Most students who involve themselves in examination malpractice are students from separated homes.	90	60	26	24	200	3.11	Agreed
3.	Both students from intact and separated homes involve themselves in examination malpractices in school.	58	45	67	30	200	2.21	Disagreed
4	Students who live with only single parent are bound to involve themselves in examination malpractices in school.	77	47	45	31	200	2.61	Agreed
5	Home structure or family types have nothing to do with students’ involvement in examination malpractices.	83	66	24	27	200	2.78	Agreed
	<b>Grand mean (<math>\bar{x}</math>)</b>						<b>2.73</b>	<b>Agreed</b>

From table 1, four of the items presented have mean scores ranging from the least 2.61 to the highest 3.11 which are above the cut-off point of 2.50. This implies agreement with the four items and disagreement with one item which has a mean rating of 2.21. The grand mean score of 2.73 indicates that respondents agreed that parents’ family type influence examination malpractice among secondary school students.

**Research question 2:** To what extent does the parents’ socio-economic status influence examination malpractice among secondary school students?

**Table 2:** Mean ratings of respondents on influence of parents' socio-economic status on examination malpractice among secondary school students.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	$\bar{x}$	REMARK
1	Parents who are socio-economically balance make provision for their children's school needs as such students from these parents do not involve themselves in examination malpractices.	80	65	40	15	200	3.12	Agreed
2	My parents are rich as such they give tips to my teacher who expose me to some of my examination questions.	39	26	64	71	200	1.73	Disagreed
3	Some parents who are rich buy examination questions for their children to study at home before the examination proper.	75	59	39	27	200	3.01	Agreed
4	My parents are very rich but do not use their money to promote examination malpractice in school.	96	76	20	18	200	3.43	Agreed
5	All socio-economically balanced parents use their money to influence examination malpractices in school.	38	54	96	12	200	2.60	Disagreed
	<b>Grand mean (<math>\bar{x}</math>)</b>						<b>2.78</b>	<b>Agreed</b>

From table 2, four of the items presented have mean scores ranging from the least 2.60 to the highest 3.43 which are above the cut-off point of 2.50 indicating agreement with the four items, while respondents disagreed with one item which have a mean rating of 1.73. The grand mean score of 2.78 indicates that respondents agreed that parents' socio-economic status influence examination malpractice among secondary school students.

**Ho1:** Parent's family type does not significantly influence examination malpractice among secondary school students in Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State.

**Table 3:** Independent t-test analysis of the significant influence of parents’ family type on examination malpractice among secondary school students

Variable	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	t <sub>cal</sub>	t <sub>crit</sub>
Single and intact parents who support examination malpractice	107	57.45	7.76	2.32	1.96
Single and intact parents who do not support examination malpractice	93	52.79	8.41		

From table 3, the calculated t-value was 2.32 as against the critical t-value of 1.96 (df= 198). Since the calculated t- value was greater than the t-critical value, the null hypothesis was rejected and the study concluded that parents’ family type significantly influences examination malpractice among secondary school students.

**Ho2:** Parents’ socio-economic status does not significantly influence examination malpractice among secondary school students in Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State.

**Table 4:** Independent t-test analysis of the significant influence of parents’ socio-economic status on examination malpractice among secondary school students

Variable	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	t <sub>cal</sub>	t <sub>crit</sub>
Socio-economically stable parents who support examination malpractice	120	58.43	8.63	5.34	1.96
Socio-economically stable parents who do not support examination malpractice	80	52.89	6.05		

From table 4, the calculated t-value was 5.34 as against the critical t-value of 1.96 (df= 198). Since the calculated t- value was greater than the t-critical value, the null hypothesis was rejected and the study concluded that parents’ socio-economic status significantly influence examination malpractice among secondary school students.

### Discussion of the findings

The objective of this paper was to investigate the influence of parents’ variables (family type and socio- economic status) on examination malpractice of secondary school students in Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State. The findings from this paper show that parent’s variables (family type and socio-economic status) significantly influenced secondary school student’s engagement in examination malpractice.

The findings are consistent with those of Vitro in Smith (2005), Offorma (2006), Agbajor (2011), Ekanem and Uchendu (2011) and Ukpepi and Ndifon (2012). Variously, these researchers found that family type (single parentage) encourages children to do all sorts of things including examination malpractice to succeed in school.

This could result from indiscipline of children or high handedness from parents which puts pressure on the children to succeed at all cost. Other researchers found that parents of high socio-economic status over-pamper their children such that even though they provide all learning facilities for them, they still go to support them by providing cover and resources to facilitate their engaging in examination malpractices to promote school success for them. The findings support today's realities where many parents in attempt to promote their children's school success, register them in "magic" or "special" centres, provide resources with which to pay 'co-operation' fee, 'sorting' fee or pay for materials such as "ekpo," "micro-chips," "brain assistance" etc. It is understood that many parents do all it takes to encourage their children engage in examination malpractice.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that parents' variable has a significant influence on examination malpractice among secondary school students in Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State. The result of the study clearly showed that there is a significant influence of parents' family type on examination malpractice among secondary school students. The study equally showed that parents' socio-economic status has as significant influence on examination malpractice among secondary school students in Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State. Therefore, it is on this note that it was concluded that parents' variable has a significant influence on examination malpractice among secondary school students in Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

1. Parents should encourage their children to study hard and avoid examination malpractices.
2. Teachers should help relate well in class with students from broken homes or separated families as this will help such students to avoid involving in examination malpractice.
3. Parents should not use their socio-economic status to encourage their children's involvement in examination malpractice but provide all they need for effective studies, and to be discouraged from involving in examination malpractices.

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