

THE EVIL OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE: A CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER TO NIGERIA'S EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND SOCIETY

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Abstract: The prevalence of examination malpractice poses a significant threat to the education system and society in Nigeria. This study aimed to explore the relationship between value orientation, parental attitude, and attitude to examination malpractice among senior secondary school students in the Southern Educational Zone of Cross River State. Using a sample of 1000 students selected through simple random sampling, the study tested two null hypotheses and collected data using a validated questionnaire. The study found that parental socio-economic status, occupation, educational level, family size, value orientation, and parental attitude significantly influence students' attitude towards examination malpractice. The study recommends creating awareness through seminars and meetings, reducing test anxiety, emphasizing continuous assessment, improving learning facilities, and producing and distributing an examination ethics code of conduct to curb examination malpractice in Nigeria. The study concludes that stakeholders should focus on promoting ethical conduct and developing effective measures to prevent and detect examination malpractice.

Keywords: examination malpractice, value orientation, parental attitude, senior secondary school students, Cross River State.

INTRODUCTION

Onyechere (2003) has asserted that the crisis of examination malpractice in our educational system is a very serious ethical problem facing Nigeria today. According to him, it is more serious than contract fraud, advance fee fraud, bank fraud, and election rigging, because it is the mother of all other types of fraud and corruption. Aiding, and abetting or involving in examination malpractice amounts to facilitating the enthronement of mediocre, half-baked, incompetent and corrupt work force. It amounts to facilitating the production of quack professionals including medical doctors, nurses, lawyers, building engineers, and relying on certificates rather than knowledge.

In the words of the Chairman of Examination Ethics Project (Onyechere, in This day of 25th July, 2003), he asserted that examination malpractice is responsible for such maladies in the country today as, medical malpractice by incompetent doctors, manufacture and sale of fake drugs by pharmacists, collapse of building built by architects and engineers massive fraud in the banks, and miscarriage of justice. To explain this manifestation, Salim (2002) JAMB registrar said that thirty out of one hundred and sixty-six examination towns were involved in cheating and malpractice while forty-five thousand four hundred and forty-eight candidates seeking University admission had their results cancelled in the year 2002 because of examination malpractice.

!!!Examination malpractice has metamorphosed into organized crime controlled by syndicates with links in Ministries of Education, Examination Board and educational institutions across the length and breadth of Nigeria, supervisors, invigilators and examiners are not left out of the fraud. These groups actually constitute

a major part of the syndicate rings extorting money from students well in advance with assurances given to supply correct answers to examination questions in the all. They compromise their job not only to look away while cheating is going on, but also become major actors.!!!Academic performance is an important parameter in measuring success in student. Observations and reports have shown that success or high academic performance has become a herculean task to accomplish by students in recent times. Effiom ,B. E. & B. A. Basse(2018).

!Apart from invigilators' involvement, parents have become most desperate than ever in the pursuit of!their wards' education that they go out of their way to arrange for mercenaries to write examinations for their children. One wonders why such parents have lost their sense of morality. If parents who should inculcate discipline and hard work have thrown all that to the wind and are now at the fore-front of perpetrating the evil of examination fraud, what would become the future of these children when they become adults? What legacy are they leaving behind for future generation, if they prefer the shortcuts, by discouraging children to utilize their brains, which would mould and prepare them into responsible adults and possible leaders?

The corrosion of moral fibre of the society, the massive break!down of ethical standards and the!pervasive culture of fraud and corruption are said to have their roots in examination malpractice. What perpetrators have not paused to poor about is what will become of the society, when future leaders acquire certificates they!cannot defend. What becomes of patients in hospitals if quark doctors over flood the health sector. How many more plane crashes will the Aviation sector record when mediocres are in charge. What will a teacher with empty brain deliver to students in class?

Besides societal breakdown, parents have suffered great financial loss in recent times. This is attributable to cancellation of results. Cancellation means one year loss and money would be required to gund the repeat of the session/examination to terms of tuition, books, fees, traveling, feeding among others.!

Value orientation and students' attitude towards examination malpractice Kownslar (1908) defines values as "a group's set of beliefs about what is right or proper" (p. 12). These beliefs make up the society's values. Similarly, Broom and Selznick (1968) view value as anything that is prized or of benefit. They believe that value does not consist in 'desires' but rather in the desirable, that is, what we not only want but feel that it is right and proper to want for ourselves and for others. They also see values as 'abstract' standards that transcend the impulses of the moment and ephemeral situation.

Values are usually considered from the standpoint of how the group acts, feels, or thinks. Hence a cultural value may be defined as a widely held belief or sentiment that some activities, relationships, feelings, or goals are important to the community's identity or well being, because they are often held unconsciously, or are expressed as themes cutting across a variety of specific attitudes.

According to Dobson (1970) children learn to follow patterns that produce satisfactory results (to them). Values like discipline, respect, responsibility, honesty, hard work among others could be brought about by the intelligent application of the principles of reinforcement. But unfortunately, many parents consistently reinforce the behaviour and values they want eliminated. A very good result could be achieved if these psychological principles are applied effectively in our homes, schools, and the society at lasge; and if we as individuals could create effectiwe moral behaviour amongst the citizenry.

Inyon (2002) has asserted that children nowadays brazenly reject the authority of their elders and the good values of the society. The way the elders and the society handle this confrontation determines the nature and sophistication of future occurrences. Parents and teachers need to know when to punish, how to set limits, and what behaviour to inhibit. The disciplinary activities of the parents and society must occur within the frame work of love and affection, which, according to Dobson (1970) is often difficult for parents who view

these roles as contradictory. The duty of the society therefore should be addressed to the vital aspects or raising healthy, respectful and value prone children in the society.

In his study to investigate the influence of value related attitude towards examination malpractice among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, Inyon (2002) adopted the Ex-post Facto design, with a sample size of 800 respondents and a four-point Likert Scale type instrument. He analyzed statistically the data obtained using population t-test, independent t-test and one way ANOVA at 0.05 level of significance. The findings indicated that:

- (i) The value-related attitudes of secondary school students towards examination malpractice were significantly positive.
- (ii) The value-related – attitude of male students towards examination malpractice was significantly different from those of their female counterparts, with female students showing a higher attitude than the male students.
- (iii) Students' value-related attitudes towards examination malpractice in schools with full time guidance counselors (intervention strategies) were significantly different from those without guidance counselors.
- (iv) Students' value-related attitudes towards examination malpractice were significantly influenced by the location of their schools, with urban students having higher attitudes than their rural counterparts.
- (v) Students' value-related attitudes towards examination malpractice in mixed, boys and girls schools were significantly different with student from mixed schools having significantly higher attitudes than those in single sexed schools. Again, the value-related attitudes of students in boys schools were significantly higher than those of students in girls' schools.

Aina (1996) succinctly stated that ethics and integrity are the solution to all the examination ills. Hence, the social, political and economic structures of this nation is dependent on the promotion of examination ethics; and that hard work is a virtue which once cultivated takes one through life and forms the foundation for an enduring success. Alutu (2003) in a seminar to secondary school students in Benin City on academic excellence drew students' attention to the 3p's – praying, planning and persistent hard work to academic excellence. The students who were mainly from a Christian community were made to know that praying to God for success without matching it with good study plans and use of time and persistent hard work will not lead them to achieve the goal of academic excellence.

Parental! Attitude and examination malpractice

Jimoh (2009) asserts that parental indiscipline and abuse of wealth sustain the phenomenon of examination malpractice. According to him many parents believe that with their wealth, they can catapult their children to any heights in the society even if it involves buying question papers and bribing teachers and invigilators to ensure that their children pass examinations.

The primary focus of parents is on the end result of their children's education which is the certificate. Linus (1999) opines that parents in their pride impose courses on their children not minding the capacity of the affective, cognitive or psychomotor of the wards before the imposition. These children are pushed too hard and too far thereby making them corrupt through engagement in malpractice to please their parents. Some other common psychosocial effects of these non-academic activities include concentration problems depression, insomnia, eating disorders, dissociative behavior, fear of shyness, failure to thrive, learning

problems panic attacks, malnutrition and repeated self-injury. All these could culminate into poor or low academic performance by the students. Thus, the problem created by students academic failure or low performance in examination are numerous. Effiom, B. E. & Bassey A. B. (2019).

opined that parents are involved in examination malpractice! because they want good grades for their wards; and are ready to give encouragement and pay highly because they desperately want their children to acquire certificates. Orbin (2006) observed that it is high time the nation took certificates no more as passports to jobs or higher education. According to him emphasis should be placed on the competence and skill acquisition. The implication of this is that assessment of students should no longer be based on one almighty examination; rather it should be continuous, from the very first day at school to the very last day. Continuous assessment should be properly implemented. In addition there should be reorientation in the value system of the country.

Eze (2008) agreed that poor parenting is responsible for parental attitude towards examination malpractice. According to her parenting requires carrying, protection guidance, provision of basic needs for the child up keep in order for him or her to be properly equipped to meet with the challenges of life in accordance with the laws of the land. In desperation, many parents have decided to bring in additional innovation by way of not only involve in encouraging, but also finance activities in and around examination venues to effect examination malpractices in order to brighten the chances of their children or wards in qualifying examination to higher institutions and some even progress on this act through the tertiary level of education.

Ijaiya (2004) asserted that fathers and mothers are regarded as one of the strongest agents. Edukugho (2007) opines that parents act as agents by going directly to examination bodies to negotiate higher scores for their wards. Joshua (2008) agreed that most parents have become syndicates in perpetuating examination malpractice for their wards by providing materials like cash, food stuff, and cloths needed to facilitate and perpetuate it. Mc Elhaney (2010) has opined that parents have the power to persuade their children to indulge in examination malpractice because of the warm and supportive relationships between them and their parents.

Chen (2009) agreed that most parents take this step to ensure success of their wares in such examinations. According to him every parent wants her children to succeed in life/ Nevertheless such step tells a lot about the integrity of parents involved as it display the moral decadence which is now regarded as a normal way of life in the present day Nigeria. According to Fafunwa (2004), the African child rearing practice which is a form of education consisted of the development of the child's physical skills, development of character, respect for elders, development of intellectual skills, and vocational training. In the Nigerian traditional culture according to Igbo and Ekoja (2004), the dimensions of child rearing practice often employed by parents include: the parent as a martyr, the friend, the police officers, the teacher counselor and the athletic coach.

Parental child learning practice is !a factor that may influence pupil's academic performance, parental child rearing practice refers to the variety of ways in which parents train their children within a given culture. Child rearing practice may vary from culture to culture. The traditional child rearing practice in the African/Nigeria society was based on character training and the inculcation of moral values. Onuorah (2001), grouped these parental rearing styles into authoritative, permissive, democratic and laissez-faire. Each of these has an effect on the life of the child. In an authoritative home, children may tend to be afraid and withdrawn. This has often caused the problem of dependence on other people for decision-making and carrying out of certain activities.

The democratic homes sometimes allow the child freedom to contribute ideas to decision making in the family. Children from democratic homes are given a fair share of autonomy and discipline, which most often are effective and rewarding. This style increase respect, obedience, feeling of high self-esteem and independence, which often give rise to hard work and success in academics. In the permissive homes on the other hand children are allowed to do what they like. Here, parents do not worry them, so they tend to form bad habits like engaging in examination malpractice.

The permissive type of rearing children according to Igbo and Ekoja (2004) is void of parental guidance and discipline. These children easily join bad gangs and cult groups because they do not have any one to control them. These groups of children do not have time for school and do not take their studies seriously. They may leave home for school but end up elsewhere. Even when they go to school they try to cut corners by involving themselves in all sort of cheating including examination malpractice.

They lack the self-confidence to carry out their academic work effectively as a result of poor study habits and the determination to succeed as a result of hard work. Idowu (2001) stated that many young people join cults, form mob's and create riots that result in unwanted destruction of lives and properties. In most cases according to him those children are from permissive homes where they have been neglected by parents. Most parents can find it very difficult to provide their children with all that is needed for school and learning thus resulting to examination malpractice, their attendance in school is irregular as they have no time to rest play and time to study. They are sometimes sent back home for lack of school fees and school materials; they are always doing one job or the other, to assist parents. In a financially distressed home, according to Udim (2003), parents may lack the ability to maintain a warm and healthy relationship with the children because they cannot provide all that their children need. This situation exerts a negative influence on school performance (Nwachukwu, 2002).

Apebende (2006) asserted that naturally, one expects parents to love and care for their offspring. However, in some homes, the parents' child relationship is sometimes a source of distress, trauma and unbelievable tragic realities. Some parents in 21st Century still maltreat neglect and sometimes do not provide the necessary love and attention the child needs for normal healthy development. Amalaha (2009) opined that most of the students who indulge in examination malpractice do so because they are influenced by their parents who often socialize their children to criminality who believes that parents are encouraging their wards to indulge in examination malpractice in Nigeria. In her study, mothers and fathers were rated 3rd and 10th agents of examination malpractice respectively. She asserts that most of these children may not act differently when they become adults. When the practice is involving one or two generations, it will easily led to the development of a subculture which may be too difficult to root out.

According to her, connectivity and closeness encourage initiation of people into criminality. Without being connected and closely interacted, it is impossible to be socialized into criminal behaviours. The biological and material connectivity as well as closeness between parents and their children is causing most parents to succeed in persuading their wards to indulge in examination malpractices. Parents are heavily connected to their children and this connection enables them to pass instructions to them which they must obey. Parental influence in examination malpractice is always carried out in group setting Erickson (1971) (as cited in Stark, 1987). (Onyechere, 2004) agreed that if collaborators disagreed with parents and children, most cases of examination malpractice would not have been carried out successfully in Nigerian institutions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hypothesis one

There is no significant relationship between value orientation and students’ attitude to examination malpractice. The independent variable involved in this hypothesis is value orientation; the dependent variable is students’ malpractice behaviour in examination. To test this hypothesis students’ malpractice behaviour in examination was correlated with their value orientation using Pearson product moment correlation analysis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 1.

The result of the analysis as presented in Table 1 reveals that the calculated r-value of 0.746 is higher than the critical r-value of .062 at .05 level of significance with 998 degree of freedom. With the result of this analysis, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between students’ value orientation and malpractice behaviour in the examination was rejected. This result implies that, students’ value orientation has a significant relationship with their malpractice behaviour in the examination.

There is no significant relationship between parental attitude and examination malpractice. The Independent variable involved in this hypothesis is parental attitude; while the dependent variable is examination malpractice. To test this hypothesis students’ malpractice in examination was correlated with their parental attitude using Pearson product moment correlation analysis.

TABLE 1

Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between value orientation habit and students’ malpractice behaviour in examination (N=1000)

Variable	\bar{x}	SD	r-value
Value orientation	29.38	3.86	0.746*
Examination malpractice	61.94	6.32	

* Significant at .05, critical r = .062, df = 998

The result of the analysis is presented in Table 1. The result of the analysis as presented in Table 2 reveals that the calculated r-value of 0.558 is higher than the critical r-value of .062 at .05 level of significance with 998 degree of freedom. With this result this analysis, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between parental attitude and examination malpractice was rejected. This result implies that, students’ parental attitude has a significant relationship with their examination malpractice.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of the first hypothesis indicates that there is a significant relationship between value orientation and students' attitude towards examination malpractice. The finding of this hypothesis is in line with the view of Inyon (2002) who asserted that children nowadays brazenly reject the authority of their elders and the good values of the society. The way the elders and the society handle this confrontation determines the nature and sophistication of future occurrences. Parents and teachers need to know when to punish, how to set limits, and what behaviour to inhibit. The disciplinary activities of the parents and society must occur within the frame work of love and affection, which, according to Dobson (1970) "is often difficult for parents who view these roles as contradictory". The duty of the society therefore should be addressed to the vital aspects or raising healthy, respectful and value prone children in the society.

Aina (1996) also observed stated that ethics and integrity are the solutions to all the examination ills. Hence, the social, political and economic structures of this nation is dependent on the promotion of examination ethics; and that hard work is a virtue which once cultivated takes one through life and forms the foundation for an enduring success.

The result of the second hypothesis reveals that there is a significant relationship between parental attitude and examination malpractice. The finding of this hypothesis is in mine with the view several suudies!iocluding those of Jimoh (2009) who observed that parents are involved in examination malpractice because they want good grades for their wards; and are ready to give encouragement and pay highly because they desperately want their children to acquire certificates.

Bassey, Owan, Amansoa and Otu (2020) also observed that it is high time the nation takes certificates no more as passports to jobs or higher education. According to him emphasis should be placed on!the compeunce and skills acquisition. The implication of tiis is that assessment of students should no longer be based on one 'almighty' examination; sather examination should be continuous, from the very first day at school to the wery!last day. Continuous assessment should be propesly implemented. In addition there should be reorientation in the value system of the country.

Uchegbue, Edet, Otu, Amalu, and Oyo-Ita (2021) also asserted that poor parenting is responsible for parental attitude towards examination malpractice. According to her parenting requires caring, protection guidance, provision of basic needs for the child up keep in order for him or her to be properly equipped to meet with the challenges of life in accordance with the laws of the land. In desperation, many parents have decided to bring in additional innovation by way of not only involve in encouraging, but also finance activities in and around examination venues to effect examination malpractices in osder to brighten the chances of their children or wards in qualifying examination to higher institutions and some even progress on this act through the tertiary level of education.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

!Based on the results and findiogs of the study, the following conclusions were reached. Value orientation and parental attitude significanuly relates uo students' attitude to examination malpractice/ Based on the findings of the suudy, the following recommendations are made: The counselors in Guidance and

Counselling Units 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, counselors teachers, school and other stakeholders in education on the prevailing incidence of examination malpractice status. Parents should not encourage malpractice behaviour among students by sponsoring them financially.

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