

TEST ANXIETY, ATTITUDE TO SCHOOLING, PARENTAL INFLUENCE, AND PEER PRESSURE AS PREDICTORS OF STUDENTS CHEATING TENDENCIES IN EXAMINATION IN EDO STATE, NIGERIA

B. A. BASSEY AND JOHN IRUOJE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated test anxiety, attitude to schooling, parental influence, and peer pressure as predictors of cheating tendencies in examination among secondary school students in Edo State, Nigeria. Ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. Using stratified random sampling technique, 1200 senior secondary two (SS 2) students were selected for the study. A 60-item, four-point Likert type questionnaire developed by the researchers was used for data collection. The data collected were analysed using multiple regression analysis. The results revealed that test anxiety, attitude to schooling, parental influence and peer pressure jointly significantly predict students' cheating tendencies in examination. The result also showed that about 34.2% of the total variation in cheating tendencies is accounted for by test anxiety, attitude to schooling, parental influence and peer pressure. It was recommended that teachers, parents and counselors should identify strategies of reducing test anxiety, develop students positive attitude to schooling, and advise students not to imitate their peers' unwholesome ways of life, as these will help reduce cheating tendencies during examinations.

KEYWORDS: Test anxiety; Attitude to schooling; Parental influence; Peer pressure; Cheating tendency; Examination malpractice.

INTRODUCTION

Since the advent of western education in Nigeria, examination has been the major instrument used for the evaluation of learners' achievement in schools. Examination is a means of assessing the quantity and quality of performance that an individual has accumulated at the end of a teaching learning process. The application of tests and examinations helps the teacher to adjust or change his instructional strategies in the process of teaching and learning in the school system. If the students' performance in examination is encouraging, then it indicates that the teachers' methods of teaching are appropriate, efficient and effective.

Success in examination serves as a good motivator for students, teachers, school

administrators, employers of labour and all stakeholders in education. On the other hand, failure to perform successfully in examination demoralizes all stakeholders in education, especially students. It is the craved to succeed and avoid frustration and/or embarrassment associated with failure that makes students engage in cheating, which has threatened the very foundation of our educational system.

Cheating is the act of using fraudulent means to project oneself as possessing knowledge perpetrated by violating the rules. Cheating in the context of testing is the obtaining of something valuable by use of deceit or fraud and violating the rules dishonestly. Cheating tendency is the willingness to carry out illegal act or behaviour by a candidate or a group of candidates before, during or after examination as

B. A. Bassey, Department of Educational Foundations, University of Calabar, Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria.

John Iruoje, Department of Educational Foundations, University of Calabar, Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria.

to have unfair advantage over others (Offor, 2009). Cheating tendency, therefore, is the desire to pass examination through illegal or fraudulent means.

Cheating tendency during examination has graduated from mere stretching of the neck (giraffing) to see what another candidate is writing during examination or consulting unauthorized notes or books inside or outside the examination hall to such sophisticated methods as the use of micro-computer, mobile phones and guns to intimidate those concerned with the administration of examination. Many more forms of cheating tendencies are employed by students to carry out this nefarious act.

Cheating tendency is a form of examination malpractice. The growing menace of examination malpractice in our schools is becoming a worrisome and disturbing phenomenon on a daily basis. In Nigeria, cases of cheating before, during and after examinations at different levels of education abound (Adamu, 2006).

In 2006, 324 secondary schools in Nigeria were blacklisted and banned by the Federal Government from registering or serving as venues from 2007-2010 for Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) and University Matriculation Examination (UME), due to their involvement in different forms of examination malpractices (Federal Ministry of education, 2007). In Edo State, the rate of examination malpractice is alarming (Iruoje, 2015). According to the Annual Publication of Examination Ethics Project (2007), when compared with 36 states and Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Edo State ranked 24th in 2002; 13th in 2003; 6th in 2004; 4th in 2005; and 10th in 2006, Edo State ranked 3rd in the South-South Geopolitical Zone in terms of involvement in examination malpractice.

The question now is, why do students indulge in cheating during examination? According to Obe (2005), poor preparation of candidates for examination and the compromising attitude of the entire society are responsible for examination malpractice. Egbo (2006) identified seven causes of examination malpractice, namely: moral decadence, poor facilities in schools, indiscriminate closure of schools, fear of failure, corruption, home factors and bad invigilators.

Chaminuka and Nudzo (2014) identified fear of failure and inadequate preparation for examinations, shortages of learning and teaching resources among other factors as possible

causes of examination malpractice and fraud. Chukudi-Oji (2013) attributed examination malpractice to scarcity of textbooks, incessant closure of educational institutions due to strike and students rampages as causes of the cheating.

Test anxiety is a state of uneasiness, worry or feeling of uncertainty about impending or on-going evaluation programme, examination/test. (Okorodudu & Ossai, 2014). Otu (2009) investigated factor analytic validation of examination related malpractice variables among undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study revealed that test anxiety, parental socio-economic background, and attitude significantly predict students' cheating tendencies during examination.

Oyama (2009) studied correlates of examination malpractice among secondary school students in Cross River State, Nigeria. The findings of the study revealed significant positive relationships among test anxiety, attitude, instructional facilities, parental socio-economic status, and students' tendency to cheat during examination.

Ossai (2011) investigated the relationship between test anxiety and students' attitude towards examination malpractices in tertiary institutions in Delta State, Nigeria. Proportional stratified sampling technique was used to select 1,200 students from a population of about 1200 regular students from eight tertiary institutions in Delta State. Data collected were analysed with correlation and multiple regression statistical tools. It was found that a significant positive relationship existed between test anxiety and attitude towards cheating examinations. Students who possessed high test anxiety were more predisposed towards cheating in examinations.

Idika (2005) investigated the causal relationship between students' cheating tendency in examinations and some psycho-social variables in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study examined the composite and relative contributions of socio-economic status, study habit, achievement motivation, test anxiety, self-concept and attribution to hard work and students' tendency to cheat in examination. Analysis of the data was done by using multiple regression analysis and path analysis. The findings showed that, of the six psycho-social variables, five contributed significantly to the prediction of cheating tendency. The relative

order of importance of the prediction showed that test anxiety was the highest.

According to Angrey (2004), the attitude that secondary school students bring to the learning environment (school) influence the meaningfulness of the learning that they manifest. Writers and researchers in education have explored learners' attitude to schooling as a means of explaining students' performance and other attendant behaviours including cheating tendencies. Bature and Bature (2005) opined that the extent to which students demonstrate readiness or reluctance to accept new ideas and techniques and used them is determined by their attitude to such ideas and techniques. Thus, when students have positive attitude to new ideas, learning techniques and learning environment (school), they become delighted to embrace them. The opposite will be the case if they develop negative attitude to such ideas, techniques and environment.

Parents have been found to aid their children in examination malpractice. For instance, they hire *mercenaries* for their children, arrange for special examination centres (miracle centres) as well as mount undue pressure and high expectations on their children which make them seek every means to live up to their expectations. Godfrey (2012) noted that parents usually blame examination malpractice on the excessive pressure examination bodies place on students. Some parents, therefore, see cheating as a symptomatic of a system under formidable strain.

Enu (2000) in his study revealed a significant positive relationship between parental socio-economic background and cheating tendency. The study indicated that the higher the socio-economic status of parents, the higher the students tendency to cheating in examinations. Agbo (2013) also observed that students whose parents are highly educated tend to cheat in examinations than their counterparts whose parents have low level of education. He further revealed that students from broken homes or single parent show greater tendency to cheat in examination than their counterparts from stable or intact homes.

Contrary to the findings of the above scholars, Ukporkor (2005), confirmed from his study that children from high socio-economic status families cheat less than those from low socio-economic status. The study noted that parents of the former have higher expectations for their children than parents of the later group. Pearlina (2007) found that although parental pressure

towards achievement is related to greater academic success in children, those pressures may also result in a greater motivation to involve in examination malpractice. According to the study, if parent had high aspiration for their children and are of low income level, it may result in malpractice during examination.

Psychologists have observed that peer approval or disapproval is one of the major factors that can account for good conduct or misconduct among adolescents. If a particular behaviour is sanctioned by a group, members tend to avoid such behaviour. On the other hand, if the behaviour is approved, whether considered positive or negative by the society, it becomes a norm or mode of conduct among the peers. The relationship between student's beliefs about their peers' attitude toward cheating and the likelihood of their engagement in dishonest behaviour was thoroughly explored by Andeman and Murdock (2007). They found that students with the perception that their peers condemned academic dishonesty were less likely to cheat. This result led to the conclusion that peer disapproval is the most important determinant of changes in cheating behaviour.

Statement of the problem

The effects of examination malpractice on candidates, parents, examination bodies, educational system and the society at charge are varied and enormous. It raises questions about the validity and credibility of the certificates awarded by Nigerian examination bodies. It is capable of impairing the efficacy of our labour force because it promotes mediocrity and this may result in producing individuals who are mentally and morally ineffective in public offices or work positions that they cannot competently handle. Because of the consequences of examining malpractices in our educational system, the government, examination bodies, school authorities, and so on have variously made concerted effort to eradicate examination malpractice but to no avail.

Previous studies have identified many social, cultural and economic factors associated with students' or in predicting students' tendency to cheat in examination. No consideration has been given to the use of psycho-social variables such as test anxiety, attitude to schooling, parental influence, and peer pressure jointly and relatively as predictors of students' cheating tendencies in examinations, hence this study.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which test anxiety, attitude to schooling, parental influence, and peer pressure, jointly and relatively, predict students' cheating tendencies in examination.

Statement of hypothesis

Test anxiety, attitude to schooling, parental influence, and peer pressure are not jointly significant predictors of students' cheating tendencies in examination.

Methodology

This study adopted ex post facto research design. The research area for this study was Edo State, Nigeria. The population of this study consisted of all the senior secondary two (SS 2) students in Edo State. Stratified random sampling technique was used in the selection of 1200 SS 2 students for the study.

The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire tagged: Psycho-Social Variables and Cheating Tendencies Questionnaire (PSVCTQ). The instrument was made up of two sections. Section A had 40 items to measure the independent variables such as test anxiety,

attitude to schooling, parental influence, and peer pressure. Each of these independent variables was measured using 10 questionnaire items. While section B had 20 items to measure students' cheating tendencies in examination. The internal consistency of the instrument was computed using Cronbach Alpha method and reliability coefficients ranged from .74 to .97 were obtained. These derived values were considered high enough to justify the use of the instrument for the study. The data obtained were analysed using multiple regression analysis.

Results

The hypothesis tested in this study stated that test anxiety, attitude to schooling, parental influence, and peer pressure are not jointly significant predictors of students' cheating tendencies in examination.

To test this hypothesis, multiple regression analysis technique was used with cheating tendencies as dependent variable, and test anxiety, attitude to schooling, parental influence, and peer pressure as predictor variables. The means and standard deviations of these variables are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1: Means and standard deviation of research variables (N = 1200)

S/N	Variable	No. of items	\bar{X}	SD
1.	Test anxiety	10	27.75	4.12
2.	Attitude to schooling	10	39.92	4.72
3.	Parental influence	10	29.94	4.53
4.	Peer pressure	10	30.48	4.73
5.	Cheating tendency	20	75.93	19.32

The analysis was done to examine the extent test anxiety, attitude to schooling, parental influence, and peer pressure jointly predict students cheating tendencies by computing the

coefficient of determination, prediction model parameters and testing them for significance. The results are presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2: Regression analysis of cheating tendencies on test anxiety, attitude to schooling, parental influence and peer pressure.

R	R-squared	Adj. R-Squared	Std Error		
.585	.342	.340	15.69899		

Source of variation	SS	df	MS	F	p-value
Regression	153158.500	4	38289.625	155.359*	0.000
Residual	29451.620	1195	246.458		
Total	192610.120	1199			

* Significant at p < .05

Predictors = constant, peer pressure, parental influence, attitude to schooling, and test anxiety.
 Dependent variable = cheating tendencies in examination

From Table 2, the p-value (0.000) associated with the computed F-value (155.359) is less than the chosen level of significance (.05). Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. This implies that test anxiety, attitude to schooling, parental influence, peer pressure jointly significantly predict students' cheating tendencies in

examination. The R-squared of .342 in Table 2 also showed that about 34.2% of the total variation in cheating tendencies is accounted for by test anxiety, attitude towards schooling, parental influence and peer pressure. The prediction model parameters were tested using student t-test. The results are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3: Parameters of model for predicting cheating tendencies from test anxiety, attitude towards schooling, parental influence and peer pressure.

Variable	Unstandardized coefficient	Standardised coefficient	T	p-value	
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	-13.234	3.687	-	-3.589	0.000
Test anxiety	.406	.097	.120	4.174	.0000
Attitude to schooling	.477	.120	.117	3.993	0.000
Parental influence	1.466	.132	.344	11.078	0.000
Peer pressure	.623	.118	.152	5.260	0.000

From Table 3, both the constant and test anxiety, attitude to schooling, parental influence, and peer pressure are all significant contributors to the prediction of cheating tendencies in examination since their p-values associated with their computed t-values are less than .05. The model for predicting cheating tendencies in examination is written as:

$$Y = 13.234 + .406X_1 + .477X_2 + 1.466X_3 + .623X_4$$

Where, Y = cheating tendencies in examination

- X₁ = Test anxiety
- X₂ = Attitude to schooling
- X₃ = Parental influence
- X₄ = Peer pressure

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This result revealed that test anxiety, attitude to schooling, parental influences, and peer pressure individually and jointly significantly predict students' cheating tendencies in examination. The result of this study is in agreement with the findings of Idika (2005) who examined the composite and relative contributions of socio-economic, status, study habit, achievement motivation, test anxiety, self-concept, and attribution to hardwork and students' cheating tendencies in examination. The finding showed that these variables contributed significantly to the prediction of cheating tendencies in examination.

The findings of this study is also in agreement with the findings of Otu (2009) who found that there is significant relationship between test anxiety, parental socio-economic background, attitude and students' cheating tendencies during examination. This result is also in agreement with the findings of Oyama (2009) that test anxiety, attitude, instructional facilities, and parental socio-economic status have significant influence on students' tendency to cheat during examination.

The implication of this finding is that anxiety in students arises from the fear of failure resulting from inadequate examination preparation, experiences of past failure or task difficulty in a particular examination. As a result, such students become quite apprehensive and anxious over examination. They, therefore, get involved in all forms of cheating in order to achieve success. The tendency to indulge in examination malpractice is more associated with students with poor attitude toward schooling or school work. Students who are well organized, achievement oriented and enthusiastic tend to have more positive attitudes toward academic work, while the less organized students are likely to indulge in examination malpractice as a means of achieving success.

Studies on the influence of parental socio-economic status on students' cheating tendencies in examination is inconclusive (Asia, 2001; Enu, 2000; Agbo, 2003; Ukpior, 2005). Students from high socio-economic background parents exhibit the highest tendency to indulge in examination malpractice perhaps because of high expectations from parents, followed by those from low socio-economic background. Children from the middle class showed the least tendency to indulge in examination malpractice. If parents had high aspiration for their children and are of

low income level, it may result in malpractice during examinations.

All the works reviewed concluded that the behaviour of peers has influence on students cheating behaviour (Andeman & Murdock, 2007; Gerdeman, 2002; Schiming, 2006; Grimes & Zerek, 2005). Cheating appears to be a communal act. Students who accepted to help others during examination are likely to request for such help from others or are likely to cheat in other ways through the influence of others. Equally, students that are helped by peers on request are likely to reciprocate same to other friends or the same person who assisted them. The more the cheats believed the rest were cheats, the more they believed cheating was acceptable.

CONCLUSION

This study revealed that test anxiety, attitude to schooling, parental influence, and peer pressure significantly predict students' cheating tendencies in examination in Edo State, Nigeria. From the result, it can be concluded that students who possessed high test anxiety were more predisposed toward cheating in examination than those who are not. Also, students who developed negative attitude toward schooling and those that are not encouraged by their parents to study through non-provision of learning materials are more susceptible to cheating in examination than those that developed positive to school and are encouraged by their parents to study. Some students are more likely to cheat if their peers approved it and less likely to cheat if their peers condemned it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Teachers' parents and counselors should identify strategies of reducing test anxiety among students as it will help reduce cheating tendencies during examination.
2. Teachers and parents should encourage students to develop positive attitude towards schooling and their studies. They should provide students with learning materials.
3. Parents and teachers should advise their children/students not to imitate their peers' unwholesome ways of life.
4. Emphasis should be placed on moral instructions and value orientation in our

schools to combat examination malpractice. Students should be taught the virtues of hardwork, honesty and dignity of labour.

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