Childrearing Pattern’s Influence on Examination Malpractice and Academic Performance among Secondary School Students in Ikom Education Zone, Cross River State

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of parental childrearing patterns on senior secondary school students’ tendencies towards delinquencies and their consequent academic performance in Ikom Education Zone of Cross River State. Three dimensions each of childrearing patterns were identified and used to formulate 1 null hypothesis that directed the study. A 20-items questionnaire was used in generating data from 1,080 Senior Secondary II students as the sample from 7 out of 16 senior secondary schools, using the stratified and proportional random sampling procedures and based on the expost Facto research design. Data analysis was by the descriptive, one-way ANOVA and Fisher’s least significant difference (LSD) multiple comparison statistics. It was found that parental childrearing patterns significantly influence the delinquent acts of examination malpractices and consequent poor academic performance of these students in the study areas. It was...
concluded that the delinquent acts of students’ involvement in examination malpractices is due to poor parenting, which has contributed to the consequent poor academic performance of Nigerian students in external examinations. It was recommended that government should among others, expand senior secondary school studies as well as employ more guidance and Counselors to cause attitudinal changes in students to improve their academic performance.

Cheating in examination is a manifestation of dishonest behaviour. It is a deliberate act of commission made by a candidate singly or in collaboration with others to attempt to obtain a grade that he is incapable of obtaining under normal conditions of his cognitive ability (Isangedighi, 2007). In Nigeria, where certificates are the sole indices of educational growth and examination as the only means of obtaining these certificates, students seem to see examination as war of survival and cheating is seen as an effective means of winning the war. Although cheating in examination attracts stiff penalties such as outright expulsion from school, there is hardly an examination period without incidence of cheating. Evidence in (Esen, 1980 in Isangedighi, 2007) shows that public examinations, especially in the school certificate by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), cheating is a recurrent event.

According to Bokwe (2010), examination malpractice is a grievous worm that is said to influence to a large extent the standard of Nigeria’s education. For this reason, several researches have revealed various sources as well as factors encouraging this debilitating behaviour amongst our youths. Some of these dimensions include: environmental factors such as school location and school type; level of awareness among examinees; examinees/students’ characteristics and parental factors, etc. This study was designed to determine the influence of the parental childrearing patterns of autocraticism, democraticism and laissez-fairs/permissiveness on examination malpractices among Nigerian youths.

Behaviourist theorists such as Bandura (1977) and Freud (1933) suggested that people act to fulfill their potentials to attain maturity. That is, influences and opportunities of parents and society create experience towards an individual’s knowledge and defined roles. Thus, Denga (1992) asserted that participation satisfies students’ need for recognition, self-expression an actualization. He believes that frustrating and negative experiences thwart their self-actualization.

Childrearing style is therefore manifested by the effort of the parents to clarify and justify policies, willingness to allow free expression of opinions, and freedom to participate in planning and decision-making (Baldwin, 1996). Erickson (1968) indicated that from early adolescence, the environment must allow youths the gradual well-guided experiences of the autonomy with which to cope and not make them feel
ashamed of this assertion. To him, sharing the child is indicative of wrong desires, even though autonomy includes reasonable limits, so that the individual does not become overwhelmed with decisions that are too difficult to handle, creating doubt and hindering his position more towards autonomy.

Hence, the way and manner parents handle this issue of adolescent involvement in decision-making and participation both at home and school will also determine the extent of their participation in class activities. Over-dependency on the part of the adolescent may lead them to the temptation of examination malpractices. Many students are involved in examination malpractices to the extent that it becomes a social problem that causes concern to parents and teachers.

According to Otu (2009), students in the secondary schools in Cross River State are fond of missing classes without good reasons. A sense of insecurity and uncertainty is likely to haunt them as they approach the day of examination. From observation, this breeds traumatic feelings as some who had chosen their subjects on fantasy basis are disillusioned with the subjects they have chosen, and begin to cast frantic glances at other “seemingly softer subjects” (Otu, 2009). These truant students always in the end are most likely to try to seek other ways and means of getting through their examination cheaply. They demand money unnecessarily from parents, guardians and other relations in order to buy examination papers within or outside the school if it is an external examination or pay their teachers either to leak the examination to them or award them the marks they do not deserve. It is in recognition of this problem that the Federal Military Government in 1973 promulgated Decree No. 27, Section 19, 20 and 21 on WAEC-related penalties for examination offences. Again, in 1984 the Federal Military Government promulgated the 1984 miscellaneous offences law, while Section 6(3) (1) specifies a penalty of 21 years imprisonment on conviction.

Ekpo (1996) stated that examination malpractice may be in the form of illegal use of examination papers, impersonation at examination, unfair aid in examination and falsification of examination information. According to Isanghedighi (2007), in 1984, the senior secondary school certificate examination results in 525 (out of 2,915) centres were cancelled and some candidates were even banned from taking the West African School Certificate Examination (WASCE) examinations for three years. Furthermore, in that vein, in Cross River State in 2006, several schools were banned from being centres of external examinations because of examination malpractice. It could be seen that the harsh punitive measures for the elimination of examination malpractice has gone largely unfulfilled.
Methodology: The area of study was Ikom Local Government Area of Cross river state. This local government area was created in 1967, and by virtue of its location, it is a border town with neighbouring Cameroon to the East, Boki and Ogoja local government areas to the North, Ebonyi State to the West and Obubra and Etung local government areas to the South-West, respectively. Ikom local government Area has sixteen (16) secondary schools (i.e. 3 each of science and vocational) and 10 secondary grammar schools. This local government area was selected for this study due to its fertile land that favours both crop and economic tree farming/cultivation (such as cocoa – the king crop); this has attracted foreigners far and wide and thus increasing the tempo of business and various commercial activities in the area. Ikom is the headquarters of the local government area and houses about nine (9) private secondary schools and various private and public primary schools. The study used the expost Facto research design because the major variables – parental childrearing patterns and the incidence of examination malpractice was presumed to have already occurred in the lives of youths far before the researchers carried out the study. The researchers were merely to determine relationships among the identified variables.

Population and Sample: The population of this study consisted of all senior secondary school - 2 students (male and female) in Ikom Local Government Area of Cross River State in the 2009/2010 academic session. They numbered 13,280 (7,968 males and 5,312 females) from 16 public secondary schools (that is 3 each of vocational/commercial; science/technical and 10 grammar) in Ikom Local Government Area. However, the target population therefore was 2,862 senior secondary school - 2 graders from 7 randomly selected schools (2 commercial with a population of 859, 2 technical/science with a population of 715 and 3 grammar with a population of 1,288). From these sub-populations, a sample of 1,080 was proportionately drawn (with 300 from vocational - 150 per school; 200 from technical - 120 and 80 per school; and 580 from grammar – 190, 180 and 210 per school).

Data was generated from a 20-items instrument – a questionnaire developed in 4 sub-sections (a-d) with 5 items each. Sub-section ‘A’ measured democratic childrearing patterns; sub-section ‘B’ measured autocratic; sub-section ‘C’ measured permissiveness, while sub-section ‘D’ measured the dependent variable – examination malpractice tendencies amongst the respondents. All the instrument items were developed on the 4-point likert scale type (of “SA” for strongly agreed that were coded 4 points; “A” for agreed and coded 3 points; “D” for disagreed with 2 points and “SD” for strongly disagreed coded 1 point). The minimum and maximum scores expected per sub-variate as well as per respondent were 5.0 and 20.0. These scores were summed up in a person-by-items matrix table (named data bank) to yield the various mean scores the scores (Type equation here.the various mean scores (\( \overline{x} \)) and standard deviations (SDs) as shown in tables 1 and 2 – for determination of variability in mean responses.
The sampling procedure adopted was cluster, proportional and simple random techniques. The descriptive, one-way ANOVA and Fisher’s least significant difference (LSD) multiple comparison statistics were employed in data analyses.

**Hypothesis:** Childrearing patterns do not significantly influence students’ delinquency in examination malpractices among senior secondary school students in Cross River State.

The independent variable in this hypothesis was childrearing pattern, while the dependent variable was involvement in tendency towards examination malpractice among secondary school students. The students in the sample were categorized into three groups. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was deployed to test this hypothesis. The result of the analysis is presented on table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Childrearing pattern</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>799</td>
<td>12.74</td>
<td>3.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autocratic</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>17.91</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permissive</td>
<td>651</td>
<td>18.36</td>
<td>3.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1030</td>
<td>16.34</td>
<td>3.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of variation</th>
<th>Sum of square</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean square</th>
<th>F-ratio</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>3718.638</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1859.319</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>18661.154</td>
<td>1077</td>
<td>17.327</td>
<td>107.31</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22379.792</td>
<td>1079</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Result: Significant at P<.05, df=2 and 1077, crit.F=3.00

From table 1, the calculated F-value of 107.3* was found to be greater than the critical F-value of 3.00 needed for significance at .05 alpha level, with 2 and 1077 degrees of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that childrearing patterns significantly influence the involvement of students in examination malpractices tendency. A post-hoc multiple comparison analysis was carried out using Fisher’s least significant difference (LSD) test. The result of this analysis is shown in table 2.
Table 2
Fisher’s Least Significant Difference (LSD) Analysis of the Significance of Childrearing Patterns on Students’ Deviant Act of Examination Malpractice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Childrearing patterns</th>
<th>Mean difference</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>Significant level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(i)</td>
<td>(j)</td>
<td>(i-j)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic:</td>
<td>Autocratic</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>.322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>permissive</td>
<td>-7.62*</td>
<td>.522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autocratic:</td>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>.322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>permissive</td>
<td>7.45*</td>
<td>.577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permissive:</td>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>7.65*</td>
<td>.522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Autocratic</td>
<td>7.45*</td>
<td>.577</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The mean difference is significant at .05; dependent variable is examination malpractice.

The results of Fisher’s least significant difference (LSD) multiple comparison analysis in table 2 showed that only two of the three pairwise values of students under democratic and autocratic childrearing patterns (-0.17) was not significant. The difference between mean values of students under democratic and permissive childrearing patterns (-7.62*) and the difference between mean values of students under autocratic and permissive childrearing patterns (-7.45*) were each significant at .05 level. This implies that the involvement in examination malpractice by students under democratic childrearing is not significantly different from the involvement by students under autocratic childrearing pattern. However, the involvement in examination malpractice by students from democratic childrearing pattern is significantly lower than the involvement by their counterparts under permissive childrearing pattern. Similarly, the involvement in examination malpractice by students from autocratic childrearing pattern is significantly lower than the involvement by students under permissive childrearing style. Thus, the students that are most involved in examination malpractice were those under permissive childrearing pattern, while those less involved in malpractice tendencies were those under democratic and autocratic childrearing patterns.

Discussion of Findings: It was found that the pattern of childrearing adopted by parents in the upbringing of their children at home influence the extent of delinquency among students in senior secondary schools as asserted by Bokwe (2010). This behaviour leads children to develop the delinquent act of examination malpractices experienced in Nigerian schools as discovered in earlier studies by Agbor (2003), Whitley and Associates (1999), Offorma (2006) and the Certificate for Academic Integrity (2005) among others. Furthermore, children from democratic homes are more positive in behaviour than their counterparts from authoritarian and laissez-fair homes (Smith & Cowie, 2005); and that students’ deviant behaviour is found to be
significantly dependent upon the nature of parenting as well as the nature of friends (peers) associated with children in the school/social system (Newberger, 2003). Newberger further revealed that children, most especially boys from authoritarian homes become familiar with cheating well before they attempted to practice it academically. This is because they may have done, or observed it in family life, cheating, in games in order to win; they may have also heard parents boast of successful cheating due to their authoritarian nature. Whitley and Associates (1999) found that academic dishonesty such as cheating and plagiarism was high among students who feel pressured to succeed. This implies that when a child is pressured to succeed at all cost, but cannot make it through hard-work; the end result is cheating in order to stay on in school.

The findings of this study agree with Agbor (2003), who revealed that non-seriousness on students’ part and emphasis on certificates make parents to bribe their ways through examination malpractices. Buttressing the above findings, Offorma (2006) affirmed thus: “examination malpractice has eaten deep into the vein of society (particularly Nigeria’s), and it is rampant that their children cannot do well in school and external examinations. They therefore go extra miles including hiring people to write examinations for their children and bribing the teachers and examiners with expensive gifts so that they can assist their children in any possible way to succeed in examinations.

**Conclusion:** Delinquency manifests itself in various ways such as truancy, dishonesty, examination malpractices and cheating tendency among various others, among senior secondary school students, who are the societal group just entering into adulthood. In Cross River State (as it is all over Nigeria), parents pressurize their children to always perform highly in school coupled with their (parents’) own behavior of bribing teachers or buying live question papers for the children, discussing their cheating habits at one point or the other before their children all influence students’ cheating behavior.

**Recommendation:** It was recommended that: (i) Professional guidance counselors should be engaged as a serious necessity to counsel students in the secondary schools against the delinquent act of examination malpractices, (ii) Non-Governmental Organizations on examination ethics should be engaged to always address students during examination periods to desensitize them on any plans towards examination malpractices, (iii) Open book examination should be introduced into our educational system to reduce students’ anxiety towards examinations.
References


