

Psychosocial Predictors of Secondary School Students' Attitude Towards Cheating in Examination in Emuoha Local Government Area, Rivers State

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ABSTRACT: *The study investigated Psychosocial Predictors of Secondary School Students' Attitude Towards Cheating In Examination In Emuoha Local Government Area, Rivers State. Five research questions and five corresponding hypotheses were formulated for the study. Correlational and descriptive research design was used for the study. The population of the study consisted of all the senior secondary school students in the 20 public schools in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. A sample of 125 senior secondary school II students was drawn for the study using the multi-stage sampling technique. The instruments used for data collection in this study were the Students' Attitude Cheating Scale (SACS) and the Psychosocial Predictors Scale (PPS). The validity of both instruments was done using experts' assessment while their reliability was determined through Cronbach Alpha method. The reliability coefficient of 0.78 was realized for Students' Attitude Cheating Scale (SACS) and 0.82 was realized for Psychosocial Predictors Scale (PPS) respectively. Analysis of the instruments was done using simple regression as well as t-test. Finding showed that achievement motivation ($p=0.001<0.05$) and self-efficacy ($p=0.000<0.05$) all had significant relationship with secondary school student's attitude towards cheating. On the contrary, there was insignificant differences ($p=0.22>0.05$) between the attitude of male and female students. Based on this, it was recommended among others that school authorities should encourage the student to get involved in educational and social clubs which will help them academically and morally.*

KEYWORD: achievement, motivation, self-efficacy, gender, cheating

INTRODUCTION

Regrettably, Nigeria, like many other countries of the world is a country choked with numerous problems. These problems range from economic, political and religious upheavals. When taking a careful study of these vast problems, it will be revealed that the

underlying motivating factor is indiscipline and corruption. Education is a tool for social change and the transmission of enduring social values and knowledge in the society. More often than not, the avenue for determining the extent to which such values and knowledge are transmitted is through examinations. According to Hornby (2014), examination is “a formal test involving written or oral question with no limited access to textbooks or the likes”. In the words of Nwokocha and Adesanya (1995), examination is the formal assessment of students in order to determine their extent of mastery of the subject content. Olamide (2002) also noted that examination to its widest sense, though influenced by some extraneous variables should be as objective as possible in order to induce valid judgement about the students. Unfortunately, in the Nigerian system today, examinations have been abused everywhere and in all walks of life, Nigerians exhibit unhealthy attitudes, which reflect in the lack of moral integrity comprising nepotism, forgery, bribery and corruption as well as examination malpractice. Many factors may have contributed to such moral laxity in the educational system. The quest for paper qualification, the loss of virtues of hard work, perseverance, patience and honesty has given credence to ‘the Machiavelli’s maxim that the end justifies the means’.

In the views of Nwokocha and Adesanya (1995), cheating has been seen to be an attitude most students develop while in school. Cheating in examination according to them involves an insincere act of using memory aids and other methods that gives an individual unfair advantage over others during the process of examination. While this ugly trend is a function of individual and personality perceptions, the decrease in societal norms and values has also been pinpointed as a leading cause. Most students unfortunately have identified cheating as the only approach to examination success. Many have believed in it and are thus covertly or overtly encouraging the development of this social ill. It is absolutely apparent that cheating in examination and examination malpractices in the nation are a matter of great concern to all stakeholders in the sector. It is also rather difficult to accept that the problem posed by cheating has done a serious damage to academics and the country at large. Yet not much has been done to arrest the situation.

It is obvious that a society that has nothing good for the coming generation spells doom for the youths; hence, one considers that the prevalent practice in the educational system today which trains the younger generation may lead to bribery, forgery and malpractices. Similarly, it is important to note that various past and current administrations have passed legislations and decrees aimed at arresting the incidence of cheating. Recently, the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) had issued a rule that there will be no GSM phones in examination halls. In the faculty of education of the University of Port Harcourt, the researcher has also seen some memos that read “Henceforth, possession of GSM phones in examination halls is strictly prohibited”. However, in spite of these laws,

legislation, policies and various strategies in attempting to curb this ugly trend, there seems to be an increase of cheating in examinations in our schools.

According to Udoh (2014), “cheating in examination and all other forms of examination malpractice have not been the only issue affecting the Nigerian education. In fact, cheating in academics as a whole has been reported in literature as constituting an issue of serious global concern that researchers in both developed and developing countries have not been able proffer solutions to”. Zhou and Lan (2007) have also noted that many studies had reported that cheating in examination has become a serious issue across university campuses in the United State. This was what Denga (1998) identified as negatively affecting the efficacy of the labour force and destroying the educational system. It has been observed, that students cheat; and most of these students who engage in this act believe they need to be dishonest in their exams in order to excel in today’s world.

Even in the medical education system, Muhrey, Gutman, Schnicderman (2008) have noted that cheating is dominant and steadily increasing in these areas today. Evidences abound that cheating is an extremely common occurrence in the Nigerian secondary schools and in the universities at large. According to Rawwas and Isakson (2000), numerous studies have catalogue cheating behaviour and constantly linked some predictors of such behaviours. To them, such predictors include opportunity to engage in cheating, academic standing, life expectancies, gender and institutional settings. Few studies have revealed the behavioural characteristics, attitudes, and external factors that clearly lead to cheating in examination.

Every day, evidence are manifesting that there is increasing incident of cheating in examinations by students in the secondary schools and colleges, which conflicts with the main aim of education which has to do with the training of the mind and character for the acquirement of theoretical skills, knowledge and useful ideas for development and the search for truth and knowledge, the creation and communication of ideas. As Ohoyeba and Daramola (2000) reported, “major forms of cheating in examination involves impersonation, bringing in foreign materials (books, calculator, GSM etc.); substituting work scripts, stealing, collusion in the examination hall (copying one another), mass/organized cheating involving assistance from teachers, lecturers and outsiders, as well as insult/assault on invigilators”. This trend of academic dishonesty which is harmful to development and advancement of the educational system needs to be drastically addressed. There are so many factors that may influence student’s idea or attitude towards examination malpractice, one of such is achievement motivation.

Achievement motivation is a psychological variable that probably has relationship with student’s tendency to cheat. The basic psychological needs such as love, worth, affiliation

and security are essential ingredients in the development process. One of the widely acceptable factors that lead one to their goals is drives which can also be known as motivation. For every individual, there is a driving force which a times might not just be a single factor but a combination of factors that pushes people to do anything humanly possible to achieve their goals. Motivation is widely seen as the drive to achieve targets and the process involved in keeping such drive; hence it provides very important foundation to complete cognitive behaviour. To some, achievement motivation may be responsible for an individual's actions. In other words, less moral individuals may want to engage in behaviour that may not be completely legal even in their bid to achieve their desired goals. In the school settings, desperate students may engage in unwholesome practices in order to pass their examinations. Students who record high in achievement motivation may possess more will-power to engage in both acceptable and unacceptable behaviors in order to pass more than those with less achievement motivation score.

Self-efficacy is the believe an individual has about being able to perform a given task (Bandura, 1997).It could be a great force pushing an individual towards both desirable and undesirable behaviour. It is also the student's believe of "I can" or "I cannot". It reflects how confident an individual is in performing certain task. If an individual has high self-efficacy in one area, it might not necessarily be that he/she might have so in another aspect. In summary, self-efficacy indicates how strongly individuals believe they have the skills to perform a particular activity. In the school environment, some students may have the strong believe that they possess requisite skills to cheat during examination without being caught. Some students cheat in examination because they believe they can beat the examiners or invigilators. Hence, while some student may desist from cheating during examination, due to less self-efficacy in such area, some may engage in it due to high self-efficacy in the area.

Gender may as well be responsible for behaviours that are unacceptable. Gender refers to sex which is always expressed as male or female. Roznowski and Smith (1993) noted that gender involves a wide range of behaviour, attitudes and emotional state that are commonly seen as associated with individual sex. However, Ifeanyi (2000) had noted that some behaviours are better handled by some gender. Hence, it could be that gender plays a part in cheating attitude of secondary school student.

Empirically, a study on "academic achievement motivation and attitude of senior secondary school students towards Examination Malpractice" was carried out at Uyo by Udoh and Okoro (2014) with the aim of finding out the influences of achievement motivation on the attitude of senior secondary students towards examination malpractice. A sample of 350 students of both gender were drawn using the multistage random sampling technique. An instrument named "ATCEQ" (Attitude towards Cheating in Examination

Questionnaire) was developed and used by the researcher. Three research questions and three corresponding hypotheses guided the study. Also, the “Aberdeen Academic Motivation Inventory” (ACMI) was used in assessing academic motivation. Using the SPSS aided analysis of variance (ANOVA) to analyse the data, they found out and reported among others that students’ academic achievement motivation influenced their attitude towards examination malpractice.

In the same vein, Bernadi (2004) carried out a study on examining the decision process of students’ cheating behavior. With the objectives of finding out the rationales behind students’ attitude towards cheating in examination hall. Sampling 480 students from the Ohio state university using the multistage sampling technique, they administered an instrument named “EMDQ” (Examination Malpractice Decisive Questionnaire). The instrument was a self-constructed questionnaire developed by the researchers. The data so collected was analysed using the mean, standard deviation and the one way analysis of deviance. From the analysis, the researcher confirmed that achievement motivation which was one of the objectives tested for as influencing cheating has an influence on students’ attitude towards cheating in examinations. The result of the findings however in line with that of Egbe (2005) Dorminic (2001) and Wilson (1999) who all reported similar findings supporting the notion that achievement motivation influences students attitude towards cheating in examination.

As noted earlier, self-efficacy is an individuals’ conviction that he can actually carry out a particular task successfully. In line with this, Bernedette, Cornelius, Rita and Obinna (2012) carried out a study on Correlates of Examination Malpractice and Academic Performance of Primary School Students in Cross River State. Two hypotheses were formulated and tested. The sample of the study consisted of 1818 pupils out of 68,201 pupils in 70 schools. The sample was selected using a proportionate stratified sampling technique which was used to stratify them into three educational zones with different population. Data were analysed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r), one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and independent t-test. The analysis revealed that there is a significant relationship between the influence of self-efficacy on pupils cheating behavior.

Kazon and Hasan (2012) also carried out a study on “Predicting Academic Cheating Among the fifth Grade student; the role of self-efficacy and Academic Self-Handicapping”, in Iran. The aim of the study was to predict academic cheating based on some personal factors (Self-efficacy and self- handicapping strategies).A sample of 477 students selected from fifth grade using the random cluster sampling method were used for the study. Three sub-scales of “Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scale was used adapted from Midgley (1977) in order to carry out the measurement. Data collected were analyzed using

descriptive statistics, Pearson Correlation, analysis of variance and Multiple regression analysis by using software SPSS 17.0. The findings showed among other through the t-test at 99% confidence level ($p < 0.01$) that a significant inverse relationship exist between academic self-efficacy score and cheating score ($r = 0.28$). Hence, the researcher concluded that self-efficacy as well as self-Handicapping predict high school students attitude towards cheating in examination.

In a similar study, Kristin and Micheal (2004) studied Academic Performance and Cheating: moderating role of school identification and self-efficacy. 315 voluntary adolescents were sampled from 3 colleges and 37 high schools in New York. Since the sample were self-selected, no particular sampling technique was used and they were compared to a cohort samples in large scale data base. The students' questionnaire was developed for the study. Academic performance was assessed with two items. They first asked students to report their CGPA for the past school year. The second anchored on asking students to rate their responses. From their findings, multiple regression was used to analyse their performance, they found out that self-efficacy which was one of the variables influenced academic performance and cheating among students.

In line with this, McCabe (2001) also affirmed that self-efficacy affect every area of human endeavour. It strongly influences both the power a person actually has to face challenges competently and the choices a person is most likely to make. With regards to gender, Omoluabi (1995) studied Psychological and social variables influencing student cheating behavior in Ife. A total sample of two hundred respondent students (100 males, 100 females) was randomly selected from Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State. A questionnaire was used for the study. The questionnaire was divided into three parts, the Attitude Towards Examination Cheating Scale (ATECS), the Religiosity Affiliation Scale (RAS) and parental care scale (PCS). The Pearson Product Moment Correlation formula was used to analyse the data gotten. The study found out that gender is one contributing factor that lead to cheating behavior among students.

In a related study, Oluwodunoye and Titus (2011) carried out a study on parenting styles, gender, religiosity and students attitude towards examination malpractice in Ondo State. One hundred and ninety eight participants were selected for the study using the simple random sampling technique. The parental care scale developed by Baumrind (1971), religiosity affiliation scale and the student attitude towards examinations cheating scale developed by Alarape and Onakoya (2003) were also used for the study. The method of data analysis adopted was the Pearson Correlation formular and the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The result of the findings showed that there was no significant influence of gender which was one of the independent variables on the dependent.

Furthermore, it has been observed that cheating as a form of examination malpractice is the order of the day in our secondary schools. Being sure to engage in examination malpractice, some students are no longer regular to school, some are truants while others are late comers. All these category of students make caricature of the learning process. The notion that during examination, students can carry cheats, sheets and other unacceptable gadgets like phones, calculators and textbooks etc have decreased the morale and values of public examination. In the face of international community, there is low acceptability of the nation's educational certificate because of the high rate of cheating during examinations.

The high rates of quackery and half-baked professionals also have their root on academic dishonesty. It is also obvious that many have lost their lives to quack doctors who have attained such deceitful height through cheating in examination. Unfortunately, the reward for cheating in examination has been disastrous to the economy at large. When such individuals have been identified and probably expelled, they end up in gangsterism, cultism, prostitution, armed robbery and kidnapping. Hence, in the face of these threat and other vices, associated with examination malpractice, it was the interest of the researcher to investigate Psychosocial Predictors of Secondary School Students' Attitude Towards Cheating in Examination In Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to investigate Psychosocial Predictors of Secondary School Students' Attitude Towards Cheating In Examination In Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State. specifically, the objectives of the study was to investigate;

- (1) The extent to which achievement motivation relate with secondary school students' attitude towards cheating In Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State.
- (2) The extent to which self-efficacy relate with secondary school students' attitude towards cheating In Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State.
- (3) The extent to which gender influence secondary school students' attitude towards cheating In Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this research.

- (1) To what extent does achievement motivation relate with secondary school students' attitude towards cheating In Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State?
- (2) To what extent does self-efficacy relate with secondary school students' attitude towards cheating In Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State?
- (3) Which gender has more influence on secondary school students' attitude towards cheating In Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant relationship between achievement motivation and secondary school students' attitude towards cheating In Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State.
2. There is no significant relationship between self-efficacy and secondary school students' attitude towards cheating In Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State.
3. There is no significant difference in the influence of gender on secondary school students' attitude towards cheating In Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State.

METHODOLOGY

Two designs were adopted for this study. They are the correlational research design and the descriptive design. The researcher used correlation design in the first instance because of the relationship being sought on one side between achievement motivation and self-efficacy and students' cheating behaviour on the other side. On the other hand, descriptive design was adopted because of ascertaining the influence of gender on the cheating behavior. The population of the study consisted of all the senior secondary school students in the 20 public schools in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. As at the time of the study, the population of students within the category studied was 16,522 (Source: State Ministry of Education, 2021). A sample of 125 senior secondary school II students was drawn for the study using the multi-stage sampling technique. The instruments used for data collection in this study were the Students' Attitude Cheating Scale (SACS) and the Psychosocial Predictors Scale (PPS). The Psychosocial Predictors Scale (PPS) was used to measure students' achievement motivation and self-efficacy while gender as well part of the demographic variables. The validity both instruments was done using experts assessment while their reliability was determined through internal consistency by Cronbach Alpha method. Thirty copies of the instrument were administered to students that were not part of the original sample. After their response, the instruments were collated and subjected to cronbach alpha through SPSS. The reliability coefficient of 0.78 was realized for Students' Attitude Cheating Scale (SACS) and 0.82 was realized for Psychosocial Predictors Scale (PPS) respectively. Analysis of the instruments was done using simple regression as well as t-test.

RESULTS

Research Question One: To what extent does achievement motivation relate with secondary school students' attitude towards cheating In Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State?

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Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between achievement motivation and secondary school students' attitude towards cheating In Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Table 1: simple linear regression and analysis of variance of the relationship between achievement motivation and secondary school students' attitude towards cheating.

R	= 0.130					
R square	= 0.016					
Adjusted R²	= 0.028					
Standard Error of Estimate	= 5.411					
Analysis of Variance						
	Sum of square	d.f	Mean Square	F	Sig	Result
Regression	133.315	1	233.142	5.852	0.001	Significant (Reject Ho)
Residual	32564.231	124	44.55			
Total	14047.628	125				

Table 1 revealed that R-value was 0.130, R² was 0.016, adjusted R² was 0.028 while standard error of estimate was 5.411. From the R square value, it is evidenced that achievement motivation relates about 1.6% to secondary school students cheating behaviour. The regression analysis also reveals a calculated F value of 5.852, Sig-value was 0.001. Therefore, since Sig-value (p= 0.001<0.05) is less than 0.05 alpha. The null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate accepted. This means that there is a significant relationship between achievement motivation and secondary school students' attitude towards cheating In Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Research Question Two: To what extent does self-efficacy relate with secondary school students' attitude towards cheating In Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State?

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between self-efficacy and secondary school students' attitude towards cheating In Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State.

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Table 2: simple linear regression and analysis of variance of the relationship between self-efficacy and secondary school students' attitude towards cheating.

R	= 0.217					
R square	= 0.047					
Adjusted R²	= 0.044					
Standard Error of Estimate	= 2.411					
Analysis of Variance						
	Sum of square	d.f	Mean Square	F	Sig	Result
Regression	143.215	1	233.142	8.152	0.000	Significant (Reject Ho)
Residual	33464.231	124	43.16			
Total	14047.628	125				

Table 2 revealed that R-value was 0.217, R² was 0.047, adjusted R² was 0.044 while standard error of estimate was 2.411. From the R square value, it is evidenced that self-efficacy relates about 4,7% to secondary school students cheating behaviour. The regression analysis also reveals a calculated F value of 8.152 while the Sig-value was 0.000. Therefore, since Sig-value (p= 0.000<0.05) is less than 0.05 alpha. The null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate accepted. This means that there is a significant relationship between self-efficacy and secondary school students' attitude towards cheating In Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Research Question Three: Which gender has more influence on secondary school students' attitude towards cheating In Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State?
Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the influence of gender on secondary school students' attitude towards cheating In Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State.

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Table 3: t-test analysis of the influence of gender on school students' attitude towards cheating In Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Gender	N	\bar{X}	S.D	α	d.f	Sig.	Result
Male	47	11.87	2.91	0.05	123	0.22	Insignificant (Accept Ho)
Female	78	11.50	3.10				

In respect to the independent contribution of gender to cheating, male students were 47 while the female students were 78. Their means and standard deviation values were 11.87 and 2.91 for male and 11.50 and 3.10 for the females. From the means values and in answering the researcher questions, it is obvious that male students cheat more compared to the female students. Furthermore, the calculated Sig-value was 0.22. Hence, since the Sig ($p=0.22>0.05$) is higher than the chosen alpha of 0.05, the null hypothesis was retained, meaning that there is no significant difference in attitude of male and female students towards cheating in examinations.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

From the findings, it was seen that achievement motivation relates significantly with students' attitude towards cheating. On the other hand, it had a significant relationship. This means that majority of the students who engage or have a positive attitude towards cheating are basically pushed by their desire to achieve academic excellence. This result is not surprising because with the Machiavellian concept of "the end justifies the means" and achieving by all cost syndrome imbibed by students, they are sure to engage even in an unacceptable behavior to ensure success is achieved. This confirms the findings of Udoh and Okoro who found out that achievement motivation relates to a great extent as well as significantly to students' attitude to cheating in examination.

From the findings of the study in table two, it is revealed that self-efficacy has a significant relationship with secondary school student attitude towards cheating in Obio-Akpor Local government area of Rivers State. This finding means that student is prone to cheat depending on their perceived ability to do some things. As noted, self-efficacy is ability or the perception that student have concerning what they can or what they cannot do. From this point, it means that if they perceive that they can successfully cheat in examination, then it is likely that they may develop a positive attitude towards cheating in exams and they may subsequently cheat. On the contrary, those who develop a negative perception towards their ability to cheat may not likely engage in cheating behavior. These findings may come because self-efficacy being a major psychological variable has a greater

influence on students. Whatever student perceive that they can do is certainly what they will do irrespective of whether such behaviour or action is lawful or not. Therefore, this finding is not surprising to researcher because of the above reasons. The findings is also in line with that reported by Peter (2010), Olson (2012) and also Hetzel (2016) who all noted a significant relationship between self-efficacy and negative attitude of students towards academics.

Finally, the findings reveal that there is no significant difference in the influence of gender on attitude of students towards cheating in secondary schools. This finding means that irrespective of a student gender (whether male or female), he or she is prone to cheat in examination. Although the mean and standard deviation values of the findings revealed that male student had higher mean, the hypothesis testing have otherwise revealed that such differences in the cheating behaviour is not significantly different. This means that both male and female student may develop tendency to cheat or may not develop tendency to cheat. It means that being a male or female would not have any significant difference as per the degree of cheating that one will engage. It also means that female student can cheats at the same level as male student in examination and vice-versa. The finding of the study is not surprising in any sense because as an academic, I have experience on several occasions during examination and test that student cheat indiscriminately irrespective of their gender. The researcher have caught many male students cheating just the same way she has caught many female students who cheat in examinations. The finding of the study may have come because both the male and female students are aware that cheating behaviour or attitude in exam is not gender-related but a matter of etiquette. The findings of Peter (2010) quoted earlier further supported the present one by reporting an insignificant difference in negative attitude of students towards academic

Recommendations

From the findings of this study, the following recommendations are very relevant in order to curtail and if necessary eradicate cheating behavior in students.

- (1) Teachers, parents and counsellor should also provide adequate motivation to the student to boost their zeal for achievement,
- (2) Similarly, teachers and parents should also help the students to develop a positive self-efficacy right from home in order to spur them towards believing in themselves to be able to do better academically on their own instead of cheating.
- (3) Though it is found to be insignificant, counsellors, teachers and parents should focus more on teaching their male children ethic and need for hardwork. This will help them to minimize their cheating behavior.
- (4) Finally school authorities should encourage the student to get involved in educational and social clubs which will help them academically and morally. If the

foregone recommendations are implemented, cheating in schools could be reduced to the barest minimum.

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