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

(Received 10 May 2016; Revision Accepted 29 June 2016)

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
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, 2009). 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, Ukpor (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. Pearline
(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.

| 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.

| 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                    | -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
\( X_1 \) = Test anxiety
\( X_2 \) = Attitude to schooling
\( X_3 \) = Parental influence
\( X_4 \) = 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 Ìtù (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; Ukpor, 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 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.

REFERENCES

Adamu, M., 2006. Examination malpractice: A paper presented at the 4th annual speech and prize giving day ceremony of Federal Government College, Daura, Katsina State, June 13.

Agbo, F. O., 2013. An investigation into forces behind examination malpractice: A challenge for secondary school education in 21st century. Journal of the curriculum Organization in Nigeria, 20, (2): 344-347.

Andeman, E. M and Murdock, T. P., 2007. Psychology of academic cheating. London: Elsenier Academic Press.

Angrey, N., 2004. Learning readiness. Lagos: Macmillan.

Asia, R. E., 2001. Anxiety, cheating tendencies and academic performance of senior secondary school students in Calabar. Unpublished Ph.D dissertation, University of Calabar.

Bature, A and Bature, U., 2005. What do children think about school? Retrieved January 21, 2016 from http://search.epnet.com.

Chaminuka, L and Nudzo, D., 2014. Students’ and staffs’ perceptions on examination malpractice and fraud in higher education in Zimbakew. Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 2, (2): 78-90.

Chukudi-Oji, C., 2013. Examination malpractice: Role of teachers in Anambra West Local government Area of Anambra State. www.doublegist.com/examination. Accessed 12th January, 2016.

Egbo, E. E., 2006. Psycho-social factors and students tendency to cheat in examination. Unpublished M.Ed thesis, Faculty of Education, University of Calabar.

Enu, D. B., 2000. Motivational determinants of students tendency to cheat in examination. Unpublished M.Ed. thesis, University of Calabar.

Federal Ministry of Education., 2007. Examination malpractice blacklist: Schools derecognized as centre for public examinations 2007-2010. Abuja: Federal Ministry of Education.

Gerdeman, R. D., 2012. Academic dishonesty and the community college. Eric Digests, 24, (4): 60-64.

Godfrey, J. R., 2012. Academic dishonesty in schools. Issues in Educational Research, 18, (2): 63-69.

Grimes, P. N and Rezek, J. P., 2005. Determinants of cheating by High School Economics students: A comparative study of academic dishonesty in transitional economics. International Review of Economics Education, 4, (2): 23-45.

Idika, D. O., 2005. A causal model of some psycho-social variables as determinants of cheating tendency among secondary school students in Calabar Education Zone, Cross river State. unpublished M.Ed thesis, University of Calabar.

Iruoje, J., 20015. Psycho-social variables as predictors of cheating tendencies among secondary school students in Edo State. unpublished Ph.D dissertation, University of Calabar, Nigeria.

Obe, A., 2005. Examination malpractice in Nigerian education system: Implications for quality education. African Journal of Educational Foundations, 1, (1): 8-10.

Offor, T. D., 2009. Psycho-social variables and test-taking behaviour of students in Nigeria universities. Unpublished Ph.D dissertation, University of Calabar, Nigeria.

Okorodudu, G. N and Ossai, M. C., 2004. Relationship between examination anxiety and students’ academic performance in psychology course.
Ossai, M. C., 2011. Guidance and counseling: Implication of examination anxiety as a predictor of students attitude toward examination practices. Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, 2, (7): 217-239.

Otu, B. D., 2009. Factor analytic validation of examination related malpractice variables among undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Cross River State, Nigeria. Unpublished Ph.D dissertation, University of Calabar, Nigeria.

Oyama, H. O., 2009. Correlates of examination malpractice in Cross River State, Nigeria. Unpublished Ph.D dissertation, University of Calabar, Nigeria.

Pearline, L. I., 2007. Class context and family relations: A cross national study. Boston: Little Brown.

Schiming, R. C., 2006. Academic dishonesty. From http://www.mnsued/cett/teachingresources/articles/academicdishonesty.

Ukpok, C. O., 2005. Some factors related to examination cheating tendencies among senior secondary school students in Akpabuyo LGA, Cross River State. Unpublished M.Ed thesis, University of Calabar, Nigeria.