

Home Variables as Determinant of Students' Attitude towards Examination Malpractice in Uyo Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The causal relationship of some home variables as determinant of senior secondary II students' attitude towards examination malpractice was investigated. This work examined the extent to which home variables (parents' marital status, parenting style, moral value and parent's socio-economic status) relatively and collectively contribute to students' attitude towards examination malpractice. The research design was the ex-post facto design, while the multistage sampling approach was employed for the study. A total of 450 senior secondary school II students drawn from 15 schools in nine LGAs within Uyo Senatorial District responded to the research instrument named determinant of students' attitude towards examination malpractice questionnaire. Through the construction of path model, significant pathways were identified and used for the study. The most meaningful causal paths, direct and indirect effects were established. The result shows that, of the four predictor variables hypothesized, two variables (moral value and parenting style) significantly exerted direct effect on students' attitude toward examination malpractice with parenting style having the highest proportion (17.68%) of total direct effect, while moral value had (9.13%) of the total direct effect. It was discovered that home variables are strong determinants of students' attitude towards examination malpractice.

Keywords: Attitude, Examination Malpractice, Path Model, Home Variables and Causal Effects

Introduction

Examination is a quality yardstick for formal auditing of the progress of educational system within a specific period. This is why the various forms of examination constitute substantial components of any system of education. Examination is a formal written or oral test of candidates understanding of the contents of a subject or area. In the view of Nnam and Inah (2015), examination is used for measuring students' or candidates' competency and progress in the education sector. Examination, according to Anikweze (2005) and Fasasi (2006) should provide information on students' knowledge, skill, ability and competency, as well as the educational system by creating more avenues for candidates to express what they know as regards a given concept embedded in the examination questions. Therefore, examination could play basic roles of providing authentic and meaningful platform in which academic achievement can be improved so as to achieve educational goals (Abdullahi, 2009; Idaka 2004; Joshua, 2005; Osakwe, 2011; Okorodudu, 2013). This makes examination a

veritable pillar that supports the educational system. George and Ukpong (2013) noted that, examination is key in taking decision on who is to be promoted to the next academic level, as well as a means of independent assessment of candidates. Examination is used for the selection of candidates suitable for employment into both private and public sectors. Therefore, examination is supposed to be a reliable tool for fair selection of people into critical positions that require creativity. From the foregoing, it can be deduced that examination conducted in a professional manner may have control over the sustainable development of any nation, by virtue of it being the basis for which educational outputs are evaluated.

However, Eweniyi (2002) and Abdullahi (2009) noted that many decisions emanating from examinations may not be valid due to the involvement of candidates in one form of malpractice or the other. Examination malpractice is seen as an act of omission intended to aid a student success without absolute dependence on his ability (Nwahunaya,

2004). In the opinion of Onuka and Amusan (2008) cited in Onuka and Durowoju (2013), examination malpractices are intentional or unintentional actions by a student, group of students, school authority, parents, examination official, security personnel or any other person to deprive an examination of its desired credit. These actions may be before, during or after the administration of the examination.

Joshua (2008) asserted that examination malpractice is the massive and unprecedented abuse of rules and regulations governing examinations at any point in time including certificate racketeering. Therefore, examination malpractice includes unethical actions at pre-examination, during examination and post-examination. Examination malpractice has become so widespread that there is virtually no examination anywhere within and outside the formal school system that there is not, at least, one form of unethical practice. In recent times, students have evolved more sophisticated ways of cheating during examination, which explained how badly examination malpractice has invaded the educational system (Jimoh, 2009; Ojonemi et al., 2013; Anzene, 2014; Nnam & Inah, 2015).

Some researchers (Judy & Eilkeen, 2002; Abdulkareem & Alabi, 2004; Fasasi, 2006) noted the level at which students get involved in examination misconduct to be so alarming, highly disturbing as well as threatening to sustainable education, especially in developing countries. Edukugho (2006) highlighted some factors contributing to students engagement in examination malpractices to include unwholesome quest for wealth by teachers and invigilators, fear of failure on the part of candidates, parents' compelling their wards go into professions that are against the wish of the wards. Many other researchers had sought to unravel the reason for the increasing involvement of masses in academic fraud called examination malpractice in our schools. For instance, Petters and Okon (2013) investigated the reason for examination malpractice in secondary schools. Revealed undue crave for certificates, fear of failure, parents pressurizing their children to study courses out of the passion of the child, and lust for academic titles to be

some of the reasons for examination malpractice in Nigerian schools. Others are large class sizes leading to overcrowded sitting arrangement, poor preparation of candidates and compromising attitude of the entire society (Petters and Okon, 2013). In the opinions of Taiwo (2004); Olutunbosun and Omoregie, (2012); Akaranga and Ongong (2013), examination malpractice is informed by parental upbringing, with students from divorce homes being at risk of developing positive attitude towards examination malpractice. Hence, the home, which is the first society or social environment of every person, has an uncountable influence on attitude. It is based on this, that this study seeks to investigate the relative and collective effects of some cardinal home variables on attitude towards examination malpractice.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the efforts of the government to stop examination malpractice in the country, it seems the efforts are not yielding anticipated impact as the rate of students' involvement in examination malpractice is on the increase. Virtually all educational institutions in the country have mechanism in place to fight examination malpractice but most students have deployed smarter means of beating these mechanisms. This makes it more worrisome as the need to resolve the problem of examination malpractice, requires prompt attention. Examination malpractice had affected so many processes in the country including employment, promotion, placement and decision-making. It is undisputable that a child that cheats in an examination at any level of education has the tendency to defraud any sector he is predisposed to. Examination malpractice is considered an attitudinal problem. Attitude is character developed over time and can be environmentally induced. It is believed that the home, which is the first environment of a child has much influence on the child's character, hence, attitude. It is based on the above that the work seeks to solve the problem of examination malpractice using home factors. Going by this view, one would ask, 'what indeed is the nature of students' attitude towards examination malpractice?' Can this attitude be explained, predicted and modelled using home variables?

What then is the most meaningful model for attitude towards examination malpractice among secondary school students in Uyo Educational zone of Akwa Ibom State?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the effect of individual and composite home variables (such as parents' marital status, parenting style, moral value and parents' socio-economic status) on attitude towards examination malpractice among senior secondary school students in public schools in Akwa Ibom State. In specific terms, the study:

1. examines the most meaningful causal model involving the four variables (parents' socio-economic status, moral value, parents' marital status) and students' attitude towards examination malpractice;
2. estimates the strengths of causation (path coefficients) of the factors in the model;
3. determines the direct and indirect effect of home variables on students' attitude towards examination malpractice

Research Questions

In order to achieve the purpose of the study, the following questions were raised;

1. What is the most meaningful causal model involving the four home variables (parents' socio-economic status, moral value, parents' marital status, and parenting style) and students' attitude towards examination malpractice?
2. What are the estimates of the strengths of causation (path coefficients) of the factors in the model?
3. What are the direct and indirect effects of home variables on attitude towards examination malpractice?

Methodology

The following methodologies were deployed for the investigation.

Research Design

The Ex-post facto research design was deployed for the study. This research design is very suitable for a study of this nature because the variables of study had already occurred and therefore cannot be manipulated. According to Kerlinger in Isangedighi, Joshua, Asim and

Ekuri (2004), Ex-post facto is a systematic empirical design in which the research does not have direct control on the research variables, especially the independent variables, because they had already occurred in the population of interest. Hence, they become inherently not manipulative.

Population of the Study

The study population for this work was all senior secondary school II students of 2016/2017 academic session in public schools in Uyo Educational Zone, Akwa Ibom State. The students' population was 5364 students.

Sampling Technique

The study adopted the multistage sampling procedure to select the sample size. This procedure combined stratified random sampling, simple random sampling and proportional sampling technique, and was used to sample 450 senior secondary (SS) II students, comprising 226 males and 224 females. The stratified random sampling was first used to select five Local Government Areas (L.G.As) from the nine Local Government Areas in Uyo Senatorial District. From the five selected L.G.As, three schools were selected from each LGA using simple random sampling technique. Hence, a total of 15 schools were involved in the study. The number of students selected per school was determined through proportionate random sampling. However, the research instrument was administered randomly to students.

Instrumentation

The instrument used to collect data for the study was a questionnaire "Determinant of students' attitude towards examination malpractice questionnaire" (DSATEMQ) which was developed by the researcher. DSATEMQ had two sections (section "A" and "B"). Section "A" measured students' background information, while Section "B" of the DSATEMQ was structured to gather information on three variables namely parenting style, moral value and attitude towards examination malpractice. The overall scale used by section "B" of the DSATEMQ was the four Likert type scale: Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D), and Strongly Disagreed (SD). The

questionnaire was structured in such a way that it would generate honest and unbiased answer from the respondent.

Validity and Reliability Research Instruments

For the purpose of establishing validity of the instrument, four experts in educational test and measurement and research and statistics vetted the instrument. The observation and inputs of experts were considered and incorporated to relevant parts of the instrument. This gave the instrument face validity. The reliability of DSATEMQ was achieved through pilot survey, where the research instrument was administered to forty respondents, who were not part of the study population. Test reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's Alpha and it yielded an acceptable correlation coefficients, which ranged between 0.92- 0.97. This gave the researcher the confidence that the instrument was reliable enough to collect data that could elucidate the causal effect of home

variables on attitude towards examination malpractice. Research data were collected from SS II students drawn randomly from selected secondary schools.

Results

The results for the study were presented based on the stated research questions.

RQ1. What is the most meaningful model involving the four home variables (parents' socio-economic status, moral value, parents' marital status, and parenting style) and students' attitude towards examination malpractice.

Result: Fig. 1 is a reproduced model with the path coefficient and the zero order correlation coefficient (in parenthesis). In trimming the paths in the model, paths were considered statistically significant at 0.05 alpha level and considered meaningful if the absolute value of the path coefficient is at least 0.10. It was based on these criteria that the new path model was obtained (Fig. 2). Fig. 2 shows that, of the 10 pathways in the hypothesis model, 6 pathways survive the trimming exercise.

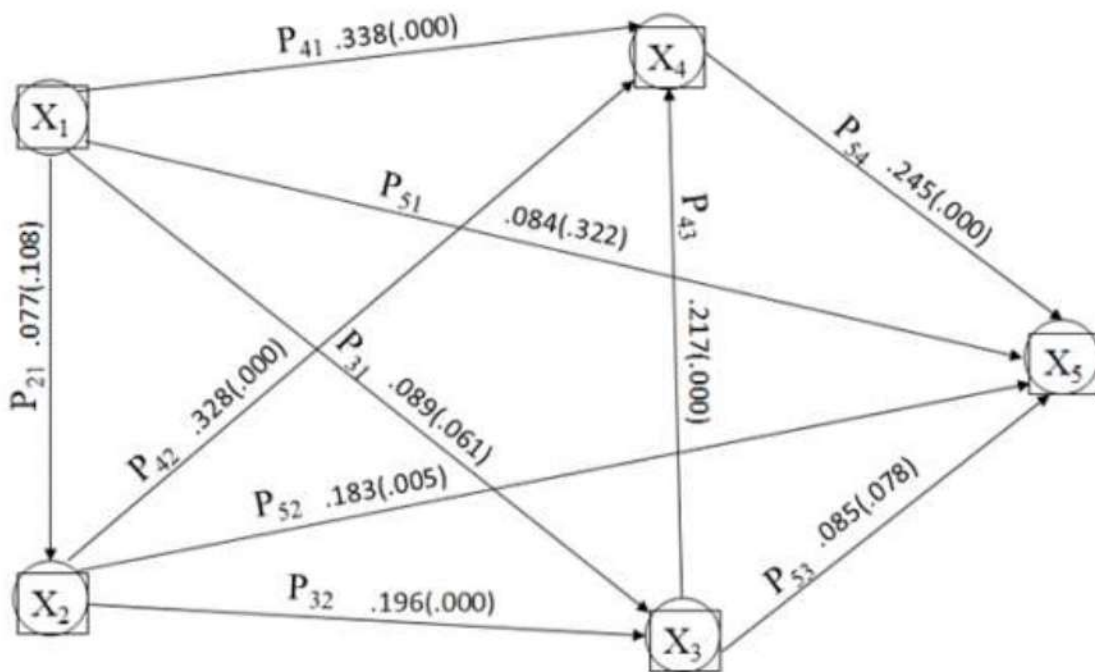


Fig. 1 Hypothesized recursive path model with path coefficient

KEY:

- X1 = Parents' socio-economic status
- X2 = Moral value
- X3 = Parents' marital status
- X4 = Parenting Style

X5 = Attitude towards examination malpractice
 From the hypothesised model, a set of hypothesised structural equations were developed as shown:

$$\begin{aligned}
 X_1 &= e_1 \\
 X_2 &= P_{21}X_1 + e_2 \\
 X_3 &= P_{31}X_1 + P_{32}X_2 + e_3
 \end{aligned}$$

$$X_4 = P_{41}X_1 + P_{42}X_2 + P_{43}X_3 + e_4$$

$$X_5 = P_{51}X_1 + P_{52}X_2 + P_{53}X_3 + P_{54}X_4 + e_5$$

Validation of the New Model

The hypothesis recursive model constructed for this study was trimmed using significant and meaningfulness criteria of the paths coefficient. The trimming produces a new path model, which was compared to the original correlation coefficient shown in Table 1. This helps in verifying the efficacy of the new model (Fig. 2). The discrepancies between the original and the reproduced correlation are considered very small as contained in Table 2. This is an indication that the pattern of correlation in the observed data is consistent with the new model. The model is thus considered tenable in explaining the causal interaction between the home variables and students' attitude towards examination malpractice. Fig. 2 is the most meaningful causal model for students' attitude towards examination malpractice.

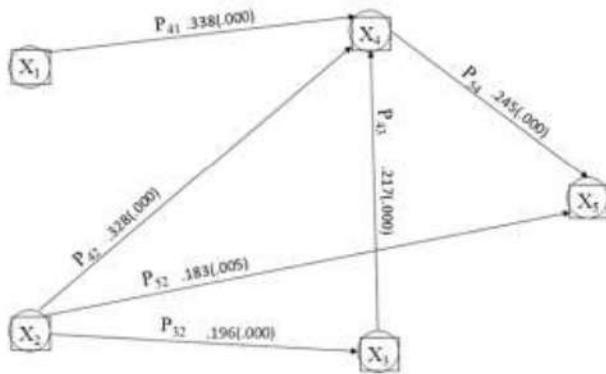


Fig. 2: The parsimonious causal model of four home variables on students' attitude towards examination malpractice

KEY:

X_1 = Parents' socio-economic status

X_2 = Moral value

X_3 = Parents' marital status

X_4 = Parenting Style

X_5 = Attitude towards examination malpractice

From the new model, a new set of structural equations were developed and presented thus:

$$X_1 = e_1$$

$$X_2 = e_2$$

$$X_3 = P_{32}X_2 + e_3$$

$$X_4 = P_{41}X_1 + P_{42}X_2 + P_{43}X_3 + e_4$$

$$X_5 = P_{51}X_1 + P_{52}X_2 + P_{53}X_3 + P_{54}X_4 + e_5$$

Table1: Correlation matrix for the hypothesized model of the four home variables and SSII students' attitude towards examination malpractice

Variable	ATEM	MS	PS	MV	PES
ATEM	1.000	0.204	0.356	-0.262	0.165
MS	0.203	1.000	0.317	-0.203	0.104
PS	0.356	0.317	1.000	-0.390	0.385
MV	-0.261	-0.203	-0.390	1.000	-0.077
PES	0.165	0.102	0.385	-0.077	1.000

^aEntries above the matrix diagonal are original (observed) correlation coefficients

^bEntries below the matrix diagonal are reproduced correlation coefficients

KEY:

ATEM - Attitude towards examination malpractice

MS - Parents' marital status

PS - Parenting style

MV - Moral value

PES - Parents' socio economic status

Table 2: The discrepancy between the observed correlation coefficient and the reproduce correlation coefficient

Variables	ATEM	MS	PS	MV	PES
ATEM	0.000				
MS	0.000	0.000			
PS	0.000	0.000	0.000		
MV	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	
PES	0.000	0.002	0.000	0.000	0.000

KEY:
ATEM - Attitude towards examination malpractice
MS - Parents' marital status
PS - Parenting style
MV - Moral value
PES -Parents' socio economic status
RQ2: What are the estimates of the strength of causation (path coefficients) of the variables in the model?
Result: The beta (β) weight of the path coefficients gives the estimate of the strength of causation. From the beta weights, the actual values of the indirect path were determined by multiplying the component single paths. The results are shown in Table 3

Table 3: Significant and meaningful paths and their coefficients through which the home variables caused variation in students' attitude towards examination malpractice

Pathway	Nature of path	β Weight	Path coefficient	P-Value
P ₂₁	Indirect	0.077	(0.077)(0.165)=0.00776	.108
P ₃₁	Indirect	.089	(0.089)(0.102)=0.00908	.061
P ₃₂	Indirect	-.196	(-0.196)(0.203)=-0.0392	.000
P ₄₁	Indirect	0.338	(.388)(0.338)=0.1142	.000
P ₄₂	Indirect	-.320	(-.320)(.390)= -0.1248	.000
P ₄₃	Indirect	.217	(.217)(0.317)=0.0688	.000
P ₅₁	Direct	.048	0.048	.322
P ₅₂	Direct	-.138	.138	.005
P ₅₃	Direct	.085	0.085	.076
P ₅₄	Direct	.245	0.245	.000

RQ3: What are the direct and indirect effects of home variables on attitude towards examination malpractice?

Result: The paths in the model which exert direct and indirect effect on student's attitude towards examination malpractice are the pathways which are (i) significant (ii) meaningful (iii) have link with students' attitude towards examination malpractice as shown in Fig 1. These pathways are ten (10) in number and are presented in Table 4. Out of the ten pathways, two are direct while eight (8) are indirect. An indirect path (a compound path) is considered

significant and meaningful if the constituent single path coefficient is significant and meaningful. The result shows that two variables (moral value and parenting style) have direct effect on students' attitude towards examination malpractice with parenting style (X_4) contributing the highest with the ($\beta = 0.245$ and $P\text{-value} = 0.000$) This was closely followed by moral value (X_2) (with $\beta = -0.138$ and $P\text{-value} = 0.005$). Table 5 shows the direct effects of home variables on students' attitude towards examination malpractice.

Table 4: Paths, their coefficient and effects on students' attitude towards examination malpractice

Path	Path Coefficient	Nature of path	Remarks
P ₂₁	0.077	Indirect	NS
P ₃₁	0,089	Indirect	NS
P ₃₂	-0.196	Indirect	S
P ₄₁	0.338	Indirect	S
P ₄₂	-0.320	Indirect	S
P ₄₃	0.217	Indirect	S
P ₅₁	0.048	Indirect	NS
P ₅₂	-0.138	Direct	S
P ₅₃	0.085	Indirect	NS
P ₅₄	0.245	Direct	S

Table 5: Variable with direct effect on students' attitude towards examination malpractice

S/N	Variables	Beta value	Sig	Remark
1	Parent's socio-economic status	0.048	0.322	NS
2	Moral Value	-0.138	0.005	S
3	Parents marital Status	0.085	0.075	NS
4	Parenting style	0.245	0.000	S

Discussion of findings

The results indicate that, of the 10 hypothesized pathways constructed for the study, 6 pathways were statistically meaningful and significant after the trimming of the hypothesis path model. Therefore, the new model has 6 significant and meaningful pathways. The efficacy of the new model was verified by reproducing the original correlation matrix of the variables. The verified model shows that the original correlation data is consistent with the new model. Hence, the new model is retained. The new model reveals that, X_1 (Parents' socio economics status) and X_2 (Moral Value) are both exogenous variables in the model because no arrow is entering any of them. From the results, two variables (moral value and parenting style) determine secondary school students' attitude towards examination malpractice directly. However, the other two variables, parents' socio-economic status and parents' marital status determine secondary school students' attitude towards examination malpractice indirectly.

Students' attitude towards examination malpractice which is significantly determined by parenting style should not be surprising because parenting style can highly influence the child's upbringing. Students' conception of their home will normally reflect on their attitude, while parenting style is at the centre. The findings corroborate earlier findings such as Opiyo et al. (2018) who posited that parenting style has strong influence on students' tendency to cheat in an examination. Their study, which was conducted using secondary school students in Kenya further shows that permissive parenting style was a strong support to examination malpractice.

The present causal linkage between students' moral value and attitude towards examination malpractice directly and indirectly influence through parenting style. The result is not surprising because any student with the right (high) moral value will have negative attitude towards such vices, while those with low moral value will see nothing wrong in indulging in deviant behaviours. This is in agreement with Ukpoh (2004). He found out that the students with low moral value cheat more in school

examination than those with high moral value. Parents' marital status contributes indirectly and this indirectly exerts greater influence on students' attitude towards examination malpractice. Olutunbosun and Omoregie (2012) have agreed that the stress of family breakup may place students at risk of unpredictable attitude. In addition, they noted stress from parents to cause students poor preparation for examination which subsequently exposes them to engaging in examination misconduct.

The study further indicates that parents' socio economic status predict attitude towards examination malpractice indirectly through moral value but the new model shows that parents' socio economic status had strong influence on parenting style. This is a pointer to the fact that parents' socio-economic status can influence students' attitude towards examination malpractice depending on the parenting style. The earlier findings by Khan and Khan (2011) discovered that students from low socio-economic background have higher tendency of involvement in examination malpractice.

Conclusion

The study on home variables as determinant of students' attitude towards examination malpractice shows that, of the four (4) variables hypothesized to have direct and indirect causal effect on SS2 students' attitude towards examination malpractice, only two of the variables (parenting style and moral value) had direct and indirect effects. The other variables (parents' socio economics and parents' marital status) had only indirect effects. The relative order of importance of these home variables as determinant of students' attitude towards examination malpractice in senior secondary school are $X_4 > X_2 > X_1 > X_3$.

It is therefore recommended that parents should note the causal order in the new model christened model of "home environment as determinants of students' attitude towards examination malpractice" in planning for their wards' upbringing. This is very necessary if they have to make impact in stamping out examination malpractice in the society. In addition, the school administrators, teachers and

counsellors should make use of these findings to advise parents on their style of parenting at home, as parenting style has direct causation effect on students' attitude towards examination malpractice.

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