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PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE AMONG PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS STUDENTS IN SOKOTO STATE

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Abstract

The alarming rate of poor results in external examinations such as WASSCE, NECO, JAMB and POST UME examinations has been an issue of concern. Most people argue that whereas the government has tried its best to curb examination malpractice in both public and private secondary schools, much is yet to be done to be done by parents to eradicate the issue of examination malpractice completely. This study investigated the level of parental involvement in examination malpractice among private secondary school students in Sokoto State. A stratified random sampling was used to select 200 SS2 Students (100 males and 100 female) from a universal population of 500 SS2 Students who were also randomly selected by Sokoto State government from all the Private secondary schools to attend a workshop on "students' educational Skills and empowerment" in July 2024. A 14-items questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. Two hypotheses were tested using population t-test and independent t-test statistical techniques. The findings revealed among others that the level of parental involvement in examination malpractice in private secondary school students is significantly high. Some recommendations were made as the way forward.

Introduction

Examination has been generally accepted as the best means of assessment. It is a formal test of knowledge or ability. In fact, in a school setting, examination is a means of evaluating the quantity of knowledge a student has acquired within a specific period of time. Adekunle (2003) sees examination as an instrument used for the assessment of individual skills and knowledge-content, both in general and specific area of study. Teaching and learning become more effective when the students are subjected to an examination process to determine the extent to which the students have assimilated the content of the instruction given and the teacher can also assess himself from the performance of the students. Unfortunately, this all

important means of assessing students has become ineffective as all forms of malpractice have been introduced into the educational system. Several patriotic Nigerians are disturbed by the trend, since it could lead to a stage where certificate obtained from our educational institutions will not be admitted by other countries because examination malpractice is rampant in our schools and many students graduate with the aid of examination malpractice. Education is agreed to be the last expectation of the ordinary man in any country, if it is allowed to be destroyed by negligence or carelessness. Thus, if destroyed, it will be a great catastrophe for the entire national development and the future of our upcoming generation.

According to Ajoke and Harour-Peters (2021), examination malpractice refers to any action taken by those involved in a test or examination which renders the result obtained from such an assessment invalid. Before now, Examination malpractice of general nature, such as problems bordering on anxiety and general inadequate preparation were prevalent in both internal and external examinations. Other examination malpractices such as; smuggling textbooks into exam halls, collusion and attempt to copy from other candidates' work, are common presently. The complicated or sophisticated strategies were used such as: use of contractors, impersonation, dubbing and bullets or missiles. Meanwhile, examination malpractice has taken a perilous or dangerous and disturbing turn in recent years, since parents, teachers, supervisors and even the parent of students and schools heads are directly involved in it. There had been a case where supervisors are bought by parents or students to enable the later do what they like in the exam hall. Therefore, such supervisors allow students to take question papers outside to be solved by touts commonly referred to as "machineries". At times, questions are solved by subject teachers and solutions distributed to candidates who contributed money to finance the deal. There had been a case where principals bribe the supervisor over and make him cooperates some private Schools it is parent do gathered money for supervisors and securities agents. The supervisors then feel indifferent to whatever is happening in the hall, principal in these school also arrange to ensure an early warning as soon as external supervisor is sighted, some supervisors also do not parcel their answer script at the appropriate time but want for a convenient time to substitute candidate scripts on payment of the required fees. The above forms of examination malpractices are peculiar with external examination.

Examination malpractice also occurs in internal examination but highly technical as those discussed above. In most cases, principals and teachers are not involved, except few among them used to give question papers to students they love or have close relationship with. Moreover, students also go on their own to make sure they pass the examination. This, they carry textbooks, notebooks and other related

materials into the hall, some write on their legs, hands and in pieces of papers which they pin to their dresses. These incidences of examination malpractice have reduced students urge to read and they believed that, they might have found a way passing when the examination comes. Thus; one of the reasons for the introduction of the former 6-3-3-4 system of education, which is to curb examination malpractices did not yield the fruits. Henceforth, due to the uncontrollable rate of examination malpractice, a scholar called Ugwu in (2012 stated that "the problems is academic, virtually in all schools in the country. Those whom were caught and punished are just a tiny fraction of the culprits, thus, they are regarded by students as the unfortunate ones. This causes a lot of concern to patriotic and well-meaning Nigerians, especially those in the educational sector. Every Nigerian should therefore assist or bring his or her quota to see this menace or problem to be wiped out in our school system. To this end, it is so paramount to study the causes of examination malpractice, so as to find out some possible way out towards them.

According to Ayinla (2021), this problem of examination is also rampant in private schools because the principals of private school want their students to have good result at all cost so as to have more enrolment in their schools in order to generate more money. According to Onwuegbu (2014), teachers in the dilapidating secondary and primary schools, and poorly paid as well, sometime went to work only when they wanted to, and often left to catch up with other businesses during school hours, and so not being able to cover their schemes for the period specified. As a result of these, the option for private schools by parents became a necessity. To meet up with this demand, private schools started springing up at every nook and cranny of streets in major towns and cities in the country. As these schools competed to retain the highest number of students/pupils, examination malpractice started rising. To start with, most of these schools have no standard for admission. Anybody, no matter the background or level is admitted so long as the bargain is beaten with the expectation of performing "the magic" at the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) level. Emphasis was no longer placed on standard but on money. In fact, hardly will a student pass out from these private schools without having chains of distinction and As. Proprietors whose students fail woefully the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) or the National Examination Council (NECO) examination, are regarded as not "knowing the way''.

Lofty ideas as enshrined in the National Policy on Education (2013) has led to series of rapid changes and innovations that has made Nigerian education "child centered" with the right of the child properly documented. This has therefore highlighted the need for the home and school to work in partnership towards the achievement of the laudable educational goals. The contributions of the school to children's education

are often evaluated by the children's academic achievements while parental contributions are viewed from parents' ability to provide their wards, physical, mental and psychological needs. These needs include: provision of positive emotional climate at home, supervision of homework, provision of textbooks, uniform, etc. (Shittu 2004 and Adiotome 2006).Uzoechina & Obidike (2008) and Akiniromi (2004) also added that'll parents could contribute to their wards academic excellence through their active involvement in school's decision making, active participation in parents and teachers association, fund raising, meeting with the school counsellors to proffer ways of helping the children, and also helping the children to maintain study time table. Nevertheless, many parents have gone beyond these examination malpractice (Onyechere, 2004). Examination malpractice is viewed as an unlawful behaviour or activity engaged by the same examination. These acts include: taking into the examination hall prohibited materials, paying of money to examination officials in order to allow their children copy from each other's, exchange of question papers, etc. (Edide 1997, Okoye 1998 & Eze 2008).

Many reasons from the home front and the school accounts for examination malpractice, whereas inadequate preparation and inability to cover the school syllabus, lack of infrastructural material also enhanced by parental as reasons for examination malpractice, the teacher contend that parents bully teachers who are unwilling to assist their children to cheat in examination (Olushola, 2008). Studies also revealed that some parents are of the habit of withdrawing their children from well-organized schools only to register them in examination centers where malpractice These studies also revealed that parents irrespective of their social or educational status are that teachers who help students to cheat in examination, do that by receiving gratification parents withdraw their children from one school to another due to their children's inability to excel in examination.

Statement of the problem

Nowadays, the issue of examination malpractice is becoming very alarming in our secondary schools as a good number of students are being apprehended on examination, majority of whom were found guilty from one form of examination malpractice or another. With this, studies are undertaken with a view to state and find out the causes of examination malpractice among senior secondary school students, see the resultant. Causes of examination malpractice can be as many as the malpractices themselves. But, they are often expressed through apportioning blames to one side or the others, this is because everybody believed that, nobody takes care and therefore, they stated integration. With a careful consideration towards the students' side, being the worst victims are blamed for inadequate preparation for the examination and this makes them loose confidence and ability to perform well in

examinations, and therefore resort to all kinds of malpractices. Teachers on the other hand are blamed for their inability to teach the students effectively and therefore to rid themselves of this guilt and to be free from their sin, they try to aid their students in conduct of real examination by telling the candidates directly answers to some or all questions. Therefore, principals involved in threes kind of activity are blamed for lack of supervision in the daily running of their schools. Some principals of private schools might be induced by their proprietors since passing examination by many candidates attracts more parents to send their children to such schools.

However, parents who have confidence for the capability of their children in writing examinations for themselves which may be the reason why agreed with no malpractice during exams. The activities of the examination touts in Nigerian society has been of serious concern towards examination malpractice as these are the kind of people who crookedly get the question papers well bodies, for example West African Examination Council for cancelling the papers wherever detected. The examination bodies also have their own share of blame, example W.A.E.C regulations and syllables are usually delayed in their release to the schools. This may frustrate the efforts of the schools in preparing their candidates well for the examination. Therefore, the students sit for questions of topic which they have not been taught and these questions determine validity and reliability of the whole examination. Government efforts have not made a significant especially on providing adequate learning facilities and qualified teachers to enhance conducive atmospheres for the candidates to develop confidence in their academic capabilities. Therefore, the schools complain of insufficient equipment’s and qualified teachers as funds to provide the proper execution of different educational activities and programmes have frequently become useless.

Consequently, the effect of examination malpractice is therefore, a serious menace in the educational sector and the nation at large. This effect is growing up as a result of the fertility of the ground on which it is natured, thus, the indiscipline in Nigerian society where honesty, dedication and hard work could hardly earn you or anyone a livelihood especially when he/she retired from the job. This area was chosen because the research cannot cover all the schools affected by examination malpractice. Worried about the dwindling rate of secondary school students' academic performance, especially in external examinations such as WASSCE, NECO, JAMB, etc, parents and teachers often point accusing fingers at each other as being responsible for the children's poor performance. This situation has also put Nigerians in a fix as regards who should actually take the blame. It is unarguable fact that inadequate preparation, inability to cover the school curriculum, lack of infrastructural and instructional materials, among other reasons could affect students'

academic performance and thereby result in examination malpractice. What is more worrisome to the researchers of this study is the level of parental involvement in students' examination malpractice.

Objectives

The objectives of the study were:

1. To find out the level of involvement of parents in students' examination malpractice.
2. To find out whether there is any difference between the highly educated and the less educated parents in their involvement in students' examination malpractice.

Research Questions

1 What are the level of parents involved in students' examination malpractice?
2 Are the highly educated parents different from the less educated parents in terms of their involvement in students' examination malpractice?

Hypotheses

1. The level of parental involvement in students' examination malpractice in secondary school is not significantly high.
2. There is no significant difference in the level of involvement in students' examination malpractice between the highly educated and the less educated parents.

Methodology

The research design used for this study was descriptive survey. The study population comprised of 200 SS2 students (100 males and 100 female) who were selected through stratified random sampling in order to ensure equal representation of the male and female students. These 200SS2 students were selected from a population of 500 SS2 students who were randomly selected from all private secondary schools in the Sokoto state the instruments was distributed students during the Annual quiz competition organized by the Private schools Association of Sokoto state the participants were from Sokoto South and Sokoto North in Sokoto metropolis from of the two local government areas while 100 students were randomly selected from each of the two. A total of 200 students were selected from the two groups and used for this study.

Data were collected using a 14-item questionnaire, divided into 2 sections. Section A elicited demographic information on student’s school, sex, class, sponsors/guardians and parental literacy level. Section B consisted of 10 items that

sought information on how parents are involved in their wards examinations success. Examples of items in Section B include:

1. My parents do not see anything wrong in whatever I do to pass my examination.
2. My parents will prefer that I go to another school than to repeat a class.
3. My parents are planning to register me for WASSCE and NECO in a special centre.

Response was on a 4-point Likert scale of SA, A, D and SD

To ensure the reliability of the instrument, the Cronbach Alpha reliability method was adopted. The researchers administered the instruments to fifty (50) respondents who were not part of the study sample. The scores obtained were subjected to the Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha formula. The reliability obtained was 0.76, which is an indication of the internal consistency of the instrument. It was considered high enough for the study. A population t-test and independent t-test statistical analysis were used for the data analysis.

Analysis and results

Hypothesis 1: The level of parental involvement in students' examination malpractice in private secondary school is not significantly high. In this hypothesis, for the level of involvement to be involvement should be significantly greater than 25.0, which is the Central point of Agreed respondents, t-test was used to test this hypothesis. The result of the analysis is shown in

Table 1

Table 1: A population t-test analysis of parental involvement in examination malpractice of their wards/children

Variable	**Sample mean**	**SD**	**t-value**	**df**
Level of parental involvement in examination malpractice	26.05	4.62	4.84*	197
Reference mean	25.0			

* Significant at 0.05 level of significant (critical t-value=1.972)N=198

The result shows that the calculated t-value of 4.84 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.972 at.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected, meaning that the level of parental involvement in examination malpractice of their wards/children is significantly high.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the level of involvement in students' examination malpractice between the highly educated and the less educated parents. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Independent t-test analysis of the extent of involvement of the high educated and the less educated parents in aiding and abating examination malpractice of their wards/children

Variable	**N**	**X**	**SD**	**t-**	**df**
Highly educated parents	100	26.00	4.25	0.98	196
Less educated parents	98	25.40	4.00		

* Not significant at 0.05 level (critical t-value=1.972)N=198

The result shows that the calculated t-value of 0.98 is lower than the critical t-value of 1.972 at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted. In other words, both the highly educated and the less educated parents are involved in aiding and abating examination malpractice in their wards/children.

The first hypothesis sought to investigate the level of parental involvement in students' examination malpractice in secondary schoo1 is not significantly high. Data collected and analyzed by the researchers in order to test the hypothesis revealed that the calculated t-value of 4.84 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.972 thereby rejecting the null hypothesis. These findings agree with the earlier assertion by Agu (2005); Anagbogu & Nwokulo (2007) and Eze (2008) that parents send their children to special or 'miracle centres' to write their external examinations, irrespective or where these centres are situated. The result further discovered that parents become desperate to the point of arranging and paying for mercenaries to write for their unruly behaviour, this encourages examination malpractices as such teachers are likely to avoid the children even in examination hall.

The findings of this research also affirm Onyechere (2004) and Ijaiya (2004) assertion that parents not only pay for special coaching of their wards for examination malpractice but also pay monies to the subject teachers from time to time in order to curry their favour for the marks for their wards. Such parents Onyechere (2004) and Ijaiya (2004) further explained do not bother themselves to attend parents and teacher’s association meetings where the welfare of the children is being discussed.

The second hypothesis tried to find out if a significant difference exists in the level of significance and less educated parents. The findings revealed that the calculated t-

value of 0.98 was both less and highly educated parents are highly involved in student's examination malpractice.

The researchers found out from the respondents that most parents, irrespective of their academic only register them in schools where their wards can be assisted to excel in their examination through examination malpractice. The researchers however, noted that if only such parents could allow their children to repeat the classes for which they failed in the examination, teachers as well as the children involved will put in more effort in ensuring that such children excel in the next examination. Better still, the researchers also opined that if failed children are referred to their counsellors for counselling, such children will be assisted to discover for themselves why they failed in their examination and what can be done in order to excel in examination. The findings of this study agrees with Iyaiya (2004), Olushola (2004), Agu (2005) and Eze (2008) findings which discovered that parents irrespective of their educational and social status are guilty in their involvement with student's examination malpractice. These researchers also noted that there is connivance between parents irrespective of their status and their wards where examination malpractice is concerned.

Conclusion

The present study has demonstrated a significant need for parents to join hands with other educational stakeholders in curbing the menace of examination malpractice which is gradually dragging the image of this great nation (Nigeria) into the mud. Children who are the leaders of tomorrow should be assisted by all educational stake holders including parents to discover their potentials and put them to maximum use, for the benefit of the nation rather than being assisted to pass examination through malpractice. This study saw the need for children who fail in their examination to be allowed to repeat such class in order to make up for the lapses in them which may have result to the children's failure, rather than help them cheat to acquire certificates the children cannot defend.

Recommendations

In view of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are enhanced as the way forward.

1. The State Ministry of Education should collaborate with private secondary school Directors, proprietors, and principals to ensure that all parents irrespective of their status attend PTA meetings. Counsellors during PTA/SBMC meetings should counsel parents on the need to assist their children to attain their educational goals. Parents should also be counselled to allow their children repeat classes for which their examination performances are not encouraged.

2. The State Government should direct the State House of Assembly to enact laws that will make students movement from one school to the other impossible.
3. The State Ministry of Education should keep record of all the children who fail and of wards whose parents are transferred from one geographical location to another, should be made subject to the State Ministry of Education ratification.

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