

---

## **Parenting Style, Test Anxiety and Cheating Tendency Among Secondary Students in Calabar Municipality Local Government of Cross River State, Nigeria**

**Stella ESUABANA**

Department of Guidance Counselling,  
University of Calabar, Nigeria.

---

### **Abstract**

The main purpose of this study was to investigate on parenting style, test anxiety and cheating tendencies among secondary students in Calabar Municipality Local Government of Cross River State. To achieve this aim, four hypotheses were formulated to direct the study. Literature relating to the variables was reviewed accordingly. Ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. A sample of two hundred (200) students was randomly selected for the study. The selection was done through stratified and simple random sampling techniques. The questionnaire was the main instrument used for data collection. The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by the researcher. The reliability estimate of the instrument was established through the test-retest reliability coefficient of the research instrument. To test the hypotheses to ascertain whether to reject or retain them, One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was adopted for the study. The hypotheses were tested at .05 levels of significance. The result of the analysis revealed that parenting style and test anxiety significantly influenced students' cheating behaviours in examination. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that government should adopt measures of checking or reducing cheating tendency in examination.

**Keywords:** Parenting Style, Test Anxiety, Cheating Tendency, Secondary Students, Calabar Municipality Cross River State, Nigeria.

---

### **INTRODUCTION**

Examination malpractice has become a cankerworm which has eaten deep into the fabrics of Nigeria's educational systems. Examination malpractice is any form of misbehaviour that leads to alteration, or tampering with the prescribed ways of conducting examination in any given system. For example, bringing into the examination hall extraneous materials; irregular activities in the examination rooms or outside the venue, communicating with others while taking examination or impersonation (Jega, 2006).

Habiba (2001) sees it as any act of misconduct such as causing of leakages, impersonation, writing on palms or hidden parts of dresses, coding of the five fingers (a, b, c, d, e, respectively) for objective test, exchange of question papers that is after the examination by either students taking the examination or the official, assigned the duty of scoring or releasing the result of the examination.

Of course, examination is a potent instrument for judgment of knowledge or competence in every human endeavour especially in educational institution. For examination to be adjudged, to be free, fair and devoid of partiality, valid and reliable, it is necessary to urge that our educational institutions must endeavour to conduct examinations with all the seriousness it deserves, lest the entire nation is saturated with incompetent or half-baked and

confused professionals who may bring disaster to our future development (Moronkola, 2004).

Examination malpractice is not a recent phenomenon in Nigeria. It has been there for a long time now, but there is a new dimension to examination malpractice in the country (Adenipekun, 2004). Today examination malpractice is perpetuated by individuals who are desperate to pass and acquire certificates or degrees. Today, there is an unholy, unwholesome conspiracy to aid and abet examination malpractice by school heads, teachers, invigilators, parents, students and “mercenaries” whose motive is to make quick money rather than genuine love for the candidates (Adenipekun, 2004, Idaka, 2006). However, parenting style and expectations are presumed to be at the forefront of examination malpractice in Nigeria. Most parents send their children or wards to school expecting that they will complete their courses at the top of their class; as a result, students who cannot cope with their studies and cannot meet their parents’ expectations may have anxiety to resort to examination malpractice (Ololube, 2013).

According to Ekpo (1999), cheating in examination is as old as academics. It is pertinent to understand what examination malpractice is, agreeing with Isangedighi (2007) examination malpractice is a form of corruption and corrupt practices. It is a deliberate act made by a candidate singly or in collaboration with others to attempt to obtain a grade better than he is capable of obtaining.

It is a cankerworm that is neither new to education system nor peculiar to only Nigerian schools. Cheating behaviours include-glancing at other students scripts, going into examination halls with pieces of papers popularly referred to as “brain support” or “microchips”, exchanges of papers/answer sheets, discussion, used of handset to send answer to candidates which is a recent method. Other higher arrangements which implicate examination officials, teachers and lectures include—leakage of exam questions prior to exam external assistance aided by compromise of examination official, improper assignment of candidate to ghost centers, marker malpractice, impersonation done with knowledge of examination officials. The varieties cannot be exhausted because as one form is discovered and counteracted, new strategies are being devised. Eliminating or curbing examination malpractice has been a long time battle by both the government and stakeholders in education, in an attempt to curb the problem of cheating the federal government has over the years instructed commissions of inquiry, acted upon the commission’s findings and recommendations, introduced legislations which stipulate strict penalties for various examination offences. The penalties have ranged from withholding and or cancellation of results, expulsion to imprisonment. Despite these measures the problem of cheating has remained intractable.

It is very obvious that the cheating today no longer responds to harsh disciplinary measures as the latter tend to treat symptoms rather than the causes. In a situation of this nature therefore it becomes imperative to look beyond punishment and other measures as a means of correcting this dishonest behaviour to a more lasting and enduring solution.

The state of Nigeria education today is a matter of great concern to all stakeholders and lovers of education. This concern arises from the widespread and on-going rate of malpractices. The aim of education is to transmit values, attitudes, skills and knowledge that are acceptable to the society and the institutions of learning are supposed to produce men and women who are highly skilled and proficient in their difficult fields. Today, products of our institutions come out with good grades and certificates that they cannot defend practically. Why are our institutions bringing out students from secondary schools that cannot read fluently and graduates that cannot display proficiency in their different fields? The answer can be inferred from simple response “ill-gotten” certificates through examination malpractices. Cheating in examinations is a “Cankerworm” that seem to have resisted all measures to stop it. According to the Daily Guardian of July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2000, it is “Nigeria’s

festering sore". The Daily Guardian of July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2005) reported that JAMB 2005, 95,000 student's results were cancelled due to various forms of examination malpractice.

This cankerworm has defied attempts by commission's draconian degrees (Decree No 20 of 1984), with 21 years jail term and several other measures like cancellation or withholding of result, demotion of teachers and supervisors, de-recognition of some centers or schools, rustication and dismissal of erring students and other punitive steps. In spite of these and many other attempts made to stop cheating in examination, such practice still persists. It is the intention of this study to provide empirical evidence of the influence of, parenting style and test anxiety on cheating tendency among secondary students in Calabar Municipality of Cross River State.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Parenting Style and Tendency to Cheat in Examination**

Rosenthal (2007) study revealed observations that parenting style predicts child well-being in a number of area including social skills academic performance and the degree of problem behaviour children of authoritative and authoritarian parents may do well in school and not engage in problem behaviour, permissive parents, she said, shield their kids from the consequences of their actions as well as the complications of life. Thus, they are more involved in problem behaviour and perform less well in school.

In another study, Satterwhite et al. (2002) asserts that parental support was a significant predictor of child's academic performance. Denga and Ali as cited in Agbor (2004) pointed out that permissive parents may not want their children to cheat in examination but due to lack of specific guidance and attention (moral or social) the children tend to exhibit some kind of deviant behaviour.

On parental pressure, Nyenti cited in Ekpo (1999) observed that, factors that influence cheating include parental pressure for success, disciplinary level and parental example. Children may show fewer tendencies to cheat only if parent set realistic goals for them. That, pressures begins from hoe where a high value is placed upon academic learning. Fanfunwa in Agbor (2004) observed that parents sometimes in their pride impose courses not minding the capacity of the affective, cognitive or psychomotor domain of their wards before, imposition. These kids are pushed too hard and too far, making them corrupt through examination malpractice to please parents and parents justify any form of misconduct satisfy the desire and pride. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

- Parenting style does not significantly influence students cheating behaviours in examination.

### **Test Anxiety and Students' Tendency to Cheat in Examination**

Ukpor (2004) carried out an investigation of examination cheating tendency among senior school students (SSS) in Akpabuyo Local Government area. On one of the formulated hypotheses is that test anxiety in students does not have any significant relationship with examination tendency.

The causal-comparative research design was considered suitable for the study since it involved studying the causes when the effects are already manifested. A total of 240 respondents were randomly chosen from the eleven (11) post primary schools in the area. Five sets of questionnaires were used. The data were analyzed using Pearson Product

Moment correlation. The results revealed that test anxiety related significantly with cheating tendency.

On the other hand, it could be correctly said that heightened anxiety through threat is likely to increase in the students the tendency to cheat in examination. Those who are not honest in their school work (cheat) according to Vitro (2002) generally come from home where they receive severe punishment or not at all.

Nwana (2003) while making remarks on the increased incidence of cheating in examination pointed out that test anxiety influences cheating. Furthermore, he opined that our secondary school students' look on public examinations as confrontation with enemy, all hands must be one deck and all heads put together. Previous studies have found level of test anxiety to be significantly related to students examination cheating behaviour (Shelton and Hill, 1969; Ugawuegbu, 2003; and Jersild (2003).

Hill and Eton (2000) tested children's arithmetic performance under two conditions. In one case, time limits were imposed so that children could complete two thirds of the problem they attempted, but failed to complete the remaining third. In an optimizing condition, the time limited was removed, which minimized the failure experienced and permitted the children to complete all the problems they attempted under the time pressure condition, the high anxious fifth and sixth grades showed three times the errors, took twice as long as each problem and cheated twice as often as low anxious children. They also found that high anxious children were seen to perform poorly at those critical areas of child's progress in school measures of academic skills, classroom learning and verbal problem solving activity. He observed that such children are not less capable than their low anxious peers. It is the type of evaluation or test-taking settling, which accounts in part for the poor performance of high anxious children, to demonstrate the role of different types of evaluation procedures on children performance.

The result of Udom (2001) contradicts widely the held views that level of test anxiety is related positively to their tendency to cheat in examination. Udom (2001) result revealed that students with different actual level of cheating do not differ significantly on test anxiety. Despite this insignificant result she observed a trend in the result which shows that the higher the anxiety the higher the actual level of cheating. Despite this contrary view, previous studies for example Johnsn, Kirts and Sarason (2003) found that students feel more justified cheating and permitting others to copy their work when a lot of anxiety and hostility are aroused by their instructions.

Piaget as quoted by Maier (2005) also argue that our school system creates anxiety in students by laying undue emphasis on competition and on examination grades as evidence of academic competence. He went further to conclude that such condition impose on the students create anxiety in them and tempted then to cheat in order to be able to meet up with the acceptable grade thus it could be argued that test anxiety is a factor influencing cheating behaviour in examination.

The result of Nseikpong (2001) contradicts the widely held views that level of test anxiety is related positively to their tendency to be involved in examination malpractice. Nsekpong's (2002) result reveal that students with different level of cheating do not differ significantly on test anxiety. Despite this insignificant result, she observed a trend in the result, which shows that the higher the anxiety, the higher the actual level of examination malpractice. In spite of this contrary view, previous study, for example, Johnson and Sarason (2003) have shown that students feel more justified indulging in examination malpractice and permitting others to copy their work when a lot of anxiety and hostility are aroused by the instructors.

Piaget as quoted by Maier (2000) also argues that our school system creates anxiety in students by laying undue emphasis on competition and on examination grades as evidence of

academic competence. He goes on to concludes that such condition when imposed on the students, created anxiety in them and tempts them to be involved in examination malpractice in order to meet up with the acceptable grade. Thus, it could be argued that test anxiety is a factor that influences examination malpractice. It is hypothesized that:

- Test anxiety does not have any significant relationship with students cheating tendencies.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research design adopted for this study is ex-post facto design. The design, ex-post facto is suitable for this study because of the nature of the variables being investigated. Moreso, the researcher had no direct control over the independent variables since they had already occurred in the population. The population of the study is made up of all the students in Junior Secondary School III in Calabar Municipality of Cross River State. There are a total number of four thousand, three-hundred and sixty-two (4362) students, which comprises of Out of this number 2181 were male, while 2249 were female (As recorded by Secondary Education Board [SEB], 2016). The sampling technique adopted for this study was the stratified and simple random sampling technique. The stratification was based on schools and gender. In each stratum a simple random sampling was used to select the sample. The sample of this study is made up of two hundred (200) students randomly selected from four public secondary schools in Calabar Municipality. The instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire. The questionnaire was subjected to face validity by experts in the area of educational psychology, test and measurement of the Faculty of Education University of Calabar. The reliability of the research instrument (questionnaire) was established through the split-half method of reliability. The reliability estimates ranges from 0.79 to 0.91, which shows that it is high enough to measure the variables.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In this section, each of the study hypothesis was re – stated and the result of data analysis carried out to test it is presented. Each hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance.

### **Hypothesis One**

Parenting style does not significantly influence students cheating behaviours in examination.

The independent variable in this hypothesis is parenting style (autocratic, democratic and permissive); while the dependent variable is cheating behaviours in examination. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was the employed to test this hypothesis. The results of the analysis are presented in table 1.

Table 1: One-way Analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the influence of parenting style on students' cheating behaviours in examination (N=200)

Parenting style	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	
Autocratic	76	13.95	2.82	
Democratic	56	16.79	1.71	
Permissive	68	17.12	1.19	
Total	200	15.82	2.26	
Source of Variation	Sums of squares	Df	MS	F-ratio
Between groups	433.243	2	216.622	
Within groups	580.277	197	2.946	73.542*
Total	1013.520	199		

\*Significant at .05 level, critical  $F = 2, 197 = 3.04$

The result of the analysis revealed that the calculated F-ratio of 73.542, is higher than the critical F-value of 3.04 at .05 level of significance with 3 and 197 degrees of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that parenting style significantly influence students' cheating behaviours in examination.

## Hypothesis Two

Test anxiety does not significantly influence students cheating behaviours in examination.

The independent variable in this hypothesis is test anxiety (high, moderate and low); while the dependent variable is cheating behaviours in examination. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was the employed to test this hypothesis. The results of the analysis was presented in Table 2.

Table 2: One-way Analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the influence of test anxiety on students' cheating behaviours in examination (N=200)

Test anxiety	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	
High	76	15.42	2.72	
Moderate	60	15.47	2.05	
Low	64	16.63	1.55	
Total	200	15.82	2.26	
Source of Variation	Sums of squares	df	MS	F-ratio
Between groups	61.060	2	30.530	
Within groups	952.460	197	4.835	6.315*
Total	1013.520	199		

\*Significant at .05 level, critical  $F = 2, 197 = 3.04$

The result of the analysis revealed that the calculated F-ratio of 6.315, is higher than the critical F-value of 3.04 at .05 level of significance with 2 and 197 degrees of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that test anxiety has a significant influence on students' cheating behaviours in examination.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of the first hypothesis indicated that there is a significant influence of parenting style on cheating behaviours in examination. The finding is in agreement with the view of Bandurind (1999) who believes that the primary role of all parents is to influence, teach and

control their children. He stressed that parenting style has been found to predict child wellbeing in the domains of social competence academic performance, psychosocial development etc. Children and adolescents from authoritarian families tend to perform moderately well in school and are uninvolved in problem behaviour while children from uninvolved home (permissive) are more likely to be involved in problem behaviour such as examination malpractice, truancy and riotous practices and perform less well in school. Authoritative parenting predicts good psychosocial outcomes, less problem behaviour and good academic performance. He opined that, the benefits of authoritative parenting and the detrimental effects of uninvolved parenting become evident as early as the pre-school years and continue throughout adolescence into early adulthood.

Rosenthal (2007) also noted that parenting style predicts child well-being in a number of areas including social skills academic performance and the degree of problem behaviour children of authoritative and authoritarian parents may do well in school and not engage in problem behaviour, permissive parents, she said, shield their kids from the consequences of their actions as well as the complications of life. Thus, they are more involved in problem behaviour and perform less well in school.

Agbor (2004) also pointed out that permissive parents may not want their children to cheat in examination but due to lack of specific guidance and attention (moral or social) the children tend to exhibit some kind of deviant behaviour. He further observed that parents sometimes in their pride impose courses not minding the capacity of the affective, cognitive or psychomotor domain of their wards before, imposition. These kids are pushed too hard and too far, making them corrupt through examination malpractice to please parents and parents justify any form of misconduct satisfy the desire and pride. Ekpo (1999) also observed that, factors that influence cheating include parental pressure for success, disciplinary level and parental example. Children may show fewer tendencies to cheat only if parent set realistic goals for them. That, pressures begins from home where a high value is placed upon academic learning.

The result of the second hypothesis indicated that there is a significant influence of test anxiety on cheating behaviours in examination. The finding is in line with the view of Omoluebi (1985) who observed that examination stress varies in degrees because of the situation. The higher levels of test anxiety are manifested when examination is in view than when it is not. The higher the level of anxiety, the less students are likely to achieve and to avoid failure. Cheating becomes the most available option.

Nwana (2003) also opined that our secondary school students' look on public examinations as confrontation with enemy, all hands must be one deck and all heads put together. Previous studies have found level of test anxiety to be significantly related to students' examination cheating behaviour. Hill (1969) also found that high anxious children were seen to perform poorly at those critical areas of child's progress in school measures of academic skills, classroom learning and verbal problem solving activity. He observed that such children are not less capable than their low anxious peers. It is the type of evaluation or test-taking settling which accounts in part for the poor performance of high anxious children.

Nenty (1985) also pointed out that students' level of test anxiety related positively and significantly to their tendency to cheat in examination. He concluded that the more test related anxiety a student shows the more likely he is to cheat in examination. He opined that probably, it might be argued that test anxiety is a part of social related factor acting on the student at that time. Johnsen, Kirks and Sarason (2003) also found that students feel more justified cheating and permitting others to copy their work when a lot of anxiety and hostility are aroused by their instructions.

Maier (2005) also argued that our school system creates anxiety in students by laying undue emphasis on competition and on examination grades as evidence of academic

competence. He went further to conclude that such condition impose on the students create anxiety in them and tempted then to cheat in order to be able to meet up with the acceptable grade thus it could be argued that test anxiety is a factor influencing cheating behaviour in examination.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results and the findings of this study, the researcher concluded that parenting style and test anxiety significantly influence students' cheating behaviours in examination. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- Government should adopt measures of checking or reducing cheating tendency in examination. For example, prizes should be given to schools to give to the in examination.
- School authority should always organize seminars, workshop and symposium as part of orientation programme for first year student where examination ethics are been taught, code of conduct produced and distributed to students.
- Regular holding of Parents Teachers Association (PTA) meetings should be encourage where school related problems have examination malpractice are discussed and punitive measure are been recommended for any student who is caught on the act.
- Teacher and counselors should identify strategies of reducing test anxiety among students as it will to reduce malpractice behaviour during examination.

## REFERENCES

- Adenipekun, P. I. (1996). Examination Cheats: Their modes of operation. *Daily Times*. P. 15-16.
- Agbor, F. O. (2004). An investigation into the forces behind examination malpractice. A challenge for secondary school education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *Journal of the Curriculum Organization of Nigeria*, 10(2), 344-347.
- Bandurind, R. F. (1999). *Psychology applied to education*. Atlanta, Houghton and Mifflin Company.
- Ekpo, E. E. (1999). *Psychosocial factors and students tendency to cheat in examination*. Unpublished M.Ed thesis, University of Calabar.
- Habiba, B. (2001). Gender differences in cheating attitudes and class cheating behaviour: A meta-analysis, sex-role. *A Journal of Research*, 13(5), 657-660.
- Hill, K. T. & Eton, W. D. (2000). The interaction of test anxiety and success-failure experienced in determining children's arithmetic performance. *Developmental psychology*, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Idaka, J. T. (2001). *The psychology of adolescence behaviour and development*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin company.
- Isangedighi, A. J. (2007). *Child psychology development and education*. Calabar, Eti-Nwa Associates.
- Jega, J. (2006). Academic cheating: The contribution of sex, personality and situational variables. *Developmental psychology*, 6, 320-325.
- Jerslid, A. T. (2003). *The psychology of adolescence*. New York: Macmillan publication company.
- Johnson, K. and Sarason, L. (2003). *Examination malpractice and students psycho-social factors as threats to the school examination*. New York: Bureau of Applied science Research, Columbia University.

- Maier, H. M. (2005). *Undergraduate Cheating*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Moronkola, T. R. (2004). *Psychological theories and human learning: Kongo report*. Moterey, California. Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.
- Nseikpong, E. P. (2001). *Effects of continuous assessment and threat of punishment on some Ondo State students' attitudes towards cheating on examinations. Psychological strategies for national development*. Enugu: Great Paulson Press.
- Nwana, O. C. (2003). School discipline in the East central state of Nigeria after the civil war. *West African Journal of Education*, 71(1), 24-31.
- Ololube, N. P. (2013). *Educational management, planning and supervision: model for effective implementation*. Owerri, Nigeria: Springfield Publishers.
- Omoluebi, P. B. (1985). *Stress reactions of failed students to University resist examination: Psychological strategies for material development*. Enugu: Great Paulson press.
- Rosenthal, I. E. (2007). Test anxiety, attention and the general problem of anxiety. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 28, 58-61.
- Shelton, J. & Hill, J. P. (1969). Effects on cheating of achievement, anxiety and knowledge of peer performance. *Developmental psychology*, 1(3), 449-455.
- Sullivan, I. A. (2001). *The interpersonal theory of psychiatry*. New York: Noston.
- Udom, N. E. (2001). *Factors that affect students tendency to cheat in examination*. Unpublished M.Ed thesis, University of Calabar, Calabar.
- Ugwuegbu, D. C. (2003). Attitude of Igbor high school students towards cheating in examination. *West African Journal of Education*, 19(3),18-25.
- Ukpor, P. R. (2004). Discipline in secondary schools implications for performance in WAEC conducted examination as it affects Remo candidate. *West Africa Journal of Education*, 24(2), 374-381.
- Vitro, F. J. (2002). The relationship of classroom dishonesty to perceived parental discipline. *Journal of college students personnel*, 12, 427-429.