

Teachers' Perceptions of Parental Involvement in Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination Malpractices in Ovia North East Local Government Area, Edo State

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated teachers' perceptions of parental involvement in Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination malpractices in Ovia North East Local Government Area, Edo State. Utilizing a descriptive survey research design, the study encompassed all 174 teachers from 24 public senior secondary schools in the area. A sample of 36 teachers was selected through simple random sampling from 12 of these schools. Data were collected using a validated questionnaire and analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and independent sample t-test.

The findings revealed a positive perception of parental involvement in examination malpractices among teachers. Moreover, the study indicated a high level of parental involvement in these malpractices. However, no significant differences were found in teachers' perceptions based on gender, experience, or qualification. The study recommends implementing biometric verification, enhancing surveillance, and incorporating modules on managing parental involvement in teacher training programs. Additionally, orientation sessions for parents on the dangers of engaging in examination malpractices are suggested.

KEYWORDS: Examination, malpractices, parents, teachers, involvement

ARTICLE DETAILS

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INTRODUCTION

Examination malpractice, particularly in high-stakes testing environments like the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE), remains a persistent issue in Nigeria's educational system. Traditionally, the focus has been on students as the main perpetrators of these malpractices. However, recent studies have broadened this focus to include other stakeholders, such as parents. Teachers, who are on the front lines of the educational process, often have valuable insights into the extent of parental involvement in these unethical practices.

Examination malpractice poses a significant challenge to the Nigerian education system, compromising the integrity of educational assessments and the fairness of the system. Ugochi (2020) defines examination malpractice as any deliberate act of wrongdoing by individuals before, during, or after an examination, aimed at unfairly improving a candidate's result. According to Adewale and Abiodun (2021), examination malpractices include cheating through impersonation, leakage of examination questions, collaboration between students and invigilators, and external influences from non-participants, such as parents.

Examination malpractice in Nigeria has been increasing, with the West African Examination Council (WAEC) and the National Examination Council (NECO) reporting rising incidences each year (Agbaje, 2019). Contributing factors include systemic issues within the educational system, societal pressure for academic success, and inadequate student preparation for examinations (Eze, 2018). While students are often blamed, it's crucial to acknowledge the significant role of the broader social and familial context, including parental involvement.

Examination malpractice is not confined to Nigeria; it is a global issue that undermines educational systems worldwide. Research from various countries indicates that examination malpractice manifests in different forms and is often driven by similar factors, such as societal pressures, parental involvement, and the pursuit of academic success. Newton (2018) defines examination malpractice as any form of cheating or dishonest behaviour before, during, or after an examination to unfairly improve a candidate's performance. The global prevalence of examination malpractice necessitates a broader examination of all involved parties, including parents.

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A global survey by Orosz et al. (2018) revealed that countries such as India, China, and the United States face significant challenges with examination malpractice. High-stakes examinations, like college entrance tests or national certifications, create pressure that leads to unethical behaviours by students and, in some cases, parents. This study emphasized that parental involvement in examination malpractice is not confined to developing countries but is also present in more developed educational systems.

Parental involvement in education is generally seen as beneficial for a child's academic performance (Aremu & Oluwole, 2019). However, the competitive nature of the SSSCE and the high stakes associated with academic success has driven some parents to engage in unethical practices. These actions include paying for special examination centres, bribing teachers or invigilators, and even helping their children cheat (Uche, 2022). As Olatunde (2021) notes, parents, motivated by the desire for their children to gain admission to tertiary institutions, may feel justified in circumventing the system to secure better results for their children.

In many countries, parents play a crucial role in shaping their children's academic paths, and sometimes this influence extends to unethical behaviours. For example, in India, where competition for seats in prestigious institutions is fierce, some parents provide financial incentives to invigilators or seek access to exam materials in advance (Biswas & Biswas, 2019). Parental intervention is driven by the desire to ensure their children's success, especially in high-stakes examinations like the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) for engineering and the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) for medical studies (Rao & Singh, 2020).

In China, the national college entrance examination, known as the Gaokao, is another setting where parental involvement in malpractice has been observed. Due to the competitive nature of the Gaokao, parents sometimes collaborate with tutors or school administrators to engage in unethical practices, such as accessing exam questions beforehand or helping students use unauthorized aids during the exam (Zhou & Cai, 2021). The intense pressure on students to succeed in these examinations, often seen as the sole determinant of their future success, leads parents to justify their involvement in examination malpractice.

In the United States, scandals surrounding college entrance examinations like the SAT and ACT have also highlighted parental involvement in malpractice. A notable example is the "Varsity Blues" scandal, where wealthy parents were implicated in schemes involving bribery and cheating to secure college admissions for their children (Burd, 2019). This scandal underscores that even in developed countries with robust education systems, parental involvement in academic dishonesty can occur when the stakes are high.

Teachers, as custodians of learning and examination processes, often witness various forms of examination malpractice firsthand. They are uniquely positioned to observe the influence of parents on students' behaviours and the examination environment. According to Okon and Adebayo (2020), many teachers believe that parental involvement in examination malpractice stems from societal pressure and a desire to ensure their children's success, often regardless of the ethical implications. Teachers also report that some parents approach them with offers of financial inducements or other incentives to assist their children during examinations (Emeka & Odu, 2019).

Furthermore, the societal expectation for teachers to serve as moral exemplars puts them in a challenging position when they observe or are approached to participate in malpractice facilitated by parents (Adeyemi & Idowu, 2020). This challenge is exacerbated by the fear of backlash from school administrators or communities if they report such incidents. Some teachers even argue that they are forced to compromise their ethical standards due to societal pressure or threats from influential parents (Bello, 2021).

Teachers, as guardians of academic integrity, often witness instances of examination malpractice involving parents. Studies from various countries show that teachers share similar concerns to their Nigerian counterparts about parents facilitating or encouraging cheating. For example, Dlamini and Vilakazi (2020) found that in South Africa, teachers felt parents were often complicit in examination malpractice by providing unauthorized materials or attempting to bribe teachers and exam officials to alter grades. These teachers reported feeling conflicted, as reporting such behaviours could lead to personal and professional repercussions.

In India, teachers also face challenges with parental involvement in examination malpractice, especially in rural areas where social ties between families and teachers are stronger (Singh & Sharma, 2019). Teachers in these areas noted that they were often pressured by influential parents to ignore malpractice or even assist students.

In Greece, Koulouris and Xenos (2018) found that teachers were increasingly concerned about parents promoting academic dishonesty. They reported that economic and social pressures on families to secure university admission for their children led some parents to engage in unethical practices, such as bribing examination officials or illegally accessing exam content. Teachers expressed frustration over the lack of clear policies to address parental involvement in malpractice, complicating their role in maintaining academic integrity.

Nigeria's societal expectations regarding academic achievement significantly contribute to the prevalence of examination malpractice. In many communities, there is a strong belief that success in examinations is the primary route to socioeconomic mobility (Ajayi, 2018). Consequently, parents feel immense pressure to ensure their children's success, often resorting to unconventional methods. Okoye and Ibrahim (2021) suggest that parental involvement in malpractice reflects a broader societal moral decline, where achieving results is valued more than the means of achieving them.

The cultural context of respect for elders and authority figures also affects teachers' responses to parental involvement in malpractice. In some cases, traditional norms that discourage challenging authority make teachers reluctant to confront parents (Onuoha, 2020).

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This creates a complex ethical dilemma for teachers, who must balance their professional responsibilities with societal and cultural pressures.

The increasing involvement of parents in examination malpractice has significant implications for educational policy in Nigeria. There is a growing need for stricter regulations and oversight during examinations to curb malpractice. Additionally, schools should implement comprehensive parent education programs that emphasize the importance of academic integrity and the long-term harm of engaging in malpractice (Nwafor & Anumudu, 2021).

The international prevalence of parental involvement in examination malpractice calls for comprehensive policy interventions. Koulouris and Xenos (2018) recommend developing clear guidelines for addressing parental involvement in academic dishonesty, with a focus on protecting teachers who report these incidents. Countries like South Korea have implemented stringent examination security measures, such as biometric verification and increased surveillance during examinations, which have been effective in reducing malpractice (Kim, 2019). However, these measures alone are insufficient; efforts must also be made to change societal attitudes toward academic achievement and the means of attaining it.

Moreover, teacher training programs should include modules on handling situations involving parental involvement in malpractice. As Singh and Sharma (2019) highlight, teachers often feel unprepared to deal with these scenarios, especially when confronted by influential or wealthy parents.

Teachers' views on parental involvement in Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination malpractice highlight a complex mix of societal pressures, cultural norms, and personal ethical challenges. Tackling this issue necessitates a multifaceted strategy, incorporating both enhanced examination security and initiatives to change societal attitudes towards academic success and integrity. Parental involvement in examination malpractice is a global concern that crosses national and socioeconomic boundaries. Teachers around the world face similar difficulties with parental pressure and unethical behaviour. Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive approach, including policy reforms, shifts in societal attitudes, and robust support systems for teachers to uphold academic integrity.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Both external and internal examiners have consistently reported students' involvement in examination malpractices each year. Consequently, examination methods and marking schemes have been adjusted to address this issue. Despite these efforts, the rate of examination misconduct continues to rise, with parents devising new strategies to facilitate cheating. The more measures are implemented to combat examination misconduct, the more parental involvement in these acts increases.

Parents significantly influence their children's behaviour and academic performance. Often, some parents fail to provide the necessary materials for their children's learning. When their children underperform, these parents may pressure the students, blame the teachers, or resort to fraudulent means to ensure their children pass examinations. Some affluent parents bribe teachers to help their children pass internal examinations or even purchase examination questions, giving their children the impression that the end justifies the means.

Teachers often hesitate to report cheating incidents due to fear of confrontation with parents. To avoid such confrontations, some teachers overlook academic dishonesty, leave the examination hall, or distract themselves with other activities when they should be supervising students. In a society that emphasizes individual success, parents often see nothing wrong with helping their children cheat as long as they succeed in the examinations.

This study aims to assess teachers' perceptions of the role parents play in their children's involvement in examination malpractices in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To guide this study, the following research questions were raised.

1. What is the perception of teachers towards the role of parents in senior secondary school certificate examination malpractices?
2. What is the level of parents' involvement in senior secondary school certificate examination malpractices in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State?
3. Is there a difference in the role of parents in senior secondary school certificate examination malpractices as perceived by the teachers based on gender?
4. Is there a difference in the role of parents in senior secondary school certificate examination malpractices as perceived by the teachers based on experience?
5. Is there a difference in the role of parents in senior secondary school certificate examination malpractices as perceived by the teachers based on educational qualifications?

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METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a descriptive survey research design. The population included all 174 teachers from the 24 public senior secondary schools in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. A sample of 36 teachers (three from the schools selected) was selected from this population using simple random sampling, which involved choosing 12 out of the 24 schools. The study employed a questionnaire divided into three sections: Section A gathered demographic information (gender, experience, and qualification); Section B included 10 items on teachers' perceptions of parental involvement; and Section C contained 12 items on the level of parental involvement in examination malpractice. Sections B and C were rated on a modified four-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA) - 4 points, Agree (A) - 3 points, Disagree (D) - 2 points, and Strongly Disagree (SD) - 1 point. All items were positively worded.

The questionnaire was validated by three experts in measurement and evaluation at the Institute of Education, University of Benin, Nigeria. Its reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha, yielding indices of 0.92 and 0.89. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for the first two research questions, with a criterion mean of 2.50 as the benchmark for acceptance. Research questions three to five were addressed using independent sample t-test statistics at a 0.05 level of significance.

Table 1: Teachers' Perception of Parents's involvement in Examination Malpractices

Statement	Mean	Standard deviation	Remarks
Some parents do act as accomplices to help their children pass	3.01	1.04	Agree
Some teachers do have dubious dealings with parents of students to render assistance during examinations	2.71	0.96	Agree
Highly influential parents/ambitious parents are often found inducing school principals and teachers with money to secure good grades for their wards during and after examination	2.86	0.90	Agree
Some parents intentionally give their children mobile phones to use with answers stored in them during examination	2.58	0.96	Agree
Some teachers are employed by parents to dictate answers to their children during examinations	2.70	0.99	Agree
Some teachers have cultivated the attitude of divulging official confidential information on practical examinations after being induced by interested parents of their students	2.48	0.88	Disagree
Cluster	16.34	3.38	

Table 1 indicates that teachers agree some parents act as accomplices to help their children pass examinations. Some teachers engage in dubious dealings with parents to assist during examinations. Influential or ambitious parents often bribe school principals and teachers to secure good grades for their children. Some parents give their children mobile phones containing answers, allow them to communicate with outsiders during examinations, and hire teachers to dictate answers. However, teachers disagree that some of their colleagues divulge confidential information on practical examinations after being bribed by interested parents. The cluster mean of 16.34 suggests that teachers perceive parental involvement in examination malpractices in senior secondary schools in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State positively.

Table 2: The Level of Parent's Involvement in Examination Malpractice

Statement	Mean	Standard deviation	Remarks
Some rich parents tend to dangle money before teachers to assist their children pass the examination	2.97	0.88	Agree
Parents buy answers for their children during examination	2.90	0.80	Agree
Parents go the extra mile by hiring people to write examinations for their wards or children	2.59	0.91	Agree
Parents or guardians are seen hovering around examination premises looking for who will assist their children	2.69	0.91	Agree
Parents pay teachers to smuggle answers into examination hall	2.22	0.88	Disagree
Parents "block" examination invigilators and supervisors during the examination	2.97	0.88	Agree
Parents hire touts and tugs to smuggle papers during the period of examination	2.13	0.91	Disagree

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Parents register their children in special tutorial centres in disguise to indulge their children in examination malpractice	3.19	0.88	Agree
Parents provide money for their children to purchase leaked questions	2.82	0.93	Agree
Cluster	24.48	4.12	

Table 2 reveals that teachers acknowledge that some affluent parents engage in various forms of examination malpractice. These include bribing teachers to help their children pass, purchasing answers, hiring individuals to take examinations on behalf of their children, lingering around examination venues to find ways to influence invigilators and supervisors, enrolling their children in special tutorial centres to facilitate cheating, and providing funds for their children to buy leaked exam questions. However, teachers disagree that parents pay them to smuggle answers into examination halls, buy advanced phones or organizers to store answers or hire individuals to smuggle papers during examinations. The cluster mean of 31.38 indicates a high level of parental involvement in examination malpractices in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State.

Table 3: Independents Sample T-Test of the Difference in the Role of Parents in Examination Malpractices as Perceived by the Teachers Based on Gender

Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	df	t-value	p-value	Remarks
Male	27	30.67	6.57	89	-0.623	0.535	Not significant
Female	64	31.69	7.37				

Table 3 indicates a t-value of -0.623 and a p-value of 0.535, suggesting that teachers' perceptions of parents' involvement in examination malpractices do not significantly differ based on gender ($p > 0.05$).

Table 4: Independents Sample T-Test of the Difference in the Role of Parents in Examination Malpractices as Perceived by the Teachers Based on Experience

Experience	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	df	t-value	p-value	Remarks
Less than 5 years	6	30.17	3.87	89	-0.432	0.667	Not significant
5 years and above	85	31.47	7.30				

Table 4 reports a t-value of -0.432 and a p-value of 0.667, indicating that teachers' perceptions of parents' involvement in examination malpractices do not significantly vary based on their experience ($p > 0.05$).

Table 5: Independents Sample T-Test of the Difference in the Role of Parents in Examination Malpractices as Perceived by the Teachers Based on Qualification

Qualification	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	df	t-value	p-value	Remarks
Less than Bachelor	34	31.56	5.55	89	0.179	0.858	Not significant
Bachelor and above	57	31.28	7.96				

Table 5 presents a t-value of 0.179 and a p-value of 0.858, suggesting that teachers' perceptions of parents' involvement in examination malpractices do not significantly differ based on their qualifications ($p > 0.05$).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study revealed that teachers in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State had a positive perception of the role parents play in Senior Secondary School Certificate examination malpractices. This is consistent with the findings of Koulouris and Xenos (2018), who observed that teachers believed economic and social pressures on families to secure university admissions led some parents to engage in unethical practices, such as bribing officials or obtaining examination content illegally. Similarly, Singh and Sharma (2019) noted that teachers, particularly in rural areas with close social ties between families and educators, faced challenges in dealing with parental involvement in examination malpractice, often being pressured by influential parents to overlook or even assist in such behaviour.

These findings are also supported by Dlamini and Vilakazi (2020), who found that teachers felt parents were often complicit in examination malpractices by providing their children with unauthorized materials or attempting to bribe teachers and officials to alter grades. Bello (2021) similarly observed that some teachers feel compelled to compromise their ethical standards due to societal

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pressure or threats from influential parents. Adeyemi and Idowu (2020) highlighted the difficulty teachers face in maintaining moral integrity when approached by parents to participate in malpractice, given societal expectations for them to serve as moral exemplars. This aligns with Emeka and Odu's (2019) findings, which revealed that teachers often reported being offered financial or other incentives by parents seeking assistance for their children during examinations.

The study also found a high level of parental involvement in examination malpractices in the area, echoing the conclusions of Zhou and Cai (2021), who observed that parents sometimes collaborate with tutors or school administrators to gain unethical advantages, such as accessing exam questions or using unauthorized aids. Similarly, Rao and Singh (2020) suggested that parental intervention is often driven by the desire to ensure their children's success in high-stakes examinations, like the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) and the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) in India. Biswas and Biswas (2019) also noted that some parents provide financial incentives to invigilators or seek early access to exam materials. Olatunde (2021) and Uche (2022) further reported that some parents, motivated by the desire to secure tertiary admissions for their children, resort to paying for special exam centres, bribing teachers or invigilators, and even directly assisting their children in cheating.

Additionally, the study found no significant difference in teachers' perceptions of parental involvement in examination malpractice based on their gender, experience, or qualifications.

CONCLUSION

Based on the study's findings, it was concluded that teachers in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State favourably perceived parents' involvement in Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination malpractices. The study also revealed a high level of parental participation in these malpractices within the area. Furthermore, no significant differences were observed in teachers' perceptions of parental involvement in examination malpractices when considering their gender, experience, or qualifications.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings it was recommended as follows:

- Implement biometric verification and enhanced surveillance during examinations.
- Incorporate modules in teacher training programs on managing situations involving parental involvement in malpractice.
- Provide orientation sessions for parents on the dangers of engaging in examination malpractices.

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