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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAMILY VARIABLES, EXAMINATION MISCONDUCT AND STEALING AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' IN OGBADIBO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BENUE STATE

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ABSTRACT
This study investigated the relationship between family variables, examination misconduct and stealing among students of public secondary schools in Ogbadibo Local Government Area. Two research questions guided the study and two hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted a correlational survey research design. The population of the study consisted of 2149 students from 10 public secondary schools in Ogbadibo Local Government Area of Benue State. A sample of 322 respondents was selected for the study using the Research Advisor Table for sample size determination. The researcher developed two research instruments titled Family Variables Questionnaire (FVQ) and Examination Misconduct Questionnaire (EMQ) and Stealing Questionnaire (SQ). To ensure the reliability of the instruments, a trial test was conducted using 20 respondents outside the study area. Cronbach's alpha method was used to determine the internal consistency of the instruments, and reliability coefficients ranging from 0.72 to 0.81 were obtained. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation to answer the research questions, while linear regression analysis was used. The findings of the study revealed that family variables had significant strong negative relationship with examination misconduct and stealing among students of public secondary schools in Ogbadibo Local Government Area of Benue State. The study concluded that family variables have significant negative relationship with examination misconduct and stealing among students. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that parents should strengthen supervision, moral training and academic support at home in order to reduce students' involvement in examination misconduct and also parents and guardians should provide basic school needs and teach children honesty, respect for other people's property and the consequences of stealing.

Keywords: Family variables, examination misconduct, stealing, students, public, secondary and schools

Introduction

Examination misconduct and stealing are school discipline problems that affect teaching, learning and relationships among students. Examination misconduct makes it difficult to judge what students have learned, while stealing can cause suspicion and conflict within the school. Chuulabantu (2020) identified school discipline problems as barriers to quality education. Although schools establish rules to guide students' behaviour, students also learn values and habits from their homes. Understanding their family circumstances may therefore help explain differences in their conduct at school. Family variables are characteristics of the home that may be associated with children's development and behaviour. They include parental education, family income, family size, family structure, communication, supervision and disciplinary practices (Ayodele, 2020). These characteristics describe both the organisation of the family and the relationships among its members. Huang (2022) explained that family characteristics can be measured to examine their relationship with children's outcomes. In this study, family variables are considered in relation to examination misconduct and stealing among secondary school students. Parental supervision and support may be relevant to students' conduct. Parents who discuss school activities with their children may notice difficulties with schoolwork or changes in behaviour. Clear rules and consistent discipline may also help children understand what is expected of them. However, family income or structure alone should not be taken as evidence of good or poor behaviour. Students' conduct needs to be examined in relation to the family characteristics actually measured.

Examination misconduct refers to actions that break examination rules or give a candidate an unfair advantage. Examples include copying another student's answers, bringing prohibited materials into the examination hall and receiving unauthorised assistance (Ajala, 2023). Such actions weaken confidence in examination results because the scores may not reflect students' knowledge. Examination misconduct may also lead to the cancellation of results or other disciplinary measures. Previous studies have reported relationships between family circumstances and examination misconduct. Olayinka and Abdu-Raheem (2019) found significant relationships between parental income, parental education, family structure, family setting and students' involvement in examination malpractice. Suleiman (2023) also reported that parental education may be related to students' attitudes towards examinations. Okafor and Eze (2019) associated poor parental monitoring and unstable family circumstances with examination misconduct. These findings provide a basis for examining the relationship among students in Ogbadibo Local Government Area.

Stealing involves taking another person's property without permission and intending to keep it. In schools, it may involve money, books, food, uniforms or other belongings. The loss of these items can affect the owner's participation in school activities and damage trust among students. Yakubu (2020) noted that stealing can have legal and social consequences, including punishment, loss of reputation and damaged relationships. Research has also linked family characteristics with stealing among students. Okafor, Nnamdi and Uche (2020) reported significant relationships between parental socioeconomic status, family size, disciplinary practices and stealing. Okafor, Nwachukwu and Obi (2021) found that weak parental monitoring and low family cohesion were associated with stealing behaviour. These findings suggest that family relationships and practices deserve attention when examining students' conduct. The present study therefore examined the relationship between family variables, examination misconduct and stealing among public secondary school students in Ogbadibo Local Government Area of Benue State.

Statement of the problem

Student behaviour in secondary schools is becoming a serious concern, as many education systems face increasing levels of deviant behaviour among adolescents. School discipline problems are now widely seen as major barriers to achieving quality education (Chuulabantu, 2020). Globally, about 32% of students experience bullying, and nearly 246 million children and adolescents are affected by school-related violence each year (UNESCO, 2019). In many low- and middle-income countries, about 30–40% of secondary school students engage in behaviours such as truancy, bullying, vandalism and substance abuse (Adewale, 2022). These behaviours reduce academic performance, disrupt classroom activities, limit teaching time and create unsafe learning environments. In Nigeria, the situation follows this global trend but is worsened by factors such as poor parental supervision, economic hardship, peer pressure and weak school discipline systems, with many school administrators reporting frequent cases of student misconduct that negatively affect teaching and learning.

There were growing concerns about different forms of deviant behaviours among public secondary school students in the area, such as examination misconduct, stealing, bullying, indecent dressing and the use of abusive language. These behaviours had become serious issues in many secondary schools and appeared to be affecting students' moral conduct, academic performance, discipline, and the overall school environment. Since secondary school students are at a critical stage of character formation, any persistent misconduct at this level may negatively influence their future and the development of the society. Against this background, the researcher investigates family variables as correlates of deviant behaviour among secondary school students in Ogbadibo Local Government Area of Benue State.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to establish the relationship between family variables, examination misconduct and stealing among students of public secondary schools in Ogbadibo Local Government Area, Benue State. Specifically the study sought to:

1. ascertain the relationship between family variables and examination misconduct among students of public secondary schools in Ogbadibo Local Government Area, Benue State.
2. find out the relationship between family variables and stealing among students of public secondary schools in Ogbadibo Local Government Area, Benue State

Research questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between family variables and examination misconduct among students of public secondary schools in Ogbadibo Local Government Area, Benue State?
2. What is the relationship between family variables and stealing among students of public secondary schools in Ogbadibo Local Government Area, Benue State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. Family variables has no significant relationship between examination misconduct among students of public secondary schools in Ogbadibo Local Government Area, Benue State
2. Family variables has no significant relationship between stealing among students of public secondary schools in Ogbadibo Local Government Area, Benue State

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Methodology

The study adopted a correlational survey research design. It was conducted in Ogbadibo Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria. The population comprised 2,149 students from 10 public secondary schools, according to the Benue State Teaching Service Board (2025). A sample of 322 students was selected using the Research Advisor Table cited as 2015. Multistage sampling involved purposive, proportionate stratified and simple random sampling techniques. The reported statistical analyses included 322 students. Three researcher-developed questionnaires were used for data collection: the Family Variables Questionnaire (FVQ), Examination Misconduct Questionnaire (EMQ) and Stealing Questionnaire (SQ). The FVQ contained 20 items. The instruments used a four-point response scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The instruments underwent face and content validation by the research supervisor and three academic experts from the Faculty of Education, Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi. Two experts were drawn from Guidance and Counselling Education and Educational Psychology, while one was from Mathematics and Science Education. A trial test was conducted with 20 students from Methodist High School, Odoba. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The reported coefficient for the FVQ was 0.78. The researcher and four trained research assistants administered the questionnaires. Pearson's product-moment correlation was used to answer the research questions, while simple linear regression was used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance

Results

Research question 1

What is the relationship between family variables and examination misconduct among students of public secondary schools in Ogbadibo Local Government Area, Benue State?

Table 1:

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Scores on Relationship between Family Variables and Examination Misconduct among Students of Public Secondary Schools in Ogbadibo Local Government Area, Benue State

		Family Variables	Examination Misconduct
Family Variables	Pearson Correlation	1.000	-0.974**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	310	310
Examination Misconduct	Pearson Correlation	-0.974**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	310	310

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Table 1 shows the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient on the relationship between family variables and examination misconduct among students of public secondary schools in Ogbadibo Local Government Area, Benue State. The result showed a correlation coefficient of r = -0.974**, indicating a negative relationship between family variables and examination misconduct. This means that, there is relationship between family variables and examination misconduct among secondary school students. in Ogbadibo Local Government Area

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Research question 2

What is the relationship between family variables and stealing among students of public secondary schools in Ogbadibo Local Government Area, Benue State?

Table 2:

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Scores on Relationship between Family Variables and Stealing among Students of Public Secondary Schools in Ogbadibo Local Government Area, Benue State

Family Variables	Pearson Correlation	1.000	-0.986**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	310	310
Stealing	Pearson Correlation	-0.986**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	310	310

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)..*

Table 2 shows the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient on the relationship between family variables and stealing among students of public secondary schools in Ogbadibo Local Government Area, Benue State. The result showed a correlation coefficient of r = -0.986**, indicating a negative relationship between family variables and stealing. This means that, there is relationship between family variables and stealing among secondary school students. in Ogbadibo Local Government Area

Research question 2

What is the relationship between family variables and stealing among students of public secondary schools in Ogbadibo Local Government Area, Benue State?

Table 2:

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Scores on Relationship between Family Variables and Stealing among Students of Public Secondary Schools in Ogbadibo Local Government Area, Benue State

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*** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)..*

Table 2 shows the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient on the relationship between family variables and stealing among students of public secondary schools in Ogbadibo Local Government Area, Benue State. The result showed a correlation coefficient of r = -0.986**, indicating a negative relationship between family variables and stealing. This means that, there is relationship between family variables and stealing among secondary school students. in Ogbadibo Local Government Area.

Hypothesis 1: Family variables have no significant relationship between examination misconduct among students of public secondary schools in Ogbadibo Local Government Area, Benue State

Table 3:

Linear Regression Showing Relationship Family Variables between Examination Misconduct among Students of Public Secondary Schools in Ogbadibo Local Government Area, Benue State

Variable	R	R^2	F	B	T	Sig	P-Value
(Constant)				29.403	160.642	0.05	0.000
Examination Misconduct	0.974	0.949	5693.091	-0.219	-75.453	0.05	0.000

$F(1, 308) = 5693.091$, $p < 0.05$

Table 3 shows the linear regression result on the relationship between family variables and examination misconduct among students of public secondary schools in Ogbadibo Local Government Area, Benue State. The result revealed $R = 0.974$, $R^2 = 0.949$, $F(1, 308) = 5693.091$, $B = -0.219$, $t = -75.453$, and $p = 0.000$. Since the p-value of 0.000 is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between family variables and examination misconduct among students of public secondary schools in Ogbadibo Local Government Area, Benue State was therefore rejected. This implies that there is a significant strong negative relationship between family variables and examination misconduct among students of public secondary schools in Ogbadibo Local Government Area, Benue State.

Hypothesis 2: Family variables have no significant relationship between stealing among students of public secondary schools in Ogbadibo Local Government Area, Benue State

Table 4:

Linear Regression Showing Relationship Family Variables between Stealing among Students of Public Secondary Schools in Ogbadibo Local Government Area, Benue State

Variable	R	R^2	F	B	T	Sig	P-Value
(Constant)				30.028	205.271	0.05	0.000
Stealing	0.986	0.972	10769.543	-0.240	-103.776	0.05	0.000

$F(1, 308) = 10769.543$, $p < 0.05$

Table 4 shows the linear regression result on the relationship between family variables and stealing among students of public secondary schools in Ogbadibo Local Government Area, Benue State. The result revealed $R = 0.986$, $R^2 = 0.972$, $F(1, 308) = 10769.543$, $B = -0.240$, $t = -103.776$, and $p = 0.000$. Since the p-value of 0.000 is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis which stated that there was no significant relationship between family variables and stealing is therefore rejected. This means that there is a significant strong negative relationship between family variables and stealing among students of public secondary schools in Ogbadibo Local Government Area, Benue State.

Discussion of findings

The first findings revealed that family variables have negative significant relationship with examination misconduct among students of public secondary schools in Ogbadibo Local Government Area, Benue State. This shows that as positive family variables improve,

examination misconduct among students reduces. It also implies that students who receive better parental supervision, moral guidance, educational support and proper discipline at home are less likely to engage in cheating, copying, use of unauthorized materials and other forms of examination misconduct. This finding agrees with that of Olayinka and Abdu-Raheem (2019) who found that parents' income, parents' educational status, family structure and family setting had significant relationship with students' involvement in examination malpractice. The finding also agrees with the finding of Okafor and Eze (2019) who revealed that students from unstable family backgrounds and homes with poor parental monitoring were more likely to engage in examination misconduct. The implication of this finding is that examination misconduct is not only a school problem, but also a family-related problem. Therefore, parents, teachers and counsellors should work together to strengthen supervision, moral training and examination ethics among students.

The second findings revealed that family variables have negative significant relationship with stealing among students of public secondary schools in Ogbadibo Local Government Area, Benue State. This means that as family variables improve, students' involvement in stealing reduces. This shows that students who come from homes where basic needs are reasonably met, discipline is consistent and parents monitor the behaviour of their children are less likely to take other people's belongings without permission. This finding agrees with that of Okafor, Nnamdi and Uche (2020) who found that parental socio-economic status, family size and disciplinary practices were significantly related to stealing behaviour among secondary school students. The finding also agrees with that of Okafor, Nwachukwu and Obi (2021) who revealed that students from homes with low family cohesion and weak parental monitoring were more prone to stealing. The implication of this finding is that lack of parental support, unmet needs and weak home discipline may expose students to stealing. Therefore, parents should provide basic school needs, monitor their children closely and teach them the value of honesty and respect for other people's property.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concluded that family variables have significant negative relationship with examination misconduct and stealing among the students. This means that improved family conditions are associated with reduced examination misconduct and stealing,. The study therefore concluded that the family remains an important factor in controlling students' examination misconduct, stealing and promoting discipline in public secondary schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Parents should strengthen supervision, moral training and academic support at home in order to reduce students' involvement in examination misconduct.
2. Parents and guardians should provide basic school needs and teach children honesty, respect for other people's property and the consequences of stealing

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