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INFLUENCE OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AND BULLYING ON SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TO SCHOOLING IN BAUCHI EMIRATE, BAUCHI STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examines academic dishonesty and bullying as correlates of secondary school students attitudes to schooling in Bauchi emirate, Bauchi state Nigeria. A correlational research design was employed for the study. A multistage sampling technique was used to select sample of 869 from population of 8,674 senior secondary two (SS2) students in the fifty-four (54) public secondary schools in Bauchi Emirate, Bauchi State Nigeria. Students Deviant Behaviours Questionnaire (SDBPIQ, α = 0.961) and Students Attitude to Schooling Questionnaire (SASQ, α = 0.949) were used for data collection. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, means and percentage, and inferential statistic such as chi-square technique. Results indicated high extent of academic dishonesty and bullying among the secondary school students. Also, the direction of attitude of secondary school students towards schooling was significantly related to academic dishonesty [X^2 (2) = 36.40, p = 0.000] and bullying [X^2 (2) = 58.93, p = 0.000]. The study concluded that academic dishonesty and bullying are significant correlates of senior secondary school students' attitudes towards schooling. It was recommended that attitudes of senior secondary school students towards schooling should be improved by the students themselves and through effective monitoring and control of academic dishonesty and bullying by school authority and government.

Key words: Deviant Behaviours, Academic Dishonesty, Bullying, Attitudes to Schooling, Secondary School Students

Introduction

Students' attitudes to schooling are important in decision-making, problem-solving processes, social interactions, and self-management. Attitude refers to strong belief, feeling, approval, or disapproval towards people and situations, but it can be favourable or unfavourable towards people, things and academic subjects (Suleiman, Isma'i & Bello, 2020). Students with positive attitudes would have positive responses in school situations and be responsible for making positive decisions and solving academic challenges. Positive-minded students tend to understand themselves, their potential, as well as their weaknesses and seek ways to address them.

Considering the positive formation of attitudes towards schooling and its consequences, it seems that many children who are at the secondary education level are less interested in schooling, particularly in Bauchi State. United Nations Education Trust Fund in 2023 reported that Bauchi State has the highest level of dropout students at 61% which further confirmed that many students have a negative mind set towards schooling (Owolabi, 2023). The extent of lateness to school, leaving school before time, and school dropout have been on high level (Opoola & Nasir, 2020). Reasonable number of students come to school not to achieve their personal goals but to fulfil the wishes of their parents or guardians. Many of the students are out of school for one reason or another that is known to them.

In Bauchi Emirate, the increasing rate of negative attitudes towards schooling among secondary school students in recent times is a concern. The phenomena of inability to attend classes, skipping school hours, coming to school late, absenteeism and dropping out of school among secondary school students have been of great concern to parents, teachers, educational policymakers, the society, and the government. The negative attitudes to schooling could be partly attributed to the high rate of deviant behaviours such as academic dishonesty and bullying among the students.

Academic dishonesty is a form of deviant behaviour that is quite common in academic environments in Nigeria. Academic dishonesty was perceived by Hasri, Supar, Azman, Sharip and Yamin (2022) as behaviour such as plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, violating examination rules, cheating during the examination, and examination impersonation. It is any form of unethical or fraudulent behaviour in schools, colleges, polytechnics and universities (Walsh, Lichti & Zambrano-Varghese, 2021). Academic dishonesty is any behaviour aimed at giving or receiving information from others, using unauthorized materials, and circumventing the sanctioned assessment process in an academic context. Secondary school students who are fond of engaging in the act of academic dishonesty may do so out of negative attitudes' formation towards schooling. Such students when caught in the act may completely disregard the value of schooling and leave the school untimely. However, the students who are honest with academic activities would like schooling and would love to complete their school even at the tertiary level.

Students' perceptions of academic dishonesty might influence their disposition towards engaging in it. Roe (2022) discovered that positive perceptions of cheating, coupled with expectations for the results of cheating, prior histories of cheating, and perceived rewards, were

causal factors for academic dishonesty. Furthermore, students in eastern China who believed that academic dishonesty was a minor or inconsequential issue were more likely to do it, according to Zhang, Yin, and Zheng's (2018) study. Additionally, it has been shown that students' inclination to engage in academic dishonesty is influenced by their classmates' and teachers' individual opinions regarding the matter (Maloshonok & Shmeleva, 2019). The prevalence of academic dishonesty was found to be negatively correlated with students' opinions of their teachers as well as teachers' attitudes towards it by Yu, Glanzer, and Johnson (2018). pupils would be deterred from committing academic dishonesty and exhibit positive attitudes towards learning if secondary school pupils developed positive impressions of their teachers and teachers responded favourably to them.

The nature, causes, and behaviours of academic dishonesty or cheating in higher education have been uncovered by earlier research (Chala, 2021). Baran and Jonason (2020) examined the roles of motivation, self-efficacy, and psychopathy in academic dishonesty among Polish university students. According to the study, the frequency of students' academic dishonesty was predicted by the disinhibition aspect of psychopathy and mastery-goal orientation, and the association between the meanness and disinhibition elements of psychopathy and dishonesty was mediated by mastery-goal orientation. Cheng, Hung, and Hsu (2021) examined the relationship between academic dishonesty, ethical climate, and ethical attitude in a cross-sectional survey of 1271 students. The findings indicated that female students were less likely than male students to engage in academic dishonesty and to have a more positive attitude towards ethics. Additionally, academic dishonesty was adversely correlated with ethical attitude, but the negative correlation between academic dishonesty and ethical attitude was reinforced by a strong ethical climate. Additionally, in an exploratory study conducted in Brazil, Clinciu and Ives (2021) looked at academic dishonesty and academic adjustment among university students. The findings indicated a strong relationship between academic dishonesty and academic adjustment.

Bullying is another form of deviant behaviour that is intentional and it is repetitive where the actions may be physical, verbal, or relational between two groups that have a difference in interest (Verma, Balayan & Gupt, 2021). This means that bullying is a pervasive form of deviant behaviour and appears in forms of physical, verbal, relational, or social, and cyberbullying. Bullying can be at home, office, community, and at school. In secondary school, the impact of bullying may be negative for both the one that bullied and the one being bullied. Those who bully may not concentrate on academic tasks and will always be seeking who to bully, while the student who is being bullied may not like the school anymore for fear of torture, assault, or shame. Both outcomes may lead to dislike of school and school dropout. The effects of bullying on secondary school students could be both psychological and academic. In other words, bullies can be more prone to hyperactivity, conduct problems, and low pro-social behaviour.

A survey conducted by Rajith, Jayakumar, Kishore, Binukumar and Bhaskar (2019) showed that the majority of bullied adolescents had significant mental health problems and 26.1% of adolescents had borderline mental health problems. It also showed that 10.5% had

emotional problems, 20.3% had conduct problems, 6.2% were hyperactive or inattentive, 16.9% reported peer problems, and 5.7% had low pro-social behaviour. The victims showed low self-worth, delinquent behaviour, depressive symptoms, and low social acceptance and were prone to psychological problems. Adolescents being bullied or victims had greater chances of problems related to mental health, such as depression, anxiety, problems in decision-making, irritation, concentration, academic adjustment, and low self-confidence (Jordan. Zhang, Li, Tan, Zhang, Zhao & Chen, 2021: Verma, Balayan & Gupt, 2021). According to some researchers, adolescents who experience bullying perform worse academically because they feel dissatisfied at school and start to disengage, which lowers their engagement in the classroom and their school attendance (Li, Chen & Li, 2020). Recent research posits that the externalized behavioral difficulties, in particular, hampered both mathematics and literacy attainment in a sample of 5–13-year-olds (Kirkøen, Engell, Follestad, Holen & Hagen, 2021). Secondary school students who experience severe bullying may not show interest in school and such students are likely to leave the school due to negative attitudes formation.

In 2018, the impact of bullying on students' behavioural engagement in Pakistan was investigated by Najam and Kashif. The results indicated that teachers bullying and peer bullying significantly affect the students' behavioural engagement. A study titled "Impact of bullying on academic performance. A case study for the community of Madrid" was studied by Rusteholz, Mediavilla and Pires (2021). Murphy, Leonard, Taylor and Santos (2022) focused on educational achievement and bullying: The mediating role of psychological difficulties in Ireland. Results showed that significant indirect effects of bullying on achievement via psychological difficulties.

According to the evidences presented in the literature, there are not many studies on the prevalence of deviant behaviours like academic dishonesty and bullying in relation to students' attitudes towards education in Bauchi State. The purpose of this study was to fill in the gaps and satisfy the expectations of the education stakeholders. An insightful investigation into this issue would be helpful to students, teachers, school authorities, parents, the community, and the government at large.

Aim and Objectives

This study aims to examine influence of academic dishonesty and bullying on secondary school students' attitudes toward schooling in Bauchi Emirate, Nigeria. The specific objectives to of the study are to:

1. ascertain the extent of academic dishonesty and how it related to secondary school students' attitudes to schooling in Bauchi Emirate;
2. determine the extent of bullying and how it related to secondary school students' attitudes to schooling in Bauchi Emirate.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised and answered:

1. What is the extent of academic dishonesty among secondary school students in Bauchi Emirate?
2. What is the extent of bullying among secondary school students in the Bauchi Emirate?

Hypotheses

1. Attitudes of secondary school students towards schooling in the Bauchi Emirate does not significantly depend on their level of academic dishonesty.
2. Attitudes of secondary school students towards schooling in the Bauchi Emirate is significantly independent of their level of bullying behaviour.

Method and Procedures

Design and Participants

The research design used in the study was a correlational survey. According to Saleh and Kowalczyk (2023), a correlational survey research strategy focusses on collecting data from a population or a representative sample at a single point in time to determine the direction, strength and significance of relationships between two or more variables or among number of variables. The 8,674 senior secondary two (SS2) students enrolled in the 154 public secondary schools spread across the eight Local Government Areas in Bauchi Emirate, Bauchi State, Nigeria, during the 2023–2024 academic year made up the study's population. Selection was done using a multistage sampling technique. Eight hundred and sixty-nine (869) public secondary school two (SS2) students from 32 schools spread throughout five (5) Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Bauchi Emirate in Bauchi State made up the study's sample. The choice of 869 students was the 10% of the population. Fox (2025) states that 10% of a population is representative enough for research.

Research Instrument

The Students Deviant Behaviours Questionnaire (SDBPIQ, $\alpha = 0.961$) consisted of 36 items measuring three deviant behaviours was used for data collection. Among the items, nine each were measuring academic dishonesty and academic bullying. Respondents were asked to indicate how often students in their school have engaged in the deviant behaviours using a 4-point scale of: Never (N) = 1, Rarely (R) = 2, Sometimes (S) = 3, and Always (A) = 4. The Students Attitude to Schooling Questionnaire (SASQ, $\alpha = 0.949$) was also used to obtain data about the attitudes of secondary school students towards schooling. This had twenty-six (26) items. Respondents indicated their degree of agreement or disagreement on an item by ticking the appropriate column using a 5-point Likert scale as Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UD), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The SASQ and SDBPIQ underwent construct and content validity testing. After evaluating the instruments' contents, two experts from the University of Jos—one in educational psychology and the other in educational sociology—certified them as valid, albeit with some minor modifications. Exploratory factor analysis was used to assess construct validity, and all of the items loaded moderately to highly (0.40 – 0.74), into the appropriate factors.

Procedure

First, the researchers obtained consent and authority letters from the Department of Educational Foundations at the University of Jos, Nigeria, and contacted the participating students and the school authorities. The approval was acquired prior to the study's start. Using a

face-to-face administration strategy, the instruments were provided to the students during break time. They were instructed to read the instructions and then complete the questionnaire on their own. After completing the questionnaires in forty minutes, 271 of them were sent back to the researcher and the research assistants. The researchers valued the research assistants' and respondents' time and effort. The responders' answers were guaranteed to be kept completely private and confidential.

Data Analysis

To provide a broad overview of the data gathered, descriptive statistics including frequency counts, means, and percentages were used to analyse the data gathered in order to answer the study objectives (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). The association between attitudes towards education and the components of deviant conduct that were measured was examined using chi-square. The chi-square statistic, according to Hayes (2023), examines the magnitude of any differences between the actual and predicted results, taking into account the number of variables in the relationship and the sample size. All of the analyses were conducted using SPSS version 26.

Results

Research Question Three

What is the extent of academic dishonesty among secondary school students in Bauchi Emirate?

Table 1: Extent of Academic Dishonesty among Secondary School Students in Bauchi Emirate

Extent	Scores Range	Frequency	%	$\bar{x}$	SD
Low	9-23	248	28.7	24.00	2.44
High	24-36	616	71.3	32.05	2.38
Total	**36**	864	100.0	29.73	4.36

Table 1 shows the extent of academic dishonesty among secondary school students. Results indicated that 248 (28.7%) respondents indicated low extent (mean and standard deviation scores of 24.00 and 2.44 respectively), while 616 (71.3%) reported high extent of academic dishonesty ($\bar{x}$ = 32.05, SD = 2.38). This implies that there was high academic dishonesty among secondary school students in Bauchi Emirate.

Hypothesis One

Attitudes of secondary school students towards schooling in the Bauchi Emirate does not depend on their level of academic dishonesty.

Table 2: Chi Square (X^2) Test between the Level of Academic Dishonesty and Attitudes of Secondary School Students towards Schooling

	Direction of Attitudes			
Academic Dishonesty	**Negative**	**Neutral**	**Positive**	**Total**

	fo(fe)	fo(fe)	fo(fe)	fo(fe)	df	X^2	p	Decision
High	478(483.8)	275(259.7)	63(63.5)	807(807.0)	2	36.40	0.000	Rejected
Low	40(34.2)	3(18.3)	14(4.5)	57(57.0)				
Total	518(518.0)	278(278.0)	68(68.0)	864(864.0)				

NB: N = 864, $p < 0.05$. fo =observed frequency & fe = expected frequency

Result in Table 2 displays the relationship between academic dishonesty and attitudes of secondary school students towards schooling. Analysis outcomes indicates that the p-value = 0.000 is less than the level of significance at 2 degrees of freedom (df). Therefore, there is enough proof to reject the null hypothesis and rules that academic dishonesty was significantly related to attitude of secondary school students towards schooling [X^2 (2) = 36.40, $p < 0.05$]. This signifies that academic dishonesty would significantly influence attitudes of secondary school students towards schooling in Bauchi Emirate.

Research Question Four

What is the extent of bullying among secondary school students in the Bauchi Emirate?

Table 3: Extent of Bullying among Secondary School Students in Bauchi Emirate

Extent	Scores Range	Frequency	%	$\overline{X}$	SD
Low	10-24	137	15.9	22.53	0.50
High	26-40	727	84.1	31.38	3.22
Total	**40**	**864**	**100.0**	**29.97**	**4.38**

Table 3 displays the extent of bullying among the secondary school students in Bauchi Emirate. Data analysis reveals that 137 (15.9%) respondents reported low extent with mean and standard deviation scores of 22.53 and 0.50 respectively. Whereas, 727 (84.1%) reported high extent of academic dishonesty ($\bar{x}$ = 31.38, SD = 3.22). This implies that many of secondary school students in Bauchi Emirate had high extent of academic dishonesty.

Hypothesis Three

Attitudes of secondary school students towards schooling in the Bauchi Emirate is independent of their level of bullying behaviour.

Table 4: Chi Square (X^2) Test between the Level of Bullying and Attitudes of Secondary School Students towards Schooling

	Direction of Attitudes							
Bullying	**Negative**	**Neutral**	**Positive**	**Total**				
	fo(fe)	**fo(fe)**	**fo(fe)**	**fo(fe)**	**df**	**X^2**	**p**	**Decision**
High	430(451.5)	275(242.3)	48(59.3)	753(753.0)	2	58.93	0.000	Rejected
Low	88(66.5)	3(35.7)	20(8.7)	111(111.0)				
Total	518(518.0)	278(278.0)	68(68.0)	864(864.0)				

NB: N = 864, $p < 0.05$. fo =observed frequency & fe = expected frequency

Data in Table 4 shows the relationship between bullying and attitudes of secondary school students towards schooling. Result indicates that the p-value = 0.000 is less than the level

of significance at df = 2. Consequently, there is sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis and claims that bullying is significantly related to direction of attitude of secondary school students towards schooling, X^2 (2) = 58.93, p = 0.000. It implies that high bullying would significantly influence attitudes of secondary school students towards schooling in Bauchi Emirate.

Discussion

The study investigated influence of academic dishonesty and bullying on secondary school students' attitudes toward schooling in Bauchi Emirate, Nigeria. High levels of academic dishonesty were found among Bauchi Emirate secondary school pupils. In line with the findings in this section, Baran and Jonason (2020) examined academic dishonesty among university students. The students attested that many of them copy from a nearby student during an exam, use text messaging to obtain or send answers during an exam, take summary notes in an exam room without permission from the teacher, and write in exam halls. Chala (2021) reported that undergraduate students saw academic cheating activities as significant. The majority of respondents assessed the bulk of cheating activities as "serious," according to the results. The study found that although students perceived the seriousness of most cheating behaviours, they continued to actively engage in cheating. In Bauchi Emirate also, good number of students reported doing assignments for other students, copying homework from another student, whispering the answers to friends during an examination, and allow their own assignment to be copied by another student are rampant in their school.

The results also demonstrated a substantial relationship between academic dishonesty and secondary school pupils' attitudes towards learning. Cheng, Hung, and Hsu (2021) previously reported on the relationship between academic dishonesty, ethical attitude, and ethical climate in Taiwan. They discovered a negative correlation between academic dishonesty and an ethical attitude. Clinciu and Ives (2021) investigated academic dishonesty and academic adjustment among students, and they found strong relationships between academic dishonesty and academic adjustment, which is consistent with the current findings. However, a prior study found no correlation between the attitudes and actions of Indian students regarding academic dishonesty during online learning (Hasri, Supar, Azman, Sharip & Yamin, 2022). The context of the study and the research methodology may be responsible for the differences between the two findings. Academic dishonesty is therefore likely to have a major impact on secondary school pupils' views towards education in the Bauchi Emirate.

A section of finding showed that majority (84.1%) of secondary school students had high extent of academic bullying. Jordan. Zhang, Li, Tan, Zhang, Zhao and Chen (2021) showed high bullying behaviours among students. They reported that neuroticism had a significant positive predictive effect on being bullied, extroversion had a significant negative predictive effect on being bullied, and agreeableness had a significant negative predictive effect on bullying/being bullied. In Bauchi Emirate, reasonable number of students agreed that some students have tried to make other students dislike other students, have said bad things about them, have told lies

about other students, have thrown things at them, and have been blackmailing each other. Verma, Balayan and Gupt (2021) in India showed that 49.68% of adolescents were involved in different acts of bullying, where 26.37% reported being a bully and 24.46% reported being a victim. Verbal bullying was found to be a more common form of bullying as compared to social bullying and physical bullying. In the area covered by present study, students affirmed that many students have talked about others behind their backs, calling another student bad names, have been pushing or punching another student, and have tried to make people dislike other students.

Further confirmation showed that bullying was significantly related to direction of attitude of secondary school students towards schooling. Najam and Kashif. (2018) indicated that teachers bullying and peer bullying significantly affect the students' behavioural engagement and attitudes to schooling. Rusteholz, Mediavilla and Pires (2021) also indicated significant relationship between bullying and academic attitudes. That bullying hurts all the competencies evaluated and that the probability of a lower academic performance increases in environments where there is bullying, and that bullying can affect students with low or high academic achievement in different ways. Possibly, high bullying would significantly influence attitudes of secondary school students towards schooling.

Conclusion

Attainment of students' academic progress depends on their attitudes towards schooling. Consequently, this study examined academic dishonesty and bullying as correlates of secondary school students attitudes to schooling in Bauchi emirate, Bauchi state Nigeria. From the findings, it can be inferred that academic dishonesty and bullying were highly common among the secondary school students and these negated their attitudes towards schooling. Students who believed in examination misconduct and bully other students or being bullied might dislike schooling. The significance of these revelation has provided insight for education policy development and implementation in Nigeria. The findings also suggested bases for both theory and practice in the field of sociology and educational psychology. However, the study was limited to an emirate council, hence care should be taken when generalizing the findings of the study. Students from other sections of the population across Nigeria can be explored in subsequent studies.

Recommendations

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

1. High academic dishonesty among senior secondary school students should be checkmated by school authorities, teachers and government agencies because it has a link with attitudes to schooling. Stringent measures such as increasing number of invigilators and establishment of examination malpractice committees in secondary schools should be considered.

2. The high rate of bullying among senior secondary school students should be checked and measures be put in place by school authorities and teachers to reduce such acts, because it could affect attitudes to schooling.

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