

An analysis of effects of test misconduct on students' perception of assessment quality in Nigeria's Federal Colleges of Education

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Abstract

This paper examines the effects of test misconduct on students' perception of assessment quality in Nigeria's colleges of education. It uses a mixed-method approach, combining questionnaires, focus group discussions, and interview to gather data on student experiences. The validity of the research guides was determined by evaluation experts. The questionnaire was pilot-tested on 450 students with a reliability coefficient of 0.78. The study includes 296 students from federal colleges of education, selected through proportionate stratified sampling. Focus group discussions and interviews were conducted with 12 students, 1 Head of Department and examination officer from English language departments in the institutions. The research findings address two research questions and test a hypothesis. The results show that test misconduct is still prevalent in these institutions despite measures in place to curb it, and it affects students' trust in the assessment process. The study also highlights the inadequacy of assessment feedback. There is a significant relationship between students' perception of assessment quality and test misconduct, at $p < 0.05$ ($r = 0.59$; $p = 0.00$). The paper recommends strategies to address this issue, including promoting honesty and providing support for students. Fostering integrity and merit can help rebuild trust in the evaluation process.

Keywords: Test, misconduct, Perception, Assessment, Quality, Feedback, Colleges of Education

Introduction

The academic integrity of assessment processes is crucial for ensuring fair and accurate evaluation of students' knowledge and skills. However, the high occurrence of test misconduct undermines the credibility and quality of assessments, leading to concerns about fairness and meritocracy in Nigeria's colleges of education. (Udim, 2018). The purpose of this study is to investigate how students' opinions of assessment quality are impacted by test fraud.

Testing is a structured method of evaluation in which people are given a set of questions or tasks designed to determine what information and abilities they have gained. (Oduwaiye, 2014). Akaranga and Ongong (2013) noted that tests serve as a tool for instructors to experiment with different teaching pedagogies while also serving as a means of motivating students and assisting them in identifying their academic strengths and shortcomings. However, the predicted reply might not be trustworthy if the test is done incorrectly. Due to this, the outcome of such an evaluation results in incorrect decisions and

judgements, which have an impact on society, the education sector as a whole, teachers, and students. (Ojonemi, Enejoh, Enejoh and Olatunmibi (2013)).

Test misconduct is defined by the Test Misconduct Act (1999) as any act of commission or omission by an individual who, in advance of, during, or after a test, fraudulently secures any unfair advantage in a way that violates the law to the point where it compromises the test's validity, reliability, authenticity, and, ultimately, the integrity of the certificates issued. Test misconduct, according to Jega (2006), is any action that modifies or interferes with the established methods of administering tests inside a certain system. He went on to say that test misconduct is an infraction that can be prosecuted when it occurs during an official, regular test. Test misconduct, according to Obo (2008), is any act of commission or omission that jeopardises the integrity, validity, and dependability of any assessment or evaluation system. Test misconduct is defined by Joshua (2008) as any unauthorised or unapproved action, inaction, activity, behaviour, or practise that is connected to the planning, conducting,

and processing of a test and is carried out by any person involved in planning, administering, taking, and processing that test at any level. This definition simplifies a variety of definitions of the term. Test misconduct, which happens in Nigeria at all educational levels—primary, secondary, and post-secondary—is defined as fraud inside the educational system. Test misconduct is a dishonest practise in the educational system that appears to be flourishing, making it a true monster in Nigeria's many educational establishments.

Numerous studies on test misconduct have been conducted. One such study, conducted by Onuka & Durowoju (2013), asserted that agents of test misconduct in our society include teachers, parents, supervisors of tests, invigilators, security personnel, guardians, students, and the management and staff of schools. Test misconduct is primarily caused by a number of factors, according to Aderogba (2011). These include a weak economy, the desire for credentials over education, system flaws, teachers' status, children's upbringing, parents' and families' histories, poverty, frustration, pride, the pursuit of paper qualifications, and private school and college owners' desire to remain in business. According to Jekayinfa et al. (2011), there is a growing number of moral issues in Nigerian society, and as a result of this moral slackness, certain people and organisations with moral issues have been known to support and encourage frauds in both private and public tests. According to Asinya (2012), administrators from schools and test boards who are motivated by money are the main causes of test misconduct, as is the desire to avoid failure and highlight one's strong achievement. Additionally, Onuka & Durowoju (2013) noted tardiness of supervisors and invigilators to the test hall; tardiness of students to the test hall; undue favouritism from invigilators to students; impersonation; disclosing a candidate's identity on answer booklets and bribing or influencing staff invigilators and examiners; allotment of choice test centres; supervisors demanding for particular centres; smuggling of answer books inside or outside the test centre; tearing of test questions, tearing of test answer sheet, writing of answers on the chalk board during test and dictating answers during the test.

A statistical analysis of test misconduct among students in Nigeria colleges of education reveals alarming figures. A research by the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) found that almost 70% of Nigerian students had participated in some sort of test misconduct. The study further reveals that cheating is the most common form of test misconduct, followed by impersonation and plagiarism. Another study conducted by the West African Tests Council (WAEC) revealed that test misconduct increased by 24.97% in 2018, compared to the 2017 figures. The report also stated that the number of candidates involved in test misconduct rose from 98,328 in 2017 to 122,102 in 2018. The statistics indicate that the problem of test misconduct is getting worse in Nigeria, despite the efforts of the government and other stakeholders to curb the menace.

Petters and Okon (2013) in Amadi and Opuiyo (2018) highlighted the causes of the prevalent cases of test misconduct to include: a). Fear of failing and; b). Parents' desire for their kids to attend universities and pursue their dream careers.

George and Ukpong (2013) connected the following factors to the rising incidence of test misconduct: (i) Ineffective instruction: Students—especially the weaker ones—will become stuck and may try to find other ways to pass the course if lecturers fail to make sure that the course outline they have set for the academic semester has been taught before giving tests to the students or give tests in subjects that have not been taught. Additionally, a lecturer's technique of instruction is quite important. Do the students actually comprehend such teaching method? A good teacher must ensure that their students understand, and if they do not, he/she must apply another method. Employing incompetent lecturers as well as lack of re-training exercises are also cogent reasons why some students would resort to engaging in test misconduct. (ii) Ineffective preparation by students: Many students do not want to work hard by studying and this is why they want to cut-corners to pass their tests. (iii) Weak parental functions: Negligence on the part of parents in encouraging their children morally and financially to work

hard and make it on their own, can make such students to either underestimate the value of education or feel societally oppressed to want to find an easy-way-out approach. (iv) Poor remuneration of Lecturers, (v) Insatiability/greed of agents legitimately involved in the test process.

The measure of quality of assessment is determined by several factors which includes proper procedures for continuous assessment. Shukla (2019) asserts that continuous assessment in Nigeria's tertiary education has been identified as a frequently used tool for analyzing learner performance. Mendez & Sarmiento (2011) noted that continuous assessment in learning process is valued, starting from continuous monitoring of the work developed and the knowledge acquired by the students, to the modifications needed to optimize the process and to improve the results obtained. Mwebaza (2010) is of the opinion that CA is more than giving a test; it involves every decision made by the teacher in class to improve students' achievement. According to Patrick and Uvietesivwi (2018) cited in Faremi and Faremi (2020), the introduction of continuous assessment into the educational system improves the use of formative evaluation in which the three domains of education (cognitive, affective and psychomotor) can be assessed, using a class test, assignments, experiments and project methods.

Testing is an organized assessment technique, which presents individuals with a series of questions or tasks geared towards ascertaining the individual acquired knowledge and skills (Oduwaiye, 2014). Akaranga and Ongong (2013) observed that examination is not only a process of assessing the progress of students but, it also motivates and helps them to know their academic strengths and weaknesses. Tests should serve as a form of communicating feedback both to students' learning and teachers' teaching. Phelps (2011) conducted a meta-analysis on the effect of testing on achievement. The results indicated that testing followed by feedback has the strongest positive effect on achievement. Feedback is a crucial factor in the teaching/learning process (Ghilay and Ghilay, 2015). In their study on students' perception of the concept of feedback, McGrath, et.al. (2011) revealed that students most often associate feedback with appreciation of what has been done right or wrong, thereby influencing their

opinion on the assessment process. Lizzio and Wilson (2008) were of the opinion that effective feedback supports learning by relating to goals and strategy, to demonstrate examiner's engagement with the assessed written work as well as to acknowledge learners' achievement and efforts. Parker and Pinard (2014) also assert that effective feedback can only occur when both the teacher and student are committed to the process. They opine that learner's level of confidence in themselves will be boosted when they are involved in assessment process through feedback. Boud and Molly (2013) also stress that feedback helps the students to self-regulate their learning process.

There have been raised concerns about the attitude of the 21st century students towards assessment practices and the educational process as a whole, in Nigeria's tertiary institutions. A recent statistical report showed a high rise in the rate of unemployment of NCE graduates across Nigeria. Some other studies found out that most students undergoing the NCE programmes are not much interested in working with their certificates, some need the certificate as the only means to enrol for a degree programme, some have personal business prospects while some just want to relocate from Nigeria. There is a likelihood that these attitude may affect not necessarily the quality of teaching/ assessment practice on the part of the institution but the quality of learning received by the students. There is an assumption that the attitude of students towards assessment practices can either make or mar the entire learning process. These concerns make it imperative to find out what the perception of these students are towards test misconduct-a phenomenon directly related to the assessment process as well as very common to them- and also study how their perceptions impact how they rate the quality of assessment in their institutions of learning.

Research Question

- 1.a What are the test misconduct control structures in place, in the observed colleges of education in the southwest Nigeria?
- b. What are the students' opinion on assessment conducts in colleges of education in the southwest Nigeria?

Hypothesis

H₀: There is no discernible correlation between students' perceptions of test misconduct and the quality of assessments in federal colleges of education in southwest Nigeria.

Methodology

The research adopted exploratory-concurrent design (Quan+qual). The design incorporates both quantitative and qualitative methods. A structured questionnaire was distributed to a proportionately stratified sample of 296

students in Federal colleges of education across south west, Nigeria. The questionnaire collected data on the occurrence of test misconduct, students' involvement, and their perceptions of assessment quality. Additionally, in-depth interviews were conducted with lecturers, one head of department and one examination officer from the department of English language education. Focus group discussion sessions were conducted with 12 students to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences and perceptions.

Results

Research Questions

Results are presented based on the set out research questions and hypothesis.

1a. What are the test misconduct control structures in place, in the observed colleges of education in the southwest Nigeria?

Table 1.1a is the presentation of responses generated from students on structures put in place in their colleges to control test misconducts.

Table 1.1a: Test misconduct control structures in place, in the observed colleges of education in south west Nigeria.

Statement	Very True		True		Not Sure		Untrue		Most Untrue		M	Std. Dev
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
I get to see the test time-table at least two weeks before the commencement of tests	90	31.5	102	35.8	53	18.6	29	10.2	11	3.9	3.81	1.11
There are proper arrangements for us when we have test clashes on the time-table.	88	31.1	79	27.9	57	20.1	51	18.0	8	2.8	3.66	1.18
I am not permitted to sit close to anyone in the test hall.	131	46.1	70	24.6	42	14.8	26	9.2	15	5.3	3.97	1.21
I sometimes have to peer -up with my mates to use question papers in the test hall.	31	10.9	29	10.2	78	27.5	98	34.5	48	16.9	2.64	1.20
I somehow have access to the test questions before the tests	30	10.6	42	14.8	55	19.3	76	26.8	81	28.5	2.52	1.33
The rules of test in my institution are very strict.	112	39.5	85	29.9	45	15.8	29	10.2	13	4.6	3.89	1.17
The invigilators during most of my tests are very strict	111	38.9	98	34.4	44	15.4	22	7.8	10	3.5	3.98	1.08
The invigilators during tests are always too many	79	27.8	98	34.5	46	16.2	54	19.0	7	2.5	3.66	1.15
It takes more than a month before I can see results of my test	130	45.5	68	23.8	49	17.1	22	7.7	17	5.9	3.95	1.21
I know where test results are kept in my department	33	11.6	39	13.7	46	16.1	96	33.7	71	24.9	2.53	1.31

I am allowed to check the record sheets by myself for my results	33	11.6	55	19.4	56	19.7	89	31.3	51	18.0	2.75	1.28
Test offenders are usually punished severely in my institution.	148	53.2	69	24.8	34	12.2	19	6.8	8	2.9	4.19	1.08
The test halls in my institution are very comfortable for tests.	109	39.2	100	36.0	38	13.6	25	9.0	6	2.2	4.01	1.04
Tests do not always start at the time they ought to.	47	17.1	62	22.5	61	22.2	81	29.5	24	8.7	3.10	1.24
We are not always allowed to use up our time before we are asked to submit.	46	16.6	51	18.4	48	17.3	106	38.3	26	9.3	2.98	1.35
I am aware of some students helping lecturers to mark scripts in my department.	45	16.5	50	18.3	77	28.2	63	23.1	38	13.9	3.00	1.28
Some non-lecturers do invigilate tests in my institution.	67	24.2	57	20.6	58	20.9	69	24.9	26	9.4	3.25	1.32

Table 1.1a shows that there are positive perceptions of students on the structures put in place to control test misconducts in the colleges. However, qualitative reports revealed that despite the measures being put in place to curb the menace, there are still incidents of test misconducts among students and lecturers alike.

Qualitative data

In addition, interview sessions were held with the lecturers and students of the selected

colleges of education. As presented in figure 1, the participants enumerated various rules guiding conduct of test in the institutions.

- HOD in custody of test questions
- Spacious test hall
- Punctuality
- Adherence to test rules
- 5 questions to be set, at least 3 should be answered
- No interactions with colleagues
- Non-usage of phones/electronics

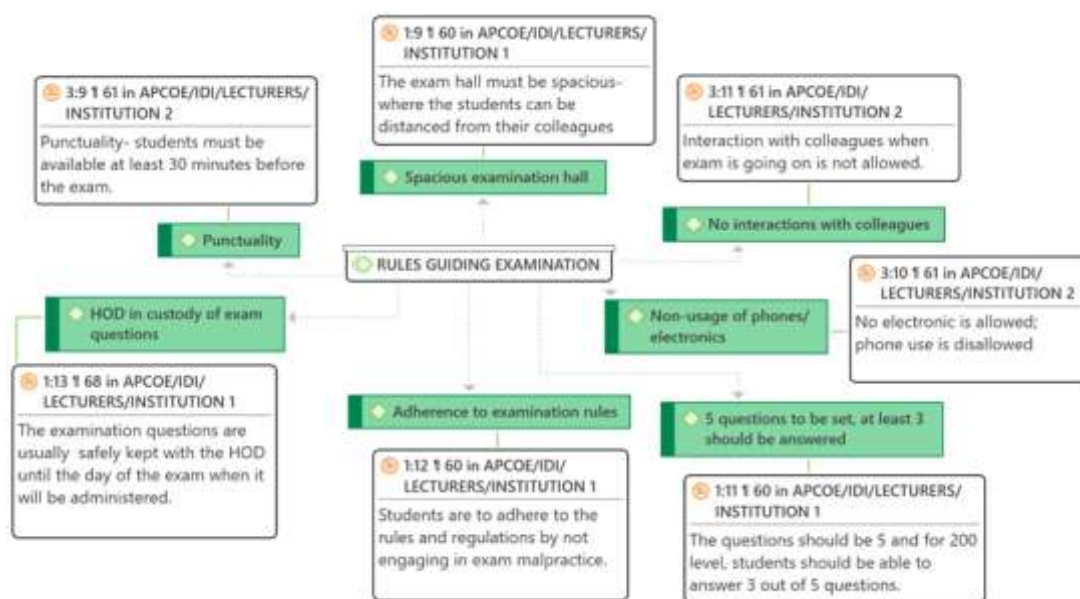


Figure 1.1a: Test Misconduct Control

Structures 1 – The Rules

Additionally, the participants also stated other structures put in place for control of test misconducts.

Test Misconduct form - The lecturer shared that in their institutions, forms are made available for the invigilators to record any act of malpractice during tests. A lecturer explained that the invigilator "...has forms to take record of such event, so he will report appropriately to the college (APCOE/KII/HOD/INSTITUTION 2). Another lecturer further explained that "We have what we call the test malpractice form which invigilators in the hall are supposed to have handy in any test hall. That means when you are going as an invigilator to a hall for the

conduct of a test, you must necessarily have that form with you, just in case there is any case of malpractices."(APCOE/KII/HOD/INSTITUTION 3).

Test misconduct committee - When cases are reported, one of the participants stressed, that disciplinary steps are taken against such act:

"Test malpractice is taken serious in this institution. Whenever they catch any student engaging in test malpractice, the student will be sent to the college test malpractice committee." (APCOE/KII/HOD/INSTITUTION 1)

While another participant asserted that the institution "... usually have the test misconduct committee every year. The job of the test misconduct committee is to try students who are caught during test for malpractice." (APCOE/KII/HOD/INSTITUTION 1)

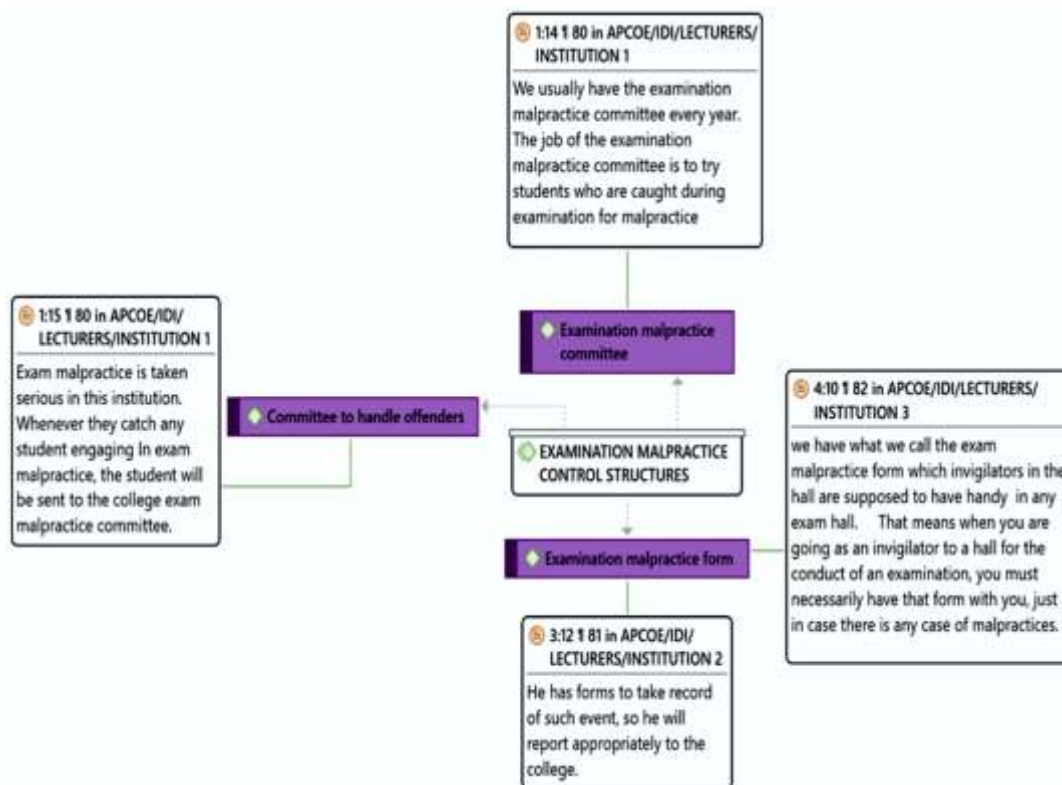


Figure 1.1b: Test Misconduct Control

Structures II – The Measures

The students mentioned the measures put in place by the school to control test misconducts. One of the students during the student FGD shared that:

"Whenever a student is caught in such act, they will be given test malpractice form to fill and

after filling the form, they will be asked to face the panel. When the students get to the panel, that's where the fate of the student will be decided" (APCOE/FGD/Students/Institution 1)

Another student shared an experience that:

"There was a student, he had finished his work and wanted to help someone beside him, so the paper just dropped inside his booklet, the

lecturer caught him and even everybody was begging for him because once you are caught, immediately, you wear your graduation gown. So immediately they just brought the yellow form and filled the form for him and that was the end of his admission on campus” (APCOE/FGD/Students/Institution 2).

Students also expressed that there is proper sitting arrangement and adequate invigilators during their tests. A student stated that they “...don't seat close to each other. If someone will sit close to you, it is someone doing another course, so you cannot copy or giraffe” (APCOE/FGD/Students/Institution 3). It was also pointed out by the students that “most times [they] can have up to 10 invigilators or more in a test hall. But it depends on the number of students and the size of the hall” (APCOE/FGD/Students/Institution 1).

Summarily, the above generated responses revealed that the Colleges of Education have rules put in place for test. However, students also expressed that test misconducts still occur in various forms:

“When we pay the lecturer, the person will come for the test but the person will not write anything. There will be a plan for the person to answer his own question later”. (APCOE/FGD/Students/Institution 2).

“There are some ogas that are wicked o! If you don't do what they want, they will not allow you to go. 3 to 4 years you will still be on campus doing a course. You just give them at least one time, so that you can go your way.”

(APCOE/FGD/Students/Institution 3).

“No matter how strict the supervision may be, some students will always try to smuggle in the prepared microchips.” (APCOE/FGD/Students/Institution 3).

“I have witnessed some. Students call the lecturers to offer themselves for grades.” (APCOE/FGD/Students/Institution 1)

Some of the students were also asked how they feel about engaging in test misconduct, e.g. “giraffing” or asking for help from a friend in the test hall. Some of their responses were:

“I would say it is wrong, but then, we are all guilty of it. I mean, there are some courses where we had nothing to write and we had to copy from our friends in order to put something on our scripts. Still, I would say that it is wrong.” (APCOE/FGD/Students/Institution 1)

“I don't think it is wrong. I see it as a way of helping myself...the payment for extra year is quite much to consider when you fail. In fact, if you will fail, at least put something down that will help you when you want to go and plead for the result.” (APCOE/FGD/Students/Institution 3)

“I believe it is not right, but then, it is still better than any other form of malpractices.” (APCOE/FGD/Students/Institution 3).

b. What are the students' opinion on assessment conducts in colleges of education in the southwest Nigeria?

Frequency and percentages were used to determine the perception of the students towards test misconducts in their colleges.

Table 1.1b: Students' opinions of assessment conducts in colleges of education in the southwest, Nigeria?

Statement	Very True		True		Not Sure		Untrue		Most Untrue		M	Std. Dev
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1. During test we are asked questions on everything we are taught.	134	45.7	109	37.2	25	8.5	16	5.5	8	2.7	4.18	.99
2. What I study doesn't come out in the test questions	28	9.6	70	23.9	94	32.7	78	26.6	21	7.2	3.02	1.09
3. We are given test questions on what we have not learnt in class	31	10.6	32	10.9	74	25.6	120	41.5	33	11.4	2.68	1.15
4. We are given test frequently	69	23.6	132	45.5	51	17.0	32	11.0	7	2.4	3.77	1.01
5. We are only given two tests every semester	45	15.7	51	17.8	95	33.1	77	26.8	19	6.6	3.09	1.16
6. We are given just one test every semester	23	8.0	33	11.4	69	24.0	123	42.7	40	13.9	2.57	1.11
7. The tests given to us are too many	41	14.2	66	22.9	67	23.3	87	30.2	27	9.4	3.02	1.22
8. The assignments given to us are too many	55	19.4	80	28.2	57	20.1	74	26.1	18	6.2	3.28	1.22
9. We do not get to know our performance in our assignments	70	24.1	103	35.5	45	15.5	52	17.9	20	7.0	3.52	1.23
10. I will still pass my test even if I don't do assignments	46	15.8	45	15.5	70	24.1	97	33.3	33	11.3	2.91	1.25
11. I will still pass this course even if I don't do tests	67	23.6	35	12.3	76	26.8	81	28.5	25	8.8	3.13	1.30
12. My assignments are very important for me to be able to pass my tests	127	44.4	115	40.2	28	9.8	11	3.8	5	1.8	4.22	.90

As presented in the Table 1.1b, majority of the students' perception on continuous assessments were positive. However, the qualitative data revealed a major flaw in the assessment process was observed in their responses on frequency of feedback, which was negative.

Qualitative Data

The students expressed their perceptions about overall assessment practices in COE in the southwestern Nigeria. A few of their responses are shown below:

"...Most people just collect our scripts and that's all we know. We get our test results like a month after our tests." (APCOE/FGD/Students/Institution 2).

"I don't ever see my test and assignment scores even after the tests. It is only test score that we see when they paste it on the notice board." (APCOE/FGD/Students/Institution 1).

"Since 100 level I haven't seen my C.A except in some elective courses. Some of them when you give them the assignment, you don't see it again, they just score you anyhow. The C.A will be lost." (APCOE/FGD/Students/Institution 3).

"We don't see our test scores but if the lecturer thinks that we didn't do well, he will conduct another test."

(APCOE/FGD/Students/Institution 3).

"Actually, anybody that doesn't do test and assignment will automatically fail, even though we don't know whether the lecturer marks the script or not. Anybody that doesn't write anything in the test will also not pass but sometimes when you just try your best, you can pass."

"There is a course I did that I was expecting like E or F but later when the results came out I had a B, so I was like, wow. I know what I did... and there are some that you are expecting A and you have something else."

Hypothesis

1. There is no discernible correlation between students' perceptions of test misconduct and the quality of assessments in federal colleges of education in the southwest Nigeria.

The hypothesis that there is no meaningful link between students' perception of test misconduct and the quality of assessments in federal colleges of education in the southwest Nigeria was tested using the Pearson product moment correlation test.

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Perception about assessment quality	64.2116	10.47549	293
Perception about test misconduct	61.2664	11.19810	289

Correlations

		Perception about assessment quality	Perception about test misconduct
Perception about assessment quality	Pearson Correlation	1	.589**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	293	289
Perception about test misconduct	Pearson Correlation	.589**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	289	289

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

The result revealed a statistical significant relationship between students' perception of quality of assessment and their perception of test misconduct which is significant at $p < 0.05$ ($r = 0.59$; $p = 0.00$). Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. The result further revealed that there is positive and moderate relation between the two variables.

Discussion

The findings highlight the test misconduct control structures in place in colleges of education. The presence of a test misconduct committee, availability of malpractice forms, confidentiality of test questions, and suitable test venues are positive aspects of these structures. However, the persistence of test misconducts despite severe punishments suggests that more measures need to be taken to deter and prevent such behaviours. The findings reveal that the COE are doing much but too little; likewise, administrative efforts are not enough, to reduce test misconducts. Qualitative data reveal that there are factors beyond the administrative control of COE which continuously instigates test misconducts and which can be alleviated by interventions of the federal government. One of the major issues highlighted in the focus group discussion sessions is lecturers requesting for personal financial gains (including but not limited to, lecturers asking students to contribute money to buy tyres or fuel for their vehicles) for good grades. The findings of the study highlight the need for federal government to improve remuneration of lecturers in order to ensure comfortable social standards for improved working efficiency. Also, qualitative reports show that the fear of having to pay for an extra year, also causes students to engage in test misconduct. This finding is supported by Petters and Okon (2013) who identified fear of failure as a cause of test misconduct, and George and Ukpong (2013) who also identified the need for federal government to improve remuneration of lecturers. Aderogba (2011) also asserts that poor remuneration of lecturers is a cause of test misconduct.

The findings likewise, provides insights into the students' perceptions of various aspects of assessment. While continuous assessments are given frequently, the students express dissatisfaction with the quality of assessment

feedback. Furthermore, despite severe punishment for test misconducts and efforts to ensure test confidentiality, these issues still persist. The findings indicate the need for colleges to focus on improving feedback practices and strengthening measures to prevent test misconducts. It also points out that there are adequate records of formative and summative assessments in most colleges. This suggests that the colleges are keeping records of student performance, which is essential for monitoring progress and providing feedback. However, majority of the students complained of not getting feedback of formative assessments until after the summative assessments have been concluded.

The findings of this study reveal that the students in COE recognize and are aware of the role they play in the assessment process through feedback and majority of them are of the opinion that feedback improves performance. Therefore, giving regular feedback of continuous assessments should be taken seriously and treated as a priority aspect of the assessment process. This finding is in line with Lizzio and Wilson (2008) who opined that effective feedback supports learning by acknowledging learners' achievement and efforts; as well as Boud and Molly (2013) who also stressed that feedback helps the students to self-regulate their learning process. Qualitative data shows that the students in COE perceive examiner's/course lecturer's engagement with their written tests/assignments as being very poor. This finding is also in line with Carless (2015) and Sambell (2013), who are of the opinion that students are to actively engage in feedback from various sources, as it enhances learning. Moreover, when the students are actively involved in the assessment process through feedback, the menace of fraud in the acquisition of assessment record will be reduced.

Conclusion

The results indicate that engaging in test misconduct has a harmful effect on students' view of the quality of assessments in institutes of education in Nigeria. In order to tackle this problem, it is crucial to adopt comprehensive strategies such as strengthening test security, fostering academic honesty, and offering sufficient assistance for students' education and preparation. Promoting a culture characterised

by integrity and a system based on individual merit can help to rebuild students' trust in the evaluation process. Findings based on the quantitative survey highlight a moderately high incidence of test misconduct and students' understanding of its negative consequences. The results reveal that students who engage in misconduct have a significantly different perception of assessment quality compared to those with no involvement. This perception is predominantly negative, suggesting that test misconduct undermines students' trust in the fairness and efficacy of assessments.

The qualitative focus group discussions offer excellent insight into the underlying motivations for test misconduct and its influence on students' opinion of the quality of assessments. Typical motivations for engagement encompass a sense of apprehension about failure, inadequate readiness, and a belief that misconduct is widely tolerated. The discussion sessions also bring attention to students' worries over the disparity among examiners, which further erodes their confidence in the quality of evaluation. Test misconduct has a detrimental impact on students' opinion of the quality of assessments in colleges of education in Nigeria. The study emphasises the necessity for prompt and enduring efforts to mitigate this issue. By improving the credibility of assessments, colleges of education may guarantee equitable and precise assessments that foster a high-quality education system founded on meritocracy and student growth.

Recommendations

Despite the measures already in place to curb test misconducts in colleges of education within the south western region of Nigeria, quality assurance departments of colleges of education must ensure efficiency in the implementation of these measures; amongst students and lecturers alike, in a bid to boost the credibility of assessment process as well as improve student opinion on general assessment practices in colleges of education. Lecturers must be ethically, professionally, morally encouraged by the college administrations, to take continuous assessment seriously, in a bid to ensure the predictability of outcomes from assessment output. The lecturers should also be financially motivated by the federal government in order to

boost general teacher efficiency in the colleges of education. It is likewise imperative to adopt comprehensive strategies such as fostering academic honesty, and offering sufficient assistance (e.g., providing feedback at appropriate times for students' education and preparation. Also, promoting a culture characterised by integrity and a system based on individual merit can help to rebuild students' trust in the evaluation process

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