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STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EXAMINATIONS MISCONDUCT IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN NORTH WEST, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study on the students' perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North West Nigeria' was guided by three objectives, three research questions, and three hypotheses. A descriptive cross-sectional survey research design was employed in the study. The researchers used mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) for data collection. The population of the study was 53,458, and a simple random sampling technique was employed to select the sample. The final sample size was 382, determined using the Raosoft online sampling calculator. A questionnaire, which was adapted, served as the instrument for quantitative data collection, and a frequency count and simple percentage were used to analyze the respondents' demographic information. The study explores misconduct in colleges of education in the North West, focusing on students' perceptions and the impact on academic integrity. It aims to uncover the philosophical perspectives behind cheating and recommend strategies to address misconduct and promote ethical behaviour among students. Examination misconduct has been a problem of national concern, requiring collective efforts to curb its spread. To address this issue, there is urgent need recommend placing emphasis on moral instruction and value re-orientation in all educational institutions.

Introduction

Education plays a significant role in the moral, socio-cultural, economic, cultural and political development of a nation. A nation stands the risk of being underdeveloped in terms of accumulation of illiteracy, disease and poverty when its people reject the honour of getting sound education and seems to opt for fraudulent activities and deceptive ways in making ends meet as epitomized by examinations malpractices thereby negating the philosophy of sound education (Ako & James 2018). Examinations are used to measure students' achievement by asking a series of questions to determine mastery of learning objectives. Although not the true test of knowledge, they are a close indicator of students' ability level in a given skill.

Examination misconduct is a significant issue among contemporary Nigerians. It involves students being classified based on their IQ. Those with high IQs often receive preferential treatment, leading to vices and misbehaviours. This issue is a major concern in the academic community, as it poses a significant threat to the school

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system and society. (Ajogbeje, Olofinlae, & Jeje 2015). Examination malpractice and misconduct is not a recent phenomenon or something peculiar to Nigeria or Africa alone but it is a pandemic. It has been in existence for very long time. There seems to be no consensus agreement on the first incidence of examinations malpractice in public examinations because, while Okoye observed that it occurred in early 1948, Famiwole claimed it occurred in 1945 Okoye, (1986);Famiwole (1998). The education system in Nigeria is experiencing an embarrassing decline in professional competence, largely due to factors such as family upbringing, societal influence, social media, and government policies. This massive decline is a shameful and embarrassing issue, as education is considered the pivot on which civilisation lies, and something must have gone wrong with the current system, (Onyibe, Uma, & Emmanuel 2015).

The systemic corruption of paper qualifications has led students to pursue devious practices to pass terminal examinations, believing that a certificate is all they need for a job, promotion, or admission. This systemic corruption has led to students focusing on devious practices, such as manipulating the examination process to obtain certificates, resulting in systemic corruption that hinders their academic progress. Examination misconduct is a significant issue among North West Nigerian education students, particularly in Colleges of Education. This study aims to understand the perceptions and experiences of these students, examining the relationship between class, parents' educational qualifications, and school type. The goal is to identify ways to reduce or improve examination misconduct in North West Colleges of Education.

Statement of the Problem

Examination misconduct is a significant issue in the educational sector, as it hinders the process of determining eligibility for classes and positions. Students often sit close together, move around in the exam hall, and complain about things like calculators or pencils. This misconduct can lead to students being unfairly treated and hurting the educational sector.

Researchers observed that many students were begging for permission and going outside after seeing exam questions without invigilators. The exam hall had close to 450 candidates, with a 1:90 ratio, and students answering multiple-choice questions. Identification papers were not checked upon entering or during writing. The researchers aimed to find ways to curb educational malpractices like cheating, interpersonal relationships between students and invigilators, and absenteeism. Evidence of increasing incidents of examination misconduct conflicts with the core purpose of education, which is to train the mind and character for practical and theoretical skills, knowledge, and development.

What are the factors responsible for the continuous rise in cases of examination malpractice? Students at Colleges of Education are influenced by various agents of socialization, including teachers, parents, friends, and college management, to shape their perceptions of examination misconduct, affecting their understanding

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and interpretation of the subject matter. Of what significance then, are these influences on students' perceptions?

Examination misconduct, often linked to paper qualifications, undermines the validity and reliability of tests and certificates in education. This study aims to provide context on the causes of misconduct, highlighting its negative impact on students' perceptions of education and the need for curriculums that promote the practical application of knowledge.

Literature Review

Examination has been defined variously by experts with more or less the same meaning. Balogun (1999) defined examination as the process through which students are evaluated or tested to find out the quality of knowledge they have acquired within a specified period after completing specific course schedules. Examination can also be defined as an instrument used for the assessment of individual skills and knowledge-content, both in general and specific area of study (Adesina, 2000).

The examinee is consequently awarded a certificate which could qualify students for admission into a school, promotion into higher level of an institution and employment opportunities (Kebuya & Mekongtso 2020). Teaching and learning become more effective and goal-orientated when students undergo examinations to assess their understanding of instruction and their teacher's performance. (Yusif, 2019).

Examination Misconduct

Several scholars have set out to define Examinations Misconduct, some of which are here presented. According to Olushola (2006), Examination misconduct is an unlawful behavior or activity engaged in by students to have personal advantage in an examination over their colleagues or mates who are taking the same examinations. Misconduct could be committed before, during or after the examination by either the students taking the examination or by officials assigned with the administration of the examination. Eperokun (1976), posited that examination misconduct involve various methods employed by candidates to cheat before or during examination Eperokun, (1976.). Olumero (2009), viewed examination misconduct as any examination not conducted in accordance with specified norms set up by the examining institution or body Olumero, (1992). Oluyeba and Daramola also asserted that examination misconduct is an irregular behaviour exhibited by a candidate or anybody charged with the conduct of examination before, during or after the examination which contravenes the rules and regulations governing the conduct of such examination. Olayinka (1993) defines examinations malpractice as a misconduct or improper practice in any examination with a view to obtaining good results through such a fraudulent action. Ongom (1994) also described examination misconduct as a wrong doing in an examination which involves misconduct, irregularity as a situation which is contrary to the established rules and directives to be

followed in order to affect fair conduct of examination.

He also stated that misconduct is an improper behaviour by candidates within or around the examination hall and dishonesty as an unfair practice devised with intention to cheat in examinations Ongom 1994). Fatai (2005), also described examination misconduct as wrong doings in an examination, which involve misconduct and irregularity contrary to the established rules and directives or regulations guiding the fair conduct of both internal and external examinations. It is a deliberate act of wrong doing, contrary to official rules, and is designed to place a candidate at unfair advantage or disadvantage.

Finally, World Bank Education Website (2021), defines examination misconduct as a deliberate act of wrongdoing contrary to the official examination rules and is aimed at placing a candidate at an unfair advantage or disadvantage. From the psychological point of view, examination malpractice can be seen as all forms of cheating which directly or indirectly falsify the ability of the students. It refers to counter practice that is against the ethics of examination. It is also an act of disrespect to all rules and regulations guiding the good conduct of any examination or any evaluation process (Kebuya & Mekongtso 2020).

Origin of Examinations Malpractice

Examination malpractice and misconduct is not a recent phenomenon or something peculiar to Nigeria or Africa alone but it is a global issue. It has been in existence for very long time. Although, there seems not to be a consensus agreement on the first incidence of examination malpractice in public examination because while Okoye (1986) observed that it occurred in early 1948, Famiwole (1998) claimed it occurred in 1945. According to Adesina (2000) however, the first examination malpractice incident has been traced back to 1914, when there was leakage of the Cambridge examination.

Examination malpractice is not peculiar to Nigeria alone, but one must also agree that this cankerworm has gotten to a devastating state that Nigerian certificates presented outside are questionable and regardless. Luke and Elizabeth (2009), gave the summary of historical antecedents that brought Examination malpractice to a full-blown problem in the academic world. This scourge started becoming the order of the day in the late 1980s and the 1990s during the military regimes when the educational sector at both the federal and state levels fell to sorry states. Previous regimes during these years, mismanaged the school systems, starving them of funds and keeping students in distress, out of the campuses. Schools at all levels were starved of necessary funds and allowed to dilapidate.

Several other mass malpractice cases were experienced, leading to the promulgation of laws and acts in order to curb this problem (Luke & Elizabeth, n.d). The Examination Malpractice Act (1999) explains examination misconduct as any act of omission or commission by a person who in anticipation of, before, during or after any examination fraudulently secure any unfair advantage for himself or any other person in such a manner that contravenes

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the rules and regulations to the extent of undermining the validity, reliability, authenticity of the examination and ultimately the integrity of the certificates issued.

Causes of Examinations Malpractices

Examination malpractice in educational institutions is a significant issue, often linked to factors like fear of failure, excessive certificate desire, and overcrowded seating arrangements. This issue is exacerbated by a lack of institutional means and a focus on cultural goals.

1. The fear of failure in the examination on the part of candidates.
2. The craze for certificate which can only be issued after passing examinations.
3. The desire of parents, even at any price, to have their children in choice professions and jobs.
4. The jobless and opportunists who take advantage of this situation to make money from candidates.
5. The phenomena of leakages and cheating.
6. The temptation for some principals of school to embrace examination malpractice in order to enhance the status or societal rating of their schools.
7. Pressure on children by parents to pursue course for which they have no aptitudes.
8. The pressure on teachers who want to gain the favour of students.
9. The inordinate ambition of some people to get rich quick.
10. The policy for some state Ministries of Education which ties promotion of school personnel to the success of their students in final examination. This tends to encourage, aid and abet malpractices.
11. The tendency of some candidates to join in cheating because they see others do so and frequently get away with it.
12. The encouragement to engage in malpractice with the complicity of the invigilators.
13. Examination malpractice takes advantage of the moral laxity in the society.
14. The over-crowded sitting arrangement in examination hall, encourage cheating among candidates.
15. Lack of qualified teacher and attitude of student and so on.

Dimensions of Examinations Misconduct or Malpractice

Examination malpractice occurs in various stages of the school system, including pre-examination, during, and post-examination, depending on the institutional framework, as discussed by Joshua (2021) in managing the examination crisis in Nigeria.

Pre-Examination Phase: Misconducts in public examinations include non-school registration, migration, fabricated scores, overcrowding, and money laundering. Administrators may also impose impersonators' photographs and leak questions for various amounts, causing anxiety among candidates.

During Examination Phase, Examination misconduct involves various methods, including copying from neighbours, using prepared materials, asking questions, using handkerchiefs, underwear, and cell phones, hiding materials, writing on designated desks, placing reading materials on thighs, and

disposing of materials in braziers. These methods are not fully explored and can significant consequences for students, (Joshua, 2008).

In the Post-Examination Phase, Examination misconduct involves repackaging scripts, payment to examiners, corrupt computer operators, and general sorting, often involving candidates obtaining money to change grades or post grades they never earned. Examination misconduct has severe consequences for individuals, educational institutions, societies, and the nation, leading to job loss, insecurity, and criminal individuals unable to defend their certificates or perform their jobs.

Consequences of Examination Misconduct or Malpractices

Examination misconduct in the school system has led to staffing problems and moral degeneration. The educational system aims to instil self-discipline and diligence, but when pervasive, it compromises feedback mechanisms and warps the system. Real-world consequences include bank failures, building collapses, economic sabotage, vandalism, kidnapping, drug trafficking, and counterfeit drug production. The drawbacks of examination misconduct are having a detrimental impact on society as a whole. It will be challenging for our country to reach its full social, economic, and technological potential unless citizens, governments, and other education sector collaborators cooperate in order to end this malpractice.

Key Players in Examinations Malpractice

Examination misconduct is a menace in the educational sector, affecting students' confidence and academic performance. Key stakeholders, including students, contribute to this issue. Students' lack of hard work, interest in studying, poor study habits, and distractions contribute to this menace. Dishonesty has become the norm, and honesty is no longer a virtue. Dishonesty in examination halls is now an acceptable behaviour and life style (Joshua, 2008). Examinations of malpractices, supposed to be exemplary custodians of academic honesty, are often perpetrated by teachers who provide students with cheating answers to test items, distract invigilators, and offer refreshments during exams.

Parents and guardians often aid students in cheating on exams, as they are the sole financiers of malpractice activities. Teachers may participate in malpractice for personal financial benefits, while the government indirectly encourages malpractice by setting unrealistic standards and poor conditions for teachers. Teachers are often poorly paid and frequently strike long, leading to students staying home and facing public examinations. Some state governments require provosts to record student passes or face sack, demotion, or stagnation, encouraging cheating. Society views certificates as proof of knowledge rather than skills exhibition.

They often fail to adhere to examination ethics due to financial incentives. Inadequate infrastructure, such as inadequate halls, writing desks, lighting, and ventilation, contributes to malpractice,

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often leading to overcrowding and discomfort, facilitating cheating. The Law Enforcement Agents such as the police personnel often drafted to maintain discipline, keep rules and regulations, are often greatly involved in examination misconduct. They do this by collecting large sums of money from students and school authorities to allow students to cheat during examinations. This in itself is very disappointing for a developing nation like Nigeria (Monday *et al,* n.d). These players are not exhaustive, hence the reality of examination malpractice being a canker worm that have eaten deep into the fabrics of the society.

Forms of Examinations Misconduct or Malpractice

Methods employed for examinations malpractice continue to evolve with the years and as newer technologies emerge (Onyibe, Uma & Ibina 2015). With this digital age comes various means of examinations malpractice which can vary with the setting, individual and the type of examination. According to Kebuya and Mekongtso (2020), examination malpractice comes in different forms.

The most common ways are **Collusion** among candidates themselves and between them and examination officials. Collusion occurs when candidates writing the same examination copy from one another. When examination official leaks the examination materials to the intended examinees, parents, or overzealous school managers prior to the examination time, the malpractice committed also falls under collusion. Collusion leads to mass and systematic cheating in examinations.

Another form is **Impersonation,** a case where another candidate or hired stand-in sits for examination on behalf of the genuine candidate; Male candidates sitting in for girls or vice versa and twins writing examinations for each other.

Giraffing is historically older than most forms of examination malpractice. It is a process in which an examinee stretches out his neck as long as possible to view and copy what a fellow candidate has written down for a given question. Students use inscription, using their body parts for exam preparation, including palms, thighs, handkerchiefs, rulers, purses, chairs, tables, and walls of examination halls, (Oredein, 2006). Nursing mothers convert the tender skin of their baby to white board; intermittently during examination seek for permission to breastfeed their baby only to use such avenues for note reading or revision.

Students cheat during exams by smuggling papers, sharing information, and tearing answer booklets. They use unauthorised tools, bribery, and money to manipulate exam officials. Both male and female students use money or sex to negotiate scores. Secret cult activities increase violent acts, particularly during external exams.

Inscription: Students have now advanced to the level of inscribing materials or information on anything like parts of their body for example palms, thighs, baby pampers; handkerchiefs, rulers, purses, chairs, tables, walls of examination halls and so on (Oredein, 2006). Nursing mothers convert the tender

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skin of their baby to white board; intermittently during examination seek for permission to breastfeed their baby only to use such avenues for note reading or revision.

Irregular activities inside and outside the examination halls: Students, who have made up their minds to cheat, exhibit unwholesome behaviour during examination. For instance, smuggling out question papers out of the examination hall, sending and receiving information from other candidates or from agents and touts outside the hall, tearing part of the question paper or answer booklet during the examination to perpetrate malpractice.

Scientific malpractice/ the use of mobile phones during examinations: Nowadays, candidates employ unauthorized scientific calculators, organizers, compact disc, and mobile phones to take undue advantage. Mobile phones with cameras (imaging functions) are used to take snapshots of a whole textbook in a much-reduced format for use during examination. Colleges of Education North west often engage in examination malpractices, where students pay officials money to use smuggled materials or extend the exam period. This practice, usually involving male and female students, involves bribery to upgrade their scores or obtain valuables, highlighting the economic aspects of examination misconduct.

Intimidation / Assault on examination officials: There are reported cases where students and touts brandish dangerous weapons like daggers, pistols, axes, etc. in the examination venues to intimidate invigilators to have a free day while committing the heinous crime. Students engaging in secret cult activities are more likely to engage in violent acts, particularly during final semester NCE studies exams, including coded sign languages, exchange of answer booklets, and mass cheating.

Possible solutions to examinations misconduct in COEs in North Western Nigeria

Nobody may assert to have all the answers for ending examination misconduct in Nigeria. According to (Onyibe, Uma, and Ibina 2015), there is a strong belief that the following recommendations will minimise malpractice. First, societal reorientation and re-engineering to revive moral values: It is important to correctly develop moral principles in our kids, and parents should refrain from encouraging their children to cheat on exams. Once more, only trustworthy individuals should be involved in exam management. Additionally, Petters and Okon (2013) recommend that educational institutions provide excellent counselling services to help students develop productive study habits. Teachers should also be prepared for the world that is driven by technology (Uzoigwe 2001). Teachers or lecturers who do not comprehend the concepts they are teaching their students cannot steer their learning towards understanding them by experience or activities, and they cannot question their students' comprehension if they are also misinformed (Jimoh, 2009). A compulsory nationwide teacher retraining programme is crucial to equipping educators with the necessary skills to teach information, as some of the learners in our various Colleges

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of Education in North Western are either victims or benefactors of misconduct.

Uzoigwe (2001), suggests that the examination process should be designed to be both human habitation and conducive to learning. Teachers should be given new responsibilities and enhanced salaries to discourage tampering. Examination officers, including teachers, supervisors, and security personnel, should be receive special welfare benefits. This will ensure a well-designed educational environment.

Impersonation: According to Onyibe, Uma & Ibina (2015) defined impersonation as the case where another candidate or hired stand-in sits for examination on behalf of the genuine candidate; Male candidates sitting in for girls or vice versa and twins writing examinations for each other. Impersonation is a prevalent form of educational malpractice. In this form, individuals hire someone else to take tests or complete assignments. This can lead to cheating and potential discipline, such as failing grades or bans from government exams. Both students involved in impersonation must be aware of the situation.

Gbagolo (2011) defined impersonation as the hiring of touts to take examinations by appearing in the halls as genuine candidates. Ndifon and Ndifon (2012) asserted that a major difference between mercenary (impersonation) and other forms of examination malpractice is that the actual candidates in question perpetrate other kinds of malpractice while mercenary involves the recruitment of an external body to take or sit the examinations on behalf of the Bonafide candidate. Issa (2012) explained that a mercenary is considered as the intellectual giant who takes examinations for the person who has engaged his services. Academic mercenaries impersonate students, committing serious offences like exam impersonation. Students' failure to demonstrate knowledge and future obsession with such crimes threaten society and lead to fraudulent behaviour.

Intimidation: Urim 2015 holds asserts that ages ago, as well as more recently, intimidation has become a talk on every mouth. Intimidation in schools have become so rampant and pronounced that it extends from common games out of the school campus, to inside classrooms and worst of all, examination halls. Students often intimidate and bully their peers to gain favour during tests and examinations. They use weapons to frighten invigilators and harm their prey. To combat this, the educational system has considered installing security officials in examination halls, but this has not been entirely successful. Experts suggest limiting the presence of security officers to unarmed or armed areas.

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on relevant educational theories which appear to be timeless.

The social cognitive theory by Albert Bandura.

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) is a learning theory based on the idea that people learn by observing others. These learned behaviours can be central to one's personality. Social psychologists emphasize the importance of individual behaviour, cognition, and environment in shaping development, with each behaviour influencing the other in a reciprocal

relationship. Similarly, the environment one is raised in may influence later behaviours, just as a father's mindset (also cognition) determines the environment in which his children are raised (Bandura, 2002). Relevance of the theory to the study on Examination misconduct is a learned habit that students develop through their social environment. Bad behaviours, such as cheating, are influenced by peers, teachers, and parents. The social environment, including school campuses and homes, influences students' behaviour, and public figures can help students unlearn these bad behaviours.

Moral development by Lawrence Kolberg.

Kohlberg expanded on Piaget's cognitive development stages to form the six stages of moral development. Kohlberg's moral development theory suggests correct moral reasoning is crucial for ethical decision-making. Gilligan, a psychologist, challenges Kohlberg's findings, arguing that women tend to prioritize caring and empathy over justice, despite Kohlberg's belief that individuals progress through stages of moral development. She developed an alternative scale, heavily influenced by Kohlberg's scale, which showed that both men and women could reach advanced stages of moral development (Zhou, Molly & Brown 2015).

Relevance of this theory to the study on the Moral and character development is integral to the development of self. Ashton & Huitt, (1980), and is as much the responsibility of early caregivers as it is of later educators. Morality has nothing to do with religion or social environment (Nucci, 1989). Religious organizations play a crucial role in providing worthwhile education by providing training to young people, focusing on character development and integrity. This education helps young people maintain adherence to philosophies and beliefs while also defending their values.

Moral education has a significant relationship with cheating incidences, with less serious perceptions leading to higher incidences. The relationship between cheating and perceptions is crucial for educators to address, (Kline, 2017; Williams 2012). In a survey conducted by Eze (2010), there was no significant interactions of family socio-economic status (FSES) and gender; gender and school location and family socioeconomic status, Environment and gender on students' perception of examination malpractice. However, the results indicate significant interaction of family socio-economic status and colleges of education location on examinations misconduct.

Empirical Literature

Emaikwu, Sunday Oche (2012) carried out a study titled Assessing the impact of examination misconduct on the measurement of ability in Nigeria. The purpose of the research work was to assess the impact of examination malpractices on the measurement of ability in Nigeria. This study is set up as survey research. For the study, a random sample of 300 students and 100 teachers from four universities in North Central Nigeria was used. The researcher created a structured questionnaire that was used as the data gathering tool. One hypothesis was evaluated and four research issues were addressed.

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Exam misconduct in Nigeria is prevalent, influenced by excessive focus on paper qualifications, fear of failure, and lack of preparation. Key forms include using foreign materials, student collaboration, and cheating through continuous assessment. This practice decreases education quality, discourages hard work, produces undeveloped graduates, and undermines Nigerian educational products' market confidence. To reduce malpractice, laws against it and adequate guidance and counselling services are recommended.

Adegokeh B, (2016) carried out a survey. This research was carried out to investigate examination malpractice among African Church College of Education students in Lagos State. The research focuses on the African Church College of Education's response to examination malpractice, as well as its origins, effects, and consequences among African Church College of Education students. Using basic random selection techniques, a sample of one hundred (100) students and twenty (20) teachers were selected from African Church College of Education for this study. The research instrument, a teacher and student perception questionnaire, was utilized to gather data from respondents. Distribution tables and basic percentage analysis were utilized for analysis. The study identified main causes of examination malpractice, advising parents not to pressure their children.

Okey, Stella- Maris and Moses (2011) published a work on examination malpractices. They held that this phenomenon has become a recurrent decimal in schools, both secondary and higher institutions. Examination malpractice is often closely linked to unethical behaviour by students at these schools since it gives them the chance to obtain a degree through deception. The legitimacy and authenticity of the grades they receive in school are called into doubt, and this shows in how well they perform overall on the job market. Examinations misconduct, according to Okey et al. (2011), is a common instance of corruption in higher education institutions. They go on to say that any act of dishonesty in public service is bribery. Exam malpractice, which includes any dishonest behaviour that provides a student with an unfair advantage to receive grades before, during, and after an exam, is closely linked to corruption.

Fasisi (2006) and Bitrus (2013) highlight the influence of parental pressure on students in the North West Colleges of Education, leading to inappropriate activities and concerns about academic performance. This practice, which has become rampant, has led to students bribing teachers and classmates to pass exams, destroying their future and posing a threat to the educational process. The North West Colleges of Education are addressing this issue to ensure the safety and well-being of students.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study as follows:

1. Is there any significant relationship between students' philosophical beliefs and their perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria?

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2. Are there any significant differences between male and female students' perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria?
3. Is there any significant relationship between in students' academic performance and perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria?

Hypotheses

H_{01}. There is no significant relationship between students' philosophical beliefs and their perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria.

H_{02}. There are no significant differences between male and female students' perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria

H_{03}. There is no significant relationship between students' academic performance and perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria

Methodology

The research design employed a cross-sectional survey, employing various techniques for data collection from a research sample across various colleges. This according to Zubairu (2014) The study involved collecting and analyzing data from a representative group through questionnaires and interviews, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of their opinions and perceptions. The researchers used a mixed-method approach, collected data in both quantitative and qualitative formats, and described the data in a systematic manner, as supported by Nworgu (2015).

The population of the study

The populations of the study are students State Colleges of Education (Coes) In North Western Nigeria with a total number of fifty-three thousand and four hundred fifty-eight (53,458). The students of these are studied in the seven Colleges of Education in North-West, Nigeria.

Table: 1 Name of Colleges and their respective Students' Perception Population:

S/N	Name of The College	Population
1.	Jigawa College of Education, Gumel (JSCOEG)	8,582
2.	Saadatu Rimi College of Edu, Kano	12,221
3.	Kaduna State College of Education, GidanWaya	5,324
4.	Isa Kaita College of Education, Dutsin Ma Katsina, Katsina State.	8,151
5.	Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto State	7,244
6.	Zamfara State College of Education, Maru, Zamfara	6,835
7.	Adamu Augie College of Education, Argungu	5,101
	Total	**53,458**

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Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample size was drawn from the State Colleges of Education in North Western zone. Proportionate sampling techniques was used to select samples of the study with help of the research advisor table, every member of the population will likely to be chosen as a representation of the entire population. The selected State Colleges of Education are as follows. Jigawa College of Education, Gumel (JSCOEG), Kaduna State College of Education, Waya Kafanchan (KSCOEWK), Saadatu Rimi College of Education, Kano (SRCOEK), Isa Kaita College of Education, Dutsin Ma Katsina, Katsina State (IKCOEDM), Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto (SSCOES), (FCEKN), Zamfara State College of Education, Maru (ZSCOEM), Adamu Augie College of Education, Argungu, (AACOEA).

Table 2: Name of institutions and selected samples (Gender)

S/N	Name of The College	Male Sample	Female Sample	Total
1.	Jigawa College of Education, Gumel (JSCOEG)	40	21	61
2.	Saadatu Rimi College of Edu, Kano	56	31	87
3.	Kaduna State College of Education, Gidan Waya	20	18	38
4.	Isa Kaita College of Education, Dutsin Ma Katsina, Katsina State.	33	25	58
5.	Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto State	34	18	52
6.	Zamfara State College of Education, Maru, Zamfara	30	19	49
7.	Adamu Augie College of Education, Argungu	22	15	37
	Total	**235**	**147**	**382**

Source: National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), Abuja (2023) Annual Report

Instrumentation

The Instrument was used for data collection is the "Examination Malpractice Questionnaire (EMQ) developed by (Alutu and Aluede 2006). The examination malpractice Questionnaire (EMQ) was originally a 24 item Questionnaire. According to Alutu and Aluede (2006), it elicited responses on students' personal perception and their opinion on the perception of significant others about examination malpractices. The questionnaire will be divided into two sections: part A and part B. Part A is for demographic information of the respondents, while part B contains items based on the usefulness. Philosophical Examination on Students' perception of Examination Misconduct in Colleges of Education (COEs) in North Western Nigeria. Part A was asked respondents to tick the appropriate responses in the slots provided. Part B was asked respondents to selected the relevant option in four Likert scale (Agreed, Strongly Agreed, Disagreed and Strongly disagreed).

Validity of the Instrument

The Instrument was given to experts in the Department of Educational Foundations Faculty of Education and Extension Services, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Nigeria for input, suggestions, and corrections to ascertained

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the face and content validity of the instrument. There is no empirical evidence of the instrument's validity. However, it was judged to be valid by the Expert, who is a seasoned educationist. After face and content validation, no item was discarded as it was agreed that the items measured malpractice.

Reliability of the instrument

The Federal College of Education (F.C.E.) in Katsina state was performed a pilot project. The reason for choosing F.C.E. Katsina is because the respondents in this location share many of the same characteristics as those in other tertiary institutions that would be chosen for the study, fifty (40) students from F.C.E. Katsina were used which are part of the population but not part of the sample. Within the time limit, all of the questionnaires will be retrieved. The data would be statistically analyzed using statistical programme (SPSS) version 20:0 to determine whether the instrument is dependable the reliability Coefficient, Cronbach alpha = 85.2 was obtain and considered high enough for the research.

Procedure for Data Collection

The researchers from Shehu Shagari University of Education Sokoto State, Nigeria, was gathered an introductory letter. The letter was delivered to the appropriate officials at the tertiary institutions where the data was collected. The study's goal was also explained to the relevant authorities by the researcher. Following that, four research assistants with at least a minimum of National Certificate in Education (N.C.E.) Certificate was received one-day training on how to assist respondents in filling out the questionnaires. They were also received training on the substance of the questionnaire so that they may respond to some of the respondents' questions. The research assistants are responsible for questionnaire distribution, collected, and responded to every complaint received from respondents.

Procedure of Data Analysis

After the making session, scores obtained from the study was subjected to analysis using SPSS Statistics. The researcher used descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) to answer the three (3) research questions and t-test statistics was used to test three (3) null hypotheses (H_{01}, H_{02}, and H_{03}) while null hypothesis at 0.05 alpha level of significance to further confirm the difference in mean score.

Analysis of Research question

This section addressed the research questions earlier raised in the study using descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, as presented in tables below.

Research Question one: Is there any significant relationship between students' philosophical beliefs and their perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria?

To answer this research question, the data were obtained from the colleges of education in North western zone Nigeria. Which comprises of 382 respondents. Also, the data was analysed using descriptive statistics and the result is presented in Table 4.1

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Table 1: Is there any significant relationship between students' philosophical beliefs and their perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria?

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean difference
Philosophical beliefs	382	2.3257	0.511	
				0.046
Perceptions	382	2.2795	0.278	

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2024.

Table 4.1 shows the significant relationship between students' philosophical beliefs and their perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria. The result indicates that Students Philosophical beliefs had a mean score of 2.3257 (SD = 0.511) while perceptions of examination misconduct had a mean score of 2.2795 (SD = 0.278), with mean difference of 0.046

Research Question two: Is there any significant differences between male and female students' perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria**?**

To answer this research question, the data were obtained from the colleges of education in North western zone Nigeria. Which comprises of 382 respondents. Also, the data was analysed using descriptive statistics and the result is presented in Table 4.2

Table 4.2: Differences between male and female students' perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean difference
Male	235	13.95	4.02	
				5.33
Female	147	8.62	4.23	

Table 4.2 shows significant differences between male and female students' perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria. The result indicates that Male students had a mean score of 13.95 (SD = 4.02) while those from Female students had a mean score of 8.62 (SD = 4.23), with mean difference of 5.33 the result will be subjected to the analysis using t-test statistics.

Research Question three: Is there any significant relationship between in students' academic performance and perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria?
To answer this research question, the data were obtained from the colleges of education in North western zone Nigeria. Which comprises of 382 respondents. Also, the data was analysed using descriptive statistics and the result is presented in Table 4.2

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Table 4.3 Relationship between in students' academic performance and perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria

Schools	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean difference
Students' academic performance	382	11.36	3.12	1.27
Perceptions of examination misconduct	382	10.10	2.54	

Table 4.2 shows significance relationship between in students' academic performance and perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria. The result indicates that Students' academic performance had a mean score of 11.36 (SD = 3.12) while the Perceptions of examination misconduct had a mean score of 10.10 (SD = 2.54). The mean difference is quite small, the result will be subjected to the analysis using ANOBA to confirm if significance relationship exists.

Testing of Hypotheses

This section tested the hypotheses predicted earlier in the study. Prior to this, preliminary investigation was conducted to check for normality, outliers and homogeneity of variance, with violations noticed.

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between students' philosophical beliefs and their perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria**.**

Table 4.4: **Significant relationship between promotion of staff and managerial effectiveness**

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	DF	r-value	P-value	Decision
Philosophical beliefs	382	2.3257	0.511	698	0.095	0.007	H_0 rejected
perceptions of examination misconduct	382	2.2795	0.278				

Source field work (2019) **α- value= 0.05**

In table 4.4, shows significant relationship between students' philosophical beliefs and their perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria. It showed that, p-value of 0.007 was less than α- value of 0.05 ($p < \alpha$). There was a strong positive relationship between students' philosophical beliefs and their perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria. In view of this result, the research hypothesis which there is no significant relationship between students' philosophical beliefs and their perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria is here by rejected.

H_{02}. There are no significant differences between male and female students' perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria**.**

To test this null hypothesis, the data was obtained from the 382 selected was sorted according to Male and Female students' perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education. The data was

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analyzed electronically using independent t-test at 0.05 level of significance on SPSS Statistics and the result.

Table 4.5: significant differences between male and female students' perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	DF	T-value	P-value	Decision
Male	235	13.95	4.02	380	3.65	0.000	H_0 rejected
Female	147	8.62	4.23				

Source field work (2024) **α- value= 0.05**

In table 4.5, shows significant differences between male and female students' perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria. It showed that, p-value of 0.007 was less than α- value of 0.05 ($p < \alpha$). In view of this result, the research hypothesis which says there is no significant differences between male and female students' perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria is here by rejected.

H_{03}. There is no significant relationship between students' academic performance and perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria**.**

To test this null hypothesis, the data was obtained from the 382 selected was sorted according to students' academic performance and perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education. The data was analyzed electronically using independent t-test at 0.05 level of significance on SPSS Statistics and the result

Table 4.6: **Significant relationship between students' academic performance and perceptions of examination misconduct.**

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	DF	r-value	P-value	Decision
Students' academic performance	382	11.36	3.12	380	0.08	0.003	H_0 rejected
Perceptions of examination misconduct	382	10.10	2.54				

Source field work (2024) **α- value= 0.05**

In table 4.6, shows significant relationship between students' academic performance and perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria. It showed that, p-value of 0.003 was less than α- value of 0.05 ($p < \alpha$). There was a strong positive relationship between relationship between students' academic performance and perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria at ($r = 0.08$), the research hypothesis which There are no significant relationship between students' academic performance and

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perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria is here by rejected.

Summary of the Major Findings

1. There is significant relationship between students' philosophical beliefs and their perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria.
2. There are significant differences between male and female students' perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria**.**
3. There is significant relationship between students' academic performance and perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria**.**

Discussions of the Findings

The discussion of the major findings was done based on the finding of the study;

The result of this study indicated that there is significant relationship between students' philosophical beliefs and their perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria. The result revealed that significant relationship between students' philosophical beliefs and their perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria exist, this finding is in line with the finding of Adamu and Salihu, (2023) whose carried out a study to study surveyed of student's perception on examination misconduct in national examination in Jalingo, Taraba State. The study which adopted a survey research design has students from Taraba State University, Jalingo and Collage of Agriculture, Jalingo who had written National Examinations to form the population of the study. Students from the two (2) schools were administered questionnaires, the data collected was analyzed to answer the research questions. The samples of the study were on 120 respondents. The samples were randomly selected from the study area where students had previously participated in National Examinations. Descriptive statistical tool was used. The study showed student's perception of examination misconduct during National Examination in the study area was of cheating and other forms of examination misconduct. Students saw and believed that non implementation of examination misconduct sanctions was a factor that encouraged examination misconduct. Students should be counselled against negative perceptions and encouraged to study hard in other to pass their examination rather than believe they can pass using self-help. Hence, it was recommended to utilize Students should be counselled in their various schools before any National Examination to have confidence in what they were thought in school and what they have studied for the examination.

There are significant differences between male and female students' perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria**.** The result from the study indicated that students have general knowledge about rules and regulations governing National Examination in the study area. This agrees

with the findings of Oede (2014) and supported by the report of Adeyemi (2010). The study revealed that students in the study area were generally involved in examination malpractice at some point during the National Examination. This finding aligns with Cornelius-Ukpepi's (2010) work. It also indicated that students perceived the possibility of receiving assistance during the examination, which may stem from their lack of confidence in their abilities and study habits. Additionally, the study found no significant interaction effect between gender and experimental conditions on participants' attitudes toward examination malpractice.

The study's results indicated that gender and self-assessment training had no significant interaction effect on students' attitudes toward examination malpractice. This suggests that the self-assessment training was equally effective for both male and female students. However, male participants demonstrated a higher tendency to engage in examination malpractice. This finding contrasts with Okorodudu's (2013) study, which found no significant relationship between gender and attitudes toward examination malpractice, identifying peer pressure as the strongest predictor of such behavior. The findings of this study contradict Ossai's (2011) conclusion that both male and female students exhibit an equal tendency toward examination misconduct. Similarly, Athanason and Olasehinde (2002), in a meta-analysis of literature on gender influence in academic dishonesty, found that males were more likely to cheat than females. However, their further analysis revealed no significant difference in the proportion of males and females involved in cheating during examinations. Minnesota State University (2006) reported that in four recent studies examining gender as a factor in academic dishonesty, three found that males were more likely to cheat, while one found no significant correlation between gender and cheating. Additionally, it was observed that pupils' perception of examination malpractice did not significantly differ by gender, suggesting that perceptions of malpractice are not influenced by whether a student is male or female. However, Good, Nichols, and Sabres (1999) found a significant difference in cheating perceptions between male and female students. Similarly, Hill (1972) reported that girls cheated more often in subjects like mathematics, while boys cheated more in vocabulary tests. These contradictory findings suggest that gender's influence on attitudes toward examination malpractice may vary depending on the context.

There is significant relationship between students' academic performance and perceptions of examination misconduct in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria**.** This finding aligns with Tamunosisi's (2015) report, which highlighted that the average Nigerian student often fails to dedicate sufficient effort to their studies. Many students neglect homework and assignments, attend few or no classes, yet aspire to achieve good grades in exams. As a result, they turn to shortcuts and dishonest practices to succeed. This behaviour, coupled with a lack of self-confidence, drives examination malpractice. These findings are further supported by Shaire (2000), who identified

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students' abilities and lack of confidence as the primary causes of examination malpractice.

The study revealed that students in the study area generally perceived it as acceptable for a candidate to be reminded of a forgotten point during an examination. This finding aligns with Omede's (2014) report, which indicated that students viewed such reminders as permissible. Additionally, the study suggested that poor study habits were not the primary cause of examination misconduct in the National Examination within the study area. However, this contradicts Adeoti et al.'s (2015) findings, which attributed examination malpractice to poor concentration during lectures and inadequate exam preparation. Despite being aware of the rules and regulations governing the National Examination, students in the study area were found to engage in misconduct during examinations.

This behaviour contributes to unethical practices during examinations. The study found that students attribute examination misconduct to the lack of enforcement of sanctions, which they believe encourages others to engage in such acts since offenders face no consequences. This aligns with Omede's (2014) findings. Similarly, Onokerhorage (2000) emphasized that a conducive school environment should discourage cheating and similar behaviours. Furthermore, the study revealed that students acknowledged that the seating arrangement during exams facilitates cheating. This supports Onuka and Obialo's (2004) observation that overcrowding is a major cause of examination malpractice and highlights the importance of providing adequate spacing between candidates during examinations.

Conclusion

The study has shown that in the study area, the Philosophical Examination on Students' Perceptions of Examinations Misconduct in Colleges of Education in North West, Nigeria, involved cheating and other forms of misbehaviour or examination misconduct. Examination misconduct in Nigeria is a moral issue that has grown increasingly difficult to address. Students often face consequences for misconduct, leading to poor study habits. To solve this problem, it is essential to address its underlying causes and promote sound moral values through effective moral education in schools. The prevalence of examination malpractice in Nigeria has reached alarming levels and continues to evolve. Despite efforts by the government and stakeholders to curtail it, significant progress remains elusive. Without urgent intervention, this trend threatens to undermine the integrity and quality of education in the country.

Prioritize oral exams and group work for NCE students, and instil moral values and ethical instruction. Parents should be counselled against cheating and honesty in examination handling. Examination malpractices negatively impact Nigerians' academic performance and prospects. If left unchecked, it can lead to corrupt individuals and perpetuate immorality. To combat this issue, Nigerians must implement sustainable measures promoting zero tolerance for misconduct, paving the way for progress in all nations. Further research is needed to identify lasting solutions. Examination misconduct

in tertiary institutions, particularly State Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria, has led to a significant educational crisis. This paper advocates for transformative changes in examination invigilation methods and adopting advanced technologies to restore integrity. The State Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria serve as a case study, demonstrating the importance of adopting these measures to reduce misconduct and restore the honour and integrity of Nigeria's tertiary institutions.

Recommendations

1. Examination misconduct has been a problem of national concern, requiring collective efforts to curb its spread. To address this issue, there is urgent need recommend placing emphasis on moral instruction and value re-orientation in all educational institutions.
2. Students should be instilled with the virtues of hard work, honesty, and the dignity of labour, integrity, alongside examination ethics and the repercussions of misconduct. Additionally, reducing the excessive emphasis on paper qualifications can help alleviate the pressure that drives students to engage in examination malpractice.
3. To curb examination malpractice, Colleges of Education should adopt diverse evaluation methods, including oral, practical, and project-based assessments. Guidance and counseling should help students manage stress, while parents must instill honesty at home. Financial incentives for exam officials can reduce corruption, and swift disciplinary actions are essential.

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