PEER INFLUENCE AND SELF EFFICACY AS CORRELATES OF THE RELIABILITY OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT SCORES

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of peer pressure and self-efficacy on students' perceptions of the reliability of Continuous Assessment (CA) scores in Senior Secondary School (SSS) II in Benin Metropolis. To guide the study, four research questions were raised and four null hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 significant level. The study sampled 200 SSSII students in Benin Metropolis. A correlational survey research design was employed to achieve the general aim of the study. Data were collected through a structured and validated questionnaire, which yielded a coefficient value of 0.92, using a Cronbach's alpha statistic. Mean, Standard Deviations, One-Sample t-tests and Spearman Correlation statistics were used to analyze the data collected from the respondents. The findings revealed that students generally perceived CA as fair and reliable, with peer influence significantly shaping their perceptions. A slight positive correlation was found between self-efficacy and perceived CA reliability, suggesting that students with lower self-confidence were more likely to question the fairness of their assessments. The authors of the study, therefore, emphasized the need for transparent assessment practices and timely feedback to enhance student trust and correct the misconceptions surrounding CA.

Keywords: Benin Metropolis, CA, Peer Pressure, Reliability, Self-Efficacy, Senior Secondary School II, Students' Perceptions, Continuous Assessment Scores.

Introduction

Continuous Assessment (CA) or assessment for learning has gained prominence as a method of evaluating students' progress over time, offering a more comprehensive measure of their abilities compared to traditional one-time evaluation examinations. However, the reliability of CA scores is debatable, as students' perceptions of its credibility can be influenced by psychological and social factors such as peer influence and self-efficacy. Many developed countries, including the United States., the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia, have adopted CA frameworks that emphasize formative assessments and coursework. Standardized grading policies and teacher training help maintain CA credibility, although students' perceptions can still be influenced by peer discussions. In African countries such as Ghana, South Africa, Kenya, and Nigeria, CA has been integrated to promote continuous learning and reduce examination malpractice. Teachers' bias and lack of standardization concerns affect its perceived reliability. In Nigeria, CA is a central part of the educational system, applied at all levels as per the national policy on education. Concerns about grading inconsistencies, favouritism, and external influences impact students' trust in CA. Peer discussions play a significant role in shaping the perceptions of students in school environments, where CA is seen as fair tend to trust it, while skepticism grows in settings where manipulation is suspected. Several scholars and researchers have explored the impact of

peer influence and self-efficacy in shaping students' perceptions on assessment reliability.

Self-efficacy can be defined as an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in specific tasks. It plays a significant role in academic performance and perception of assessment reliability (Pajares, 2006; Usher & Pajares, 2008). Students with high self-efficacy tend to exhibit greater confidence in their academic assessments, while those with low self-efficacy may perceive continuous assessment scores as unreliable or unfair (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021). Similarly, peer influence—the impact of classmates and friends on an individual's attitudes and behaviors—can shape students' perceptions of assessment systems (Wentzel, 2005; Ryan, 2011). Self-efficacy, a core component of Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory, has been extensively studied in relation to academic achievement and students' perceptions of assessment fairness (Schunk & Pajares, 2002; Klassen & Usher, 2010). Students with high self-efficacy are more likely to trust the reliability of CA scores because they believe their performance is a result of their effort and skills rather than external biases (Pajares & Schunk, 2001; Usher & Pajares, 2008). On the other hand, students with low self-efficacy may attribute their poor performance to external factors, including unreliable assessment practices (Zimmerman, 2000; Bong, 2001). Empirical studies have demonstrated that self-efficacy correlates positively with students' perceptions of fairness and reliability in assessment (Bandura, 2006; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021). For instance, students who engage in self-regulated learning strategies tend to perceive continuous assessment as more reliable, as they feel in control of their learning outcomes (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011). Conversely, students with learned helplessness or low academic confidence often doubt the credibility of assessment scores (Dweck, 2006; Elliot & Dweck, 2017).

In many educational settings, students often discuss their scores, grading fairness, and assessment reliability with their peers, which may affect their individual perceptions of the legitimacy of CA scores (Brown & Rollins, 2020). If a student's peers frequently express skepticism about the reliability of CA, this skepticism may spread, influencing the student's own perception regardless of the actual reliability of the assessment system (Perkins, 2003; Allen et al., 2018). Conversely, if a peer group values and trusts the CA system, a student may be more likely to perceive it as reliable (Wentzel & Muenks, 2016). Peers play a significant role in shaping students' attitudes toward learning, assessment, and academic success (Ryan, 2000; Wentzel, 2005). Peer influence can be direct, such as through academic discussions and collaborative learning, or indirect, where students adopt the attitudes and behaviours of their peers without direct persuasion (Brown, 2004; Berndt, 2009). Research has shown that students who associate with academically motivated peers tend to develop a positive perception of the reliability of assessment scores, whereas those influenced by disengaged peers may develop skepticism toward assessment practices (Kindermann, 2007; Juvonen & Wentzel, 2013). Additionally, peer influence has been found to impact students' engagement with assessments (Wentzel & Caldwell, 1997; Steinberg, 2011). Studies indicate that students who are part of academic support groups or study circles often develop a stronger belief in the fairness and reliability of assessment systems (Altermatt & Pomerantz, 2003; Hamm & Faircloth, 2005). Conversely, students exposed to negative peer discussions about unfair grading may internalize these perceptions, leading to increased distrust in CA scores (Chen et al., 2010; Allen et al., 2018).

While peer influence and self-efficacy independently affect students' perceptions of assessment reliability, their interaction can further shape students' beliefs and attitudes (Ryan, 2011; Wentzel & Muenks, 2016). Studies indicate that students with strong self-efficacy are less susceptible to negative peer influence regarding assessment reliability (Alivernini & Lucidi, 2011; Bouchard & Berg, 2017). However, when self-efficacy is low, peer influence can significantly alter students' judgment about the fairness of CA scores (Chen et al., 2010; Allen et al., 2018). CA has been widely accepted as a means of ensuring a more holistic evaluation of students' academic performance (Guskey, 2019). Unlike summative assessments or assessment of learning, which provide a one-time evaluation, CA allows educators to track students' progress throughout the academic period, offering opportunities for feedback and improvement (Sadler, 1989; Black & Wiliam, 1998). However, concerns regarding the reliability of CA scores persist, with some studies highlighting inconsistencies in grading criteria, teacher bias, and students' varying

levels of engagement (Harlen, 2005; Brookhart, 2011). Reliability in assessment refers to the consistency and dependability of scores obtained through a particular evaluation process (Moss, 2003; Linn, 2006). When students perceive assessment scores as unreliable, it may lead to demotivation, anxiety, and reduced academic effort (Stiggins, 2005; Andrade, 2010). Several factors contribute to students' perceptions of CA reliability, including the transparency of grading, the fairness of assessment practices, and the credibility of the assessors (McMillan, 2013; Wiliam, 2018).

The concept of social comparison theory, proposed by Festinger (1954), had suggested that individuals evaluate their abilities and opinions by comparing themselves to others. This theory is relevant in understanding how students' perceptions of CA reliability are shaped by their peers. If a student perceives that their peers are consistently receiving unfairly high or low scores, they may question the reliability of CA, even if their own scores are fair (Dijkstra et al., 2008; Prinstein & Dodge, 2008). Given these psychological and social influences, this study seeks to explore, with a particular focus on Nigeria, where the education system faces challenges such as examination malpractice, grading inconsistencies, and social pressures among students, the extent to which peer influence and self-efficacy predict students' perceptions of the reliability of continuous assessment scores. By exploring this relationship, this research aims identify factors that contribute to students' skepticism or trust in CA scores and recommend strategies for improving students' confidence in CA as a credible assessment tool. Understanding these relationships is crucial for educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers to enhance the validity of assessment practices and improve students' trust in the educational evaluation system (Brookhart, 2013; Andrade & Heritage, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

Continuous Assessment is a crucial method for evaluating students' academic performance, offering a more consistent and comprehensive measure of learning than single high-stakes exams. It includes assignments, quizzes, projects, and participation, ensuring students are assessed on overall engagement. However, the reliability of CA scores is often questioned, with peer influence and self-efficacy playing key roles in shaping students' perceptions. Peer influence significantly affects students' attitudes toward CA, as they often rely on peers for feedback and validation. If students collectively perceive CA as biased or inconsistent, skepticism can spread, regardless of the actual integrity of the system. Negative peer perceptions may lead to disengagement, skepticism, or even unethical behavior, Conversely, if CA is viewed as fair and credible within a peer group, students are more likely to trust the process and engage positively. In other words, positive peer perception can enhance motivation and trust in CA. Despite the widespread use of CA, little research has explored how peer influence and self-efficacy predict students' perceptions of its reliability. Since CA is a salient tool for evaluating academic progress, understanding the extent to which peer influence and self-efficacy plays a crucial role in shaping the beliefs about the fairness, accuracy and consistency of CA is essential. Therefore, it is imperative for examine the extent to which peer influence and self-efficacy shapes students' beliefs regarding CA. The important question at this juncture is: what are students' perceptions of peer influence and self-efficacy on reliability within the CA framework in Senior Secondary Schools in Benin Metropolis?

Purpose of the Study

This study examined students' perceptions of peer influence and self-efficacy on reliability of CA scores in Senior Secondary School (SSS) II in Benin Metropolis. The specific objectives of the present study were to examine:

1. students' perception of the reliability of CA scores in SSSII in Benin Metropolis.
2. the extent to which students' perception on peer influence associate with the reliability of CA scores in SSSII in Benin Metropolis.
3. the extent to which students' perception on self-efficacy associate with the reliability of CA scores in SSSII in Benin Metropolis.

4. the differences in students' perception on peer influence and self-efficacy as correlates with the reliability of CA scores in SSSII in Benin Metropolis.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

Research Question 1: What are the students' perception of the reliability of CA scores in SSSII in Benin Metropolis?

Research Question 2: To what extent does students' perception on peer influence associate with the reliability of CA scores in SSSII in Benin Metropolis?

Research Question 3: To what extent does students' perception on self-efficacy associate with the reliability of CA scores in SSSII in Benin Metropolis?

Research Question 4: What is the difference in students' perception on peer influence and self-efficacy as correlates with the reliability of CA scores in SSSII in Benin Metropolis?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were proposed and tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

Research Hypothesis 1: The students' perception of the reliability of CA scores in SSSII in Benin Metropolis.

Research Hypothesis 2: Students' perception on peer influence does not significantly associate with the reliability of CA scores in SSSII in Benin Metropolis.

Research Hypothesis 3: Students' perception on self-efficacy does not significantly associate with the reliability of CA scores in SSSII in Benin Metropolis.

Research Hypothesis 4: The difference in students' perception on peer influence and self-efficacy does not significantly correlates with the reliability of CA scores in SSSII in Benin Metropolis**.**

Methodology

Research Design

A quantitative survey research design was used in achieving the broad goal of the study. This design was used in achieving the broad goal of the study because the study involves assessing the interplay between and among the variables of the study.

Population and Sampling Technique

The total population of the study was 200 SSSII students in Benin Metropolis, Edo State, Nigeria. To get a representative sample of 133 SSSII students (respondents), the Taro Yamane statistical formula was employed.

Research Instrument: Validation and Reliability

The instrument that was used for data collection in the study was a structured questionnaire, titled "Students' Perception of Peer Influence and Self Efficacy on the Reliability of Continuous Assessment Scores". Face and content validity of the research instrument was conducted by three experts. Their suggestions were considered and the instrument was modified accordingly. The instrument was administered on 30 SSSII students who were not part of the sample employed for the study. Data generated were analyzed using a Cronbach's alpha statistic to ascertain the internal consistencies of the items in the instrument. The obtained reliability coefficient value was 0.82, which is relatively high, which indicated that the instrument was good and reliable for the study.

Data Collection and Analysis

The questionnaires were personally administered on the respondents after due permission was granted by the school authority. The completed copies of the questionnaire were collected immediately

they were completed, and 100% of the questionnaires were retrieved. Data collected were analyzed using Mean, Standard Deviation, Spearman Rho Correlation, One Sample t-test and Fisher's Z Statistics.

Results

Answering Research Questions

Research Question 1: What are the students' perception of the reliability of CA scores in SSSII in Benin Metropolis?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on Students' Perception of the Reliability of CA scores in SSSII in Benin Metropolis.

Items	N	Sum	Mean	SD	Remark
I believe my CA score.	133	420.28	3.1600	.54810	Agree
I feel CA scores are fairly awarded by teachers.	133	412.3	3.1000	.88641	Agree
Peer opinions influence how I perceive the fairness of CA scores.	133	335.16	2.5200	.95276	Agree
I trust the assessment process to determine CA scores.	133	436.24	3.2800	.70102	Agree
I believe that external factors do not affect reliability of CA scores.	133	340.48	2.5600	1.03332	Agree

Note. SD = Standard Deviation.

Table 1 showed students' perceptions of the reliability of assessment scores. It is observed from the Table that the Mean perceptions ranging from 2.52 to3.28 with the Standard Deviations ranging from .55 to 1.0. The Table showed that the respondents believed in the reliability of their CA scores. The Table further showed that respondents believed that the reliability of CA scores is free from external factors. However, the respondents believed that peer influence influenced their perceptions.

Research Question 2: To what extent does students' perception on peer influence associate with the reliability of CA scores in SSSII in Benin Metropolis?

Table 2: Spearman's Rho Correlation Coefficient Between Students' Perception on Peer Influence and Reliability of CA Scores in SSSII in Benin Metropolis.

Variable	N	r	r^2	%	Remark
Peer Influence	133	0.30	0.09	9%	Low
Reliability of CA Scores	133				

Table 2 showed that there is a low correlation of 0.30 between the two variables under study. The coefficient of determination is 09%, thus indicating that peers influence have 9% influence the reliability of CA scores and is considered low because it is closer to zero than the Median.

Research Question 3: To what extent does students' perception on self-efficacy associate with the reliability of CA scores in SSII in Benin Metropolis?

Table 3: Spearman's Rho Correlation Coefficient Between Students' Perception on Self-Efficacy and the Reliability of CA scores in SSII in Benin Metropolis.

Variables	N	r	r^2	%	Remark
Self-efficacy	133	0.09	0.008	0.8%	Very Low
Reliability of CA Scores	133				

Table 3 showed that there is a very low positive correlation of 0.09 between the two variables under study. The coefficient of determination is 0.8%, thus indicating that students' perception on self-efficacy has a very low correlation with the reliability of CA scores.

Research Question 4: What is the difference in students' perception on peer influence and self-efficacy as correlates of the reliability of CA scores in SSSII in Benin Metropolis?

Table 4: Difference in Students' Perception on Peer Influence and Self-Efficacy as Correlates of the Reliability of CA Scores in SSSII in Benin Metropolis.

Variables	Coefficient		AD	PD	Remark
	Self-efficacy	Peer influence			
Peer Influence					
	0.09	0.30	0.21	21%	Moderate
Self-Efficacy					

Note. PD = Percentage Difference, Absolute Difference.

Table 4 showed that the difference in students' perception on peer influence and self-efficacy are 0.30 and 0.09 respectively. The absolute difference between the coefficients of the two variables is 0.21. The percentage difference is 21%, thus indicating that the difference in students' perception on peer influence and self-efficacy are moderately correlated with the reliability of CA scores.

Research Hypotheses Testing

Research Hypothesis 1: The students' perception of the reliability of CA scores in SSSII in Benin Metropolis.

Table 5: One Sample t-test on the Students' Perception of the Reliability of CA Scores in SSSII in Benin Metropolis.

Perception	MD	SED	T	df	P-value	Decision
I believe my CA score	2.16	0.048	45.46	132	0.00	Significant
I feel like CA scores are fairly awarded by teachers	3.10	0.077	40.35	132	0.00	Significant
Peer opinions influence how I perceive the fairness of CA	2.52	0.083	30.50	132	0.00	Significant
I trust the assessment process to determine CA scores	3.28	0.061	53.96	132	0.00	Significant
I don't believe that external factors	2.56	0.089	28.66	132	0.00	Significant

affect reliability of CA scores

Note. df = Degree of Freedom.

Table 5 showed that students' perception of the reliability of CA scores in SSII in Benin Metropolis are significant at 0.00. Since the p-value (0.00) is less than 0.05 alpha level of significance, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. All in all, this results implies that the reliability of CA scores is significant.

Research Hypothesis 2: Students' perception on peer influence does not significantly associate with the reliability of CA scores in SSSII in Benin Metropolis.

Table 6: Spearman's Rho Statistics Showing the Relationship between Students' Perception of Peer Influence and the Reliability of Assessments Scores in SSSII in Benin Metropolis.

Variables	N	R	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Decision
Peer influence	50				
Perceptions reliability of assessment score	50	0.30	48	0.03	Reject Ho

Note. df = Degree of Freedom.

Table 6 showed that there is a low correlation of 0.30 between the two variables under study. The coefficient of determination is 0.30 is 0.09 and the relationship is significant at 0.03. Since 0.03 is less than 0.05 alpha level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected, which implies that there is a significant relationship between students' perception of peer influence and the reliability of CA scores.

Research Hypothesis 3: Students' perception on self-efficacy does not significantly associate with the reliability of CA scores in SSSII in Benin Metropolis.

Table 7: Spearman's Rho Correlation Coefficient Students' Perception on Self-Efficacy and the reliability of CA scores in SSSII in Benin Metropolis.

Variable	N	R	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Decision
Self-efficacy	50				
		0.09	48	0.50	Retain Ho
Reliability of CA Scores.	50				

Note. df = Degree of Freedom, Sig. = Significant.

Table 6 showed that there is a very low positive correlation coefficient of 0.09 between the two variables under study. The relationship is significant at 0.50. Since 0.50 is higher than 0.05 alpha level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is retained, which implies that self-efficacy is insignificantly correlated with the reliability of CA scores.

Research Hypothesis 4: The difference in students' perception on peer influence and self-efficacy does not significantly correlates with the reliability of CA scores in SSSII in Benin Metropolis**.**

Table 8: Z-Test on the Difference in Students' Perception on Peer Influence and Self-Efficacy does not Significantly Correlates with the Reliability of CA Scores in SSSII in Benin Metropolis.

Variable	Self- Efficacy	Peer Influence	AD	Z	Sig.(right-tailed)	Decision
Peer Influence	0.09	0.30	0.21	1.94	0.05	Reject Ho

and Self-Efficacy.

Reliability of CA
Scores.

Note. AD = Absolute Difference, Sig. = Significant.

Table 8 showed that the absolute difference in students' perception on peer influence and self-efficacy as they relate with the reliability of CA scores is 0.21. The fishers' Z of the differential is 1.94. The Z value is significant at 0.05 level. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected, which suggests that the coefficient of students' perceptions of self-efficacy is significantly less than that of students' perceptions of peer influence in the reliability of CA scores, which implies also that students' perceptions of self-efficacy has very little moderation on the relationship between students' perceptions of peer influence and the reliability of CA scores.

Discussions

The findings of this study showed that respondents believed that CA process in their schools was fair and reliable. This position was corroborated by their answers to the questions on peer opinion which affirmed its influence on their belief on the reliability of CA scores. This perhaps is the effect of shared experiences where students compare their scores with that of their peers. As they do this, they mentally compare individuals' abilities with their scores. This finding is supported by Wentzel and Muenks (2016), Ryan (2000), Wentzel (2005), Brown (2004), Berndt (2009), who reported that if a peer group values and trusts the CA system, a student may be more likely to perceive it as reliable whereas those influenced by disengaged peers may develop skepticism toward assessment practices. These scholars found that peers play a considerable role in shaping students' attitudes with respect to learning, assessment, and academic results. And that peer influence could be direct, such as in academic discussions and collaborative task, or indirect, when students adopt the attitudes and stereotypes of their peers irrespective of persuasion. Other scholar and researchers such as Altermatt and Pomerantz (2003), Hamm and Faircloth (2005), Kindermann (2007), Juvonen and Wentzel (2013) also corroborate these findings in that students who are part of academic support groups or study circles often develop a stronger belief in the fairness and reliability of CA systems. However, the very low positive correlation coefficient between students' perception of self-efficacy and the reliability of CA scores in this study suggest that some very few respondents with low self-efficacy pointed to the possibility of external influence on the award of scores and grades in their school. This view is supported by research findings that students with low self-efficacy tend to have distrust for the assessment process (Dweck, 2006; Elliot & Dweck, 2017). This may be so because there is no perfect system anywhere.

Conclusion

This present study attempted to address the concerns about credible CA for improving the educational system, ensuring that the process remains effective and reliable method of student evaluation. To assess the impact of students' perception of peer influence on CA scores of 200 students in SSSII in Benin Metropolis was used as a case study. Thus, the study examined the extent of students' perception of peer influence and self-efficacy in shaping the reliability of CA scores. Social interactions and shared experiences contribute to how students interpret the reliability of CA scores. While peer influence may sometimes lead to cynicisms and disengagement, creating a transparent and inclusive assessment environment will help eliminate negative perceptions and build trust for improving students' attitude toward academic studies.

Recommendations

The importance of effective and reliable CA cannot be overemphasized. The government and school administrators should as a matter of necessity ensure that:

1. a more effective and transparent CA process is created to elicit considerable credibility among the students.
2. teachers are encouraged to mark tests scripts and return same to students in good time for the latter inputs and assessment.
3. any wrong impressions about CA are addressed promptly.

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