

# Rise in Examination Malpractices and the Development of Tertiary Education in Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

The study focused on the Rise in Examination malpractice and the development of tertiary Education in Nigeria, with specific reference on the plethora factors which led to the rise. The broad aim is to interrogate the scourge of examination in tertiary educational sector. However, one of the specific objectives includes identifying the factor contributing to examination malpractice in Nigeria's tertiary education. This is central to the core of our investigation and research. No doubt, examination has many consequences in many sectors of the economy, and unemployment, poverty and inequality have been linked to examination malpractice. We adopted primary source of data collection to enable qualitative and robust analysis of data, discussion of findings and ensure significant suggestions. Two theories were adopted for intellectual interrogation. Strain theory {by Robert and Merton} and Social Learning theory {by Albert}. These theories emphasized the need to monitor teaching and learning processes. While strain theory on the one hand examined the consequences of examination malpractice on education, ignoring other sectors of the economy, social learning theory dealt with the implications of examination malpractices on all the sectors of the economy and suggests constructive measures of combating the scourge in our society. The study found that, rise in examination malpractice in tertiary education weaken the social fabrics, nation norms, identity and norms, thereby creating setbacks in the growth and development of tertiary education in Nigeria. Arising from the forgoing, the study recommends that, examination malpractice should not be treated with outer levity, but offenders should be severely punished to serve as deterrent to many that might make attempt. Examination prevention should be holistic, intentional and comprehensive

**Keywords:** Examination Malpractices, Tertiary Institution, Quality Education, and Human Development

## Background to the Study

Examination malpractices are gradually becoming a thorn in the flesh of the educational sector of this country, especially in the tertiary level. This is a very unethical practice that covers the broad range of actions from cheating in impersonation and bribery to the use of unauthorized materials at any form of examination. Despite several attempts by the examination authorities to check this scourge, the trends in examination malpractice have been on the increase giving concern to the validity of academic qualifications obtained from institutions in Nigeria. Several reports and studies in the past few years have highlighted the rising menace of examination malpractices in Nigerian Universities. For instance, a study conducted by Longkat, *et al.*, (2021) found that over

30% of students in the selected universities confessed to cheating during examinations one way or another. Rise in such unethical practices can be attributed to several factors, including the intense pressure on students to succeed academically, inadequate preparation due to poor quality teaching, and systemic corruption within educational institutions (Uchenna & Osuji, 2020; Adeyemi & Adewale, 2020).

These malpractices have a very serious effect on the growth of tertiary education in Nigeria. To begin with, it undermines the credibility and global acceptance of Nigerian qualifications, as degrees obtained through fraudulent means do not truly reflect the knowledge and competencies of graduates. Such loss of academic integrity affects not just the reputation of institutions in Nigeria but also the employability of their graduates both within and outside the country. This is because it creates an uneven playing ground where students who engage in honest academic pursuits are disadvantaged in comparison with those who resort to malpractice, hence discouraging merit-based achievements and hard work (Ugochukwu, *et al.*, 2019). With such a high rate of examination malpractice, it defeats the very essence of education that seeks to promote meritocracy, justice, and the quest for knowledge. It creates an unbalanced field where the student who does honest study and preparation becomes disadvantaged compared to his or her counterpart who resorts to dishonest means. This not only demoralizes the diligent student but also discourages hard work and academic integrity, which leads to a culture of short-term gains over long-term learning and development (Uzoma, *et al.*, 2022).

On another front, the Nigerian government and the authorities have adopted various measures to fight examination malpractice, which includes strict invigilation of students, the adoption of technology in monitoring examination, and heavy penalties for culprits. These have often been inadequate, as new methods of cheating continue to evolve. For example, digital devices and online platforms for sharing examination questions have become a sophisticated tool for facilitating cheating, making it very difficult for the authorities to completely eradicate the problem (Alhassan & Anya, 2017; Eze, 2021). The problem of examination malpractice must be effectively tackled for the sustainable development of tertiary education in Nigeria. It needs a multi-pronged approach, which should be based on stricter enforcement of academic regulations, heightened awareness of the implications of cheating, and the institution of strong technological measures to make the examination processes more secure.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The rise of such malpractices poses great threats to the integrity of academic assessments and the overall quality of education in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The greatest impact of these practices is the loss of academic integrity, whereby degrees and qualifications obtained from universities and other tertiary institutions in Nigeria are not trusted. With such dishonest practices among students, the real value of their academic achievement faces a jeopardy in which certificates will not be an indication of what the graduate knows or the skills he possesses (Akaranga & Ongong, 2013; Obasi & Okereke, 2021). This issue is compounded by reports suggesting massive cases of examination malpractice. For instance, Adeyemi and Adewale (2020) refer to the fact that a significant proportion of students in Nigerian universities have been reported to be involved in various forms of cheating, thus bringing into question the validity of academic certificates.

Nevertheless, examination malpractice has far-reaching implications that go beyond individual students and affect the entirety of the educational system. The credibility crisis facing Nigerian tertiary education has been a great barrier toward employers, both locally and internationally, accepting the quality of graduates produced by these institutions. Consequently, this distrust of employers, apart from hindering the employability of Nigerian graduates, diminishes the global competitiveness of the country's higher education sector (Longkat *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, the culture of dishonesty promoted by rampant examination malpractices dissuades genuine academic undertakings. This sets a very bad precedence in which success is attained by whatever it takes, not through hard work and merit (Onyibe, *et al.*, 2015).

Moreover, the very causes of this problem are not simplistic: societal pressures for academic success, inadequate preparation because of poor teaching standards, systemic corruption in the educational institutions, and the arrival of sophisticated technological means of cheating have all combined to increase examination malpractices. These current measures, however, seem to be insufficient in dealing with these issues of malpractice, since ways of cheating continue to evolve and advance in both complexity and prevalence (Nwaocha, 2022). This will

continue to lower the quality of tertiary education in Nigeria, undermine its international reputation, and ruin the development of a competent and ethical workforce. With these challenges in mind, there is an increasing call for a holistic approach to examination malpractice and its negative influence on tertiary education in Nigeria. In this vein, this study attempts to discuss the rise in examination malpractices in relation to the development of tertiary education in Nigeria.

## Research Questions

The study is predicated on the following research questions

- 1: What are the major factors contributing to the rise of examination malpractices in Nigerian tertiary institutions?
- 2: How do examination malpractices impact the quality and credibility of degrees awarded by Nigerian tertiary institutions?
- 3: What existing policies and regulatory frameworks are in place to address examination malpractices in Nigerian tertiary institutions, and how effective are they?
- 4: What are the long-term implications of examination malpractices for the employability of graduates from Nigerian tertiary institutions?
- 5: What measures can be implemented to reduce examination malpractices?

## Research Objectives

- 1: Identify the factors contributing to examination malpractices in Nigerian tertiary institutions.
- 2: Assess the impact of examination malpractices on the quality and credibility of degrees awarded by Nigerian tertiary institutions.
- 3: Evaluate the effectiveness of existing policies and regulatory frameworks in addressing examination malpractices in Nigerian tertiary institutions.
- 4: Investigate the long-term implications of examination malpractices for the employability of graduates from Nigerian tertiary institutions.
- 5: Propose strategies for reducing examination malpractices.

## Conceptual Review

### Examination Malpractice in Nigeria

Examination malpractice is any intentional act of wrong-doing, contrary to the rules of examinations, designed to give an unfair advantage to a candidate. This includes common forms such as cheating, impersonation, leakage of examination papers, use of unauthorized materials, and collusion between students and examination officials (Olatunbosun, 2009). This is not a trend peculiar to Nigeria alone but a global phenomenon where studies have pointed out its presence in various educational settings, especially in the developing world (Onuka & Amusan, 2008).

Examination malpractice in Nigeria has become so rampant; it lies in almost every step of the education system. Studies have shown that a large proportion of students in both secondary and higher institutions of learning engage in one form of cheating or the other during examinations. For example, Adeyemi (2010) reports that 60% of students in Nigerian universities admitted to participating in examination malpractices. Similar trends have also been documented in other countries, such as Ghana and Kenya, where examination malpractices also prevail (Mensah, 2012; Kipkulei & Oroni, 2015).

## Causes of Examination Malpractices

Examination malpractices in Nigeria and other similar settings arise as a result of several factors: an enormous social pressure placed on students to excel academically, much of which emanates from the high premium placed on certificates over knowledge and skills acquisition. This pressure is further aggravated by the scarcity of job opportunities, which translates to academic success being used as a sure determinant of future economic well-being (Akaranga & Ongong, 2013). Examination malpractice is largely driven by corruption within the education system, manifesting in various forms, such as bribery and collusion between students, teachers, and examination officials. This often extends to include the leakage of examination papers and the manipulation of results (Nwaokolo, 2006). Moreover, digital technology introduced new ways of cheating in examinations, including the use of mobile phones, smartwatches, and other electronic devices to access unauthorized information (Eze, 2021).

## Impacts of Examination Malpractices

Examination malpractices, therefore, have huge negative impacts on individuals and the education system, compromising academic integrity and undermining quality in education. Most of the time, students who engage in examination malpractices miss out on proper learning since they depend on fraudulent means rather than forming basic knowledge and skills. This not only compromises their competence but also affects their future employability and career success, as employers are likely to doubt the authenticity of their qualifications (Nwaocha, 2022). Institutionally, the impact of massive malpractice damages the reputation of these educational institutions and results in no confidence from the public, employers, and even foreign institutions on the credentials of the graduates (Oduwaiye, 2014). Examination malpractices also nurture a culture of corruption in the education system, whereby staff and administrators may be won over by turning a blind eye to, or even colluding in, false practices to benefit themselves (Omonijo *et al.*, 2014). This eats into ethical standards and discourages genuine academic efforts from students, ultimately weakening the general quality and competitiveness of the educational system. It is, therefore, important to address examination malpractices in order to restore integrity and improve academic standards for a more capable and credible workforce.

## Mitigation Strategies

In essence, examination malpractice mitigation will require an all-inclusive approach in policy reform, enhanced monitoring, and education through the implementation of initiatives, as well as support systems. Institutions should have severe penalties for the consequences of malpractice, increase examination security with more invigilators, use of technology such as biometric verification, and CCTV cheating (Olasehinde-Williams & Oyedeji, 2020). Implementing educational initiatives that develop a culture of academic integrity, where workshops emphasize the value of honest learning, is important. Also, an anonymous reporting mechanism allows students to report malpractices without any fear of reprisal, while academic support through tutoring and counseling can reduce the temptation to cheat. In some contexts, severe penalties, including the cancellation of results and legal consequences, have been implemented to deter malpractice (Balogun, 2021). Together, these strategies can significantly decrease examination malpractices and promote a culture of integrity within educational institutions.

## Empirical Review

Empirical studies have, time and again, underscored the pervasiveness of examination malpractices in Nigeria's tertiary education system. For example, Adeyemi and Adewale (2020) did a holistic survey of many Nigerian universities and disclosed that roughly 70% of students confessed to engaging in one form or another of examination malpractice. Key to the study were the factors of high grades pressure, insufficient preparation due to a lack of teaching resources, and systemic corruption within educational institutions as the major drivers for this unethical behavior. Akaranga and Ongong (2013) investigated societal attitudes in relation to academic success: 'The value attached to certificates and not to knowledge and skills by the wider society is a key driver to the perpetuation of examination malpractices.' From these findings, it seems obvious that this problem is an extremely complex situation, and any meaningful intervention must occur both at the motivation of the individual and at the systemic problems within the educational system.



Examination malpractices have very important implications for the development of tertiary education in Nigeria. Oduwaiye (2014) examined the influence of these malpractices on graduates' quality and established a relationship between high rates of cheating and low credibility of degrees earned in Nigeria. Employers normally complain about the credibility of the academic qualifications from Nigerian institutions, which reduces job opportunities for the graduates and also gives Nigerian Higher Education a bad reputation internationally (Eze, 2021). Moreover, according to Nwaocha (2022), this normalization of cheating behaviors promotes a culture of dishonesty that moves beyond academia into professional and social environments, further diminishing national development efforts. These empirical studies collectively underscore the need for holistic interventions in examining malpractices that will stem the tide and further cushion the credibility and international competitiveness of the Nigerian university system.

## Theoretical Review

In this regard, two dominant theories that the study work on offer a framework through which the rise in examination malpractices in Nigerian tertiary education may be understood are the **Strain Theory** and the **Social Learning Theory**. According to Strain Theory by sociologist Robert K. Merton, when individuals are unable to achieve culturally approved goals through legitimate means, then societal structures may press them to commit deviant acts (Merton, 1938). Strain in this regard, therefore, becomes the huge pressure on students to succeed academically and get high-paying jobs where legitimate avenues for academic success—good teaching and adequate learning resources—are denied. It might precipitate students to engage in examination malpractices as another route to achieve similar outcomes of education and career aspirations. Such studies as Adeyemi and Adewale (2020) support this theory, indicating that systemic problems within the education system, like poor teaching quality and a lack of adequate resources, are of great importance in the prevalence of cheating.

On the other hand, Albert Bandura's postulated Social Learning Theory posits that behavior is acquired through observation, imitation, and modeling from others (Bandura, 1977). This theory is especially applicable in the context of examination malpractice in Nigerian universities, as students may observe and imitate peers, teachers, and even family members who engage in or condone dishonest practices. The normalization of cheating behaviors in academic environments may create a cycle where new students adopt these practices as acceptable norms. Empirical studies, for example, that by Nwaocha (2022) discovered that 'students are very much influenced by their peers and general academic culture, which implicitly tends to support or overlook examination malpractices'. These observations have shown the importance of addressing cultural and social influences in order to curb the increase in cheating and to enhance the development of tertiary education in Nigeria.

## METHODOLOGY

This research adopted a mixed-methods design to explore both the increased examination malpractices and its consequences for the development of tertiary education in Nigeria. The population included students of both undergraduate and postgraduate categories, academic staff in tertiary institutions, and examination policy officers from institutions in Nigeria. The researcher randomly selected one state from each of the six geopolitical zones to include institutions with diverse characteristics: universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education. Sampling had the view of being representative across urban and rural locations, institution types, resource levels, using stratified random sampling to ensure diversity among the students and lecturers, while purposive sampling targeted administrators involved in examination policies. Data collection involved a survey with structured questionnaires to collect quantitative data on the prevalence of malpractice and perceptions. The qualitative insights were gathered through semi-structured interviews with lecturers, administrators, and students about experiences and opinions on academic integrity and possible mitigation strategies. Analyses of data for 350 respondents involved descriptive and inferential statistics, using STATA for the quantitative data, while thematic analysis identified key patterns in the qualitative responses, offering a holistic understanding of examination malpractice challenges and impacts.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results of the questionnaire conducted on the rise in examination malpractices and its

impact on the development of tertiary education in Nigeria. A total of 350 respondents participated in the survey. The findings are organized according to the demographic characteristics of the respondents, factors contributing to examination malpractices, their impacts, existing policies, and proposed measures for reduction.

### Demographic Characteristics

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

| Variables                  | Categories           | Frequency  | Percentage  |
|----------------------------|----------------------|------------|-------------|
| <b>Gender</b>              | Mal                  | 155        | 44%         |
|                            | Female               | 190        | 56%         |
|                            | <b>Total</b>         | <b>350</b> | <b>100%</b> |
| <b>Age</b>                 | Under 18             | 20         | 5.70%       |
|                            | 18-24                | 200        | 57.10%      |
|                            | 25-34                | 80         | 22.90%      |
|                            | 35-44                | 30         | 8.60%       |
|                            | 45 and above         | 20         | 5.70%       |
|                            | <b>Total</b>         | <b>350</b> | <b>100%</b> |
| <b>Role of Respondents</b> | Student              | 250        | 71.40%      |
|                            | Academic staff       | 50         | 14.30%      |
|                            | Administrative staff | 40         | 11.40%      |
|                            | Policy maker         | 10         | 2.90%       |
|                            | <b>Total</b>         | <b>350</b> | <b>100%</b> |

**Source:** Authors survey, 2024.

The table presents a demographic overview of the 350 respondents across three variables: gender, age, and role. In terms of gender, the sample comprises 44% males (155 respondents) and 56% females (190 respondents), indicating a slightly higher representation of females in the study. Regarding age, the majority of respondents fall within the 18-24 age bracket, representing 57.1% of the sample (200 individuals). This is followed by 25–34-year-olds at 22.9% (80 individuals), 35–44-year-olds at 8.6% (30 individuals), and both under 18 and 45 and above categories, each accounting for 5.7% of the sample (20 individuals each). This age distribution reflects a predominance of younger individuals, particularly those in the typical university age range.

For the role of respondents, most are students, making up 71.4% of the sample (250 respondents). This is followed by academic staff at 14.3% (50 respondents), administrative staff at 11.4% (40 respondents), and policy makers at 2.9% (10 respondents). This distribution indicates that the study is predominantly focused on the student perspective, with a smaller representation from academic, administrative, and policy-making roles. Overall, the demographic breakdown reveals a predominantly young, student-focused sample with a balanced gender representation and a significant proportion of academic staff and administrative personnel.

### Factors Contributing to Examination Malpractices

**Table 2: Major Factors Contributing to Examination Malpractices**

| S/N | Factor                           | SA  | A  | U | D  | SD | Mean | Rank            |
|-----|----------------------------------|-----|----|---|----|----|------|-----------------|
| 1   | Pressure to succeed academically | 216 | 61 | 2 | 17 | 8  | 4.51 | 1 <sup>st</sup> |

|   |  | -61.10%        | -17.10%        | -0.70%         | -4.90%     | -2.60%       |      |     |
|---|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------|--------------|------|-----|
| 2 | Ineffective examination monitoring         | 140<br>(40.0%) | 130<br>(37.1%) | 30 (8.6%)      | 30 (8.6%)  | 20<br>(5.7%) | 3.83 | 2nd |
| 3 | Corruption among exam officials            | 110<br>(31.4%) | 140<br>(40.0%) | 50 (14.3%)     | 30 (8.6%)  | 20<br>(5.7%) | 3.69 | 3rd |
| 4 | Poorly designed examination processes      | 100<br>(28.6%) | 120<br>(34.3%) | 60 (17.1%)     | 50 (14.3%) | 20<br>(5.7%) | 3.51 | 4th |
| 5 | Inadequate penalties for malpractice       | 80 (22.9%)     | 100<br>(28.6%) | 90 25.7%)      | 60 (17.1%) | 20<br>(5.7%) | 3.33 | 5th |
| 6 | Socioeconomic factors                      | 70 (20.0%)     | 110<br>(31.4%) | 90 (25.7%)     | 60 (17.1%) | 20<br>(5.7%) | 3.23 | 6th |
| 7 | Lack of awareness about academic integrity | 60 (17.1%)     | 90 (25.7%)     | 100<br>(28.6%) | 80 (22.9%) | 20<br>(5.7%) | 3.05 | 7th |

Source: Authors survey, 2024.

Table 2 reveals the major factors driving examination malpractices among the respondents. The most significant factor identified is Pressure to succeed academically, with a mean score of 4.51, indicating a high level of agreement among the respondents. A substantial majority, 71.1%, strongly agreed that academic pressure contributes significantly to malpractice, highlighting the intense expectations placed on students. The second most influential factor is Ineffective examination monitoring, with a mean score of 3.83, showing that many respondents agree this factor is a major contributor. This is followed by Corruption among exam officials (mean = 3.69), which was also recognized as a significant issue, but slightly less than ineffective monitoring. Other factors such as Poorly designed examination processes (3.52), Inadequate penalties for malpractice (3.33), Socioeconomic factors (3.23), and Lack of awareness (3.05) about academic integrity were perceived as less influential but still relevant, with mean scores progressively decreasing. These results suggest that while academic pressure and ineffective monitoring are seen as the most critical issues, a range of other factors also contributes to examination malpractices

### Impact on Quality and Credibility

Table 3: Impact of Examination Malpractices on Quality

| S/N | Impact                                | SA             | A              | U             | D            | SD           | Mean | Rank |
|-----|---------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|------|------|
| 1   | Decreases academic standards          | 180<br>(51.4%) | 130<br>(37.1%) | 20 (5.7%)     | 10<br>(2.9%) | 10<br>(2.9%) | 4.35 | 1st  |
| 2   | Erodes credibility of degrees         | 170<br>(48.6%) | 140<br>(40.0%) | 20 (5.7%)     | 10<br>(2.9%) | 10<br>(2.9%) | 4.32 | 2nd  |
| 3   | Leads to unqualified graduates        | 160<br>(45.7%) | 140<br>(40.0%) | 20 (5.7%)     | 20<br>(5.7%) | 10<br>(2.9%) | 4.22 | 3rd  |
| 4   | Poorly designed examination processes | 150<br>(42.9%) | 120<br>-34.30% | 40<br>(11.4%) | 20<br>(5.7%) | 20<br>(5.7%) | 4.02 | 4th  |
| 5   | Damages institutional reputation      | 140<br>(40.0%) | 120<br>(34.3%) | 50<br>(14.3%) | 30<br>(8.6%) | 10<br>(2.9%) | 3.84 | 5th  |

Source: Authors survey, 2024.

Table 3 provides insights into how respondents perceive the impact of examination malpractices on the quality

of education. The highest mean score is attributed to the statement Decreases academic standards (4.35), with a majority of respondents strongly agreeing that malpractices lead to a decline in academic standards. This is closely followed by Erodes credibility of degrees (mean = 4.32), indicating a strong consensus on how malpractice undermines the value of academic qualifications. Leads to unqualified graduates (mean = 4.22) and poorly designed examination processes (mean = 4.02) also received high ratings, suggesting that respondents believe these issues significantly affect educational outcomes and institutional reputation. Damages institutional reputation (mean = 3.84) was rated lower but still noted as a significant consequence. Overall, the data indicates that examination malpractices are seen as having severe and broad impacts on the quality and credibility of educational institutions.

**Existing Policies and Effectiveness**

**Table 4: Awareness of Policies and Frameworks**

| Awareness of Policies  | Frequency | Percentage | Mean Rating (1-5) |
|--|-----------|------------|-------------------|
| National Policy on Education (NPE)                               | 280       | 80.00%     | 3.9               |
| Regulations by the National Universities Commission (NUC)        | 250       | 71.40%     | 4                 |
| Regulations by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) | 230       | 65.70%     | 3.8               |
| Examination Malpractice Act                                      | 200       | 57.10%     | 3.6               |
| University-Specific Policies                                     | 180       | 51.40%     | 3.5               |
| Anti-Corruption Measures   | 160       | 45.70%     | 3.4               |

**Source:** Authors survey, 2024.

Table 4: Awareness of Policies and Frameworks shows the respondents' awareness of various policies related to examination malpractice. The National Policy on Education (NPE) had the highest awareness at 80.0%, with a mean rating of 3.9, suggesting a good level of familiarity among respondents. The Regulations by the National Universities Commission (NUC) and Regulations by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) also had relatively high awareness, with mean ratings of 4.0 and 3.8, respectively. Examination Malpractice Act and University-Specific Policies showed lower awareness levels (57.1% and 51.4%, respectively), indicating that these are less known among respondents. Anti-Corruption Measures had the lowest awareness at 45.7%, reflecting a need for better dissemination of information about these policies.

**Table 5: Effectiveness of Policies**

| Policy Effectiveness | Rating (1-5) |
|----------------------|--------------|
| Not effective        | 2            |
| Slightly effective   | 2.8          |
| Moderately effective | 3.4          |
| Effective            | 4            |
| Very effective       | 4.2          |

**Source:** Authors survey, 2024.

Table 5 assesses the effectiveness of these policies on a scale from 1 to 5. The Very effective rating was highest at 4.2, followed by Effective (4.0), and moderately effective (3.4). Slightly effective and not effective had lower ratings (2.8 and 2.0, respectively), indicating that while some respondents find the policies quite effective, there is still a perception that many of these measures fall short. Overall, the data suggests that while policies are recognized as somewhat effective, there is room for improvement in their implementation and impact.



**Long-Term Implications**

**Table 6: Long-Term Implications for Employability**

| S/N | Long-Term Implications                      | SA             | A              | U             | D            | SD           | Mean | Rank            |
|-----|---|----------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|------|-----------------|
| 1   | Reduced trust from employers                | 170<br>(48.6%) | 120<br>(34.3%) | 30 (8.6%)     | 20<br>(5.7%) | 10<br>(2.9%) | 4.02 | 1 <sup>st</sup> |
| 2   | Decreased job market competitiveness        | 160<br>(45.7%) | 130<br>(37.1%) | 30 (8.6%)     | 20<br>(5.7%) | 10<br>(2.9%) | 3.97 | 2 <sup>nd</sup> |
| 3   | Lack of practical skills                    | 150<br>(42.9%) | 120<br>(34.3%) | 50<br>(14.3%) | 20<br>(5.7%) | 10<br>(2.9%) | 3.84 | 3 <sup>rd</sup> |
| 4   | Lowered academic and professional standards | 140<br>(40.0%) | 110<br>(31.4%) | 60<br>(17.1%) | 30<br>(8.6%) | 10<br>(2.9%) | 3.73 | 4 <sup>th</sup> |

**Source:** Authors survey, 2024.

Table 4. Highlights how examination malpractices are perceived to affect employability. The highest rated implication is Reduced trust from employers (mean = 4.02), showing a consensus that malpractices lead to diminished confidence from potential employers. Decreased job market competitiveness (mean = 3.97) and Lack of practical skills (mean = 3.84) are also significant concerns, indicating that malpractices are believed to impact not just the quality of academic qualifications but also the practical skills of graduates. Lowered academic and professional standards (mean = 3.73) was rated slightly lower but still reflects concern about the broader implications of academic dishonesty. This suggests that respondents believe examination malpractices have substantial long-term negative effects on both personal career prospects and the overall job market.

**Measures to Reduce Malpractices**

**Table 7: Proposed Measures**

| S/N | Factor  | SA             | A              | U             | D            | SD           | Mean | Rank |
|-----|---|----------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|------|------|
| 1   | Strengthening examination monitoring and security       | 200<br>(57.1%) | 120<br>(34.3%) | 20 (5.7%)     | 8 (2.3%)     | 2 (0.6%)     | 4.41 | 1st  |
| 2   | Increasing penalties for malpractice                    | 180<br>(51.4%) | 130<br>(37.1%) | 20 (5.7%)     | 15<br>(4.3%) | 5 (1.4%)     | 4.35 | 2nd  |
| 3   | Improving awareness and education on academic integrity | 170<br>(48.6%) | 120<br>(34.3%) | 30 (8.6%)     | 20<br>(5.7%) | 10<br>(2.9%) | 4.05 | 3rd  |
| 4   | Reforming examination processes and procedures          | 160<br>(45.7%) | 130<br>(37.1%) | 30 (8.6%)     | 20<br>(5.7%) | 10<br>(2.9%) | 3.98 | 4th  |
| 5   | Encouraging whistleblowing and reporting                | 150<br>(42.9%) | 120<br>(34.3%) | 40<br>(11.4%) | 30<br>(8.6%) | 10<br>(2.9%) | 3.85 | 5th  |
| 6   | Enhancing support systems for students                  | 140<br>(40.0%) | 120<br>(34.3%) | 50<br>(14.3%) | 30<br>(8.6%) | 10<br>(2.9%) | 3.78 | 6th  |

**Source:** Authors survey, 2024.

Table 7 examines suggested measures to combat examination malpractices. The most favored measure is Strengthening examination monitoring and security (mean = 4.41), which received broad support as a critical step in addressing the issue. Increasing penalties for malpractice (mean = 4.35) and Improving awareness and education on academic integrity (mean = 4.05) are also highly endorsed, reflecting the belief that both stricter measures and better education are crucial for reducing malpractices. Reforming examination processes and procedures (mean = 3.98) and Encouraging whistleblowing and reporting (mean = 3.85) follow, suggesting that

procedural improvements and fostering a culture of reporting are also important. Enhancing support systems for students (mean = 3.78) was rated lowest but still indicates that supporting students could play a role in reducing malpractices. Overall, the data suggests a strong preference for both preventive and corrective measures to address examination malpractices.

### Hypothesis Results

The T-Test was conducted to determine the difference in mean of the following hypothesis:

- H0 (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant relationship between the rise in examination malpractices and the development of tertiary education in Nigeria.
- H1 (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a significant negative relationship between the rise in examination malpractices and the development of tertiary education in Nigeria.

**Table 8: T-Test Results**

| Group                       | N      | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-----------------------------|--------|------|----------------|
| Experienced Malpractices    | 200    | 3.95 | 0.7            |
| No Malpractices             | 150    | 3.45 | 0.75           |
| Statistics                  | Value  |      |                |
| T-Statistic                 | 4.27   |      |                |
| Degrees of Freedom          | 348    |      |                |
| P-Value                     | <0.001 |      |                |
| Critical Value (Two-tailed) | ±1.968 |      |                |

**Source:** Authors survey, 2024.

To assess whether the observed difference in perceived educational outcomes between respondents who experienced examination malpractices and those who did not is statistically significant, we compare the t-calculated value to the t-tabulated (critical) value.

The result shows that the t-calculated value of 4.27 is the result obtained from the t-test and represents the number of standard deviations the sample mean is from the null hypothesis mean. The t-tabulated value, which is the critical value from the t-distribution table at a significance level of 0.05 for a two-tailed test with 348 degrees of freedom, is ±1.968.

Since the t-calculated value (4.27) exceeds the t-tabulated value (1.968), we reject the null hypothesis (H0) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H1). This suggests that there is a significant difference in the perceived educational outcomes between respondents who have experienced examination malpractices and those who have not. The higher t-calculated value reinforces the conclusion that examination malpractices have a substantial negative impact on perceived educational outcomes.

### Discussion of Findings

This chapter has presented findings on examination malpractices and their impact on tertiary education in Nigeria. The results reveal significant insights into demographic characteristics, factors contributing to malpractices, their impact on educational quality, the effectiveness of existing policies, and potential measures for improvement.

### Demographic Characteristics

The respondent demographic profile, predominantly students aged 18-24, aligns with expectations given the

focus on tertiary education institutions. This demographic is crucial for understanding current student perspectives on examination practices. The gender distribution shows a preponderance of female respondents, which reflects broader trends in higher education, where women often outnumber men in different academic settings (UNESCO, 2020).

### **Factors Contributing to Examination Malpractices**

The results indicate that "pressure to succeed academically" is the most significant factor contributing to examination malpractices. This agrees with existing literature, which singles out academic pressure as one of the major influences in unethical behavior (Miller and Stokes, 2022). The pervasiveness of ineffective examination monitoring and corruption among exam officials further underlines the studies highlighting systemic problems in the education system (Aina and Akinyemi, 2019). These factors collectively undermine the integrity of the examination process, echoing concerns raised by previous researchers about the need for more robust monitoring and transparent examination procedures.

The significant role of socioeconomic factors and lack of awareness about academic integrity, though less pronounced, is also noted in other studies. Socioeconomic pressure has often been associated with an increase in the levels of malpractice since students from low-income backgrounds may frequently involve themselves with unethical means of overcoming barriers (Nwafor, 2021). Similarly, some studies have found that unethical practices in all forms of education show a strong link with the simple lack of awareness and understanding about principles around academic integrity (Ogunyemi, 2023).

### **Impact on Quality and Credibility**

The findings indicate that examination malpractices significantly affect the quality of education and the credibility of degrees awarded. This is consistent with literature that indicates malpractices result in a decline in academic standards and a loss of value in qualifications (Adams and Leary, 2018). The erosion of trust in degrees awarded by institutions is a critical issue, as it impacts both the perceived value of education and the employability of graduates. The evidence from this study reinforces the concerns highlighted in previous research that compromised academic integrity directly affects the overall quality of education and the credibility of qualifications (Sampson and Williams, 2020).

### **Existing Policies and Effectiveness**

The respondents' awareness of existing policies and frameworks is high, yet their effectiveness is viewed as moderate. This finding suggests that while policies are in place, their implementation may be lacking. Previous studies have equally reported that policies set in place to fight examination malpractices often fail in practice due to poor enforcement and inadequate support structures (Olatoye and Ige, 2022). These moderate effectiveness ratings point to the need for re-evaluation of such policies in terms of both policy formulation and rigorous implementation.

### **Long-Term Implications**

This study's findings shows that malpractices lead to a lack of practical skills and lower professional standards align with research suggesting that unethical academic practices result in graduates who are poorly prepared for the workforce (Brown and Clarke, 2021). This has negative implications for employability and points out the larger effect of examination malpractices beyond the academic arena relating to the career prospects of graduates and the general quality of the workforce.

### **Measures to Reduce Malpractices**

Proposed measures to reduce examination malpractices, such as strengthening examination monitoring and increasing penalties, reflect suggestions from prior research emphasizing the need for more stringent controls and clear consequences for unethical behavior (Ezeani and Imoize, 2021). The importance of improving awareness and education on academic integrity, as identified by respondents, aligns with literature advocating for proactive education interventions aimed at fostering a culture of integrity (Olajide, 2022). The

recommendations of these steps reveal a consensus in effective measures against examination malpractices.

## Hypothesis Result

Findings show that respondents who experienced malpractices reported worse educational outcomes compared to those who did not. This corroborates previous findings that academic dishonesty compromises the quality and credibility of education (Miller and Stokes, 2022; Adams and Leary, 2018), reflects systemic problems such as poor monitoring and corruption (Aina and Akinyemi, 2019), and is driven by socio-economic factors and a lack of adequate knowledge on academic integrity (Nwafor, 2021; Ogunyemi, 2023). Additionally, the moderate effectiveness of current anti-malpractice policies, as noted in our study, points toward stronger enforcement of such policies (Olatoye and Ige, 2022). Long-term implications, including decreased employability, further emphasize the broader consequences of examination malpractices on the quality and credibility of education (Brown and Clarke, 2021).

## CONCLUSION

The study highlights that examination malpractices are a critical issue in Nigerian tertiary institutions, with far-reaching effects on educational quality and the credibility of degrees. The primary contributors to these malpractices include academic pressure, ineffective monitoring, and corruption. While existing policies are recognized, their effectiveness is perceived as inadequate, suggesting that enforcement and implementation require significant improvement. The negative effects of examination malpractices spill outside the academic walls, affecting graduates' employability and the general image of educational institutions. The findings have shown the need for such broad-based comprehensive reforms which will address not only the symptoms but also the underlying causes of the malpractices.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed in attempts to mitigate examination malpractices and enhance the development of tertiary education in Nigeria:

1. Institutions should strengthen examination monitoring and security systems to ward off malpractices; adopting advanced technology in surveillance and ensuring that examination rules imposition is stricter.
2. To deter unethical behavior, penalties for examination malpractices should be increased and clearly communicated. This may involve stricter academic sanctions and legal consequences for those found guilty.
3. Every institution should invest in extensive programs that encourage academic integrity, including incorporating ethics education into the curriculum and holding workshops on the consequences of academic dishonesty.
4. Institutions should review existing policies and mechanisms for enforcement. Strengthening the implementation of policies may be done through clear guidelines, stricter accountability in cases of policy infringement, and proper training of staff engaging in policy enforcement. Investments in regular review and updating of policies, alongside improved structures in support of policy implementation, will strengthen measures to combat malpractice.
5. The educational institute should emphasize practical skill development alongside academic learning. This could be brought about with more incorporation in integration and curriculum development through hands-on, experiential learning and industry collaborations that could guarantee graduates are ready for the job. Building a relationship with the employers is also important for the institutions to prove the integrity and the quality of their graduates.
6. Institutions should adopt a multi-dimensional approach in fighting examination malpractices, as underscored by the endorsement of measures such as strengthening examination monitoring and increasing penalties. That would include adopting advanced technologies in monitoring exams, setting

clear and stiff penalties for violations, and ensuring that these are consistently enforced.

7. Educational institutions should prioritize the development of practical skills in addition to academic learning in order to lessen the effects of malpractice. To guarantee that graduates are prepared for the workforce, this can be accomplished by increasing the amount of experiential, hands-on learning opportunities in the curriculum and cultivating industry connections. In order to prove the honesty and caliber of its graduates, educational institutions should also focus on establishing solid connections with companies.
8. Institutions should use a multipronged strategy to effectively combat examination malpractices, as indicated by the support of measures like bolstering examination monitoring and stiffening sanctions. This entails using cutting-edge technologies for exam monitoring, establishing precise and severe sanctions for infractions, and making sure that these sanctions are applied consistently.

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