

Assessment of the Effectiveness of Existing Measures to Combat Examination Malpractices in Selected Federal Universities in South-East Nigeria

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Abstract

The study assessed the effectiveness of measures put in place by universities to combat examination malpractice. The study was carried out in South-East Nigeria, guided by four research questions. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all Faculty of Education lecturers in Alex Ekwueme Federal University and the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. A sample of 208 lecturers selected through simple random sampling technique took part in the study. Data was collected using a questionnaire developed by the researchers titled "questionnaire on the effectiveness of existing measures to combat examination malpractices". The instrument was validated by three experts in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and its reliability index (α = 0.73) was obtained through Cronbach Alpha following trial-testing of the instrument on 20 Faculty of Education lecturers at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. All research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation. The study demonstrated that: extant administrative, technological, legal and educational measures are effective for combating examination malpractice. The study recommended that the university administrators should increase the number of trained invigilators and external examiners to enhance examination supervision.

Keywords: Examination malpractice, Universities, Measures, South-East, Nigeria

Introduction

Examination malpractice is a pervasive problem and a menace to the educational system, undermining the integrity of academic qualifications and eroding public trust in educational institutions. Despite the introduction of various preventive measures, including strict invigilation, surveillance cameras, and biometric verification, examination malpractice remains a persistent challenge in Nigerian universities (Adebayo, 2020; Okonkwo & Eze, 2021). At the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, these interventions have been implemented with the intent to deter examination malpractices and uphold academic standards. However, the recurrence of examination malpractice incidents suggests potential deficiencies in the enforcement of and effectiveness of these strategies, as well as possible gaps in student awareness and compliance (Ojukwu & Nwafor, 2022). This study

critically assessed the effectiveness of existing measures to prevent examination malpractice at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka to curb examination malpractices and uphold the quality of education at the University.

Examination malpractice represents a major threat to the credibility and fairness of assessments in educational institutions. According to Okafor (2015), examination malpractice encompasses deliberate acts contrary to examination rules to gain unfair advantages. Adeyemi (2017) describes it as various forms of cheating or unethical behavior before, during, or after examinations. Additionally, Umeh (2019) characterizes examination malpractice as a widespread phenomenon unethical involving practices to manipulate examination outcomes favorably. Operationally, examination malpractice encompasses any actions or



behaviors that undermine the integrity of the examination process, thereby compromising the validity and fairness of educational assessments.

Examination malpractice manifests in various forms. These forms include: impersonation, assistance from unauthorized individuals, using unauthorized devices such as smartphones during examinations, leakages of examination questions, theft of examination materials among other, undermining the validity of academic qualifications and the overall educational The implications of examination experience. malpractice are profound, affecting not only the individual students involved but also the educational institutions and the broader society. For individuals, examination malpractice undermines the credibility of academic qualifications, as grades and certifications no longer accurately reflect a student's true abilities or knowledge (Gordon, 2016). This devaluation of academic credentials can diminish trust in the educational system, making it difficult for employers and higher institutions to assess the competencies of graduates. For educational institutions, the prevalence of examination malpractice can erode the reputation and integrity of the institution (Newton, 2017). Additionally, school administrators may find it challenging to maintain academic standards and foster a culture of honesty and hard work among students (Kreber, 2018). From a societal perspective, widespread examination malpractice can lead to a workforce that is less competent and less prepared to meet the demands of the job market (Wilkins, 2020).

When students rely on dishonest means to succeed, they miss out on the opportunity to develop critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, and a genuine understanding of the subject matter. This ultimately impacts economic development, industries require skilled and knowledgeable professionals to drive innovation and growth (Mankiw, 2015). Moreover, the psychological effects on students involved in malpractice can be significant (Beck & Alford, 2015). The pressure to cheat and the fear of being caught can lead to anxiety, stress, and a diminished sense of self-worth, which can also stifle students' motivation and hinder their personal and growth. In addition, examination professional malpractice attracts punishment from government authorities. For instance, the current Examination Malpractice Act Number 33 of 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) stipulates that violators of examination malpractice shall be subjected to a maximum of Five (5) years imprisonment

or pay an option of fine of Fifty Thousand Naira (N50, 000.00) or without an option of fine. Given these profound consequences, addressing examination malpractice is essential. Effective measures must therefore be implemented to uphold academic integrity and ensure fair and valid assessments, safeguarding the future of education (McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 2016).

In response to the urgent need to combat examination malpractice in the formal education system, schools across all levels of education adopt a variety of measures. These include: the use of technology such as CCTV and biometric systems, disciplinary actions such as expulsion, suspension, and regular workshops on academic integrity to enlighten students and staff. In public University settings, various measures have been designed to uphold academic integrity and ensure the fairness of assessments. One crucial approach is the establishment of strict examination regulations and the enforcement of severe penalties for those found guilty of malpractice (Adewale, 2017). Another measure is the utilization of advanced technological solutions like the use of computer-based testing to monitor and secure the examination process (Olatoye, 2018). These technologies have the potential to reduce opportunities for cheating and ensure that only authorized individuals can participate in exams. Despite these preventive strategies, examination malpractice is still eating deep into the fabric of academic integrity. In the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, examination malpractice is witnessed in diverse ways. The University has implemented some of these measures to curtail examination malpractice but the menace continues unabated. This raises questions regarding the effectiveness of these measures.

Despite extensive research on examination malpractice in Nigerian higher education, a significant gap exists regarding the effectiveness of current measures preventive in South-East Nigeria's universities. Such studies include Udim, Abubakar, and Essien (2015) who determined the causes and effects of examination malpractice, Nnam and Inah (2015) who explored various forms and causes of examination malpractice, and Anozie et al. (2024) who examined the relationship between self-esteem and examination malpractice among students in South-East Nigeria. These studies, however but did not determine the effectiveness of existing preventive measures. This lack of targeted examination hinders the development of evidence-based policies and interventions tailored to



the unique challenges faced by universities in South-East Nigeria, underscoring the necessity for focused research in this area. This study therefore determined the effectiveness of these measures for preventing examination malpractice.

Research Questions

- 1. To what extent are administrative measures adopted by South-East Nigerian Universities prevent examination malpractice effectively?
- 2. To what extent are technological measures adopted by South-East Nigerian Universities prevent examination malpractice effectively?
- 3. To what extent are legal measures adopted by South-East Nigerian Universities prevent examination malpractice effectively?
- 4. To what extent are educational measures adopted by South-East Nigerian Universities prevent examination malpractice effectively?

Research Method

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study was domiciled in South-East Nigeria. The study population comprised all lecturers in the Faculty of Education at federal Universities in the South Eastern part of Nigeria. These universities are the University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN), Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike, and Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike Ikwo (FUNNAI). A sample size of 208 lecturers, selected through a multistage sampling procedure, took part in the study. In stage one, two Federal Universities in South-East Nigeria were sampled using the lucky dip random sampling technique. To achieve this, all five federal universities in the region were written on separate pieces of paper, folded, dropped on a table and two were picked at random. In stage two, the Faculty of Education from each university was purposively sampled, as that is the focus of the study. In stage three, 137 and 71 lecturers from UNN and FUNNAI, respectively, were sampled

using a convenience sampling technique. This was achieved by distributing the instruments electronically, and lecturers who were available to respond to it within one week made up the sample size.

The instrument for data collection was a research-developed questionnaire titled "questionnaire on the effectiveness of existing measures to combat examination malpractices". The instrument consists of 29 items organized into four clusters: I-IV. Cluster I consists of 9 items designed to elicit data on the extent to which administrative measures adopted by South-East Nigerian Universities were effective for combating examination malpractice. Clusters II, III, and IV consist of 6, 8, and 6 items respectively, designed to elicit data on the extent to which technological, legal, and educational measures are effective for combating examination malpractice in South-East Nigerian universities. The response option for the items on the instrument was a 4-point likert scale of very high extent, high extent, low extent and very low extent. The instrument was trial-tested on 20 Faculty of Education lecturers at the Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Reliability indices of 0.71, 0.8, 0.73 and 0.77 were obtained for clusters I, II, III, and IV, respectively. An overall reliability index of 0.73 was obtained, indicating that the instrument is reliable for data collection.

To collect data, the instrument was formatted into a Google form, and a link to the questionnaire was generated and distributed to respondents through their Faculty WhatsApp group. Lecturers who responded to the instrument constituted the sample for the study. Collected data was exported into a Microsoft Excel sheet and transferred to the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. All research questions were answered using mean responses and standard deviations. A benchmark mean of 2.50 was set. Thus, mean responses below 2.50 indicated a low extent of effectiveness of the measures, while mean responses from 2.50 and above indicated a high extent of effectiveness of the measures. Results were presented in tables as seen below.



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Results

Table 1: Mean and Standard deviation for effectiveness of administrative measures adopted by South-East Nigerian Universities to prevent examination malpractice.

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	SD	Decision	
1.	Strict enforcement of examination protocols	3.41	0.59	HE	
2.	Training of staff on effective invigilation of examinations.	2.95	0.61	HE	
3.	Recruitment of external invigilators to enhance neutrality.	2.80	0.84	HE	
4.	Adequate spacing of students during examinations to prevent collaboration.	3.20	0.77	HE	
5.	Deployment of security personnel to examination venue	2.68	0.86	HE	
6.	Rotation of examination invigilators to prevent familiarity with students.	2.79	0.90	HE	
7.	Introduction of clear reporting channels staff to report suspected malpractice.	2.89	0.72	HE	
8.	Regular update of examination procedures to address new malpractice trends.	2.14	0.69	LE	
9.	Manual frisking of students by security personnel at the entrance of examination halls to search for unauthorized gadgets and materials.	2.18	0.80	LE	
	Cluster Summary	2.78	0.75	HE	
	$N = 208;$ $X < 2.50 = LE (Low Extent);$ $X \ge 2.50 = HE (High Extent)$				

Table 1 presents results from the analysis of data collected to ascertain the effectiveness of administrative measures adopted by South-East Nigerian Universities to combat examination malpractice. The administrative measures considered effective to a high extent, as represented by items 1-7 (mean responses greater than 2.50) include: strict enforcement of examination protocols; training of staff on effective invigilation of examinations; recruitment of external invigilators to

enhance neutrality, among others. However, administrative measures considered effective to a low extent (items 8 and 9) include: manual frisking of students, and update of the examination procedure. Overall, administrative measures are effective to a high extent for combating examination malpractices (cluster mean = 2.78). The cluster standard deviation of 0.75 indicates little variation in the responses provided.

Table 2: Mean and Standard deviation for effectiveness of technological measures adopted by South-East Nigerian Universities to prevent examination malpractice.

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
10.	Installation of Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras in	2.57	1.04	HE
	examination halls.			
11.	Use of thumbprints to generate unique codes for students to prevent	3.16	0.99	HE
	multiple logins during examinations.			
12.	Display of students' passport photographs on the screen alongside	2.94	0.95	HE
	examination details for invigilators to verify identity.			
13.	Use of biometric systems for student identification during exams.	2.63	0.99	HE
14.	Adoption of computer-based testing (CBT) platforms.	2.05	0.61	LE
15.	Use of secure servers to store and manage CBT exam questions,	3.05	0.77	HE
	ensuring restricted access to authorized personnel.			
	Cluster Summary	2.73	0.89	HE
$N = 208;$ $X < 2.50 = LE (Low Extent);$ $X \ge 2.50 = HE (High Extent)$				

Table 2 presents results from the analysis of data collected to ascertain the effectiveness of technological

measures adopted by South-East Nigerian Universities to combat examination malpractice. The technological



measures considered effective to a high extent as represented by items 10, 11, 12, 13 and 15 (mean responses greater than 2.50) include: Installation CCTV cameras in examination halls; use of thumbprints to generate unique codes for students to prevent multiple logins during examinations; display of students passport photographs on the screen, among others. However, the technological measure considered

effective to a low extent (item 14) is adoption of computer-based testing (CBT) platforms. Overall, technological measures are effective to a high extent for combating examination malpractices (cluster mean = 2.73). The cluster standard deviation of 0.89 indicates high similarity in the responses provided by each respondent.

Table 3: Mean and Standard deviation for effectiveness of legal measures adopted by South-East Nigerian Universities to prevent examination malpractice.

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
16.	Reporting offenders to security personnel for immediate action during examination malpractice.	2.05	0.69	LE
17.	Establishment of clear sanctions for individuals caught in malpractice.	2.26	0.55	LE
18.	Regular review and amendment of examination laws to address emerging challenges.	2.00	0.57	LE
19.	Enactment of legislation that criminalizes aiding and abetting examination malpractice.	1.95	0.76	LE
20.	Collaboration with law enforcement agencies to prosecute cases of malpractice.	1.68	0.87	LE
21.	Issuance of fines for students involved in exam fraud.	1.62	0.81	LE
22.	Legal prohibition of the sale of exam questions prior to the examination date.	1.99	0.86	LE
23.	Establishment of clear policies against examination malpractice	1.99	0.66	LE
	Cluster Summary	1.94	0.72	LE

N = 208; X < 2.50 = LE (Low Extent);

 $X \ge 2.50 = HE$ (High Extent)

Table 3 presents results from the analysis of data collected to ascertain the effectiveness of legal measures adopted by South-East Nigerian Universities to combat examination malpractice. The legal measures on table 3 (items 16-23) are considered effective to a low extent (mean responses less than 2.50) in combating examination malpractice. These measures include: Reporting offenders to security personnel for immediate action during examination malpractice;

establishment of clear sanctions for individuals caught in malpractice; regular review and amendment of examination laws to address emerging challenges, among others. Overall, legal measures are effective to a low extent for combating examination malpractices (cluster mean = 1.94). The cluster standard deviation of 0.72 indicates high similarity in the responses provided by each respondent.

Table 4: Mean and Standard deviation for effectiveness of educational measures adopted by South-East Nigerian Universities to prevent examination malpractice.

Item Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
Organizing regular orientation programs for students on the consequences of examination malpractice.	2.05	0.61	LE
Providing continuous counselling services for students.	1.88	0.72	LE
Incorporating ethics education into the school curriculum.	1.94	0.61	LE
Encouraging open dialogue between students and teachers on exam- related concerns.	1.89	0.79	LE
Educating students on effective study habits.	2.09	0.65	LE
Promoting a culture of rewarding academic excellence.	2.15	0.75	LE
Cluster Summary	2.00	0.69	LE
	Organizing regular orientation programs for students on the consequences of examination malpractice. Providing continuous counselling services for students. Incorporating ethics education into the school curriculum. Encouraging open dialogue between students and teachers on examrelated concerns. Educating students on effective study habits. Promoting a culture of rewarding academic excellence.	Organizing regular orientation programs for students on the consequences of examination malpractice. Providing continuous counselling services for students. Incorporating ethics education into the school curriculum. Encouraging open dialogue between students and teachers on examrelated concerns. Educating students on effective study habits. 2.09 Promoting a culture of rewarding academic excellence.	Organizing regular orientation programs for students on the consequences of examination malpractice. Providing continuous counselling services for students. Incorporating ethics education into the school curriculum. Encouraging open dialogue between students and teachers on examrelated concerns. Educating students on effective study habits. Promoting a culture of rewarding academic excellence. 0.61 0.62 0.63 0.65 0.65

N = 208; X < 2.50 = LE (Low Extent); $X \ge 2.50 = HE (High Extent)$



Table 4 presents results from the analysis of data collected to ascertain the effectiveness of educational measures adopted by South-East Nigerian Universities to combat examination malpractice. The educational measures on table 4 (items 24 – 29) are considered effective to a low extent (mean responses less than 2.50) in combating examination malpractice. These measures include: Providing continuous counselling services for students; incorporating ethics education into the school curriculum; educating students on effective study habits, among others. Overall, educational measures are effective to a low extent for combating examination malpractices (cluster mean = 2.00). The cluster standard deviation of 0.69 indicates little variation in the responses provided.

Discussion of Findings

The high effectiveness of administrative measures—such as strict enforcement of examination protocols, staff training on invigilation, recruitment of external invigilators, and deployment of security personnel—in combating examination malpractices in Nigerian universities suggests that structured and proactive strategies can significantly uphold academic integrity. This effectiveness may stem from the deterrent effect these measures have on potential offenders and the creation of a controlled examination environment that minimizes opportunities misconduct. Supporting this observation, a study by Onyibe, Uma, and Emmanuel (2015) highlighted that societal re-engineering and re-orientation, alongside stringent enforcement of examination protocols, are crucial in curbing examination malpractice. Similarly, Lawal (2018) emphasized the importance of rigorous compliance with examination norms and increased vigilance by invigilators as effective preventive measures against malpractice. Conversely, research by Nnam and Inah (2015) indicated that despite the implementation of preventive strategies, examination malpractice persists due to deep-rooted issues such as societal emphasis on certificates over actual knowledge, suggesting that administrative measures alone may not fully address the problem.

The technological measures adopted by South-East Nigerian Universities to prevent examination malpractice (like the installation of CCTV cameras in examination halls, use of thumbprints to generate unique codes for students to prevent multiple logins during examinations, display of students passport photographs on the screen, among others) are effective to a high extent. The widespread adoption of

technological measures in South-East Nigerian universities to prevent examination malpractice signifies a major advancement in ensuring academic integrity. The use of CCTV cameras in examination halls serves as a strong deterrent, discouraging students from engaging in dishonest practices due to the fear of being monitored and penalized. **Biometric** authentication, such as thumbprint verification, adds an extra layer of security by preventing impersonation and multiple logins, ensuring that only registered students can access the exams. Displaying passport photographs on screens further reinforces identity verification, making it nearly impossible for candidates to be substituted. These interventions collectively create an environment where malpractice is not only difficult to execute but also carries a high risk of detection, leading to a significant reduction in cheating incidents. The effectiveness of these measures can be attributed to their ability to eliminate human interference in monitoring, enhance real-time surveillance, and introduce accountability in the examination process. Similar findings have been reported in other studies. Lawal (2018) found that integrating biometric verification and real-time surveillance technologies in Nigerian universities greatly reduced impersonation and unauthorized access to examinations, reinforcing the idea that technology-driven monitoring systems are a reliable deterrent against malpractice. Likewise, highlighted continuous Olumero (2019)how innovations technological examination in administration, such as digital tracking and automated monitoring systems, have significantly improved examination credibility in African higher education institutions. However, some studies offer a different perspective.

The legal measures adopted by South-East Universities to prevent examination malpractice (like reporting offenders to security personnel for immediate action during examination malpractice; establishment of clear sanctions for individuals caught in malpractice; regular review and amendment of examination laws to address emerging challenges, among others) are effective to a low extent. The limited effectiveness of legal measures in curbing examination malpractice in South-East Nigerian universities suggests that punitive approaches alone may be insufficient to address this pervasive issue. This ineffectiveness could stem from systemic factors such as inadequate enforcement of existing laws, societal pressures emphasizing certification over actual learning, and deeply ingrained cultural practices that



tacitly accept or even encourage malpractice. Supporting this perspective, a study by Sabo (2022) highlighted that examination malpractice has become internalized and legitimized among students, indicating that legal measures without cultural and systemic reforms may have limited impact.

The educational measures adopted by South-East Nigerian Universities to prevent examination malpractice (like providing continuous counselling services for students, incorporating ethics education into the school curriculum, educating students on effective study habits, among others) are effective to a low extent. The limited effectiveness of educational measures—such as continuous counseling services, ethics education, and instruction on effective study habits—in curbing examination malpractice in South-East Nigerian universities suggests that these interventions may not sufficiently address the underlying factors contributing to academic dishonesty. This ineffectiveness could stem from a pervasive societal emphasis on certificates and grades over actual knowledge and skills, leading students to prioritize outcomes over integrity. Additionally, inadequate preparation, lack of self-confidence, and peer influence may drive students toward malpractice, factors that these educational measures might not fully mitigate. Supporting this perspective, studies have identified causes of examination malpractice in Nigerian societal universities, including pressure certification, inadequate preparation, and low moral standards (Anzene, 2014; Ojonemi et al., 2013). Similarly, research has highlighted the role of societal values and the emphasis on certificates as contributing malpractice examination (Anzene, Conversely, some studies suggest that measures like effective invigilation and stricter enforcement of examination regulations can significantly reduce malpractice incidents, indicating that enforcement strategies may be more effective than educational interventions alone (Onuka & Durowoju, 2013).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the effectiveness of examination malpractice prevention strategies in South-East Nigerian universities varies significantly, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches. While structured enforcement and technological advancements create strong deterrents against malpractice, legal and educational interventions struggle to yield similar results. This disparity suggests that punitive measures alone may not be sufficient

without adequate reinforcement through awareness, institutional commitment, and student engagement. Addressing these gaps requires a more integrated approach that not only leverages administrative and technological efficiency but also strengthens legal frameworks and enhances ethical education to foster a culture of academic integrity.

Recommendations

- 1. Universities should enhance the implementation of legal measures by ensuring strict enforcement of penalties, timely prosecution of offenders, and regular updates to examination laws to address emerging malpractice tactics.
- Institutions should integrate ethics education more effectively into the curriculum, conduct regular workshops on academic integrity, and engage students in discussions on the long-term consequences of malpractice.
- 3. Universities should invest in more advanced technological solutions, such as AI-driven plagiarism detection, biometric verification for exam entry, and real-time monitoring systems to further reduce malpractice opportunities.
- 4. Regular training should be provided for examination supervisors, invigilators, and security personnel to ensure they are well-equipped to detect and prevent malpractice while maintaining a fair and transparent examination process.

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