



Comparative Study on the Influence of Student Behaviour on Examination Malpractices among Bachelor of Education Fourth-Year Students in Public and Private Universities in Kenya

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ABSTRACT: This study examines the factors influencing examination malpractices among Bachelor of Education fourth-year students in selected public and private universities in Kenya. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study analyzes responses from 365 students, 127 lecturers, and 27 examination officers through surveys and focused group discussions. It aims to identify how student behaviour, examination venue conditions, the nature of examinations, and examination supervision impact malpractice occurrences. The findings reveal a strong correlation between student behaviour and malpractice rates, with a 93.1% variance explained by behaviour in public universities. Additionally, venue conditions significantly correlate with malpractice, while supervision aspects are critically influential. These insights underscore the necessity for universities to enhance supervision and cultivate environments that promote academic integrity.

KEYWORDS: Examination Malpractice, Student Behaviour, Students Bachelor of Education, Fourth-Year students, Public and Private universities, Kenya

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Examination malpractice remains a significant challenge affecting educational systems globally, particularly in developing regions. The World Bank (2021) defines this malpractice as actions that undermine academic integrity, presenting an unfair advantage to some students. Existing literature identifies several factors contributing to examination malpractice, including peer pressure, technological advancements, and environmental conditions during examinations (Fatai, 2019; Senyamator et al., 2022).

Examination malpractice poses a formidable challenge to educational integrity worldwide, especially in developing regions where systemic pressures and ethical oversight may be weaker. The World Bank (2021) provides a framework for understanding examination malpractice as any actions that undermine the principles of academic integrity, thereby affording an unjust advantage to certain learners. The phenomenon has garnered significant attention in scholarly discourse, highlighting a multitude of factors that drive students to engage in dishonest behaviours during examinations. Key contributors to this discourse include peer pressure, technological influences, environmental conditions during examinations, and institutional practices.

Peer Pressure Peer pressure remains one of the most cited motivators for academic dishonesty. Research consistently shows that students often feel compelled to cheat when they perceive their peers engaging in similar behaviours (Adeyemo & Babatunde, 2022). This threshold is particularly high in high-stakes environments where the repercussions of failure can be dire, fostering a culture where conforming to peer actions becomes more attractive than adhering to integrity. Orji (2023) notes that in such environments, students may rationalize their engagement in malpractice as a means of survival within a competitive academic landscape. The role of peer dynamics cannot be underestimated, as students navigate social relationships that can either reinforce ethical behavior or lead them astray.

Technological Influences Technological advancements further complicate the examination malpractice landscape. The omnipresence of smartphones and online resources has made it substantially easier for students to access information during assessments, thus enhancing the propensity for cheating (Arellano et al., 2024). This phenomenon, termed "techno-cheating," is noted to burgeon particularly where digital surveillance is lax, providing students a venue to exploit technology while minimizing perceived risks of detection. The accessibility of online forums and sharing platforms fosters an environment where sharing answers or discussing test content becomes commonplace, further eroding academic integrity.

Environmental Conditions The physical and institutional environments in which examinations occur also significantly impact students' likelihood to engage in malpractice. Mumbua (2022) explores the influence of classroom layout and supervision on student behaviour during assessments, contending that well-structured environments with effective oversight can mitigate unethical behaviours. Students may feel more secure in their ability to cheat in environments lacking such rigid controls, highlighting the importance of attentive supervision and appropriate examination settings. Research shows that inadequate or ineffective oversight increases the perception of low risks associated with cheating, which propels students toward dishonest actions (Adeyemo, 2020; Fatai, 2019).

Institutional Practices and Policies Institutional practices play a crucial role in shaping environments that either promote or inhibit examination malpractice. The presence of strict academic integrity policies, transparent consequences for dishonesty, and active efforts to create an ethos of honesty can substantially deter students from engaging in cheating behaviours. However, B.Ed. programs, particularly in Kenya, often have varied implementation of these policies, suggesting an inconsistency that could be manipulated by savvy students. Comparatively, while some universities may prioritize integrity through proactive measures, others may inadvertently contribute to an environment where malpractice is tolerated or overlooked.

Conclusion from the Literature The literature underscores that examination malpractice is not a singular phenomenon but rather a complex interplay of various factors involving student behaviours, environmental conditions, peer influence, and institutional practices. This diversity makes it critical for research to delve into the context-specific variables that affect examination integrity. Given the identified factors, this study will explore how these influences converge specifically among Bachelor of Education students in Kenya, adding a nuanced perspective to the ongoing discourse on examination malpractice. By dissecting these elements, we aim to inform policy and practice that will foster academic honesty and integrity across educational institutions.

2. METHODS

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing examination malpractice among Bachelor of Education fourth-year students in Kenya. The dual approach enabled the exploration of numerical data and the collection of detailed insights, enriching the study's findings and interpretations.

Research Design

The mixed-methods design incorporated descriptive survey research and correlational research methodologies. The quantitative aspect of the research focused on measuring the extent of various factors contributing to examination malpractice, while the qualitative component sought to provide deeper insights into students' attitudes, perceptions, and experiences related to cheating.

Study Population and Sampling

The target population for the study consisted of 4,170 fourth-year Bachelor of Education students, 86 lecturers, and 27 examination officers across selected public and private universities in Kenya. To achieve representative data, a stratified sampling technique was employed, where participants were selected based on their university affiliation and course length.

A sample size of approximately 365 students, 127 lecturers, and 27 examination officers was determined to ensure a statistically relevant analysis. The sample size for students was calculated using Cochran's formula for sample size determination, ensuring an adequate representation of perspectives from both public and private universities.

Data were collected through a combination of structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. A standardized questionnaire was designed specifically for students, lecturers, and examination officers. The questionnaire included closed-ended questions using a 5-point Likert scale to assess perceptions regarding examination malpractice, peer pressure, environmental conditions, supervision, and the use of technology during examinations.

The items were developed based on existing literature and validated through a pilot study conducted with a small subset of the target population. Feedback from the pilot helped refine the questions for clarity and relevance.

Data collection took place over a six-week period. Questionnaires were administered to participants through both online platforms and face-to-face methods to accommodate different circumstances amid ongoing global health concerns.

For the semi-structured interviews, participants were chosen based on their availability and willingness to participate. Interviews were conducted in a comfortable setting, ensuring participants felt at ease to share their experiences. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for key themes and patterns.

Quantitative data from questionnaires were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize the data. Inferential statistics, specifically Pearson correlation analysis and ANOVA, were conducted to explore relationships between variables and test the research hypotheses.

Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews underwent thematic analysis. Transcripts were reviewed multiple times to identify recurrent themes, patterns, and insights related to examination malpractice. The findings were coded systematically, and key themes were extracted, providing a complementary narrative to the quantitative results.

Sampling

A stratified random sampling technique was utilized to select participants, yielding a sample of 365 students, 127 lecturers, and 27 examination officers. Surveys and focused group discussions were employed for data collection, ensuring diverse perspectives on the research questions.

Data Collection

Quantitative data were gathered using structured questionnaires designed to capture perceptions of student behavior, examination venue conditions, the nature of examinations, and supervision effectiveness. Qualitative insights were obtained from focused group discussions with student participants, lecturers, and examination officers, providing depth to the quantitative findings.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed by the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and means, provided an overview of the demographic characteristics of the participants. Inferential statistics, including Pearson correlation and ANOVA, were used to test the hypotheses at a 5% significance level.

3. RESULTS

The results of the study elucidate the intricate relationship between student behavior and examination malpractice, as well as the influence of various contextual factors. The findings are presented in a series of tables, with accompanying analyses and discussions reflecting their implications.

Table 1: Correlation Between Student Behavior and Examination Malpractices

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F-Statistic	p-Value
Total Student Behaviour Factors	0.965	0.931	0.931	4879.38	0

From Table 1 The Pearson correlation analysis indicated a strong positive correlation ($R = 0.965$) between student behaviour factors and examination malpractice. This suggests that as student behaviours improves, instances of examination malpractice significantly decrease. The R^2 value of 0.931 indicates that approximately 93.1% of the variance in examination malpractice can be attributed to student behaviors across both public and private universities.

Table 2: ANOVA on Student Behaviour and Examination Malpractices

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-Value
Regression	1912.707	1	1912.707	4879.38	0
Residual	142.295	363	0.392		
Total	2055.003	364			

The ANOVA results confirm the significance of the regression model, with an F statistic of 4879.378 and a p-value of 0.000. These findings lead to the conclusion that student behaviours has a statistically significant influence on examination malpractice.

Table 3: Impact of Various Factors on Examination Malpractice

Factor	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F-statistic	p-Value
Examination Venue Factors	0.964	0.929	0.928	4512.134	0
Nature of Examinations	0.942	0.886	0.885	3972.713	0
Supervision-Related Factors	0.752	0.564	0.563	254.24	0

The analysis of various factors impacting examination malpractice revealed significant correlations. Examination venue factors exhibited an R value of 0.964, indicating that improved conditions in examination venues could substantially reduce malpractice incidents, contributing to 92.9% of the variance in malpractice. The nature of examinations also demonstrated a considerable impact, correlating strongly with malpractice occurrences. In contrast, supervision-related factors showed a weaker correlation ($R = 0.752$), indicating that while enhanced supervision is beneficial, it alone may not suffice to deter malpractice.

Table 4: Responses Regarding Peer Pressure and Examination Malpractice

University Type	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Public Universities	131 (59.9%)	44 (20.1%)	21 (9.6%)	13 (5.9%)	10 (4.5%)
Private Universities	95 (65.1%)	25 (17.1%)	14 (9.6%)	8 (5.5%)	4 (2.7%)

Table 4 indicate that revealed that 59.9% of respondents from public universities and 65.1% from private universities agreed that peer pressure strongly influences their examination behavior. This aligns with findings from prior research, emphasizing peer influence's prominent role in facilitating academic dishonesty (Schmidt et al., 2019).

4. DISCUSSION

The results clearly demonstrate that student behavior significantly contributes to examination malpractice, underscoring the importance of fostering ethical academic practices among students. The strong correlation found ($R = 0.965$) between positive student behaviors and decreased instances of malpractice suggests that efforts to enhance academic integrity must prioritize student engagement, well-being, and ethical standards.

The high R^2 value indicates that the vast majority of variance in examination malpractice can be legitimately attributed to student actions and choices, highlighting the criticality of individual responsibility in academic settings. Moreover, the analysis of contextual factors provides a granular understanding of what influences examination practices. Specifically, examination venue conditions emerged as vital, with an R value of 0.964, indicating that well-structured, secure environments can significantly deter unethical behaviors. The need for universities to invest in improving physical examination settings is paramount to fostering an atmosphere of accountability and integrity.

Additionally, the nature of examinations proved to be a substantial factor, suggesting that the design and administration of assessments could either discourage or enable malpractice. Institutions need to consider varied assessment methods and implement strategies that diminish opportunities for cheating.

While supervision-related factors showed a weaker correlation, the results still indicate the necessity for improved monitoring during examinations. However, reliance on supervision alone may lead to a false sense of security; thus, a holistic approach that includes student education on ethics, supportive environments, and consistent enforcement of integrity policies is essential.

The results concerning peer pressure emphasize a critical social dimension of examination malpractice. The prevalence of perceived peer influence highlights the intertwined nature of individual and communal ethical conduct. Moreover, both public and private universities exhibited high agreement rates regarding peer pressure's impact, indicating that this phenomenon is widespread across different institutional contexts. Programs aimed at fostering a culture of integrity among peers could be vital in cultivating a more ethically oriented academic community.

Overall, the findings underscore the need for multi-faceted interventions targeting student behavior, examination conditions, and peer dynamics. Educational institutions must proactively implement strategies that promote academic integrity while addressing the systemic pressures that contribute to examination malpractice. This could include fostering an ethical academic culture through workshops, creating supportive networks among students, and applying empirical insights to refine examination and assessment processes.

5. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight the pivotal role that student behavior plays in shaping the landscape of examination malpractice among Bachelor of Education fourth-year students in both public and private universities in Kenya. The strong correlation identified between student behaviors—such as peer influence, competitive attitudes, and preparation strategies—and the likelihood of engaging in examination malpractice underscores the complex interplay of personal, social, and institutional factors that contribute to this pervasive issue. For instance, the research revealed that as students face increasing pressure to perform well, they may be more susceptible to engaging in unethical practices, particularly when they observe similar behaviors among their peers. This suggests that the academic culture within institutions can significantly impact students' decisions regarding integrity and ethical conduct.

Moreover, the study's results indicate that the environmental contexts in which examinations are conducted, including the conditions of examination venues and the level of supervision, also play crucial roles in influencing students' choices. Students often rationalize their involvement in malpractice based on perceptions of what their peers are doing as well as the perceived efficacy of institutional safeguards. Such insights demand a nuanced understanding from university administrators and educators about the conditions that cultivate both the pressures to succeed and the environments that may inadvertently enable or discourage dishonest practices.

Given these insights, there is a pressing need for comprehensive institutional strategies to counteract the prevalence of examination malpractice. Educational institutions should consider implementing holistic approaches that promote academic integrity, tailored to the specific contexts of both public and private universities. These strategies could include enhancing supervision during examinations, revising examination processes to include more diverse assessment methods that mitigate opportunities for cheating, and providing educational workshops aimed at fostering ethical decision-making among students. Additionally, creating robust support systems to assist students with academic pressures, such as tutoring programs, counseling services, and peer support groups, can help minimize the feelings of inadequacy that may lead to the temptation of engaging in malpractice.

By fostering a culture of academic integrity, institutions can better equip students to navigate the challenges of their educational journeys. It is critical for policymakers and educational leaders to acknowledge the influence of student behavior on examination malpractice and to invest in initiatives that promote positive academic practices. Such efforts not only serve to uphold the standards of education but also prepare students to become ethical professionals. Ultimately, addressing the root causes of examination malpractice through targeted interventions can contribute to a more equitable and honest academic environment, benefiting both students and the institutions they represent.

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