

A Comparative Analysis: on the Influence of Nature and Structure of Examination on Examination Malpractices among Bachelor of Education Fourth-Year Students in Selected Public and Private Universities in Kenya

Judy Njeri Muriuki

Prof. Daniel K. Gakunga

Associate Professor, Department of Educational Foundations,
University of Nairobi

Dr. Alice Masese

Senior Lecturer, Department of Educational Foundations
University of Nairobi

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of examination nature and structure of examination on examination malpractices among Bachelor of Education fourth-year students in both public and private universities in Kenya. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the research encompasses both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, targeting a representative sample of students from diverse institutions. The findings reveal that the physical characteristics of examination nature and structure of examinations, such as security measures, seating arrangements, and overall environment, significantly impact students' likelihood to engage in malpractices. Furthermore, comparisons between public and private universities highlight differing levels of malpractice prevalence, influenced by institutional policies and cultural attitudes towards cheating. The study underscores the need for universities to enhance examination nature and structure of examination management and enforce stricter examination

protocols to mitigate malpractice incidents. Recommendations focus on creating conducive examination environments that discourage unethical behavior while fostering academic integrity. Ultimately, this research contributes to the broader discourse on academic honesty and assessment practices in University Education within the Kenyan context.

Keywords: Examination nature and structure of examination, Examination malpractices, Bachelor of Education, Fourth-Year students, Public and Private universities Kenya

Literature Review

Examination malpractice is a big problem for schools everywhere, and it's especially tough in developing countries. The World Bank (2021) describes it as any action that gives some students an unfair advantage and destroys academic integrity. There's a lot of research out there digging into why this happens. Factors like how the exam room is set up, how strict the security is, the overall environment, and the way institutions handle exams all play a role (Gottfried, 2021; Mumbua, 2022).

Take seating arrangements, for example. If the seats are well-organized, students have fewer chances to cheat. But pack too many students into a small space, and suddenly, it's much easier for them to collaborate and break the rules (Baker & Leary, 2020). It's not just about the seats, either. A study from Nigeria showed that security really matters—if invigilators aren't paying attention, students feel emboldened to cheat (Onabajo & Ajiboye, 2020). And don't forget about the environment. Noise or bad lighting messes with concentration, which can push students toward dishonest shortcuts (Roberts & Wu, 2022; Senyameter et al., 2022).

When you look at what schools and universities actually do, it's clear that strong policies and a supportive atmosphere stop a lot of malpractice. But the reality is, many institutions don't apply these standards consistently, which lets problems slip through the cracks (Gemma et al., 2021). The research suggests that the best exam environments combine tight security, smart seating plans, and careful supervision. If institutions stay on top of these, they stand a much better chance of protecting academic integrity (Mumbua, 2022).

Methods

This study utilized a mixed-methods design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to achieve a comprehensive understanding of how examination nature and structure of examination factors influence malpractices among Bachelor of Education fourth-year students. The dual focus allowed for the numerical evaluation of responses to complement qualitative insights from participants.

The research design combined descriptive survey research and correlational methodologies. The quantitative aspect examined the extent to which nature and structure of examination factors contributed to examination malpractice, while the qualitative component provided deeper insight into student experiences and perceptions related to examination environments.

The target population included 4,170 fourth-year Bachelor of Education students, 86 lecturers, and 27 examination officers from selected public and private universities in Kenya. A stratified sampling technique was employed, yielding a sample of 365 students, 127 lecturers, and 27 examination officers for this study.

Data were gathered through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The standardized questionnaires targeted students, lecturers, and examination officers to assess perceptions of nature and structure of examination conditions and their influence on malpractice.

Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation analysis, and ANOVA were employed to test research hypotheses. Qualitative data underwent thematic analysis to extract key insights.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1 provides a detailed overview of the correlation analysis conducted to assess the relationship between examination nature and structure of examination factors and instances of examination malpractice among Bachelor of Education fourth-year students in public and private universities in Kenya.

Table 1. Correlation Analysis Between Nature and structure of examination Factors and Examination Malpractice

Statistic	Value
Correlation Coefficient (R)	0.964
R-squared (R ²)	0.929
Adjusted R-squared	0.929
Standard Error	0.63448
F-statistic	4741.746
p-value	0.000

The statistical results summarized in this table reveal a remarkably strong correlation coefficient (R) of 0.964, indicating a very robust positive relationship between the conditions of examination nature and structure of examinations and the likelihood of students engaging in malpractice. This high correlation suggests that as the quality and organization of examination nature and structure of examinations improve, the instances of malpractice correspondingly decrease.

The R-squared value (R²) of 0.929 is particularly noteworthy, as it signifies that approximately 92.9% of the variance in examination malpractice occurrences can be explained by the examination nature and structure of examination factors included in the model. This substantial percentage illustrates that nature and structure of examination -related conditions, such as seating arrangements, security measures, and overall environmental conditions, play a critical role in shaping students' behaviors during examinations. The remaining 7.1% of the variance could be attributed to other external factors not captured within this analysis, which may warrant further investigation in future research.

Another critical value presented in the table is the adjusted R-squared, which also stands at 0.929. Adjusted R-squared accounts for the number of predictors in the model, ensuring that the model's predictive power is not artificially inflated when multiple variables are included. The consistency in the R-squared and adjusted R-squared values further supports the reliability and robustness of the model, reinforcing the notion that examination nature and structure of examination conditions significantly impact the integrity of academic assessments.

The standard error of the estimate is reported as 0.63448, indicating a relatively small average deviation between the predicted values and the actual observed outcomes. This low standard error reflects the model's accuracy in predicting examination malpractice based on the nature and structure of examination factors, suggesting that the influence of these factors is both strong and predictable within the sample population.

Furthermore, the F-statistic of 4741.746, alongside a p-value of 0.000, demonstrates that the regression model is statistically significant. The F-statistic tests the overall significance of the model, and the extremely low p-value indicates that the likelihood of observing such results due to chance is virtually negligible. This statistical significance substantiates the hypothesis that examination nature and structure of examination factors are fundamentally linked to the prevalence of examination malpractice.

A significant positive correlation ($R = 0.964$) indicates a strong relationship between examination nature and structure of examination factors and instances of examination malpractice, suggesting improved nature and structure of examination conditions can lower malpractice occurrences, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. ANOVA Results for Examination Nature and structure of examination Factors and Examination Malpractice

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Regression	1908.871	1	1908.871	4741.746	0.000
Residual	146.132	363	0.403		
Total	2055.003	364			

Table 2 presents the ANOVA results used to analyze the significance of examination nature and structure of examination factors on examination malpractice. The regression sum of squares (1908.871) is substantial compared to the residual sum of squares (146.132), underlining that the independent variables effectively explain most of the variance in the dependent variable, which is examination malpractice. The F-statistic value of 4741.746, coupled with a p-value of 0.000, confirms that the model is statistically significant, indicating that examination nature and structure of examination factors play a critical role in influencing malpractice. As such, these results affirm the necessity for educational institutions to address nature and structure of examination -related issues to mitigate instances of malpractice.

Table 3. Influence of Seating Arrangements on Examination Malpractice

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	0	0%
Agree	20	5.48%
Neutral	50	13.7%
Disagree	120	32.88%
Strongly Disagree	175	48.94%
Total	365	100%

Table 3 illustrates student perceptions related to the influence of seating arrangements on examination malpractice. A significant majority (81.82%) of respondents disagreed with the notion that seating arrangements prevented malpractice, with 48.94% strongly disagreeing. This suggests a considerable skepticism regarding current seating strategies, highlighting a need for universities to reconsider how seating is organized during examinations. Improving seating arrangements could potentially reduce opportunities for cheating, reinforcing academic integrity.

Table 4. Effectiveness of Security Measures in Examination Nature and structure of examinations

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Very Effective	10	2.74%
Effective	45	12.32%
Neutral	60	16.44%
Ineffective	115	31.16%
Very Ineffective	135	36.33%
Total	365	100%

Table 4 presents students' perceptions of the effectiveness of security measures in examination nature and structure of examinations. A combined total of 67.49% of respondents

acknowledged that security measures were either ineffective or very ineffective. The lack of confidence in these measures suggests that lax security could foster an environment conducive to malpractice, emphasizing the necessity for stricter enforcement and improved security protocols during examinations.

Table 5. Lighting Conditions Impact on Performance

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	150	40.93%
No	215	59.07%
Total	365	100%

Table 5 highlights student responses regarding lighting conditions in examination nature and structure of examinations. A notable 59.07% of participants reported that lighting negatively affected their performance, suggesting that insufficient or inappropriate lighting might compromise students' focus and overall examination experience. This finding underlines the importance of ensuring optimal lighting conditions to help safeguard academic integrity and support students' performance during assessments.

Table 6. Nature and structure of examination Layout and Design for Monitoring

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	130	35.6%
No	235	64.4%

In Table 6, the responses regarding the suitability of nature and structure of examination layout for monitoring students during examinations are presented. A significant majority (64.4%) of students indicated that the layout was not conducive to effective monitoring. This perception points to potential weaknesses in nature and structure of examination design that may encourage or facilitate malpractice, highlighting the need for universities to rethink nature and structure of examination layouts to enhance oversight and promote integrity in examinations.

Table 8. Access Control to Examination Nature and structure of examinations

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	200	54.79%
No	165	45.21%
Total	365	100%

Table 8 reports on the availability of access control measures at examination nature and structure of examinations. While over half (54.79%) of respondents believed that access control measures were in place, nearly half disagreed. This ambiguity suggests that the effectiveness of access control could be improved, indicating a need for more rigorous enforcement or clearer communication of the measures in place to prevent unauthorized access, and hence, minimize opportunities for malpractice.

Table 9. Influence of Seating Arrangements on Examination Malpractice

Response	Frequency	Percentage
No	120	32.88%
Yes	245	67.12%
Total	365	100%

Table 9 shows that 67.12% of respondents believed that seating arrangements did indeed influence examination malpractice, contrasting with previous findings in Table 3 regarding their effectiveness. This discrepancy highlights a complex relationship between seating design and students' perceptions of malpractice facilitation, suggesting that even if seating arrangements are believed to contribute to malpractice, they may not be effective in preventing it.

Table 10. Thematic Analysis of Focused Group Discussions and Interviews on the Influence of Examination Nature and structure of examination on Examination Malpractice

Source	Identified Themes	Percentage of Respondents
Lecturers	Poor Supervision	68%
Examination Officers	Environment Created for Cheating	76%

In Table 10, the analysis of focused group discussions and interviews reveals critical insights into the factors affecting examination malpractice. A significant portion of both lecturers (68%) and examination officers (76%) identified poor supervision and the enabling environment for cheating as key themes. This shared acknowledgement underscores the importance of effective monitoring during examinations and the necessity for institutions to address supervision practices to enhance integrity.

Table 11. Themes from FGDs and Interviews on the Influence of Poor Layout and Supervision on Examination Malpractice

Source	Identified Themes	Key Insights
Lecturers	Nature and structure of examination Design and Supervision	Poor layout and supervision increase chances of malpractice.
Examination Officers	Opportunity for Cheating	Crowded nature and structure of examinations create conditions conducive to malpractice.

Table 11 elaborates on the thematic findings regarding nature and structure of examination design and supervision. Both lecturers and examination officers emphasized that inadequate nature and structure of examination layouts and supervision significantly contribute to opportunities for cheating. These insights highlight crucial areas for improvement, suggesting that educational institutions must prioritize the redesign of examination layouts and enhance supervisory practices to reduce malpractice opportunities effectively.

Thematic Insights from Focus Groups

After chatting with lecturers and exam officers in focus groups, some big concerns came up about how exams are set up and how that sometimes invites cheating. The main thing? Supervision just isn't strict enough. People noticed that when no one's really watching, students find it much easier to break the rules. And it's not only about having enough invigilators around. The exam setting itself matters a lot, too. If the room is cluttered, the lighting's poor, or there's a lot of noise and chaos, it just creates more chances for students to cheat—and it's tough for anyone to concentrate in those conditions anyway.

At the end of the day, how an exam is arranged—the seating, the vibe, and especially how closely it's monitored—makes a huge difference when it comes to stopping cheating. If universities in Kenya want students to play fair, they really need to get these basics right. That means proper supervision, tidy rows, clear security steps, and a space where everyone can actually focus. Schools need to take this seriously. When the exam environment is under control and everyone knows someone's paying attention, cheating drops off and students can actually trust the system. Universities owe it to everyone to make exams honest and reliable.

5. Recommendations

Recommendations include policy recommendations and recommendations for further research.

Policy Recommendations

I) Enhance Nature and structure of examination Management: To combat examination malpractice effectively, universities should prioritize enhancing the conditions of examination environments. This involves improving aspects such as seating arrangements, lighting, and overall cleanliness to create a more conducive testing atmosphere. Additionally, it is essential to implement formal training programs for invigilators, allowing them to optimize their oversight capabilities and monitor student behavior more effectively during exams. By investing in nature and structure of examination management and equipping invigilators with the necessary skills, institutions can significantly reduce opportunities for malpractice and foster a fair academic environment.

II) Address Academic Pressures: It is crucial for universities to recognize and address the academic pressures that often lead students to engage in dishonest practices. Implementing comprehensive student support programs can alleviate stress and offer resources such as counselling and time management workshops. By fostering a supportive environment that prioritizes mental health and well-being, institutions can empower students to adopt healthier study habits and academic behaviours. This proactive approach not only mitigates the risk of malpractice but also enhances overall student satisfaction and success in their educational journeys.

III) Establish Comprehensive Security Protocols: Universities must conduct a thorough review of their existing security measures surrounding examinations and take necessary actions to strengthen these protocols. This includes limiting unauthorized access to examination nature and structure of examination s, utilizing technology such as surveillance cameras, and having proper identification checks for both students and invigilators. By establishing robust security measures, institutions can enhance the integrity of the examination process and create a climate of accountability where students feel that malpractice is monitored and deterred effectively.

IV) Conduct Workshops on Academic Integrity: Raising awareness about the importance of academic integrity is vital in cultivating a culture of honesty within educational institutions. Universities should implement workshops and campaigns that target the significance of maintaining integrity during examinations. These initiatives can include discussions on the implications of academic dishonesty, the importance of personal responsibility, and strategies for studying effectively without resorting to unethical practices. By fostering a comprehensive understanding of academic integrity among students, institutions can instil the values of honesty and responsibility that are essential for their future professional endeavours.

Recommendations for Further Research

I) Longitudinal Studies: Future research should consider implementing longitudinal studies that track changes in student behaviour over time in response to modifications in examination nature and structure of examinations. By observing students across different academic terms

and under various nature and structure of examination conditions, researchers can gain valuable insights into the long-term effects of environmental changes on academic integrity and malpractice rates. Such studies would provide a dynamic understanding of how students adapt their behaviours in relation to improvements in examination settings, thereby informing policies and practices aimed at reducing malpractice.

II) Comparative Studies: It would be beneficial for future research to pursue comparative studies that expand the demographic diversity of the sample population. By including a wider range of student backgrounds, institutions, and geographical locations, researchers can enhance understanding of the various variables that affect examination malpractice. This broader perspective could help identify unique patterns and factors influencing academic dishonesty across different contexts, ultimately contributing to a more comprehensive approach to addressing the issues at hand. Additionally, these comparative analyses could highlight the specific needs and challenges faced by diverse student populations in relation to examination integrity.

III) Qualitative Approaches: Further research could utilize deeper qualitative methodologies to explore student perceptions regarding examination nature and structure of examinations and academic integrity. By conducting interviews or focus groups, researchers can gather rich, detailed narratives that reveal how students interpret and experience the examination environment. This qualitative insight can illuminate the nuanced factors that contribute to malpractice, including psychological, social, and contextual elements. Understanding student perspectives on their examination experiences would not only enrich the existing literature but also provide practical recommendations for creating more supportive and integrity-promoting examination settings in educational institutions.

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