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## An assessment of examination malpractice policies of a public university in Southwestern Nigeria

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### Abstract

The menace of examination malpractices (EM) is prevalent in tertiary institutions in many regions of the world. In this study, the examination malpractice policies of a Nigerian institution were investigated. Three research questions were raised using exploratory design with sample size of twelve (12) interviewees. This was drawn by purposive sampling technique and was complemented with snowball sampling technique. Data collection was carried out using oral interview and analyzed with Atlas-ti. The results show that students of tertiary institutions engage in EM for various reasons. It was also revealed that students use various methods for indulging in EM. In addition, some weaknesses and amendments to the existing rules and regulations were suggested to curb this menace.

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### 1. Introduction

Education provides an individual with requisite knowledge and skills that will enable him/her live a normal and peaceful life and then contribute effectively to the development of society. As the world changes in complexity, education underpins all vital aspects of human development from cradle to adulthood. Cheating, cutting corners and various negative conducts have been part of human lives across every community, system and culture. The education system has similarly been affected at all levels from primary to tertiary educational levels. Such conduct that has proven difficult to tackle is the menace of malpractices during examinations in students' desperate desire to pass examinations. Primary schools, high schools, colleges, polytechnics and universities are not spared of this nauseating syndrome with pupils, youths the age bracket of 4 to 25 as the largest vulnerable population. Examination tests a person's knowledge about a subject or topic on which he/she has been taught over a period. It is the most popular method through which knowledge, abilities, and competence are formally tested and measured. Beyond academics, selection for admission, job placement and promotion are also achieved with examinations. The desire to get things done cheaply and as fast as possible by youth of the 21<sup>st</sup> century civilization has promoted different forms of corner-cutting in which examination malpractices and cheating have evolved as constitutional criminal behaviors in educational institutions. This menace is so high in many regions of the world that it has become a subject of emphasis in every academic discourse as it attracts research interests. Digitization of almost every aspect of human lives in the 21<sup>st</sup> century occasioned by the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution rather than reducing this nagging problem has worsened it (Hans and Crasta, 2019) <sup>[17]</sup>. Information and communication technology (ICT) has become a strategic tool among young people at all levels to perpetrate all sorts of evil or negative behaviors at different levels of their education.

According to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 4, quality education emphasizes on transparent education without having flaws for everyone (Unterhalter, 2019) <sup>[12]</sup>. The main purpose of education is to teach, train, learn and gain knowledge and the only way through which knowledge can be tested is through examination. Any individual that gets involved in examination malpractice would have succeeded in acquiring a certificate without developing the essential aptitude that will enable him/her to live a fruitful and useful life.

There is no precise date about when examination malpractice started but according to Maduemezia (1998) <sup>[22]</sup> the first case of examination malpractice in Nigeria was reported in 1914 by the “Nigerian chronicle” where the question papers of a senior Cambridge local examination was leaked. Examination malpractice became more popular in the 1970’s and ever since then examination malpractice has been seen as a rampant day-to-day activity. Different attempts to define examination malpractice have been made overtime. Defined “examination malpractice as an illegal way a student uses to pass an examination which could be bringing notebooks into examination halls, cheating during examinations, copying from friends, paying another person to help in attempting the examination, or gaining foreknowledge of questions before the examinations”. Defined “examination malpractice as an unlawful behavior or activity engaged in by students to have personal advantage in an examination over their colleagues or mates who are taking the same examination” (Nganchi and Charlotte, 2020) <sup>[28]</sup>. Examination malpractice can take place either before the examination (pre-examination), during the exam (examination) and after the examination (post examination). Beyond cheating in examinations, examination malpractice bridges a gap between examination scores and the actual level of knowledge acquired by a student. The use of validity scores in examinations is to reflect the actual academic achievement of a student but when examination malpractice is involved, it can’t be achieved. The institutions will then be caught in a web of giving certificates that do not actually reflect the capacities of the student. The key actors or players in the game of examination malpractice in a university include lazy students, parents or guardians, examination invigilators, university lecturers, and non-academic staff.

The craze for academic credentials in Nigeria as the only acceptable index of recognition or societal acceptance has made the desire to pass examinations anyhow as ‘*a do or die affair*’ in many institutions. Advocated the need for public awareness about the menace of EM for standard national or regional examinations such as West African Examination Council (WAEC), National Examination Council (NECO), United Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN) and General Certificate of Education (GCE). Some university graduates who are products of examination malpractice have become a reserved army of the unemployable. Despite knowing the consequences of engaging in examination malpractice, laziness on the part of many students nowadays and failure to prepare adequately for examination keeps driving them into malpractice. Many studies have been conducted on the menace of examination malpractices and forms through which students engage in it and factors influencing it (Nganchi and Charlotte, 2020; Emiloju and Adeyoju, 2012, Petters and Okon, 2014) <sup>[28, 12, 37]</sup>, specific focus on specific Nigerian universities including Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) is rarely found. However, it suffices to remark that periodic review of examination malpractice policies, institutional rules and regulations for examination offences is rarely carried out. The peculiar focus on OAU in this research stems from researchers’ interest on the nauseating level to which malpractices has brought decadence to educational standards in most Nigeria universities and the various media attention it has attracted in the recent past.

### 1.1. Forms of Examination Malpractices

Some of the various methods in which students engage in malpractices are highlighted as follows:

- a. *Dubbing or Giraffe-ing* – Giraffe-ing is perhaps the oldest and least incriminating kind of examination malpractice. Students who adopt this method may or may not conspire with anybody but do cast occasional glances at the answer booklets of their target. The method involves straining or elongation of neck like the animal (giraffe) to improve visibility of the answers script of a neighbor who is considered better in each subject.
- b. *Impersonation* – This an act of contracting or hiring an expert student or outsider often called ‘runs-man or mercenary’ to sit for an exam by appearing at the center for the exam and pretending as the genuine candidate for the exam at an agreed price. Male candidates do sit for girls and vice versa or twins writing examinations for each other. This form of malpractice is mostly practiced by men as it requires some level of apprehension, uneasiness or worry (Emiloju and Adeyoju, 2012) <sup>[14]</sup>.
- c. *Use of ICT Devices* – The evolution of ICT (software and hardware) and associated tools such as mobile phones, iPad, internet and have shown diverse positive and negative impacts on education in almost every regions of the world (Petters and Okon, 2014) <sup>[37]</sup>. For instance, smart phones were produced for easy communication between two or more persons, to improve learning, have an open education, seek knowledge, and have access to quick information on the internet but a lot of students misuse this golden opportunity that technology has given for the betterment or growth of education. Smart phones now enable cheats to quickly and secretly work out the answers either through ‘Google’ or other service providers while in the examination hall. Students make use of their smart phones and smart watches to cheat to search for answers to questions given in an exam, take pictures of their notes before the exam or copying of notes into their phones, snapping exam questions papers to someone outside the exam hall for the person to send the answers (can either be images or texts), make use of air pods to communicate with someone outside the exam hall, recording of voice notes to be used during exam, storage of needed notes and formula in programmable calculators for use during examinations and use of cell phones calculators in examination where calculators are not allowed (Ifijeh, Michael-Onuoha, and Ilogho 2015) <sup>[19]</sup>.
- d. *Smuggling of foreign items into examination rooms/halls* - Stated that examination malpractice varied from institution to institution, while their common interest or goal was to attain an unmerited success after an examination and occupy an enviable height in the society. Some students take illegal materials like ‘microchips’, textbooks, note-books, handouts, photocopies of prepared answers, past questions, handkerchiefs into an exam hall just to cheat with it. Microchips are seen as popular modulus operandi in modern Nigeria, and they are known by a variety of code names. It is known as ‘Mgbo’ (Bullet) in Igbo territory (Southeastern Nigeria) and ‘Omokirikiri’ or ‘Omo-reminder’ (little reminder) in Yoruba land. It’s a step forward from the old method of smuggling prepared examination-related materials into the exam room with the intention of using them as a guide during the exam. Microchips are typically tiny pieces of paper that summarize the major points of a subject/course to be examined. It was called ‘Pengo’, and they described it as the most common form of malpractice which entails

coming into the examination hall with small pieces of paper full of tiny written materials.

Sometimes, students dress in a particular way for the purpose of cheating in an examination; for instance, putting on an awkward-looking face cap or wearing a particular type of trouser or gown or top, veil/hijab (for Muslim ladies), hair-do (weave-on, wigs, braids or natural hair), shoes, socks, calculators, purses/wallets, mobile phones as a means to smuggle microchips into the examination hall.

- e. *Swapping of scripts* – This is also known as collusion which means passing of illegal information to one another through the exchange of question papers or answer scripts with candidate during an exam. This often exist among students or candidates and officials in charge of examinations (Makaula 2018) <sup>[23]</sup>.
- f. *Threatening invigilators* – Some students go the extra mile to threaten invigilators or lecturers to get more marks or help them cheat in an exam with their other course mates.
- g. *Oral communication or coded sign language among candidates* – This method of cheating is the most common among students. Many students pretend to ask for extra pen, eraser and so on during exams from their course mates; meanwhile, it is a signal oftentimes for assistance during exams. Recently the advent of covid-19 has made the use of nose-masks a part of social lives. Students have taken that as an advantage to communicate with one another under masks during examinations and this is hardly noticeable by invigilators.
- h. *Leakage of questions before the examination* - This form of malpractice happens in a situation whereby the lecturer of a particular subject leak examination questions to some favorite student(s) to help them pass their examinations. At times, the questions get leaked at photocopying centers or stolen from unsuspecting lecturers by students or mercenaries due to careless errand running.
- i. *Bribery* - This form of malpractice occurs by teacher-student collusion, capitalizing on the economic status of the student or Lecturer. A student may pay a Lecturer/invigilator/ examination official some money to buy the question paper, be allowed to use illegal materials smuggled into the examination halls or to extend/alter the examination scheduled period/venue (Nganchi and Charlotte, 2020) <sup>[28]</sup>.
- j. *Altering marks and grades by lecturers* – This form of examination malpractice happens among lecturers when students pay their lecturers huge amount of money to upgrade their scores in tests or examinations. In that same context, cases of trading sex for mark have been a subject of major concern over the past few decades. This is a case wherein a female student seduces/entices a male lecturer in favor to secure high unmerited scores in an examination. On the other side, male Lecturers also harass or mount pressure on female students in demand for sex to pass a particular examination. This category of malpractice, though rampant, is quite sensitive as it attracts serious public attention in these days of social media.
- k. *Students receiving responses/answers from invigilators or supervisors in the examination hall* – For some examinations, students seeing that some of invigilators could be postgraduate students do ask them for answers

being familiar with some of them as known faces in the department or their seniors.

1. *Pranks* – Student indulge in pranks involving the exchange of answer booklets for note comparison, and at times, students take time-out to urinate or use the toilet during examinations to read up solutions/answers with unsuspecting invigilators.

## 1.2. Factors Influencing Examination Malpractices

Some of the factors or reasons that explain students' involvement in this nagging problem called examination malpractice may be categorized under the following broad categories.

### 1.2.1. Social factors

- a. *Peer influence/pressure* –Discovered that “peer pressure, as an environmental component, has the ability to positively or negatively influence students' attitudes regarding examination malpractice” (Okorodudu 2013) <sup>[32]</sup>. There is a Yoruba adage that says “*egbé búburú a máa ba iwà rere jé*” which means “bad company corrupts good manners”. That is, when a well-behaved or a good person associates him or herself with a bad peer or group of friends it can tarnish or taint his reputation. Stated that "if students took their studies seriously and worked hard, they would be adequately prepared to write and pass examinations to avoid examination malpractice or cheating." (Okorodudu 2013) <sup>[32]</sup>.
- b. *Laziness and playfulness* – A lot of students today are offensively lazy and indolent. They love the good things of life but are too lazy to lift a finger to do anything meaningful to gain those things they desire, all they want to do is sit back, relax, have fun, go clubbing, attend parties and chop life forgetting that nothing good comes easy. They forget the need to work hard and read to pass an examination. This is why they want to pass their examinations through short-corners, that is, examination malpractice (Amadi 2018) <sup>[3]</sup>.
- c. *Immaturity* – Maturity is not by physical appearance but in one's sense of reasoning and some students are not mature enough to be in university. The immaturity of students could make them vulnerable to examination malpractice.
- d. *Competition amongst students* – The world today is competitive. The rich fight and strive to remain rich and the poor are trying to become rich. This situation can be likened to the university whereby the ones topping the class (first class, second class upper) are striving not to come down and the ones that are down (second class lower and third class) are trying to move get higher grades and almost everyone wants to come out with a good grade, nobody wants to be left out so they result to cheating to pass their examinations.
- e. *Fear of failure* - Students' engagement in examination malpractice can be traced back to failure. Self-confidence in this context is when a student believes and has faith that he can pass the examination without cheating. A good student has good faith that he or she will be able to pass the examination if they have studied in preparation for the examination. Many students get involved in malpractice during examination because they doubt their abilities to get an excellent result without having a “microchip” attached to their body (Amadi 2018) <sup>[3]</sup>.

### 1.2.2. Economic factor

A student's financial status or background (rich, middle class or poor) can also affect their performance or engagement in examination malpractice. The families from which a student emanates and their financial resources to support that child goes a long way to influence the student's livelihoods. The availability of money or outright lack of it may push a student into any social vice, hence the family as a basic social structure is expected to entrench good morals and conduct in children from the cradle.

### 1.2.3. Societal factors

Factors that may influence examination malpractice due to the influence of the society include:

- a. *Lack of effective teaching and understanding of a particular subject occasioned poor teaching methods by some Lecturers* - A lot of students have very little or vague understanding of what they are being taught. Lecturers do not finish most of the course outline they have for an academic semester before giving examinations to the student. In some cases, the Lecturer even go to the extent of giving examinations to the students on topics that were not taught (Amadi 2018) <sup>[3]</sup>. Though some students put in extra effort to read extensively about what they have been taught but others who didn't read more or read more but didn't understand just resign to cheating in the examination hall.
- b. *Poor preparatory/pre-university training by parents* - Lack of preparatory/pre-university training or advice on the path of a parent also influences a child into engaging in examination malpractice. If a parent or parents will sit down to discuss, share their personal experiences (both good and bad), give good tips on hard work and how to make it on their own that will help their child or children on throughout their stay in the university some children will possibly not get themselves involved in examination malpractice. It is shameful that some parents do not perform their functions as true parents (Amadi 2018) <sup>[3]</sup>.
- c. *Negative parental influence* - According to the Yoruba adage "ilé la tí ñ k'èşò r'òde" which means charity begins from home that is, whatever a child imbibes or learns from home is what he practices outside the home. for instance, if a child sees his parents fight every day, he will most likely consciously or unconsciously imbibe it and practice it outside the home (in school, in church and so on) which applies to examination malpractice.
- d. *Selfishness on the path of the parent* - Some parents fail to listen to the dreams and aspirations of their children, and they want to decide the future of their child. Most parents impose courses on their children because of failed ambitions of themselves without considering the child's decision. A child that does not have interest in what he or she is studying has a high tendency to engage in negative vices like moving with the wrong set of friends engage in examination malpractice.
- e. *Government's insensitivity to educational needs* - The government also has its role to play in enhancing the educational standard of schools but their refusal to provide the basic infrastructures like laboratories, equipment's, more classrooms and buildings and so on, keeps promoting cheating in examinations. In a case whereby there are over 2000 students using a small class for an examination, there are high chances that the number of students liable to cheat will be more than the number of students that didn't.
- f. *Inadequate supervision by the invigilators or lecturer* -

Due to the shortage of staff in some departments the supervision of lecturers during examinations is not always adequate. When students who came to the examination hall with prepared answers see that their lecturers that are supervising them are not focusing on them, they just continue cheating with their microchips.

- g. *The ineffectiveness of the school rules against examination malpractice* - When the institution's rules against examination malpractice are not functioning well this gives the institution the aura of a lawless society where people do things and get away with them which means that students can continue cheating in examinations and get away with it and lecturers can also participate in examination malpractice without being caught.
- h. *The high value placed on certificates rather than physical capabilities or skill acquisition* - The society is growing in such a way that over emphasis is now being laid on certification for job employment rather than focusing on the strengths of people or the skill they have acquired.
- i. *Lack of regular training for staff on examination ethics and conduct* - Enough training for the lecturers concerning the institutions' code of conduct and ethics concerning the examinations should be considered because in a case whereby a lecturer is involved in examination malpractice should we say he or she is not aware of the rules?

### 1.3. The Effects of Examination Malpractice

Examination malpractice has serious implications on the educational system, students, teachers, parents and the school as a whole.

- a. *Lack of confidence in Nigerian educational products* - Presently, due to the high rate of examination malpractice in Nigeria, most foreign countries no longer value academic certificate issued in Nigeria as they see them as being no more valuable which poses a big setback to Nigerian graduates when they go abroad (Amadi 2018) <sup>[3]</sup>.
- b. *It discredits educational goals* - the actualization of educational goals will remain a mirage unless the epidemic of examination malpractice is removed from the system. The country will end up creating graduates who are unable to harness the country's resources due to a lack of knowledge, ability, competence, values and attitude necessary for survival in a globalized economy (Oluchukwu 2012).
- c. Ikenga, suggested that examination malpractice destroys the well-orchestrated work ethics and moral decadence in society. The production of touts, area boys, political thugs, rogues, drug traffickers, kidnappers, fraudsters, fake drug manufacturers and sellers as mediocrity emanates from examination malpractice.
- d. *Discourages hard work* - Examination malpractice kills the spirit of hard work as most students now depend on malpractice to achieve a higher level of success. This ultimately leads to low productivity as people get job in areas where they know little or nothing about, with their excellent certificates (Amadi 2018) <sup>[3]</sup>.
- e. Wastage of resources especially money, time and energy on the candidates who are caught and punished
- f. It can also result in the loss of lives and property, as well as a threat to society's security.

### 1.4. Research Questions

1. Why do students engage in examination malpractice

- despite knowing the consequences?
2. What are the various methods of examination malpractice that exist among OAU students?
  3. What are the weaknesses and possible amendments to the existing rules and regulations for examination malpractices in OAU?

## 2. Theoretical Framework

This study uses operant conditioning theory and social learning theory which are the relevant theories to explain the study.

Operant conditioning was largely influenced by Thorndike's (1898) law of effect. Operant conditioning - otherwise called instrumental conditioning or the Skinnerian conditioning theory - is a learning approach that uses incentives and punishments to influence behavior. Any occurrence that strengthens or increases the behavior that occurs as a result is referred to as reinforcement (Standdon 2003) <sup>[21]</sup>. Reinforcement and punishment are the core tools through which operant behavior is modified. To explain operant conditioning theory he conducted some experiments using rats which he placed in a *Skinner box* - is a device used to objectively record an animal's behavior within a short period of time and the animal can be either rewarded or punished for engaging in certain behaviors. The 4 elements that describe operant conditioning are positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, punishment, extinction. Positive reinforcements strengthen a behavior through praise giving or reward to influence repetition of such act, whereas negative reinforcements remove adverse effects of a particular behavior as it prevents reoccurrence. To prove positive reinforcement, he placed a hungry rat in his Skinner box which contained a lever on the side, and as the rat moved about the box, it pressed the lever. Immediately it did so, a food pellet would drop into a container next to the lever. The rat quickly learned to always press down the lever because the outcome of receiving food if they pressed the lever ensured that they would repeat the action. Also, to establish negative reinforcement he placed a rat in his Skinner box and subjected it to an unpleasant electric current which caused it discomfort. Whenever the rat moved about the box and knocked the lever, the electric current would be switched off. The rat soon learned to knock the lever after a period. The consequence of escaping the electric current if it knocks the lever ensured that they would repeat the action (Skinner 1971) <sup>[9]</sup>. Punishment is the opposite of reinforcement which is designed to weaken or eliminate a response. Like reinforcement, punishment can work either by directly applying an unpleasant stimulus or by removing a potentially rewarding stimulus. Extinction occurs when a previously reinforced behavior is no longer reinforced with. Using skinner's experiment, if a rat is given a pellet as a reward for pressing a lever and the experimenter no longer gives it pellet as a reward, the rat would typically press the lever often and then stop. Relating this theory to examination malpractice, it can be said that cheating is fundamentally a learnt behavior from friends, parents, perceived role models and even mentors. This theory suggests that if cheaters are reprimanded, on the basis of severity of the crime committed, it is likely that they are able to unlearn it as this serves as deterrence to others who may engage in such behavior. It teaches us that cheating can be unlearned through punishment.

On the other side, social learning theory is built on the concept of observational learning, imitation and modeling. According to Bandura "human behaviors are learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one

forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions, this coded information serves as a guide for action." It is believed that internal mental states are crucial to this process and that just because a behavior was learnt does not necessarily guarantee that it will change the personality involved (Bandura 1977) <sup>[7]</sup>. A process through which learning occurs with the observation of a behavior and the result of the behavior is defined as vicarious reinforcement. That is when a behavior is rewarded regularly it will persist, but if the behavior is continuously punished it will reduce. In establishing this school of thought, Bandura used a doll-character named *Bobo*. In his study, youngsters watched an adult engaged in violent acts with *Bobo*. When the children were later allowed to play with the doll in a separate room, they simply imitate the aggressive behaviors they had witnessed earlier. This suggests that our mental state and drive play major role in the acquisition of any new behavior. Albert proposed four important steps for learning to take place; attention (paying complete attention to the model), retention (the ability to recall/remember knowledge later and act on it), reproduction (putting what has been learnt into practice) and motivation (ability to stay motivated to replicate the behavior that has been modeled). According to three primary models of observant learning were recognized in this context: a live model (a real person acts out a behavior), a symbolic model (actual or fictional character expresses the behavior) and a verbal educational model (which involves listening to a podcast or hearing verbal instructions and watching, reading or hearing actions of characters in books and films). This means that observational learning does not always require you to observe someone else doing something. This theory establishes a strong link between behavior, observation and imitation. It shows how the social environment can encourage cheating or corner cutting. It may therefore be inferred that examination malpractice can be learned from the family, schools, peers, socio-religious gatherings, and communal institutions. Examination malpractice can be learnt through personal relationships with a cheat and a potential cheat. This perhaps is the reason why students often engage in examination malpractice because they are surrounded by organizations or individuals that approve of the activity or engage in such. Unlearning becomes very difficult when a cheat escapes punishment or gets praised rather than reprimanded.

## 3. Research Methodology

This study was carried out in Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU). The university is located in the South-West geographical zone of the country in the ancient city of Ile-Ife, Nigeria. The university was founded in 1961 and classes started in October 1962 as University of Ife by Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola and was renamed Obafemi Awolowo University on 12 May 1987 after the first premier of the Western Region of Nigeria Chief Obafemi Awolowo. It has 13 faculties and 2 colleges – the postgraduate college and the college of health sciences and about 35000 students.

In this study, exploratory research design was used with a study population comprising panel members of the disciplinary committee, lecturers who have been invited to the disciplinary committee and students who have been caught cheating and have been invited to the panel. There were twelve (12) interviewees comprising five (5) members of the disciplinary committee, five (5) lecturers that have been invited to the panel for examination malpractice and two (2) students who have been invited to the panel for cases

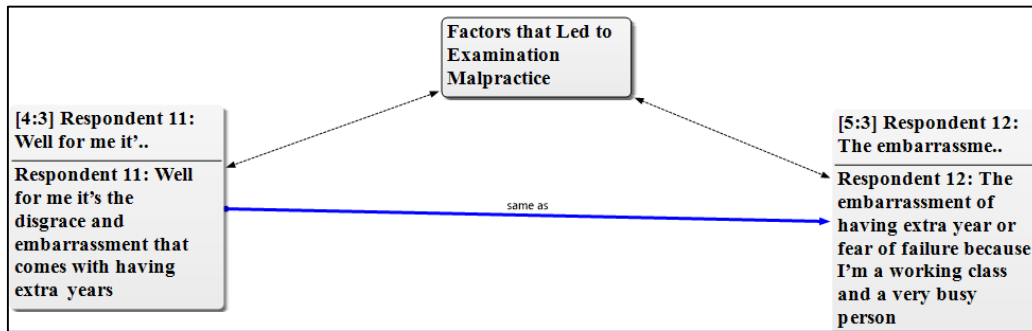
regarding examination malpractice. This was drawn by purposive sampling technique which involves obtaining oral information directly from interviewees who were selected based on their knowledge and experience relating to examination malpractice in OAU. This was complemented with snowball sampling because the research participants gave referral to identifying other potential panel members. Oral interviews were used to collect data and analysis was carried out using Atlas-ti – computer software used for qualitative data analysis. Data was carefully edited before it

was imported into the computer software. The data was then coded and sorted thematically according to the research objectives.

**4. Results**

Results of the study are presented with respect to research questions.

**Research Question 1:** Why do students engage in examination malpractice despite knowing the consequences?

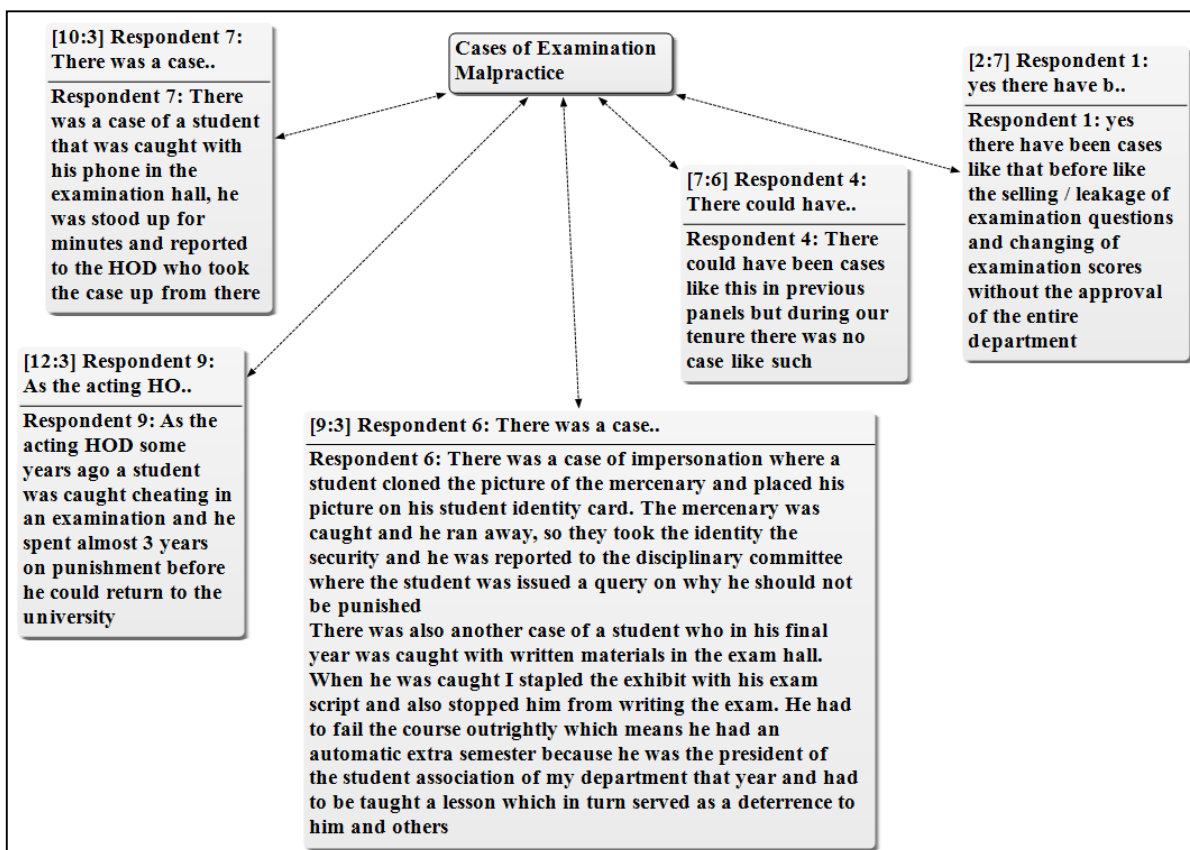


**Fig 1:** A network showing factors that cause students' engagement in examination malpractice

Students who have been caught cheating in examinations and have faced the disciplinary board affirmed that the shame of having extra years or repeating a failed course is the main reason that drives them into various malpractices during examination. This is shown in the responses of the Respondents in Figure 1.

**Research Question 2:** What are the various methods of examination malpractice that exist among OAU students? Lecturers who have been invited to the disciplinary committee submitted that impersonation, use of written

answers, communication with mobile phones, and leakage of examination questions are some of the commonest cases of EM. All these assertions are indicated in Figure 2. Respondents 7 and 10 reported the use of mobile phones to communicate during examinations as a method of EM. Respondents 6, 8 and 10 stated that some students who were caught with prepared answers (microchips) got suspended from the examination, were asked to fill examination irregularity form and reported to the Head of Department who in turn reported the case to disciplinary panel.



**Fig 2:** A network explaining methods of EM found amongst students.

In another report, a student who impersonated another student with a cloned university identity card was caught. The lecturer, the Head of the Students' Department and the security unit were alerted immediately. Impersonation is another level of crime through which EM gets perpetrated. It may even involve the police or end with the student getting rusticated. There are many other cases of malpractice amongst students ranging from written booklets or tearing the middle or back page of the booklet. Cases of communication by whispering, signaling or giraffe-ing are other common forms of cheating which students engage in.

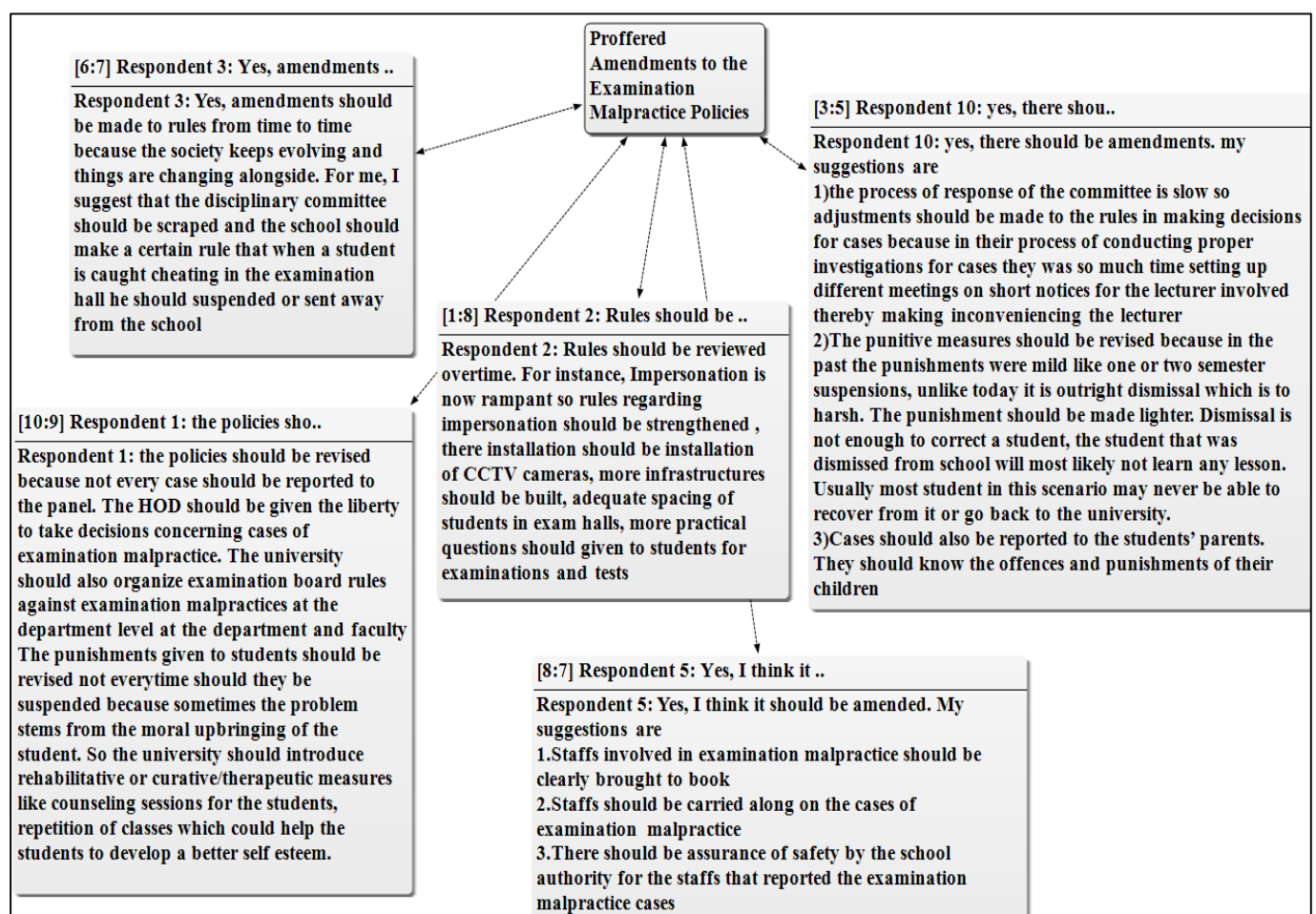
In another interview, it was opined that leakage of examination questions as one of the methods of examination malpractice – Respondent 1.

**Research Question 3:** What are the weaknesses and possible amendments to the existing rules and regulations for examination malpractices in OAU?

The weaknesses of the university's examination malpractice

policies can be seen in Figure 3. It was popularly opined that not all cases of examination malpractice should get to the Vice-Chancellor. According to respondent 1, 2 and 7, "rules regarding the use of programmable calculators should be reviewed. Students largely use calculators and problem-solving electronic gadgets to cheat in examinations; however, uncomplicated devices should be standardized for university education - maybe - in the sciences/engineering and social sciences".

Lecturers complained about invitation to meetings at short notices in a manner that interferes with several other contending assignments that are difficult to combine. This often wears out the lecturer's interest to get involved in such cumbersome and disturbing engagements. It is important that notices for meetings should be long enough and simplified in a manner that does not tend to belabor the lecturer concerned or water down interest in such cases.



**Fig 3:** Networks of the possible amendments that can be made to the EM policies

Opinions on the amendments to the existing policies on examination malpractices in OAU can be seen in (Figure 3).

Respondent 2 advised that practical questions be given to students for tests and examinations, the use of CCTV cameras in large examination halls should be introduced and the school authorities should ensure that they provide more buildings, laboratories, infrastructural facilities to make enough spacing for examinations.

Respondent 5 suggested that staffs caught indulging in examination malpractice should punished, information on examination malpractice cases should be publicized to serve

as deterrence and the university should protect its staffs in situations where their lives are being threatened.

Respondent 7 affirmed that "the university should also organize examination board rules against examination malpractices at the department level at the department and faculty giving the Head of Departments the liberty to take decisions concerning cases of examination malpractice".

Respondent 8 recommended that "there may be need for training and re-training for lecturers so that they will be able to merge whatever new tactics are being employed by students. Also, lecturers should also keep advising the

*students on morals and values so that at the end of the day the university produces complete students not just academically sound students but students that are morally decadent in learning and character”.*

Another amendment that was mentioned is that they should encourage students to familiarize themselves with the content of the students' handbook, especially the portion that has to do with examination malpractice.

Respondents 7 and 10 proffered that the punitive measures should be revised and punishments should be made lighter and parents of students that are involved in examination malpractice should be alerted.

## 5. Discussion of Findings

The findings showed that there are different reasons why students engage in examination malpractice. The reason got from the students interviewed is because of the disgrace that comes with having extra years. From the invited lecturers and committee members the reasons why students engage in examination malpractices are as a result of peer influence, poor upbringing (parental faults), poor conditions under which the examination is conducted, desperation to pass examinations, over ambition, lack of proper understanding of the course and so on.

Concerning the methods of examination malpractices that exist among OAU students were exposed in the study. One of the methods of examination malpractice is impersonation. A lot of students have been employing mercenaries to write examinations on their behalf recently. The mercenaries go ahead to clone the university's identity cards so that they can be allowed to write examinations. Another method of examination malpractice is the usage of phones to cheat in examinations. Snapping of questions with phones and sending to an outsider for answers to the questions. Lastly, the usage of prepared answers is another method of examination malpractice that is used by students to cheat in examinations.

About the weaknesses of the university's examination malpractice policies, findings from the lecturers interviewed opined that no rule is perfect and the university policies have its own flaws. It was popularly opined that not all cases of examination malpractice should get to the Vice-Chancellor. Some opinions posited that rules regarding the use of scientific programmable calculators should be reviewed. Students largely use calculators and problem-solving electronic gadgets to cheat in examinations; however, uncomplicated devices should be standardized for university education - maybe - in the sciences/engineering and social sciences. There were complaints also about invitation to meetings at short notices in a manner that interferes with several other contending assignments seemingly difficult to combine. This often wears out the lecturer's interest to get involved in such cumbersome and disturbing engagements. It is important that notices for such meetings should be long enough and simplified in a manner that does not tend to belabor the lecturer concerned or water down interest in such cases.

The following opinions and amendments to existing policies on examination malpractices in OAU were suggested by panelists and invited lecturers:

1. Examination malpractice committees and disciplinary panels should be decentralized to departmental and faculty levels. The HOD's should be granted liberty to take some decisions regarding examination malpractice

with few exceptions for criminal cases.

2. The university management should strengthen rules against impersonation by cloning the university's ID cards.
3. The use of CCTV cameras in large examination halls may be very needful at this juncture as students evolve new methods every day. The use of digital monitors/indicators to track students in examination halls should be introduced.
4. Examination questions should become more practical-oriented in a manner that will task the students to think rather than memorize.
5. The punishment given to students found culpable in examination malpractice should be reviewed. Other rehabilitative or corrective measures like counseling or therapeutic sessions, repetition of classes and so on should replace suspension and dismissal. This apart from repositioning the student from being cheat-oriented to being hard-work oriented, goes a long way in boosting self-esteem. In criminal cases where dismissal or suspension is unavoidable as a punitive measure, publicity in the media will promote deterrence to other students.
6. The university should organize training and seminars for lecturers to enlighten them on emerging forms in which students engage in examination malpractices before it gets prevalent. Digital technology has brought so many complications to examination malpractices among students and reliance on old or previous knowledge/experience is insufficient to tackle this menace. Awareness should be created by organizing conferences and seminars to educate students, lecturers, parents, and administrators on the consequences of examination malpractice.
7. Parents of students that are complicit in examination malpractices should be made aware. This will curb parental roles in promoting corner-cutting mentality in their wards from the cradle.
8. Rewards should be given to hardworking students to encourage them for their diligence and commitment to their studies, which can in turn motivate other students to read and work harder towards their education.
9. Students should put in more effort and show more readiness and willingness to learn and read without involvement in examination malpractice.
10. The school authorities should ensure that they provide more buildings, laboratories, infrastructural facilities to make enough space for examinations.
11. The government should provide job opportunities so that eligible lecturers can be employed into the institution to reduce acute shortage of staff in various departments in the university. This can in turn help to deal with issues regarding inadequate staff for invigilation and inadequate supervision during examinations.
12. The university should also address the issue of dressing and wearing a type of hairdo to cheat for an examination.

## 6. Conclusions

The assessment of examination malpractice policies in a Nigerian public premier university was carried out. Some of the reasons why students engage in examination malpractice were investigated, the different methods through which students indulge during examination malpractice were identified and the weaknesses and possible amendments to



the existing rules and regulations regarding examination malpractice were pointed out. Several reasons were found to be responsible for why students engage in examination malpractice. These include peer influence, deplorable conditions of infrastructures in Nigerian universities, poor upbringing and desperation to pass examinations among others. In addition, methods that students largely employ for indulging in malpractice during examination include the use of mercenaries, cloning of the university students' identity cards, use of phones, I-watches and other digital devices and exchange of answer scripts/questions. Most respondents' opinions indicate that not all cases of examination malpractice should get to the Vice Chancellors, the use of scientific or programmable calculators should be reviewed and disciplinary panelists should be given long notices for meetings. Some limitations encountered during this investigation include official restrictions of highly placed members who could have provided elaborate information, resistance to divulging too much of sensitive information by some lecturers, the fear of stigmatization and shame on the path of the students, resistance of lecturers to allowing voice recording to avoid being quoted. Given the way this deviance and criminal behavior have become prevalent among various categories of youths, gender issues, family values, cultural differences, specialization/area of discipline, peer pressure and accommodation types may open new perspectives on this subject and should be so captured in future investigations. In addition, extending this survey to various categories of universities (i.e. State owned, faith based and private universities) will give an overall broad-based assessment of examination malpractice policies in Nigerian universities, thereby providing a framework for instructive and definite means of curbing this menace.

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