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Article

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MODERN-DAY TECHNOLOGY AND EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE: IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION OUTPUT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The proliferation of modern technology in the educational systems of Nigeria, and its use for examination malpractice have created a double-edged sword in relation to the integrity of the exams, and consequently on educational output. This paper adopted the conceptual, desk review method is used in this paper, with 12 peer reviewed and institutional sources analyzed from 2022 to 2026 to explore the nexus between modern technologies, examination malpractices and education production in Nigeria. The paper drew on the theories of Technology Acceptance Model and General Deterrence Theory, and reviewed the concepts of education output, modern-day technology and examination malpractice, highlighting the effects of technology on education output, implications of examination malpractice on the credibility of Nigerian certificates and quality of human capital produced, and the proposed technology-based control measures such as AI-assisted proctoring, biometric authentication and reform of policies that can enhance the integrity of examinations. In order to mitigate some of the historical examination malpractices like question leakage, impersonation and collusion, Examination Bodies and Tertiary Institutions are utilizing tools such as computer-based testing (CBT), biometric verification, closed-circuit television (CCTV) surveillance, and artificial-intelligence (AI) analytics. At the same time, the same technological environment, especially the Internet, smartphones, messaging apps and generative AI chatbots like ChatGPT, have provided new and more complex opportunities for cheating that are less easily identifiable through traditional methods of test supervision. The paper concluded that technology neither has a positive nor a negative impact on the output

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of education; it is just that the impact is positive or negative as it has been deliberately regulated, funded and incorporated into the examination administration in Nigeria.

Keywords: Modern-day Technology, Examination Malpractice, Education Output, Nigeria.

Introduction

Exams are still the main tool for the Nigerian education system to certify competence, distribute opportunity, and communicate the quality of its human capital to employers, higher education institutions and the international community. However, the credibility of this certification has been continually compromised by examination malpractice. In contemporary time, examination malpractices seemed to be enhanced by technological tools, in past examination malpractices. Malpractice in Nigeria used to be very simple, ranging from the smuggling of written notes into examination hall to impersonation and alteration of the results. The rise of the Global System for Mobile communication (GSM), and more recently, smartphones, social media, and generative artificial intelligence, has also changed the nature of malpractice, making it more hidden, more networked, and a lot harder for the classic invigilator to detect (Danmole, 2023). It is paradoxical that the same technological trend that has provided new avenues for cheating has also provided new tools to examination bodies to prevent and detect cheating. The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) introduced computer-based testing (CBT) in Nigeria and both the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and the National Examinations Council (NECO) are moving toward full CBT administration, with the Federal Government setting 2026 as the target year for the switch (Zakariya *et al.*, 2026). Other instruments of deterrence and detection include experimental use of biometric verification, closed-circuit television (CCTV) surveillance, secure digital question banks, and artificial-intelligence based analytics in institutions (Galadima & Jae, 2025). Meanwhile, the proliferation of new and emerging technologies like ChatGPT has created a fresh and controversial field of academic dishonesty where the distinction between using technology to help and outright plagiarism is increasingly blurred (Bin-Nashwan *et al.*, 2023; Cotton *et al.*, 2024).

This dual nature of contemporary technology as an enabler of malpractices and a device of control has direct implications for Nigeria's output of education broadly construed as the quality, competence and credibility of the students and graduates of the system. If not detected, certificates lose the ability to indicate competence, thus reducing the confidence of employers, the labour market, and the international credibility of Nigerian qualifications (Ekpenyong & George, 2023). Conversely, with conscious and well-resourced technology implementation, it can help to restore integrity to the assessment process and thus enhance the credibility of the output of the educational process (Alarape, 2024; Sarumi, 2022). The following objectives were set in this paper: (i) to review the concepts of education output, modern-day technology and examination malpractice in the Nigerian context; (ii) to examine the impacts of modern-day technology on education output in Nigeria; (iii) to analyse the implications of examination malpractice on education output; and (iv) to propose technology-based control measures that can help to preserve the integrity of examination and hence education output. It follows a conceptual, desk-review approach with a summary of 12 relevant sources published between 2022 and 2026, it is structured for the ease of the policy makers, examination boards, and administrators of academic institutions interested in getting evidence-based insights on the technology-academic integrity nexus in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is grounded in two theoretical frameworks, which complement each other: the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and General Deterrence Theory. The Technology Acceptance Model offers an understanding of the factors that affect people's attitudes toward technology and their intention to adopt and use technology in a positive way: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. In Nigeria, the use of tools like computer-based testing (CBT) is met with some resistance and support, which can be explained using TAM in that context. The results of a phenomenological investigation by Zakariya *et al.* (2026) on undergraduate perceptions of computer-based testing (CBT) in Nigerian higher education environments, did not only provide direct empirical support for TAM but also indicated that students' perceptions of usefulness and ease of use of the technology were strongly associated with their attitudes towards it, as well as their behavioural intention to use it, and even their CBT-related anxiety itself.

General Deterrence Theory, however, assumes that the undesirable behaviour of examination malpractice is deterred when the potential for discovery and punishment is high, severe and immediate. Technological interventions like biometric verification, CCTV surveillance, and AI-powered audit trails function primarily on the deterrence principle: by making candidates' decisions to cheat riskier, the hope is that they will reconsider their actions before they do so again (Galadima & Jae, 2025). Together, the two theories provide a coherent framework for this paper. TAM provides an understanding of the contexts in which technology-based examination reforms are likely to be accepted and implemented as intended, and the deterrence theory provides an explanation of how the technologies are supposed to reduce malpractice once they are introduced. If either of these conditions applies, if technology is thought to be unusable, or if detection is not believed then the expected benefits for education output are not likely to occur. The integrated framework is used as a guide for analysis of the impact of technology, the implications of the examination malpractices and possible control measures.

Conceptual Review

Education Output

Education output is the measurable and qualitative results of an education system, such as the competence, employability and productivity of its graduates, the credibility of the certificates and credentials it releases and its overall contribution to national human-capital development. Sarumi (2022) investigated the role of information and communication technology (ICT) in the implementation of basic education in Lagos State and reported that ICT is an important instrument for ensuring the quality of the services provided in education and that the output of education is not only the number of enrolled learners or the number of certificates issued, but the quality of what they are learning and how they are being learned. In Nigeria, so often, when the education output is poor, the certification process itself, in this particular instance the examination process, is not a reliable method for sifting competent candidates from those who make it through the cracks by engaging in examination malpractice.

Modern-Day Technology

In the context of this paper, modern-day technology means the spectrum of digital technologies and systems that have transformed the manner in which examinations are delivered, tracked, and in a few instances, perverted. Administering and controlling this are also supported by computer-based testing platforms, biometric verification systems, CCTV

surveillance, secure digital question banks, online proctoring software, and AI-based analytics and audit trails (Galadima & Jae, 2025). On the hazard side, the modern-day era brings with its internet-enabled smart phones, messaging and social media apps, and even generative AI tools like ChatGPT which increases candidates' ability to access unauthorized resources, send messages with hidden messages, or produce written responses that aren't based on the text being tested (Rane *et al.*, 2024). This double inventory of tools makes it clear that "modern" technology can't be regarded as a positive or negative force in the administration of exams, depending on which side of the administration versus circumvention fence it sits on.

Examination Malpractice

Examination malpractice is defined as any dishonest or unauthorized action by any candidate, invigilator or other person involved in the examination process which is designed to give the candidate an unfair advantage in the examination. Reviewing malpractice in Senior secondary school mathematics examination, Ekpenyong and George (2023) categorised the malpractice to include impersonation, access to unauthorised materials and examination by unauthorised communication while on the other hand Danmole (2023) noted that technological advancement itself is a cause of the malpractice, especially with the continuous advancement of technology. It has become easier for candidates to access unauthorised materials or communicate during examinations. In more recent times, the definition of malpractice has evolved to include malpractice via AI: Both Bin-Nashwan *et al.* (2023) and Cotton *et al.* (2024) cite examples of new forms of academic dishonesty related to the use of generative AI tools, such as AI-generated answers that are hard to tell apart from students' own work, which effectively muddy the waters between proper use of technology and ethical violations.

Empirical Review

Apart from the conceptual papers cited above, there are now an increasing number of empirical, data-based studies that have investigated the link between modern-day technology and examination malpractices in Nigeria and in similar West African settings. Based on the thematic classification, the ten studies reviewed are grouped thematically, with the first ten articles centered on technology-based control instruments, the second ten covering the prevalence and perception of malpractice among students and the third ten considering the overall relationship between ICT and quality in education. A survey of 1,200 federal university undergraduates in the South-Western region of Nigeria by Alarape (2024) on technology-based control tools revealed that the computer-based testing (CBT) was highly effective in the control of examination malpractice (87.5%) and highly effective in reviving quality control (73.6%) however the study showed that the persistent challenges and constraints of CBT was inadequate facilitation conditions and network failure. Zakariya *et al.* (2026) engaged in a methodologically different study to investigate the perceptions of Nigerian undergraduates on CBT, using the TAM theory framework, the study revealed that perceived usefulness and ease of use had a significant influence on the attitudes and behavioural intentions of students, and anxiety and perceived ease of use were also significant predictors of students' attitudes toward CBT, which is a direct empirical support for the TAM theory in the context of assessing learners in Nigeria.

It is essential to note that there were differences in the effectiveness of the perception among the students, however, this might be a good deterrent in the fight against examination malpractice. As Aguele *et al.* (2025) found that when they surveyed 456

respondents across study centres of the National Open University of Nigeria, e-registration and biometric authentication were perceived as effective, while the SMS/internet tracking device and CCTV were perceived as comparatively less effective in curbing examination malpractice. Such observation makes it difficult to assume that all ICT tools will be equally effective. In keeping with this, Akeke and Atah (2022) studied the use of CCTVs in the monitoring of business education administration in Nigerian tertiary institutions and found that while CCTVs were appreciated for its ability to facilitate the monitoring during the social distancing measures, the effectiveness of the CCTVs was hampered by poor coverage and maintenance. Adegboye *et al.* (2023) found that in their investigation of biometric verification and examination security in Nigerian Universities, that biometric systems stopped impersonation but needed constant investment in infrastructure and administration to be effective, a pattern that has been established that technology's deterrent effect depends not on its use but on institutional investment.

Oguche *et al.* (2023) surveyed a multi-stage sample of 257 senior secondary students from a population of 2,573 students in the six education zones of Kogi State to find out the prevalence and perception of malpractice among them. Findings revealed that question-paper leakage and "sex-for-marks" arrangements were the most common form of malpractice with students' pursuit of certificate as the most prominent reason. Kumo *et al.* (2023), who surveyed 380 SS students from North-Central Nigeria, using the Impact of Examination Malpractice on Academic Performance instrument and analysed the data by ANOVA and t-test, concluded that examination malpractice was perceived to negatively affect academic performance among male and female students, in both rural and urban locations, as well as public and private schools. Using descriptive and chi-square analysis, Adeosun *et al.* (2023) in there study of 100 students from three secondary schools in Abeokuta North, Ogun State found that all the students studied knew about examination malpractice, half had personally engaged in it, and an overwhelming majority agreed that secured storage of examination materials and more sanctions were effective in controlling examination malpractice. The findings of Dadzie *et al.* (2022) who conducted a comparative study of West Africa, involving 280 teachers and 370 students in Sekondi-Takoradi, Ghana, using multivariate analysis of variance revealing that the strategies adopted before the exams significantly reduced malpractice as compared to the post-exam strategies, which has direct relevance to the sequence of technology-based interventions in Nigeria.

Finally, on the wider issue of ICT and education quality, Sarumi (2022) looked at the relationship between the integration of ICT into basic education implementation in Lagos State and the quality-of-service delivery in education. The study revealed that integration of ICT was significantly correlated with improved quality of service delivery in education, thereby adding empirical evidence for the benefits of ICT in education output beyond examination security. All of these 10 empirical studies converge to the same conclusion: technology-based interventions, such as CBT, biometric authentication, and CCTV, are generally seen by students, teachers, and administrators as effective strategies to deter examination malpractice, but the effectiveness of these technologies depends on the infrastructure, maintenance, and consistent implementation of these technologies, not on their adoption alone. The second pattern is methodological; the reviewed studies are mostly based on perception data (self-reported) collected using structured questionnaires, whereas only a few use malpractice-incidence data objectively gathered by independent sources, and the geographic scope of studies is mostly in the south-western and north-central parts of Nigeria, with comparatively less attention to the northern and south-eastern regions of

Nigeria. Insights into these patterns and gaps lead to the conceptual synthesis that follows in the rest of this paper.

Effect of Modern-Day Technology on Education Output in Nigeria

The effects of modern-day technology on output of education in Nigeria can be understood as a two-way process. There are positive developments, however, which have been identified based on the use of technology for improving the efficiency, security, and fairness of assessment. In a study of undergraduates from federal universities in southwestern Nigeria, Alarape (2024) reported high ratings for the use of computer-based testing to prevent examination malpractice and to rejuvenate the quality control in exams compared to the paper-and-pencil-based testing method, which was rated highly susceptible to examination malpractice. The authors of Zakariya *et al* (2026) also concluded that the usefulness of CBT influenced Nigerian undergraduates' behavioural intention to engage constructively with the technology-based assessment; as such, the use of technology in assessment can improve the integrity and perceived legitimacy of the education output, where it is well implemented. In a more systemic context, Sarumi (2022) reported that the integration of ICT positively and significantly enhanced the quality of basic education services delivery in Lagos State, lending support to the belief that ICT, if well resourced, enhances rather than hinders education output.

There are also avenues for the dilution of education output with the same technological wave, as its negative side. As mobile and Internet-enabled devices have become ubiquitous, it has become far easier for candidates to obtain unauthorised information and/or communicate during exams (Danmole, 2023). However, more recently, generative AI has become a force that is even more disruptive: Bin-Nashwan *et al.* (2023) stated that academic integrity is "hanging in the balance" with the use of tools such as ChatGPT in academic settings, and Cotton *et al.* (2024) reported that universities struggle to detect the use of generative AI in coursework and examination responses. Examining academic integrity in African higher education, Guadu *et al.* (2026) warned that the risks of academic malpractice using AI are disproportionately borne by institutions that are least adequate in their ability to address the issue, particularly in many parts of Nigeria, which have inadequate policies, digital literacy, and institutional oversight. Thus, modern day technology will influence education output in Nigeria in a net way, which depends on the quality of the implementation of the technology and not on the technology itself. Technology enhances education output, when infrastructure, funding, policy, and enforcement are good, as documented by Alarape (2024) and Zakariya *et al.* (2026). Where technology is advancing faster than infrastructure and policy implementation, as Guadu *et al.* (2026) and Danmole (2023) have highlighted are typical scenarios in much of Nigeria and the rest of the African higher-education sector, the same technology is a means of destroying the output of education.

Implications of Examination Malpractice on Education Output in Nigeria

Examination malpractice has wide-ranging consequences on the output of education in Nigeria, which have nothing to do with the malpracticing individual candidate but the entire educational system. The first implication is that the certificate is undermined: if there is no way to detect malpractice, the certificate itself would no longer be an effective indicator of competence. The unchecked malpractice affects the fairness of academic assessment process and gives rise to an imbalance in the playing field between candidates who are genuine and those who are not in the process of assessment (Ekpenyong and George, 2023).

Given such ugly development, examination malpractice reduces the confidence of the public and employers in Nigerian qualifications in general, not just the affected certificates. The second implication is related to the gap between the level of competence awarded and the level of capability in the workforce. In order to mitigate examination malpractices in public secondary schools in Delta State, Ayodele (2023) examined the strategies being used and the findings indicated an increasing concern among the various stakeholders on the current trend of malpractices in examination. The findings pointed to a generation of certificate holders whose documents are not matched with their actual skill and knowledge and the direct implications on productivity, job performance, and national development. This worry is compounded when generative AI is employed to circumvent real reading and learning: As students use this in ways that replace actual critical engagement with the course material, they may emerge from their studies with some minimal exposure to reading and thinking, while in the labour market, they may experience much greater challenges in writing and critical thinking, and with a lack of actual experience in the process.

The third implication is the institutional and reputational one. Ongoing or significant malpractice cases erode the reputation of the institution or exam provider in Nigeria and beyond, making it harder to get foreign recognition for the country's qualifications and confidence in the academic credentialing system in general (Danmole, 2023). Lastly, malpractice creates a "chilling effect" or self-reinforcing systemic cost; each occurrence of malpractice erodes the deterrence of future cohorts, as squandered effort due to malpractice demonstrates the low perceived risk of dishonesty to future candidates, directly predicted by the General Deterrence Theory behind the theoretical framework of this paper. When left unchecked, examination malpractices tends to accumulate over time, slowly undermining the very production of education for which the system was created and intended to certify and protect.

Control Measures of Using Modern-Day Technology for Education Output in Nigeria

Because of the dual nature of the technology of today and the deterrent and detective effect discussed above, it is important that control measures are carefully planned to maximise the deterrent and detective potential of the technology whilst minimising the opportunities it provides for malpractice. Computer-based testing is the oldest of these measures. In addition to the administrative advantage, CBT has been proven to stop malpractices that are common with paper and pencil examinations such as question leakage, script substitution and alteration of results, which has led to its growth and adoption by JAMB in administering exams and the planned introduction of full CBT administration of WAEC and NECO school exams. The second type of measures are biometric and surveillance technology measures. Jae and Galadima (2025) highlighted the use of biometric verification, CCTV surveillance, secure digital question management, online proctoring, AI-based analytics and audit trail in Nigerian tertiary institutions. These measures have bolstered deterrence, enhanced security, made traceability of malpractice incidents easier, and minimized human error in invigilation, albeit with challenges arising in terms of cost, infrastructural gaps, privacy, and uneven technical capacity. In particular, biometric authentication directly tackles one of the most prevalent malpractices mentioned by Ekpenyog and George (2023), which is direct impersonation, to ensure that the candidate sitting for an examination is the candidate who took the time to apply for it.

The third and newer issue is about the rulemaking of AI-powered risks in particular. Cotton *et al.* (2024) suggested redesigning assessments to make them less susceptible to AI-generated answers, while also implementing explicit institutional policies regarding AI

content creation and teachers' use and understanding of it, and Rane *et al.* (2024) highlighted the need to use a combination of strategies as complementary rather than standalone: assessment redesign, training in AI literacy, and tools to detect AI content. However, Guadu *et al.* (2026) warned against purely relying on detection technology and suggests a more holistic strategy that considers clear institutional policy, AI-literacy education for staff and students, and regional cooperation between African higher-education institutions, to establish common standards for acceptable AI use in assessment. Last, the effectiveness of any technology-based control programme relies on the ability to fill up the infrastructural and policy voids that are consistently highlighted in the literature. At the post-examination stage, strategies used to curb malpractice are much less effective compared to those used at the pre-examination stage, as pointed out by Dadzie *et al.* (2022), suggesting that it is necessary to deploy strategies that span the entire examination lifecycle and not focus on the point of testing. In the areas of basic education ICT delivery, basic conditions that enable the above technology measures to work as intended and ultimately safeguard Nigeria's education output remain: reliable electricity supply, broadband connectivity, appropriate funding of ICT infrastructure, and sustained investment in staff and candidate digital literacy (Sarumi, 2022).

Conclusion

The present paper has examined the relationship between modern day technology, examination malpractice and education output in Nigeria using conceptual review that was based on Technology Acceptance Model and General Deterrence Theory. The evidence also shows that technology today is not a black or white phenomenon, and the technological environment which has made exam malpractice possible and even more sophisticated via Internet connected devices and generative Artificial Intelligence, has also provided examination bodies and institutions with effective technologies that can ensure the integrity of the examination, such as computer-based testing, biometric verification, CCTV surveillance, and AI-based analysis. The consequences for the output of education are serious where malpractice is left unchecked: certificates are diminished in value, over time the gap between certified competence and what the workforce is capable of increases, reputational damage to the institutions, and a vicious circle of low deterrence. However, as the literature reviewed indicates, technology-based control measures, when intentionally applied, adequately funded, supported by appropriate policy and investments in digital-literacy, can have a significant impact on the credibility of the Nigerian examination systems and the quality of the output of examination system. It is therefore the clear inference of this paper that the outcome of the modern technology on the output of education in Nigeria cannot be preordained by the technology itself, but rather depends on the deliberate and consistent use of the technology with regard to the regulation, resourcing, and integration of the technology into the framework of the examination administration of education.

Recommendations

- i. Examination bodies at all levels (WAEC, NECO, JAMB, and tertiary institutions) should accelerate and adequately fund the transition to computer-based testing, ensuring reliable electricity and broadband infrastructure at all designated centres before rollout.
- ii. Institutions should adopt biometric verification and CCTV surveillance as standard features of examination administration, with dedicated budget lines for maintenance, given that infrastructural neglect has repeatedly undermined the effectiveness of these tools.

- iii. Regulatory and institutional authorities should develop explicit, clearly communicated policies on the acceptable use of generative AI in coursework and examinations, rather than relying solely on detection technology after the fact.
- iv. Assessment design should be reviewed and, where necessary, restructured to reduce vulnerability to AI-generated responses, including greater use of applied, contextualised, and orally defended assessment components.
- v. Digital-literacy and AI-literacy training should be extended to both staff and candidates, recognising that the effectiveness of any technological control measure depends on users' perceived ease of use and usefulness, consistent with the Technology Acceptance Model.
- vi. Enforcement and sanctioning mechanisms should be strengthened and made visible across the full examination lifecycle, from pre-examination security to post-examination result verification, to sustain the deterrent effect of technology-based controls.
- vii. Nigerian examination bodies and higher-education institutions should pursue regional and continental collaboration on shared standards for AI governance in assessment, building on models emerging elsewhere in African higher education.

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