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Article

Students' Views on the Effectiveness of Invigilation in Preventing Academic Dishonesty

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Abstract

Examination malpractice remains a significant challenge in higher education, undermining academic integrity and the credibility of qualifications. This study aimed to explore students' perceptions of invigilation as a strategy for preventing academic dishonesty, assess the adequacy of current invigilation practices, and examine how different types of invigilation influence cheating behaviors. An exploratory quantitative research design was employed, collecting data from 295 Zambian university students using a structured electronic questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were used to summarize participants' responses. The results revealed that a majority of students perceive invigilation as effective in reducing cheating ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 1.13$) and are generally satisfied with the adequacy of current invigilation practices ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 1.14$). Strict invigilation was identified as the most effective approach to deterring malpractice (58.4%), while students reported moderate variability in adherence to proper examination procedures ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 1.24$). However, perceptions of the effectiveness of specific types of invigilation were lower ($M = 2.54$, $SD = 0.58$), suggesting that while supervision is valued, its implementation and style can influence its deterrent effect. The study concludes that vigilant, well-staffed, and consistently applied invigilation practices are crucial for maintaining examination integrity and minimizing academic dishonesty.

Keywords: examination malpractice; invigilation; student perceptions; higher education; academic dishonesty

Introduction

Examination malpractice in higher education is a growing concern that continues to undermine the integrity of assessment processes, compromises the quality of learning outcomes, and erodes public trust in academic qualifications. This act is increasingly becoming a global threat to education systems, as it is perpetrated by higher education students across all age groups and academic disciplines (Negash & Gasa, 2025; Zhao et al., 2022; Cardina & Kristiani, 2022). This trend has also seen cheating prevailing in assignments, especially for students who fail to use Reference Management Software that helps to track down specific sources and prevent plagiarism (Mvula, 2023). Without proper referencing tools, students may unintentionally or deliberately copy material from online or print sources, undermining academic integrity.

Specific Objectives

1. To examine students' perceptions of the role of invigilation in reducing cheating during examinations.
2. To assess students' views on the adequacy of current invigilation practices in ensuring exam integrity.

3. To explore students' experiences with different types of invigilation and how these influence academic dishonesty.

Literature Review

Students' Perceptions on the Role of Invigilation in Reducing Cheating During Examinations

Over the years, educational systems in both developed and developing countries have been grappling with very serious problems of examination irregularities, including cheating. According to Teigaga (2025), examination integrity is a cornerstone of academic assessment, serving as a fundamental measure of students' knowledge, skills, and overall learning outcomes. It ensures that academic qualifications accurately reflect a student's capabilities and competencies (Asuru, 2012). However, examination irregularities such as cheating, plagiarism, impersonation, and collusion pose significant threats to this integrity, leading to concerns about the credibility and validity of academic credentials (Omiebi, 2016). Such breaches not only compromise the fairness of the examination process but also erode public trust in educational institutions and their graduates.

Okorie (2018) and Amadi and Opuiyo (2018), observed that most examination irregularities occur while the examination is in progress, in the form of students bringing in unauthorised materials, writing on currency notes and identity cards, spying on other candidates in examination halls, substitution of answer sheets and impersonation, among others. For example, Clariana et al.'s (2013) study in Spain reported that, more than half 50% of the students had a habit of often cheating, and boys cheat noticeably more frequently than girls. Related findings were also reported in other studies carried out in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Croatia by Dodeen (2012) and Taradi et al. (2010), who revealed that students admitted to having engaged in dishonest academic behaviour, including cheating while taking examinations.

Invigilation, the process which involves the supervision of students during examinations, is widely regarded as a critical mechanism for deterring such dishonest practices and ensuring equity among examinees (Rosalind, 2016). The core purpose of invigilation is to ensure each student sits the examination under equal conditions and to actively deter unauthorized behaviour such as copying, whispering, or using electronic devices to access answers (Awoniyi et al., 2024). Nevertheless, Nkechi and Njoku (2016), argued that while invigilation plays a major role in curbing examination irregularities, its effectiveness depends on an individual invigilator. Kumar and Nair (2020), stressed that invigilators who are vigilant ensures that examination malpractice is far from the examination centre. They also ensure that any attempts at malpractice are promptly identified and addressed. However, if an invigilator is lazy or irresponsible might aid or allow examination malpractice to occur right behind their nose (Williams and Wong, 2009).

Pritchard (2018) and O'Sullivan (2019) in their studies reported that students believed that cheating was less prevalent in examination rooms where invigilators were vigilant, mobile, and actively engaged in monitoring candidates. Similarly, Starovoytova and Arimi (2017), noted that students perceived the likelihood of engaging in dishonest behaviour to decrease when invigilators maintained constant visibility and enforced rules consistently. These findings suggest that the students' fear of being caught is a powerful influence on their conduct. In the same vein, Cluskey et al. (2011) reported that students believed that strict invigilation reduced temptation to cheat, even among those who might otherwise consider dishonest practices. Students in their study expressed that knowing an invigilator was attentive made cheating too risky, thereby encouraging compliance with examination regulations.

However, Newton (2016) contends that students often equate strong invigilation with fairness, arguing that supervision protects honest students from being disadvantaged by dishonest peers. In this regard, invigilators, as personnel responsible for supervising examinations, act as frontline defenders of academic integrity, whose vigilance and familiarity with institutional policies help reduce the incidence of examination irregularities, including cheating. Vincent-Robinson (2016), proposed that invigilators should be given a small allowance to motivate them and ensure that they

are vigilant during the exam period. Therefore, the presence, alertness, and conduct of invigilators play a decisive role in shaping student's behaviour in the examination room.

Students' Views on the Adequacy of Current Invigilation Practices in Ensuring Exam Integrity

The adequacy of invigilation practices plays a crucial role in safeguarding the integrity, credibility, and fairness of examination systems in all levels of education. Oguche et al. (2023), states that examinations serve not only as a measure of individual academic performance but also as a basis for certification, progression, and professional competence. Consequently, the effectiveness of invigilation practices is critical in ensuring that assessment outcomes genuinely reflect students' knowledge and abilities rather than their capacity to exploit weaknesses in supervision (Danbaba and Bako, 2021). McCabe et al. (2006), argued that when invigilation is adequately structured and effectively implemented, it minimizes opportunities for academic malpractice, promotes equity among candidates, and reinforces confidence in the legitimacy of academic credentials. Conversely, inadequate or poorly conducted invigilation undermines the purpose of examinations by creating opportunities for students to engage in cheating, collusion, impersonation, and other forms of academic malpractice (Forkuor et al., 2019; Dadzie and Annan-Brew, 2023).

As observed by Gallant (2017), where invigilators are inattentive, biased, or inadequately prepared, students often perceive examinations as unfair or manipulable, which in turn weakens trust in academic assessment systems. In such cases, the validity of examination results is compromised, and the credibility of academic qualifications is called into question (Bretag et al., 2019). Adequate invigilation, therefore, is not merely a procedural requirement but a core quality assurance mechanism that upholds academic standards, institutional reputation, and public confidence in educational qualifications (Alabi, 2014). A study conducted by Balbuena and Lamela (2015) focusing on the prevalence, motives, and views of academic dishonesty among students in higher education, reported that many students perceived invigilation as ineffective when invigilators appeared distracted, permissive, or indifferent. The study further revealed that students reported that in such situations, cheating was viewed as a normal and low-risk activity. This perception was reinforced in a study by Siamunako and Magasu (2021), where students unanimously acknowledged that examination malpractice was widespread despite the presence of invigilators, largely because supervision was perceived as weak. Blau et al. (2017) further reiterates that some invigilators do not care about possible exam irregularities but are engaged in other activities including reading newspaper, marking reports, watching videos and chatting during examinations.

More interestingly, the findings of another study carried out by Akindele (2018), revealed that students believed cheating was more likely when invigilators showed favouritism, accepted inducements, or failed to sanction offenders. The study further reported that students expressed the belief that invigilation existed only as a formality rather than a meaningful control mechanism. One would therefore argue that, the prevalent of such practices by invigilators when conducting examinations weakens student's confidence in examination systems and reduces trust in institutional commitment to integrity. In the same vein, Curtis and Clare's (2017) study indicated that students reported that some invigilators ignored suspicious behaviour, engaged in private conversations, or allowed students to consult unauthorised materials. The findings also indicated that students perceived invigilation as symbolic rather than effective. Similarly, in his study, Olatunbosun (2009) reported that students viewed invigilation as ineffective when institutional stakeholders indirectly encouraged malpractice through silence or tolerance.

In concordance with the above study, Mulongo et al. (2019) in their study also reported that some students admitted that familiarity between invigilators and candidates reduced the perceived risk of punishment, thereby encouraging malpractice. This suggests that students judge the effectiveness of invigilation not only by its presence, but by the professionalism and impartiality of those enforcing it. Related findings were also reported in another study done by Ndukanio and Silas (2023) on the factors influencing examination malpractices among students, where it was revealed that 52% of the students reported that the teachers gave some students hints that help them answer

exams questions. This is supported by Situma and Wasike's (2020), study which found that the persistence of the challenge of examination malpractice in Kenyan colleges and Universities is as a result of involvement of academic staff and other officials in the unethical practice. The study also reported that poor invigilation including lack of enough invigilators in exam rooms and overcrowding lead to exam cheating.

Moreover, other studies conducted in Kenya and Tanzania revealed that the majority of students reported that some examination strategies, including invigilation, and checking of students before allowing them to enter the examination venues were not effectively implemented, thereby creating opportunities for cheating (Ambani et al., 2019; Rwezaura et al., 2023). Okoe and Adie (2016) and Hassan and Watt (2017) in their studies further indicated that students felt that invigilation methods were ineffective in preventing cheating, often due to limited invigilator mobility and insufficient training in spotting sophisticated malpractice strategies. Therefore, while invigilation remains a critical mechanism for maintaining academic integrity, its effectiveness or adequacy in preventing examination dishonest, including cheating is largely dependent on the competence, training, and active engagement of invigilators.

Methodology

Study Design

This study adopts exploratory research design to explore of students' views on invigilation as a strategy for preventing academic dishonesty. A quantitative approach is used to collect and analyse data from a sample of diverse students.

Participants

The study involved diverse Zambian students (No=295) from various universities and educational institutions within Lusaka. These participants were selected due to their availability and firsthand experience with different forms of invigilation.

Sampling and Data Collection

Sampling Technique: Convenient sampling was employed to collect responses from diverse students who were readily available and willing to participate in the survey. The goal was to ensure diversity in terms of institutions represented.

Sample Size: A total of 295 participants were included in the study.

Data Collection Method: The questionnaire was distributed electronically to the selected participants. Clear instructions for completion were provided along with the questionnaire. Reminder communications were sent to encourage timely participation.

Data Analysis

Data Processing: The collected data, including responses from the questionnaire, were organized and prepared for analysis.

Statistical Analysis: Specialized software, SPSS, was used for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations (SD), were calculated to summarize participants' perspectives regarding views on invigilation in preventing academic dishonest.

Demographic Analysis: Demographic information, such as gender, age, mode and year of study, was analysed to provide context for the study findings.

Results

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the study participants expressed in percentages. With regard to gender distribution, the majority of respondents were female, accounting for 63.3% of the participants, while males constituted 36.7%. In terms of age, the largest proportion

of respondents fell within the 30 years and above category (41.4%). This was followed by participants aged 22–24 years, who represented 32.7%. Those aged 18–20 years accounted for 14.1%, while respondents in the 26–28 age group made up 11.8% of the study population. Regarding the mode of study, more than half of the respondents were enrolled in full-time study programmes (56.9%). Distance learning students constituted 36.7% of the participants. A smaller proportion were engaged in blended learning (5.1%), while part-time students accounted for 1.3%. Concerning the year of study, the majority of respondents were in their third year of study, representing 64.3%. Second-year students accounted for 15.5%, while first-year students made up 14.8%. Fourth-year students constituted 3.4%, seventh-year students 1.4%, and fifth-year students 0.7%. No respondents were recorded in the sixth year of study.

Table 1. Demographic profile of participants.

Demography	Items	Respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	109	36.7
	Female	188	63.3
Age	18 - 20	42	14.1
	22 - 24	94	32.7
	26 - 28	35	11.8
	30 & above	123	41.4
Mode of study	Full-time	169	56.9
	Part-time	4	1.3
	Distance learning	109	36.7
	Blended learning	15	5.1
Year of study	First	44	14.8
	Second	46	15.5
	Third	191	64.3
	Fourth	10	3.4
	Fifth	2	0.7
	Sixth	0	0
	Seventh	4	1.4

Table 2 presents respondents' perceptions of the effectiveness of invigilation in reducing examination cheating. The majority of respondents expressed positive views, with 32.6% strongly agreeing and 40.9% agreeing that invigilation helps reduce cheating during examinations. A moderate proportion of respondents (16.4%) were not sure about its effectiveness. In contrast, relatively few respondents disagreed (4.7%) or strongly disagreed (5.4%).

Table 2. Perceived effectiveness of invigilation in reducing examination cheating.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<i>To what extent do you agree that invigilation helps reduce</i>	32.6%	40.9%	16.4%	4.7%	5.4%

*cheating during
examinations?*

Table 3 indicates that most respondents viewed invigilation as adequate in maintaining examination integrity. Specifically, 40.3% of participants rated invigilation as *adequate*, while a further 23.1% considered it *very adequate*. Together, these responses show that nearly two-thirds of respondents expressed a positive assessment of invigilation practices. However, 20.7% of respondents were *not sure* about the adequacy of invigilation. In contrast, a smaller proportion rated invigilation negatively, with 10.2% indicating it was *inadequate* and 5.8% describing it as *very inadequate*.

Table 3. Adequacy of invigilation in maintaining examination integrity.

Statement	Very Adequate	Adequate	Not Sure	Inadequate	Very Inadequate
<i>How adequate do you feel the current invigilation practices are in maintaining exam integrity?</i>	23.1%	40.3%	20.7%	10.2%	5.8%

Table 4 presents respondents' perceptions regarding the type of invigilation they consider most effective in reducing academic dishonesty. The majority of respondents (58.4%) indicated that strict invigilation is the most effective approach. A notable proportion of respondents (36.8%) favored moderate invigilation, while only a small fraction (4.7%) considered lenient invigilation to be effective. These findings suggest that most students associate stricter monitoring with better control of examination malpractice.

Table 4. Most effective type of invigilation in reducing academic dishonesty.

Statement	Strict	Moderate	Lenient
<i>Which type of invigilation do you think is most effective in reducing academic dishonesty?</i>	58.4%	36.8%	4.7%

Table 5 presents respondents' levels of satisfaction with the adequacy of invigilators during examinations. The findings indicate a generally positive perception among respondents. A substantial proportion reported being very satisfied (32.6%) and satisfied (40.9%) with the number of invigilators present during examinations. A moderate share of respondents (16.4%) indicated that they were not sure about the adequacy of invigilators. In contrast, only a small proportion expressed dissatisfaction, with 4.7% reporting that they were dissatisfied and 5.4% indicating that they were very dissatisfied with the number of invigilators available during examinations.

Table 5. Satisfaction with the Adequacy of Invigilators During Examinations.

Statement	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Not Sure	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
<i>How satisfied are you with the number of invigilators present during examinations?</i>	32.6%	40.9%	16.4%	4.7%	5.4%

Table 6 presents respondents' perceptions of the extent to which invigilators adhere to proper examination procedures in preventing malpractice. Majority of respondents expressed positive views, with 21.5% strongly agreeing and 41.3% agreeing that invigilators follow appropriate procedures during examinations. A notable proportion of respondents (21.5%) indicated uncertainty regarding invigilators' adherence to these procedures. In contrast, a smaller proportion of respondents expressed negative perceptions, with 6.4% disagreeing and 9.4% strongly disagreeing that invigilators consistently follow proper procedures to prevent examination malpractice.

Table 6. Perceived adherence of invigilators to examination procedures in preventing malpractice.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<i>To what extent do you agree that invigilators follow proper procedures to prevent examination malpractice?</i>	21.5%	41.3%	21.5%	6.4%	9.4%

Discussion

Students' Perceptions of the Role of Invigilation in Reducing Cheating

The findings from Table 2 indicate that most students perceive invigilation as a critical mechanism for reducing cheating during examinations. A substantial majority of respondents (73.5%) either strongly agreed or agreed that invigilation helps curb examination malpractice. This perception aligns strongly with the existing literature, which consistently emphasizes invigilation as a frontline strategy for safeguarding examination integrity. As noted by Teigaga (2025) and Asuru (2012), examination integrity is fundamental to the credibility of academic assessment, and effective supervision plays a central role in ensuring that examination outcomes genuinely reflect students' knowledge and competencies.

The deterrent effect of invigilation observed in this study supports earlier findings by Rosalind (2016) and Awoniyi et al. (2024), who argue that the presence of vigilant invigilators creates a controlled examination environment that limits opportunities for dishonest practices such as copying, collusion, or the use of unauthorized materials. Similarly, Pritchard (2018) and O'Sullivan (2019) reported that students perceived cheating to be less prevalent in examination rooms where invigilators were alert, mobile, and actively monitoring candidates. This reinforces the notion that

invigilation functions not only as a control mechanism but also as a psychological deterrent, where the fear of being caught influences students' behaviour, as also highlighted by Starovoytova and Arimi (2017).

However, the finding that 16.4% of respondents were unsure about the effectiveness of invigilation suggests that invigilation alone may not completely eliminate cheating. This uncertainty resonates with the arguments of Nkechi and Njoku (2016) and Kumar and Nair (2020), who contend that the effectiveness of invigilation largely depends on the individual invigilator's vigilance, commitment, and professionalism. Where invigilators are perceived as inattentive or inconsistent, students may believe that cheating can still occur despite their presence. Williams and Wong (2009) further caution that irresponsible or complacent invigilators may unintentionally facilitate malpractice, thereby weakening the deterrent effect of invigilation.

The relatively small proportion of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the effectiveness of invigilation indicates that negative perceptions toward invigilation are minimal. This supports Cluskey et al.'s (2011) findings that students generally associate strict invigilation with reduced temptation to cheat and view it as a mechanism that protects honest students from being disadvantaged. In line with Newton's (2016) assertion, students often equate strong invigilation with fairness, reinforcing trust in the examination process and institutional commitment to academic integrity.

Adequacy of Current Invigilation Practices in Ensuring Examination Integrity

The findings from Tables 3, 5, and 6 reveal that nearly two-thirds of respondents (63.4%) rated current invigilation practices as adequate or very adequate in ensuring examination integrity. This suggests a general level of confidence among students in the invigilation systems currently in place. These findings are consistent with McCabe et al. (2006) and Danbaba and Bako (2021), who argue that adequately structured and well-implemented invigilation minimizes opportunities for malpractice and reinforces confidence in the legitimacy of examination outcomes.

High levels of satisfaction with the number of invigilators (73.5%) further indicate that adequate staffing enhances monitoring effectiveness. This supports Alabi's (2014) assertion that sufficient invigilator presence is a core quality assurance mechanism that upholds academic standards and institutional credibility. Adequate invigilation staffing likely reduces overcrowding and blind spots in examination rooms, which have been identified as risk factors for cheating (Situma & Wasike, 2020).

Despite these positive perceptions, a notable proportion of respondents expressed uncertainty regarding the adequacy of invigilation practices (20.7%), the sufficiency of invigilators (16.4%), and adherence to proper procedures (21.5%). This uncertainty mirrors findings from Balbuena and Lamela (2015) and Siamunako and Magasu (2021), who reported that students often perceive invigilation as ineffective when invigilators appear distracted, permissive, or inconsistent. Such inconsistencies may vary across examination venues, sessions, or modes of study, leading students to question the uniformity and reliability of invigilation practices.

Furthermore, although a minority, the presence of respondents who rated invigilation as inadequate or very inadequate highlights areas requiring improvement. Previous studies have shown that weak invigilation, favouritism, or tolerance of malpractice by invigilators significantly undermines examination integrity (Akindele, 2018; Curtis & Clare, 2017). Blau et al. (2017) similarly observed that invigilators who engage in unrelated activities during examinations reduce the perceived seriousness of supervision, thereby encouraging dishonest behaviour.

The findings also resonate with Mulongo et al. (2019) and Ndukanio and Silas (2023), who reported that familiarity between invigilators and candidates, as well as staff involvement in malpractice, reduces the perceived risk of punishment and promotes cheating. Studies conducted in Kenya and Tanzania (Ambani et al., 2019; Rwezaura et al., 2023) further demonstrate that ineffective implementation of invigilation strategies, including inadequate checks and limited invigilator mobility, creates opportunities for malpractice.

Overall, while the findings of this study indicate that students generally perceive current invigilation practices as adequate and effective, the observed uncertainty and minority negative perceptions suggest that invigilation effectiveness is not guaranteed by presence alone. Consistent with Okoe and Adie (2016) and Hassan and Watt (2017), the adequacy of invigilation in preventing cheating largely depends on the competence, training, impartiality, and active engagement of invigilators. Strengthening these aspects is therefore essential to enhancing student confidence in examination systems and ensuring sustained academic integrity.

Experiences with Different Types of Invigilation and Their Influence on Academic Dishonesty

Table 4 demonstrates that students' experiences and perceptions strongly favor strict invigilation as the most effective approach to reducing academic dishonesty. More than half of the respondents (58.4%) identified strict invigilation as the most effective, while 36.8% preferred moderate invigilation. Very few respondents (4.7%) believed lenient invigilation to be effective. These findings suggest that students associate stricter monitoring with reduced opportunities for cheating and a stronger sense of examination seriousness. Strict invigilation likely signals institutional commitment to academic integrity, thereby discouraging dishonest practices.

However, the notable support for moderate invigilation also suggests that while students value control and supervision, they may prefer a balanced approach that maintains discipline without creating excessive anxiety or discomfort. The minimal support for lenient invigilation reinforces the perception that relaxed supervision may encourage or enable examination malpractice.

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 7 summarize students' perceptions of invigilation as a strategy for preventing academic dishonesty during examinations. Students expressed a positive perception of invigilation as a deterrent to cheating. The statement "*Invigilation helps reduce cheating during examinations*" recorded a high mean score ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 1.13$), indicating that most respondents agreed or strongly agreed that invigilation plays an important role in minimizing examination malpractice.

Table 7. Descriptive statistical summary of how participants' responded to statements.

Statement	Mean	SD
Invigilation helps reduce cheating during examinations	3.90	1.13
Adequacy of current invigilation practices in maintaining exam integrity	3.64	1.14
Perceived effectiveness of type of invigilation in reducing academic dishonesty	2.54	0.58
Satisfaction with the number of invigilators during examinations	3.90	1.13
Invigilators follow proper procedures to prevent exam malpractice	3.59	1.24

Similarly, respondents showed a relatively high level of satisfaction with the number of invigilators present during examinations ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 1.13$). This suggests that students generally perceive the staffing of examination rooms as adequate to support effective monitoring.

With regard to the adequacy of current invigilation practices in maintaining exam integrity, the mean score ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 1.14$) indicates moderate to high agreement. This finding implies that while students largely view current practices as sufficient, there may still be room for improvement.

The statement "*Invigilators follow proper procedures to prevent exam malpractice*" also attracted a moderately positive response ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 1.24$). The relatively higher standard deviation suggests some variability in students' experiences, possibly reflecting inconsistencies in how invigilation procedures are applied across different examination settings.

In contrast, the perceived effectiveness of the type of invigilation used in reducing academic dishonesty recorded a notably lower mean score ($M = 2.54$, $SD = 0.58$). This indicates that students were less convinced that the specific mode or style of invigilation employed was effective in deterring

dishonest behaviors. The low standard deviation further suggests a general consensus among respondents on this issue.

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