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Students' Perceptions of the Implementation of Examination Rules and Regulations in Curbing Examination Malpractice in Public and Private Universities in Uasin-Gishu County, Kenya

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Abstract

Examination malpractice remains a concern in higher education because it can undermine academic integrity, the credibility of academic awards, and the quality of university education. Effective implementation of examination rules and regulations is therefore important for promoting orderly examination administration and reducing opportunities for academic misconduct. This study examined the implementation of examination rules and regulations in public and private universities in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. The study was guided by the need to establish how examination rules and regulations are implemented and to identify challenges affecting their implementation. A mixed-methods research approach was adopted, combining quantitative and qualitative data. The study targeted students, Heads of Department (HODs), and examination officers from selected public and private universities. Data were collected using student questionnaires and interview schedules for HODs and examination officers. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. The study obtained responses from 279 students, 43 HODs, and 38 examination officers. Students generally reported favourable

implementation of routine examination procedures. The highest level of agreement was recorded for the requirement that candidates sign an examination attendance register (M = 3.65, SD = 0.501), followed by the requirement that candidates settle at least 10 minutes before the examination (M = 3.54, SD = 0.591) and the prohibition of smoking in examination rooms (M = 3.46, SD = 0.815). However, comparatively lower perceptions were recorded for discontinuation of candidates found engaging in examination malpractice (M = 2.57, SD = 1.077) and the requirement that candidates cannot leave the examination venue and return (M = 2.53, SD = 1.272). Students from private universities reported a higher mean perception score (M = 2.41, SD = 0.628) than those from public universities (M = 2.25, SD = 0.699), with the difference being statistically significant, $t(277) = 2.014$, $p = .045$, although the effect size was small (Cohen's $d = 0.24$). Qualitative findings identified inadequate invigilator staffing, large examination classes, limited screening capacity, inadequate facilities for storing prohibited materials, and challenges in enforcing disciplinary procedures as key implementation challenges. The study concludes that although examination rules and regulations are formally established, their implementation is not equally consistent across all aspects of examination administration. The study recommends strengthening examination supervision, improving control of prohibited materials, streamlining disciplinary procedures, enhancing communication of examination regulations, and providing regular training for examination personnel. Future research should examine institutional and technological factors that influence the effectiveness and consistency of examination-rule implementation across universities in Kenya.

Keywords: Examination Malpractice, Examination Rules, Examination Regulations, Academic Integrity, Uasin Gishu County, Kenya

Introduction

Credible university assessment is essential for ensuring fairness, reliability and validity in academic decisions. Since examination results influence progression, graduation and access to employment and professional opportunities, their credibility depends on students being assessed independently (Houston, 2018). Examination malpractice undermines this process by providing unauthorized advantages, weakening confidence in results and potentially allowing students to obtain qualifications that do not reflect their competencies (Varghese, 2024).

Examination malpractice includes prohibited practices such as copying, collusion, impersonation, possession of unauthorized materials, communication during examinations and use of prohibited electronic devices (Ayonote, 2025; Abdulazeez, Adeeko & Adegun, 2024). It differs from broader academic misconduct, which also includes plagiarism, fabrication, falsification and contract cheating (Varghese, 2024; Odoh, Ogbuanya & Nwokwu, 2025). The distinction is important

because this study focuses specifically on examination rules and regulations. Emerging technologies, including smartphones, online platforms and generative artificial intelligence (AI), have also created new opportunities for unauthorized assistance, highlighting the need for clear and regularly communicated examination requirements (Johnston et al., 2024; Chan, 2024/2025).

However, having examination rules does not guarantee compliance. Implementation entails translating written regulations into practice through communication, awareness, invigilation, monitoring, detection, reporting, investigation and consistent sanctions. Thus, effective examination control depends not only on the existence of regulations but also on their consistent enforcement. Dench and Joyce (2022) found that credible sanctions following detected cheating were more effective in reducing subsequent cheating than information about detection capacity. Similarly, evidence from randomized examinations indicates that timely reminders about academic-integrity rules, cheating and its consequences can reduce malpractice. These findings demonstrate that the effectiveness of examination regulations depends largely on how consistently they are communicated and enforced.

Students are particularly important informants in assessing implementation because they directly experience examination procedures. Their perceptions can reveal whether regulations are clearly communicated, understood, fairly applied and consistently enforced. Campbell and Waddington (2024), for example, found high reported awareness of academic integrity among university students but continuing gaps in guidance and training, with students calling for clearer and more frequent communication. Felski (2025), using responses from almost 4,000 university students, further showed that cheating behaviour was influenced by perceptions of the examination environment and institutional expectations. Harper and Prentice (2024) similarly emphasized the importance of student voices in understanding academic dishonesty. These findings suggest that students should not be viewed only as potential perpetrators but also as important sources of evidence concerning the operation of institutional examination controls.

The global literature also demonstrates that awareness alone does not necessarily result in compliance. Campbell and Waddington (2024) identified information gaps despite high levels of awareness, while Dench and Joyce (2022) found stronger deterrent effects when enforcement was credible. Felski (2025) similarly questioned the assumption that students' knowledge of cheating rules automatically prevents misconduct. At the same time, technological developments are creating new areas of uncertainty, particularly regarding AI and online forms of academic assistance (Johnston et al., 2024; Chan, 2024/2025). The international evidence therefore points to the importance of examining examination regulations as an implementation process involving communication, awareness, monitoring and enforcement, rather than simply as formal institutional policies.

Evidence from Africa reflects similar concerns. Dorsah et al. (2022) found that students at the University of Cape Coast in Ghana perceived examination malpractice as common even though they recognized it as unethical. Chala (2021) similarly reported that Ethiopian university students regarded cheating behaviours as serious while malpractice nevertheless persisted. These findings reveal a gap between students' attitudes and actual compliance. Institutional enforcement also presents challenges. Awoniyi et al. (2024) documented difficulties experienced by examination personnel when enforcing regulations, while Hammond et al. (2026) found that students identified unauthorized materials, mobile phones and collusion as common forms of malpractice and that 55.7% perceived examination-malpractice policies as being applied unfairly. Chala and Agago (2022) further identified collusion, examination leakage and mobile-phone use alongside weaknesses in examination preparation and invigilation. Akello (2022), in Uganda, also found substantial student participation in examination malpractice.

The is further reinforced by Mireku et al. (2024), whose systematic review of 96 studies on examination malpractice in sub-Saharan African higher education found that research has concentrated largely on the causes, forms and consequences of malpractice. The review also showed that evidence is geographically uneven. Consequently, although African studies establish that examination malpractice remains persistent despite formal controls, relatively less attention has been given to students' perceptions of how examination regulations are communicated, implemented, monitored and enforced.

In Kenya, examination malpractice has similarly remained an academic-integrity concern despite institutional examination regulations. Akaranga and Ongong (2013) identified collusion, impersonation and unauthorized materials in Kenyan universities and showed that examination irregularities could involve both students and examination personnel. Kamau (2015) emphasized student sensitization, surveillance and technological mechanisms as measures for strengthening academic integrity, while Ndege (2012) highlighted the importance of punishment in maintaining examination integrity. Although these studies provide useful foundations, their relatively early publication dates limit their ability to explain contemporary university examinations affected by smartphones, online communication and AI.

Recent Kenyan evidence confirms the continuing nature of the problem. Adem et al. (2024) reported substantial examination malpractice among students in four Kenyan public universities and identified several student, course, school and home-related factors associated with the practice. Adan et al. (2024) identified weaknesses in examination-setting practices and recommended improved training of academic staff, while Adan (2024) reported weaknesses in examination-management practices involving setting, distribution, invigilation, marking and grading. Muriuki et al. (2026), examining selected public and private universities,

further found that examination security, seating arrangements and the examination environment influenced opportunities for malpractice. These studies demonstrate the importance of institutional controls but primarily focus on the prevalence, determinants, setting, management or environmental conditions of malpractice rather than on students' perceptions of the implementation of examination rules and regulations.

The public–private distinction is particularly relevant because implementation may be influenced by institutional size, student population, staffing, resources, governance structures, monitoring capacity and institutional culture. Public and private universities may therefore differ in how examination regulations are communicated, supervised and enforced. However, such differences should not be assumed. Although Muriuki et al. (2026) included both public and private universities, limited evidence establishes whether students in the two sectors perceive examination-rule implementation differently across dimensions such as awareness, communication, invigilation, monitoring and enforcement. Similarly, claims that malpractice is lower in private universities require contemporary comparative evidence rather than reliance on older assumptions.

Uasin Gishu County provides an important context for addressing this question because it hosts universities operating under different ownership and governance arrangements, creating an opportunity to compare students' experiences across public and private institutions. Evidence generated at national or institutional levels may conceal differences arising from local institutional structures, student populations and examination-management practices. Examining the county therefore provides context-specific evidence on how examination regulations are experienced and implemented within different university settings.

The literature consequently reveals an implementation and comparative gap. Previous Kenyan studies have predominantly examined the prevalence, causes, forms and determinants of examination malpractice or particular aspects of examination management. Limited attention has been given to students' perceptions of the actual implementation and enforcement of examination rules, particularly whether regulations are clearly communicated, understood, consistently monitored, fairly enforced and supported by credible sanctions. Evidence comparing these perceptions between public and private universities is also limited. Importantly, the present study does not assume that the existence of examination rules automatically reduces malpractice. Rather, curbing examination malpractice is understood in terms of the perceived capacity of implemented regulations to prevent, deter, detect and facilitate reporting of prohibited examination practices and promote compliance through consistent enforcement. Therefore, this study examined students' perceptions of the implementation of examination rules and regulations in public and private universities in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya.

Theoretical Framework

Information Processing Theory (IPT) provides the primary theoretical basis for explaining students' perceptions of the implementation of examination rules and regulations. The theory views individuals as active processors of information who receive, attend to, interpret, encode, store and retrieve information. Miller (1956) provided a foundational contribution by demonstrating limitations in human information-processing capacity, while Gray (2010) emphasized cognitive processes involved in interpreting information, and Schacter et al. (2011) explained the interconnected roles of perception, memory and cognition. Applied to this study, the process begins with examination rules and regulations, communication and exposure, attention and interpretation, retention and recall perception of implementation. Thus, students may perceive implementation differently depending on how clearly rules are communicated and how they interpret their application. These cognitive processes are used as a theoretical explanation and are not treated as variables directly measured in the study.

IPT alone does not adequately explain why students comply with or violate examination rules. Deterrence Theory therefore complements IPT by explaining how perceived certainty of detection and consequences of violations may influence compliance. In an examination context, students are more likely to comply when they perceive that malpractice will be detected and that violations will result in credible and consistently applied sanctions. Dench and Joyce (2022) demonstrated that information about detection alone had limited influence on cheating, whereas credible enforcement substantially reduced subsequent cheating. Similarly, Janinovic et al. (2024) found that institutional academic-integrity policies can have stronger deterrent effects when students understand the policies and perceive their enforcement as credible. The theory therefore links implementation dimensions such as monitoring, detection, reporting and sanctions with the potential prevention and deterrence of examination malpractice.

The two theories are complementary in explaining the study phenomenon. IPT explains how students receive and interpret information about examination regulations and consequently form perceptions of their implementation, while Deterrence Theory explains how perceptions of monitoring, detection and sanctions may influence compliance with those regulations. This framework does not assume that the existence of regulations automatically reduces malpractice, nor does it claim to measure students' cognitive processing or actual deterrence mechanisms. Instead, it provides a theoretical basis for examining students' perceptions of how examination regulations are communicated, understood, monitored and enforced in public and private universities.

Methodology

Research Approach and Design

The study adopted a quantitative research approach using a cross-sectional survey design, supplemented by qualitative data obtained through key-informant interviews. The quantitative survey was the principal method of data collection and was used to measure students' perceptions of the implementation of examination rules and regulations. A cross-sectional design was appropriate because data were collected at a single point in time, enabling the study to establish students' perceptions of how examination rules were communicated, monitored and enforced during the period of the study. The design also allowed comparison of perceptions between students in public and private universities within the study area.

The qualitative component was supplementary rather than a separate mixed-methods design. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Examination Officers and Heads of Departments (HODs) to provide institutional perspectives on the implementation of examination rules and regulations and to contextualise the students' survey findings. The study was therefore a quantitative cross-sectional survey supplemented by key-informant interviews.

Study Area

The study was conducted in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya, and focused on selected public and private universities within the county. Uasin Gishu County was considered appropriate because it has universities operating under both public and private institutional arrangements, thereby providing an opportunity to compare students' perceptions of examination-rule implementation across the two categories. The geographical concentration of the institutions also made it possible to administer questionnaires and conduct interviews within a manageable study area.

Target and Accessible Population

The target population comprised students undertaking university education in the selected public and private universities in Uasin Gishu County, together with university personnel responsible for examination administration and academic management, particularly Examination Officers and Heads of Departments. Students constituted the principal study population because they directly experience examination rules, communication, invigilation, monitoring and enforcement.

The accessible student population in the four selected universities was 3,020 students, comprising 120 students in University A, 800 in University B, 900 in University C and 1,200 in University D. The accessible population of key informants comprised Examination Officers and HODs who had responsibilities related to examination administration and implementation in the selected universities.

The study selected four universities, comprising two public and two private universities. A sample of 379 students was obtained from the accessible student

population. In addition, 40 Examination Officers and 45 HODs were purposively selected as key informants, giving a planned total sample of 464 participants.

Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

The student sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sampling table. For an accessible student population of 3,020, a sample of 379 students was adopted. The sample was proportionately allocated across the four selected universities to ensure that institutions with larger student populations contributed proportionately more respondents. The allocation was determined using the formula:

ni=NiN×nn_i=\frac{N_i}{N}\times n

where nin_i is the sample size for institution ii, NiN_i is the student population of institution ii, NN is the total accessible student population and nn is the total student sample of 379.

The resulting allocation was 15 students from University A, 101 from University B, 113 from University C and 150 from University D, giving a total of 379 students.

The universities were first stratified according to institutional ownership into public and private categories. Two public and two private universities were included in the study. Within the selected institutions, proportionate sampling was used to determine the number of students selected from each university, followed by simple random sampling to select individual student participants. This procedure ensured representation from both public and private universities and reflected differences in student population sizes.

First-year and fourth-year Education students were selected because they represented different levels of exposure to university examination procedures. First-year students had relatively recent experience of entering the university examination system, whereas fourth-year students had experienced university examinations and related procedures for a longer period. Including the two groups enabled the study to obtain perceptions from students with different levels of exposure to examination rules and procedures. Education students were considered relevant because they are future professionals expected to uphold academic integrity and ethical conduct.

Examination Officers and HODs were selected through purposive sampling because they possess direct knowledge and responsibilities relating to examination administration, communication of rules, invigilation, monitoring, reporting and enforcement. The planned sample comprised 379 students, 40 Examination Officers and 45 HODs, giving a total of 464 participants.

Table 1: Sample Distribution by University

University	Type	Target Student Population	Students Sampled	Examination Officers	HODs	Total Sample
PRA	Public	120	15	4	3	22
PRB	Public	800	101	8	10	119
PUC	Private	900	113	10	12	135
PUD	Private	1,200	150	18	20	188
Total		**3,020**	**379**	**40**	**45**	**464**

Data Collection Instruments

The study used a structured student questionnaire and a semi-structured key-informant interview guide. The questionnaire generated the quantitative data, while the interviews generated supplementary qualitative information relevant to the implementation of examination rules and regulations.

Student Questionnaire

Students' perceptions were measured using the Students' Perceptions Questionnaire (SPQ). The questionnaire consisted of three sections. Section I collected demographic information, including sex, university category, course and year of study. Section II measured students' perceptions of the implementation of examination rules and regulations. Section III obtained students' suggestions for improving implementation.

Key-Informant Interview Guide

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 40 Examination Officers and 45 HODs selected purposively from the four participating universities. The interview guide contained questions on communication of examination rules, implementation and enforcement practices, monitoring, reporting of violations, application of sanctions, challenges affecting implementation and measures for improvement.

The interviews were conducted using open-ended questions to allow participants to provide detailed explanations of institutional practices. With participants' consent, interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. Where recording was not permitted, detailed notes were taken during the interviews and expanded immediately afterwards. The interview data were analysed thematically and used to complement the quantitative findings.

Validity of the Instruments

Validity refers to the extent to which a research instrument measures the construct it is intended to measure. Face and content validity were established through expert review. Three researchers with expertise in education and research

methodology reviewed the questionnaire and interview guide. They assessed the clarity, relevance, wording and coverage of the items in relation to the research question and the operational definition of examination-rule implementation.

The experts specifically examined whether the questionnaire items measured perceived implementation rather than general attitudes or expectations concerning examination rules. Items that were ambiguous, repetitive or focused on what institutions should do rather than what they actually do were revised or removed. The recommendations from the experts were incorporated before the pilot study.

Construct validity was supported by organising the perception items around conceptually relevant dimensions of implementation, namely communication and awareness, enforcement, monitoring, reporting and sanctions, and perceived effectiveness. Factor analysis was not conducted and therefore the study does not claim statistical factor-analytic validation.

Pilot Study and Reliability

A pilot study was conducted before the main data collection to assess the clarity, comprehensibility and consistency of the questionnaire. The pilot involved 22 students from Kisii University, which was not included among the four universities selected for the main study. The pilot participants were excluded from the final study sample.

The pilot exercise was used to identify ambiguous, repetitive or difficult-to-understand items and to assess the suitability of the response options. Following the pilot, necessary modifications were made to the wording and sequencing of questionnaire items before the final instrument was administered.

Internal consistency reliability of the 22-item Students' Perceptions Questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha in SPSS. The scale produced a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.749, indicating acceptable internal consistency. The revised questionnaire was subsequently administered to the main sample.

Response Rate

The study planned to involve 464 participants, comprising 379 students, 40 Examination Officers and 45 HODs. A total of 360 participants provided usable responses, representing an overall response rate of 77.6%. Of the 379 sampled students, 279 responded, representing a response rate of 73.6%. Thirty-eight of the 40 Examination Officers participated, representing 95.0%, while 43 of the 45 HODs participated, representing 95.6%.

Table 2: Response Rate

Category	Sampled	Responded	Response Rate (%)
Students	379	279	73.6

Category	Sampled	Responded	Response Rate (%)
Examination Officers	40	38	95.0
HODs	45	43	95.6
Total	**464**	**360**	**77.6**

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were sorted, edited, coded, entered into SPSS version 26, cleaned and analysed. Descriptive statistics comprising frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations were used to summarise students' demographic characteristics, individual perception items and composite perception scores.

An independent-samples t-test was used to compare the mean perception scores of students in public and private universities. The test was appropriate because the study sought to determine whether the two independent institutional categories differed in their students' perceptions of examination-rule implementation. The analysis was conducted at the 5% significance level. The results should report the mean scores for the two groups, t-value, degrees of freedom, p-value and, where applicable, Cohen's d as an estimate of effect size.

Frequencies and percentages were also used to summarise responses to individual questionnaire items. This allowed the study to identify specific aspects of implementation that students perceived as strong or weak.

Qualitative interview data were analysed using thematic analysis. The transcripts and interview notes were read repeatedly, coded and grouped into themes relating to communication of examination rules, enforcement, monitoring, reporting, sanctions, implementation challenges and improvement measures. Relevant quotations from Examination Officers and HODs were used to illustrate the themes while maintaining participant confidentiality.

Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, the nature of their participation and their right to decline participation. Confidentiality was maintained by avoiding the collection of unnecessary identifying information and presenting quantitative findings in aggregate form. Interview participants were identified by institutional role rather than by name. The information collected was used exclusively for academic purposes and was handled securely throughout the research process.

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Results

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents were examined to establish the composition of the study participants and provide context for interpreting the findings on the implementation of examination rules and regulations. The study involved 279 students, 43 Heads of Department (HODs), and 38 examination officers. The characteristics considered included gender, university category, year of study, department, and duration of service in the relevant administrative position. The findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Respondent group	Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Students (N = 279)	Gender	Male	141	50.5
		Female	136	48.7
		No response	2	0.7
		Total	**279**	**100.0**
	Year of study	First year	140	50.2
		Fourth year	139	49.8
		Total	**279**	**100.0**
	University category	Private	148	53.0
		Public	131	47.0
		Total	**279**	**100.0**
HODs (N = 43)	Gender	Male	25	58.1
		Female	18	41.9
		Total	**43**	**100.0**
	University category	Public	25	58.1
		Private	18	41.9
		Total	**43**	**100.0**
	Department	Information Technology	2	4.7
		Special Needs Education	3	7.0
		Educational Psychology	11	25.6
		Education Management	4	9.3

		Physical Education	2	4.7
		Curriculum and Instruction	16	37.2
		Languages and Literature	5	11.6
		Total	**43**	**100.0**
	Years as HOD	1–2 years	27	62.8
		Over 3 years	16	37.2
		Total	**43**	**100.0**
Examination officers (N = 38)	Gender	Male	22	57.9
		Female	16	42.1
		Total	**38**	**100.0**
	University category	Public	25	65.8
		Private	13	34.2
		Total	**38**	**100.0**
	Years as examination officer	1–2 years	24	63.2
		Over 3 years	14	36.8
		Total	**38**	**100.0**

Source: Research Data (2026).

As shown in Table 3, the student respondents were relatively balanced by gender, with males accounting for 50.5% and females 48.7% of the sample. The students were also almost equally distributed between first year (50.2%) and fourth year (49.8%). In terms of university category, students from private universities constituted 53.0% of the sample, compared with 47.0% from public universities.

Among the HODs, males constituted 58.1% and females 41.9%. Public universities accounted for 58.1% of HOD respondents, while private universities accounted for 41.9%. Curriculum and Instruction had the largest departmental representation (37.2%), followed by Educational Psychology (25.6%) and Languages and Literature (11.6%). The remaining departments each accounted for less than 10% of the HOD respondents. Regarding administrative experience, 62.8% of the HODs had served in the position for 1–2 years, while 37.2% had served for more than three years.

The examination officers were similarly distributed by gender, with males accounting for 57.9% and females 42.1%. Public universities contributed 65.8% of the examination officers, compared with 34.2% from private universities. Regarding

experience, 63.2% had served as examination officers for 1–2 years, while 36.8% had more than three years of experience. The composition of the sample therefore incorporated perspectives from students and university personnel involved in the administration and implementation of examination procedures.

Students' Perceptions of the Implementation of Examination Rules and Regulations

Students' perceptions of the implementation of examination rules and regulations were assessed using 21 statements measured on a four-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD). The scale did not include a neutral response category. Higher mean scores therefore indicated stronger agreement with the stated examination rule or regulation. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Students' Perceptions of the Implementation of Examination Rules and Regulations (N = 279)

Examination rule/regulation	SA n (%)	A n (%)	D n (%)	SD n (%)	Mean	SD
Candidates without examination cards are not allowed to sit the examination	71 (25.4)	90 (32.3)	75 (26.9)	43 (15.4)	2.68	1.020
Examination registration cards should be conspicuously displayed	81 (29.0)	142 (50.9)	54 (19.4)	2 (0.7)	3.08	0.712
Books, bags or similar materials should not be carried into the examination room	121 (43.4)	140 (50.2)	8 (2.9)	10 (3.6)	3.33	0.705
Mathematical tables/calculators should not be brought unless provided for the examination	100 (35.8)	107 (38.4)	36 (12.9)	36 (12.9)	2.97	1.003
Candidates should display student identification on examination desks	99 (35.5)	130 (46.6)	42 (15.1)	8 (2.9)	3.15	0.775
Smoking is forbidden in the examination room	166 (59.5)	94 (33.7)	0 (0.0)	19 (6.8)	3.46	0.815
Candidates should stop writing and assemble scripts when instructed by the invigilator	126 (45.2)	99 (35.5)	43 (15.4)	11 (3.9)	3.22	0.847
Candidates may not communicate without permission from the invigilator	122 (43.7)	112 (40.1)	21 (7.5)	24 (8.6)	3.19	0.907

Candidates may not remove answer books from the examination room	140 (50.2)	121 (43.4)	18 (6.5)	0 (0.0)	3.44	0.614
Candidates may not reproduce another candidate's work without acknowledgement with intent to deceive	143 (51.3)	102 (36.6)	24 (8.6)	10 (3.6)	3.35	0.786
Invigilators should inform candidates before each examination about the seriousness of examination irregularities	109 (39.1)	148 (53.0)	0 (0.0)	22 (7.9)	3.23	0.809
Reading or permitting another candidate to copy/use one's paper is not allowed	124 (44.4)	112 (40.1)	33 (11.8)	10 (3.6)	3.25	0.802
Obtaining, attempting to obtain or giving assistance is prohibited	128 (45.9)	109 (39.1)	11 (3.9)	31 (11.1)	3.20	0.952
A candidate found engaging in examination malpractice is discontinued from the examination	75 (26.9)	61 (21.9)	91 (32.6)	52 (18.6)	2.57	1.077
Eligible students must have sat CATs and attended all lectures	86 (30.8)	115 (41.2)	66 (23.7)	12 (4.3)	2.99	0.848
Students carry mobile phones into examination rooms	98 (35.1)	117 (41.9)	25 (9.0)	39 (14.0)	2.98	1.002
Rough paper is not permitted; rough work should be done in the answer booklet	90 (32.3)	120 (43.0)	42 (15.1)	27 (9.7)	2.98	0.929
Each candidate signs an attendance register containing the name, registration number and signature, which is collected by the invigilator	183 (65.6)	93 (33.3)	3 (1.1)	0 (0.0)	3.65	0.501
Candidates should settle at least 10 minutes before the examination begins	166 (59.5)	99 (35.5)	14 (5.0)	0 (0.0)	3.54	0.591
Candidates cannot leave the examination venue and return	78 (28.0)	64 (22.9)	51 (18.3)	86 (30.8)	2.53	1.272

Food and drinks are not allowed in the examination room	100 (35.8)	87 (31.2)	56 (20.1)	36 (12.9)	2.95	1.103

Note. SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree.

The findings demonstrate that implementation of examination rules and regulations varied across the different aspects of examination administration. The strongest perception was recorded for the requirement that candidates sign an examination attendance register containing their name, registration number and signature, which is collected by the invigilator (M = 3.65, SD = 0.501). This was followed by the requirement that candidates settle at least 10 minutes before the examination (M = 3.54, SD = 0.591). The relatively high ratings suggest that candidate identification, attendance verification and examination-room organization are among the more consistently implemented procedures. This is consistent with the emphasis placed on supervision and invigilation as mechanisms for maintaining examination security in Kenya (Kenya National Examinations Council [KNEC], 2024). It also agrees with Adan et al. (2024), who identified examination management practices as important components of academic integrity in Kenyan tertiary institutions.

Strong implementation was also reported for rules concerning smoking (M = 3.46, SD = 0.815), removal of answer books (M = 3.44, SD = 0.614), reproduction of another candidate's work with intent to deceive (M = 3.35, SD = 0.786), and carrying books or bags into examination rooms (M = 3.33, SD = 0.705). These findings suggest that students generally recognized the implementation of rules that are visible and can be directly monitored within the examination room. Such controls are important because examination malpractice includes actions that contravene established examination rules and procedures (Kenya National Examinations Council [KNEC], 2015/2022). The findings are also consistent with Mireku et al. (2024), who identified examination ethics and educational values among the strategies used to address examination malpractice in sub-Saharan African higher education.

Similarly, relatively high agreement was recorded for informing candidates about the seriousness of examination irregularities (M = 3.23, SD = 0.809), stopping writing when instructed by the invigilator (M = 3.22, SD = 0.847), prohibiting unauthorized communication (M = 3.19, SD = 0.907), and prohibiting candidates from reading or allowing others to use their examination papers (M = 3.25, SD = 0.802). These results indicate that preventive communication and direct invigilation were perceived as relatively well implemented. This is important because examination malpractice prevention requires not only formal rules but also continuous reinforcement of expected examination behaviour. Mireku et al. (2024), based on a systematic review of 96 studies in sub-Saharan Africa, similarly identified

examination ethics and promotion of educational values as important preventive approaches.

However, implementation appeared weaker for rules requiring stronger enforcement and disciplinary action. The requirement that a candidate found engaging in examination malpractice should be discontinued from the examination recorded a mean of 2.57 (SD = 1.077), with 48.8% agreeing or strongly agreeing and 51.2% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. This finding suggests that students were less convinced that sanctions were consistently applied when malpractice was detected. The result is particularly important because formal regulations have limited preventive value if students do not perceive enforcement as predictable and credible. Mireku et al. (2024) similarly observed that examination malpractice continues in sub-Saharan African higher education despite the existence of preventive measures, pointing to continuing weaknesses in the implementation of examination-security strategies.

The lowest mean was recorded for the rule that candidates cannot leave the examination venue and return (M = 2.53, SD = 1.272). The relatively high standard deviation indicates substantial differences in students' perceptions of how consistently this rule was applied. The finding may reflect differences in invigilation practices, examination-room arrangements or institutional procedures for handling candidates who need to leave examination rooms. This is significant because examination security depends on consistent supervision and control of candidate movement, particularly where opportunities for unauthorized communication or access to materials may arise. The importance of effective supervision is also reflected in Kenya's national examination-management guidelines, which place explicit emphasis on supervision and invigilation in maintaining credible examinations (KNEC, 2024).

The requirement concerning examination cards also received comparatively low agreement (M = 2.68, SD = 1.020). This suggests that candidate-entry procedures may not have been implemented as consistently as routine attendance procedures. Examination cards are intended to support candidate identification and regulate access to examination rooms; therefore, inconsistent implementation could create weaknesses in examination administration. The finding is relevant to the broader Kenyan examination-control framework, which defines examination irregularities as actions that contravene established examination rules and regulations and provides procedures for handling such irregularities (Kenya National Examinations Council [KNEC], 2015/2022).

Moderate perceptions were also observed for the rules concerning calculators and mathematical tables (M = 2.97, SD = 1.003), mobile phones (M = 2.98, SD = 1.002), rough paper (M = 2.98, SD = 0.929), food and drinks (M = 2.95, SD = 1.103), and eligibility based on completion of continuous assessment tests and attendance of lectures (M = 2.99, SD = 0.848). The relatively moderate ratings

indicate that control of some prohibited materials and examination-entry conditions may require greater consistency. This is important because examination malpractice can take different forms and may be facilitated by weaknesses in examination security. Adem et al. (2024), for example, reported a substantial prevalence of examination malpractice among students in Kenyan public universities and demonstrated that malpractice was associated with several student and institutional factors.

Difference in Students' Perceptions of Examination Rules by University Category

The study further examined whether students' perceptions of the implementation of examination rules and regulations differed according to university category. Students from private universities reported a mean perception score of 2.41 (SD = 0.628), compared with 2.25 (SD = 0.699) among students from public universities. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Difference in Students' Perceptions of Examination Rules by University Category

University category	n	Mean	SD	Mean difference	t	df	p-value	Cohen's d
Private	148	2.41	0.628	0.16	2.014	277	.045	0.24
Public	131	2.25	0.699					

Students from private universities reported a slightly more favourable perception of examination-rule implementation (M = 2.41, SD = 0.628) than students from public universities (M = 2.25, SD = 0.699), representing a mean difference of 0.16 points. Based on the reported group statistics, the difference was statistically significant, $t(277) = 2.014$, $p = .045$. However, the effect size was small (Cohen's $d = 0.24$), indicating that the practical difference between the two university categories was limited.

The relatively more favourable perception among private-university students is consistent with evidence from a 2024 study of assessment quality in Kenyan universities, which found that students in private universities rated enforcement of examination regulations more favourably (91.3%) than those in public universities (83.2%). The same study reported lower perceived cheating in private universities (32.0%) than in public universities (55.1%), suggesting that differences in institutional examination-management practices may contribute to students' perceptions of examination processes.

The finding should nevertheless be interpreted cautiously because the small effect size indicates that university category alone does not explain a substantial proportion of the variation in students' perceptions. This is consistent with Adem et al. (2024), who found that examination malpractice in Kenyan universities was associated with several school, home, course and student factors rather than a

single institutional characteristic. Their study reported a 56.2% prevalence of examination malpractice in the public universities investigated and recommended strengthening institutional support mechanisms for students.

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative findings complemented the quantitative results by providing institutional perspectives on the implementation of examination rules and regulations. Analysis of the interview data generated four main themes: examination supervision and staffing, control of prohibited materials, enforcement of examination regulations, and examination administration.

The first theme was examination supervision and staffing**.** Key informants indicated that effective supervision was challenging when large numbers of students were examined simultaneously. The informants reported that the number of invigilators available during some examination sessions was insufficient to facilitate continuous monitoring of all candidates. One examination officer explained:

"*When the examination rooms are overcrowded, it becomes difficult for the available invigilators to monitor every student throughout the examination*."

Another informant similarly observed that large examination classes increased the workload of invigilators and made close monitoring more difficult. These views provide contextual support for the quantitative findings, which indicated comparatively lower perceptions of some aspects of examination supervision and monitoring.

The second theme concerned the control of prohibited materials, particularly mobile phones. Key informants reported that preventing students from carrying mobile phones into examination rooms remained challenging. This difficulty was attributed to the large number of candidates, limited personnel available for screening, and inadequate facilities for the secure storage of phones. An informant stated:

"*It is difficult to check every student thoroughly when there are many candidates and limited staff, and we also do not have enough secure storage for the phones*."

This evidence provides a possible explanation for the moderate student responses regarding mobile-phone control. However, the qualitative findings indicate a perceived implementation challenge and should not be interpreted as evidence that mobile phones were actually used to facilitate examination malpractice.

The third theme was enforcement of examination rules and disciplinary procedures**.** Key informants indicated that examination regulations were formally established, but their effective implementation depended on consistent monitoring, reporting, investigation, and follow-up of reported irregularities. Some informants noted that disciplinary procedures could involve several administrative stages before a case was concluded. One respondent stated:

"*The rules are available, but enforcement requires proper reporting, investigation and following the disciplinary process*."
This finding is consistent with the relatively lower quantitative perception of the implementation of sanctions against students found engaging in examination malpractice. The qualitative evidence suggests that the formal existence of examination regulations does not necessarily ensure their consistent enforcement in practice, particularly where implementation requires several administrative and disciplinary processes.

The fourth theme involved examination administration and examination-entry requirements. Key informants reported that examination cards and clearance requirements sometimes presented administrative challenges for students. One respondent explained:
"*Some students may have difficulties with examination clearance, which can affect their ability to present the required examination card*."
The informants further indicated that examination administration required institutions to balance compliance with examination-entry requirements and the practical management of large numbers of candidates. This perspective helps contextualise the relatively lower student perception concerning the requirement for candidates to present examination cards before being allowed to sit examinations.
Overall, the qualitative findings indicate that examination rules and regulations were formally established within the institutions, but their implementation presented practical challenges. These challenges were particularly evident in maintaining adequate supervision, controlling prohibited materials, enforcing disciplinary procedures, and managing examination-entry requirements. The qualitative evidence therefore complemented the quantitative results by explaining some of the areas in which students reported comparatively weaker perceptions of implementation. Rather than indicating an absence of examination regulations, the findings point to gaps between the formal existence of rules and their consistent implementation in practice.

Conclusion

The study concludes that examination rules and regulations were formally established and implemented in the universities studied, but the level of implementation varied across different aspects of examination administration. Students reported relatively strong implementation of routine examination procedures, particularly the signing and collection of attendance registers, settling before examinations, prohibition of smoking, and restrictions on removing answer books from examination rooms. These findings indicate that procedures that are clearly defined, routinely monitored, and directly incorporated into examination administration were more consistently implemented.However, comparatively

weaker perceptions were observed regarding the enforcement of sanctions for examination malpractice, examination-entry requirements, control of prohibited materials, and restrictions on movement during examinations. The qualitative findings provided further explanation for these patterns, identifying inadequate invigilator numbers, large examination classes, limited screening capacity, inadequate facilities for storing prohibited materials, and the administrative processes involved in handling examination irregularities as important implementation challenges. Thus, the presence of formal examination regulations did not necessarily translate into uniform enforcement across all examination situations.

The study further established a statistically significant difference in students' perceptions according to university category, with students from private universities reporting slightly higher perceptions of examination-rule implementation than those from public universities. Nevertheless, the small effect size indicates that the practical magnitude of this difference was limited. The finding suggests that institutional category may be associated with implementation experiences, but other organisational and operational factors are also likely to influence how examination rules are implemented.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study makes the following recommendations:

1. Universities should ensure that the number of invigilators assigned to examination rooms is adequate for the number of candidates. Examination timetables and room allocations should be planned to avoid excessive candidate numbers that compromise effective monitoring. Where large examination cohorts are unavoidable, additional invigilators should be deployed to maintain appropriate supervision.
2. Universities should strengthen procedures for preventing mobile phones and other prohibited materials from entering examination rooms. Institutions should provide secure storage facilities for students' personal items and establish clear, consistently communicated procedures for screening candidates before entry into examination rooms.
3. Universities should ensure that examination irregularities are reported, investigated, documented, and resolved within clearly defined institutional procedures. The responsibilities of invigilators, examination officers, HODs, and disciplinary committees should be clearly specified to minimise delays and inconsistencies in handling examination-misconduct cases.
4. Examination rules should be communicated to students before the examination period and reinforced immediately before individual examinations. Orientation sessions, student handbooks, institutional portals, notices, and examination-entry briefings can be used to ensure that students

understand both the requirements and consequences of violating examination regulations.

5. Universities should strengthen examination-clearance and examination-card procedures while ensuring that administrative challenges do not unnecessarily disrupt examination processes. Students should be informed in advance about clearance requirements and provided with mechanisms for resolving administrative issues before examination dates.
6. Examination officers, invigilators, HODs, and other personnel involved in examination administration should receive regular training on examination regulations, detection and reporting of irregularities, candidate management, evidence preservation, and disciplinary procedures. Refresher training should be undertaken periodically to promote consistency in implementation.
7. University management should establish mechanisms for periodically assessing the implementation of examination rules across departments and examination centres. Feedback from students, HODs, examination officers, and invigilators should be incorporated into periodic reviews of examination procedures. Areas demonstrating persistent implementation challenges should be targeted for corrective action.
8. Since students from private and public universities reported statistically different perceptions of examination-rule implementation, universities should review their examination-management practices to identify institutional factors that may contribute to these differences. The focus should be on strengthening effective practices across institutions rather than assuming that university category itself determines implementation effectiveness.

Recommendations for Further Research

Future research should also investigate the institutional factors that influence the effectiveness of examination-rule implementation, including adequacy of invigilator staffing, class size, availability of examination facilities, leadership support, technological systems, institutional culture, and disciplinary mechanisms. Such studies could help determine which factors have the strongest influence on effective implementation.

In addition, future research should examine the potential contribution of technology-based examination management and monitoring systems, including electronic examination registration, biometric identification, digital attendance systems, secure examination-clearance platforms, and other appropriate technologies. Such research could establish whether technology can improve compliance, strengthen monitoring, reduce administrative weaknesses, and enhance the consistent implementation of examination rules and regulations.

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