

The Offside Trap of Deception: A Religious Reflection on Examination Malpractice in Ghana

Samuel Boahen¹ (PhDc) 

¹ All Nations University, Ghana

ABSTRACT

Examination malpractice in Ghana's educational system poses a serious threat to academic integrity, moral values, and national development. Yet, it remains pervasive due to systemic pressures, ethical decline, and institutional complicity. There is a need for a faith-informed and culturally grounded approach to address the deeper moral and spiritual dimensions of this issue. This article, therefore, was written to highlight how this academic practice undermines educational integrity and national development and how it may be addressed. To achieve its purpose, the paper analyzed how students, teachers, parents, and institutions engage in malpractice by framing the issue metaphorically as the “offside trap” in football—a deceptive strategy used to gain an unfair advantage. The research adopts a qualitative, metaphorical approach and draws upon scriptural references from Christianity (Proverbs 12:22; Acts 5:1–11), Islam (Qur'an 2:42; 83:1–3), and Ghanaian traditional values to demonstrate the spiritual and ethical violations inherent in exam malpractice. It argues that such practices are not merely rule-breaking but constitute profound moral failures that erode societal trust and violate religious norms of honesty and integrity. The key findings are that systemic pressures, institutional complicity, and declining moral values contribute to the normalization of malpractice, which in turn produces ill-equipped graduates and damages the credibility of educational credentials. The paper concluded that tackling examination malpractice requires a multi-stakeholder, value-based response, combining moral education, institutional reform, and religious engagement. This article contributes to knowledge by offering a faith-informed, culturally grounded framework to re-establish ethical standards in Ghana's education sector.

Keywords: *Ghana, Offside Trap, Examination Malpractice, Academic Dishonesty, Metaphor*

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Correspondence

Samuel Boahen

boahen.samuel@yahoo.com

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Alexander Henderson et al. have observed that offside is among the most crucial calls a football referee must take during a match.¹ They further submit that attacking players involved in offside decisions are often part of a goal-scoring opportunity, as Fédération Internationale de Football Association's (FIFA) offside law states that a player in an offside position, closer to the goal line than both the ball and the second-to-last defender, cannot actively participate in the play when a teammate plays the ball.² The offside Rule is FIFA law 11. The "offside trap" on the other hand, in soccer is a defensive strategy in which all the defenders move forward together just before an opposing player passes the ball to a forward attacker, causing that attacker to be in an offside position behind the defensive line.³

First introduced in the 1900s, the offside trap was widely adopted by mid-century teams as a core defensive tactic, proving especially effective under a more straightforward interpretation of the offside law, which often penalized any striker caught in an offside position—regardless of their active involvement in play.⁴ While defenders have always accepted the risk of the offside trap being beaten, recent changes to the offside law and evolving offensive tactics have made it even riskier, as attackers in an offside position but not actively involved in play are now less likely to be penalized—unlike in the past, when a simple through ball could easily trigger the offside call.⁵

The offside trap often fails either when one defender mistimes the coordinated movement upfield, keeping attackers onside, or when a savvy attacker, realizing he is about to be caught offside, remains stationary to avoid interfering with play, allowing an onside teammate to pursue the ball instead.⁶ The

offside trap can be effective against opponents who rely heavily on through balls. However, it is far less successful against teams that use quick, short passes, especially those with fast, skilful strikers who are adept at recognizing and outmaneuvering the trap. According to FIFA laws, "a player is in an offside position if: the player is nearer to the opponent's goal line than both the ball and the second to the last opponent."⁷

Deception of offside in football mirrors how some students nurture the misconception that without good preparation they could still pass examinations through foul means such as relying on mobile phones by googling for answers in the examination hall, invigilators solving the questions on the board for them to copy, students asking and copying from colleagues among others; only to be caught and penalized by eternal examiners or examiners during marking. Just as a striker offside position gets his/her goal disallowed, so a student who resorts to examination malpractice for success in examinations, when caught, gets either their entire papers cancelled, some subjects cancelled, or entire results withheld, depending on the severity of collusion.

The research problem is that examination malpractice is increasingly prevalent in Ghana's educational system and is not only a breach of academic integrity but also a moral and spiritual failure that undermines societal trust and development. The importance of the study can be seen from how it reframes examination malpractice as a deeply rooted ethical and religious issue, highlighting its long-term negative consequences for leadership, character formation, and national development, and calls for culturally and spiritually grounded solutions.

The research attempts to answer the following questions: How is examination

¹ Alexander Henderson, Daniel Lai, and Tom Allen, "A modern approach to determine the offside law in international football," *Procedia Engineering*, 72 (2014): 138-143, 138-139.

² Henderson, Lai and Allen, "A modern approach to determine the offside law in international football," 138.

³ <https://coachingamericansoccer.com/tactics-and-teamwork/the-offside-trap/> as assessed on April 5, 2025.

⁴ <https://coachingamericansoccer.com/tactics-and-teamwork/the-offside-trap/> as assessed on April 5, 2025.

⁵ <https://coachingamericansoccer.com/tactics-and-teamwork/the-offside-trap/> as assessed on April 5, 2025.

⁶ <https://coachingamericansoccer.com/tactics-and-teamwork/the-offside-trap/> as assessed on April 5, 2025.

⁷ Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), *FIFA: Football's Development and Global Impact*, (Zurich: FIFA, 2023), 5.

malpractice perceived within the moral and religious frameworks of Christianity, Islam, and traditional Ghanaian values? In what ways does the metaphor of the "offside trap" in football illuminate the deceptive nature of examination malpractice? What are the long-term implications of examination malpractice on societal trust and national development? And what comprehensive strategies, grounded in moral and religious values, can be used to address examination malpractice? It was found out that examination malpractice in Ghana is a serious moral and spiritual crisis, condemned by religious and cultural values, with harmful effects on integrity and national development, requiring a unified, value-driven response from all societal sectors.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, utilizing metaphorical and thematic analysis to explore examination malpractice from a religious and moral perspective. It draws from Christian, Islamic, and traditional Ghanaian ethical teachings to examine the phenomenon as a spiritual and societal crisis. Exposition on Scriptural texts from the Bible and Quran alongside relevant cultural proverbs and teachings, were analyzed to highlight shared moral stances on dishonesty. The "offside trap" metaphor from football serves as an analytical framework to illustrate the deceptive strategies employed in academic dishonesty. Data was sourced from literature, religious texts, and moral doctrines to develop a value-based critique and solution.

3.0 EDUCATION IN AFRICA AND GHANA

Etymologically, the English word "education" is derived from the Latin terms *educare* (or *educere*) and *educatum*, meaning to train, mold, bring up, or draw out from within.⁸ According to Yusif Abubakari, the origins of education in Africa date back to the very beginning of human existence within their societies.⁹ Abubakari further states that Indigenous African education, an informal system based on observation, imitation, oral examination, and apprenticeship, existed before the arrival of missionaries but gradually declined with the rise of Western education, spurred by growing learner numbers and the introduction of written materials.¹⁰

Historically, in traditional Ghanaian societies, children were taught the material and spiritual foundations of social life and, through family and community guidance during their teenage years, were traditionally educated in norms, moral values, and skills, culminating in initiation and puberty rites marking their entry into adulthood.¹¹ Isaac Boaheng supports this and states that, this indigenous educational system instilled essential moral standards and cultural values that guided both individual behavior and communal living.¹²

Derick Folson and Francis Kwadwo Awuah also assert that, the history of education in Ghana dates back to 1592, when Danish, Dutch, and English merchants established schools in their forts—such as Christianborg Castle, Elmina Castle, and Cape Coast Castle—to educate the mulatto children they had with native women.¹³ Boaheng further quotes Kwabena Opuni-Frimpong to have argued that, the colonization of Ghana introduced a Western

⁸ John Kwaku Opoku, Eric Manu and Frimpong Wiafe, "Religion, Education and Development in Ghana: A Historical Perspective," *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, Volume (3) (Issue 12) (2015): 6-12, 9.

⁹ Yusif Abubakari, *Causes and Effects of Examination Malpractice in Public Basic Schools at Afram Plains, Ghana* (Post Graduate Diploma in Education Thesis : University of Education, Winneba, 2023), 1.

¹⁰ Abubakari, *Causes and Effects of Examination Malpractice in Public Basic Schools at Afram Plains, Ghana*, 1.

¹¹ Felix Nii Klor kwei Tetteh and Alex Asante Appiah, "Improving National Values, Professional Practice, and

Ethics," In *Economic, Social and Environmental Sustainability: The Role of Technology and Political Dialogue* (Valletta, Malta & Online: 18–20 May 2023), 767.

¹² Isaac Boaheng, *A Contextual Political Theology for the Ghanaian Society and its Implications for Human Flourishing* (Doctoral Thesis: University of Pretoria, 2023), 196.

¹³ Derick Folson and Francis Kwadwo Awuah, "Combating Examination Malpractices in the Basic Education Certificate Examinations (BECE) in Ghana," *International Journal of Computer Applications*, Volume (100) (Issue 7) (2014): 12-23, 13.

educational system that disregarded indigenous learning methods, rooted in the colonial assumption of Ghanaian ignorance, thereby imposing a pedagogical model as oppressive as colonial rule itself.¹⁴ The primary aim of traditional education was to equip individuals with knowledge and skills not only for personal and communal benefit but also to foster a sense of social responsibility and contribution to societal development.¹⁵ Boaheng adds that young males informally apprenticed with their fathers in hunting and farming by listening, observing, and practicing, while females received hands-on home management training from their mothers, reflecting a predominantly practical traditional education system.¹⁶ However, due to the harsh treatment of manual workers during colonial times, Boaheng has submitted, Ghanaians developed a preference for white-collar jobs and pursued education primarily for certificates and social recognition rather than practical skill acquisition, a mindset that persists today.¹⁷

Despite various reforms, Ghana's education system remains inadequate in equipping learners with practical skills and problem-solving competencies essential for national development.¹⁸ As a result, many graduates face unemployment due to their limited capacity for self-employment and societal problem-solving. This mismatch between educational output and labour market demands reflects a form of social inefficiency, especially in light of the substantial public and private investment in education.

In summary, the indigenous African-Ghanaian educational system, which emphasized a balance between practical and theoretical learning, has mainly been supplanted by a predominantly theory-based missionary model in recent times, contributing to persistent challenges such as graduate unemployment, lack of skilled workers among others.

4.0 EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN THE GLOBAL AND THE AFRICAN/GHANAIAN CONTEXTS

4.1 Origins and Nature of Examination and Examination Malpractice

Liyang Cheng and Andy Curtis have traced the origins of examinations to the Chinese imperial examinations which began as early as the Han dynasty and were used to select candidates for the national bureaucracy.¹⁹ In contributing, Kwang Hyun Ko has posited that the first group of examinees were assessed on their knowledge of music, mathematics, writing, and cultural practices, all rooted in Confucian texts, with the exams gradually adapting as interpretations of these texts changed over time.²⁰ Examinations are considered important because they influence key educational and career decisions, and are seen as legitimate measures of merit, fairly reflecting achievement and justifying the distribution of opportunities based on their results.²¹ Malle Ferancis Mbong asserts that Education serves as a vital tool for objectively evaluating and assessing students' learning outcomes, as well as their ability to demonstrate knowledge, comprehension, and mastery of various concepts and ideas.²² Similarly, Thomas

¹⁴ Opuni-Frimpong as cited in Boaheng, *A Contextual Political Theology for the Ghanaian Society and its Implications for Human Flourishing*, 196.

¹⁵ Boaheng, *A Contextual Political Theology for the Ghanaian Society and its Implications for Human Flourishing*, 197.

¹⁶ Boaheng, *A Contextual Political Theology for the Ghanaian Society and its Implications for Human Flourishing*, 196.

¹⁷ Boaheng, *A Contextual Political Theology for the Ghanaian Society and its Implications for Human Flourishing*, 197.

¹⁸ Boaheng, *A Contextual Political Theology for the Ghanaian Society and its Implications for Human Flourishing*, 198.

¹⁹ Liyang Cheng and Andy Curtis, "The Realities of English Language Assessment and the Chinese Learner in China and Beyond," in *English Language Assessment and the Chinese Learner*, ed. Liyang Cheng and Andy Curtis (New York: Routledge, 2010), 3–12.

²⁰ Kwang Hyun Ko, "A Brief History of Imperial Examination and Its Influences," *Society*, Volume (54) (Issue 3) (2017):1-8, 2.

²¹ Fiddelis Blessings Makaula, *Perceived causes and methods of examination malpractice in the Malawian education system: A case study of secondary schools in South East Education Division (SEED)* (Doctorate Thesis: University of Northern Iowa, 2018), 37

²² Malle Ferancis Mbong, *Examination Malpractices and Graduates, Quality in the University of Yaounde I*. (Master's Thesis: University of Yaoundé I, 2023), 28.

Kellagham has echoed that while written examinations influenced by the Chinese system began appearing in European schools in the 16th century, it was not until about 200 years later that similar public exams were adopted in Europe for university, civil service, and professional selection.²³

In Ghana and Africa at large, the origins of formal examination are tied to the history of the colonial era, when European powers introduced Western-style education systems. In the Gold Coast (now Ghana), the British implemented examinations, modeled after the British system to standardize education and select candidates for civil service and missionary roles. These exams emphasized literacy, arithmetic, and moral instruction, often marginalizing indigenous knowledge systems. Over time, examination systems evolved, with institutions like the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) emerging post-independence in 1974 to administer standardized assessments across Anglophone West Africa.²⁴

Folson and Awuah assert that examination and academic dishonesty, particularly examination malpractice, represent major challenges to the conduct of academic examinations worldwide.²⁵ Samuel Sankpo defines examination malpractice as “massive and unprecedented abuse of rules and regulations on internal and external examinations, beginning with the setting of such examinations, through the taking of such examinations, their marking, and grading, to the release of the results and the issuance of

certificates.”²⁶ To Kyeremeh Tawiah Dabone, Yaa Alberta Graham, Ineke Bossman Fabea, and Ata Snr Dabone, examination malpractice is any irregular behavior by candidates or exam officials before, during, or after an exam that violates established rules, including acts such as exam leakage, impersonation, cheating, collusion, script swapping, smuggling answer scripts, forging results or certificates, and verbal or physical assault on exam administrators.²⁷ Kofi Asante-Kyei and Kwabena Nduro define examination malpractice as “any act of omission or commission by a person who in anticipation of, before, during or after any examination fraudulently secures any unfair advantage for him or herself, or any other person in such a manner that contravenes the rules and regulation to the extent of undermining the validity reliability, or authenticity of the examination and ultimately the integrity of the certificates issued.”²⁸

From the Nigerian context, Fumilusi identified the various forms of malpractice as smuggling in unauthorized materials, candidate collusion, impersonation, assaulting invigilators, and using advanced technological methods.²⁹ Luqman Lekan Adedeji revealing the extent of the canker, has submitted that, “The tree of examination malpractices has over the years, grown gigantic satanic roots, spreading its tentacles to even the most revered of Nigeria's institutions and examination bodies.”³⁰ In sharing their experience B. A. Ayanniyi and C.O. Anya have outlined various types of examination malpractice, including the

²³ Thomas Kellaghan, “Examination Systems in Africa: Between Internationalization and Indigenization,” in *Examinations: Comparative and International Studies*, ed. M. A. Eckstein and H. J. Noah (Oxford, UK: Pergamon, 1992), 95–104.

²⁴ Brock Goldflies, <https://www.scholaro.com/db/News/WAEC-The-History-of-the-West-African-Examinations-Council-188/> as assessed on May 6, 2025.

²⁵ Folsen and Awuah, “Combating Examination Malpractices in the Basic Education Certificate Examinations (BECE) in Ghana,” 12.

²⁶ Nwana as cited in Samuel Sankpo, “Examination malpractice in Ghanaian Schools: Evidence from 2018 to 2021”, *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)*, Volume (7) (Issue 1) (2023): 130-140, 133.

²⁷ Nduka Francis Oluyeba and Simeon Olufemi Daramola as cited in Kyeremeh Tawiah Dabone, Yaa Alberta Graham, Ineke Bossman Fabea, and Ata Snr Dabone To “The Perception and Reasons of Examination Malpractice among Students,” *International Journal of Innovative Research and Development*, Volume (4) (Issue 4) (2015): 145-148, 145.

²⁸ Kofi Asante-Kyei and Kwabena Nduro, “Inclining factors towards examination malpractice among students in Takoradi Polytechnic,” *Ghana Journal of Education and Practice*, Volume (5) (Issue 22) (2014): 66-74, 66.

²⁹ Fumilusi, “A Religious-Ethical Perspective of Examination Malpractice in Nigeria,” 181.

³⁰ Luqman Lekan Adedeji, “Influence of Islamic Teachings on the Attitude of Students Towards Examination Malpractices in Nigeria,” *Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities*, Volume (7) (Issue 2) (2022): 228-246, 231.

use of tattoos, tokens, and contracts; exposure to exam content in advance (*expo*); computer-related cheating (*computo*); impersonation; leakage of question papers; assistance from teachers; collusion among students; use of unauthorized materials in the exam hall; copying from others by stretching the neck (*giraffe*); and spying during the examination.³¹

In Zambia, a study by Munachonga revealed that examination malpractice had recently become increasingly alarming and concerning, as it involved not only students but also parents, teachers, supervisors, and school administrators - and in some cases, even officials from the Examinations Council of Zambia.³² Maukaula has again indicated that a study conducted by Maureen Munachonga in 2014 revealed that each examination session saw candidates devising new and increasingly sophisticated cheating methods, some of which were so difficult to detect that invigilators failed to notice them.³³ Stella Muchemwa and Dhliwayo Alice have echoed Gladys Maheka's 2015 research result in Zambia which established that, students of all genders and socio-economic backgrounds, from both government and private schools, participate in examination malpractice.³⁴

From the Central African perspective, Mbong has affirmed that, Examination malpractice poses a serious threat to the integrity of Cameroon's educational system, undermining both moral and intellectual development, and has become increasingly widespread and sophisticated, involving

students, educators, parents, and administrators alike.³⁵ In addition to examination malpractice, Kenneth Yuomeyse has affirmed that, during General Certificate of Education Board (GCEB) exams, numerous cases of misconduct also occur during classroom assessments, evaluations, and end-of-year promotion exams in secondary schools across Yaoundé, Cameroon.³⁶

Writing on the prevalent nature of the menace, Sankpo observes that several studies reveal that examination malpractice is widespread and negatively impacts the quality of human resources produced by educational systems, and alarmingly, Ghana has experienced persistent issues with its examinations in recent years. Isaac Appodey agrees and so avers that, in Ghana, the growing prevalence of examination malpractice is undermining the integrity of the education system.³⁷

Examination malpractice in Ghana takes various forms.³⁸ According to Sankpo the fraud, manifesting in various forms—from massive leaks and invigilators writing answers on chalkboards to students stretching their necks to cheat—has often led to the cancellation of some or all exam papers in certain schools.³⁹ Ike Onyechere has also defined examination malpractice as “any act of wrong doing or neglect that contravenes the rules of acceptable practice before, during and after an examination by anybody in any way that is tantamount to malpractice.”⁴⁰

³¹ B. Alhassan Ayanniyi and Chidimma Adamma Anya, “Forms and consequences of examination malpractice in Nigerian schools and universities: What should the Stakeholders do? *International Journal of education, training and learning*, Volume (1) (Issue 1) (2017): 9-2, 12.

³² Maureen Munachonga as quoted in Maukaula, *Perceived causes and methods of examination malpractice in the Malawian education system*, 47.

³³ Maukaula, *Perceived causes and methods of examination malpractice in the Malawian education system*, 47.

³⁴ Gladys Maheka as quoted in Stella Muchemwa and Dhliwayo Alice, “Curbing Examination Malpractices in Africa: Content Analysis,” *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education*, Volume (1) (Issue 3) (2017): 126 -139, 132.

³⁵ Mbong, *Examination Malpractices and Graduates, Quality in the University of Yaounde I*. (Master's Thesis: University of Yaoundé I, 2023), 28.

³⁶ Kenneth Yuomeyse, “Assessment of Examination Malpractice and its Impact on Students' Academic Success in Secondary and High Schools in Yaoundé, Cameroon,” *Journal of Tertiary and Industrial Sciences*, Volume (4) (Issue) (1) (2024): 1-19, 3.

³⁷ Isaac Appodey, <https://www.modernghana.com/news/1331826/the-menace-of-examination-malpractice-in-ghana.html/> as assessed on April 6, 2025.

³⁸ Sankpo, “Examination malpractice in Ghanaian Schools: Evidence from 2018 to 2021,” 133-134.

³⁹ Sankpo, “Examination malpractice in Ghanaian Schools,” 134.

⁴⁰ Ike Onyechere, *Examination Ethics Handbook* (Lagos: Potomac Books, 1996), 29.

Ghana's worrying situation described by Stephen Achio has been subscribed by Abubakari as he writes, the various forms of examination malpractice include concealing materials in washrooms, pockets, private parts, or pen corks; writing answers on question papers for others to copy; communicating through speech, gestures, or coded systems; smuggling in pre-written scripts; texting during exams; removing answer sheets from the exam room; assaulting or insulting invigilators; engaging in organized cheating; and receiving assistance from supervisors or invigilators.⁴¹ In drawing on Mwenya Chileshe's thought, Abubakari has further stated that many students resort to extreme measures such as using money, sex, bullying, extortion, or any available means to gain advance access to exam questions.⁴² Appodey notes the deep-seated nature of the canker in the very fabric of society as he writes, examinations are no longer seen as a true measure of student performance or academic achievement due to the widespread collapse of the examination system across all educational levels in the country.⁴³

Some schools have normalized examination malpractice to the point that they charge their students huge amounts of monies through the consent of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) prior to the examination with the aim of using part of the money to motivate invigilators to facilitate the malpractice, a substantial amount allocated to bribe WAEC officials who are deployed to the examination centers to ensure sanity of the examination to overlook misconduct and refuse to report. Part of the remainder of the money is put aside so that in case the results of some papers are withheld such money would be used in sorting WAEC officials to release the results and the rest of the money which in most cases is a substantial amount is shared between the headmasters of such schools, their assistants and in some cases teachers who invigilated. In recent

times, some invigilators demand monies from their students' in the examination hall/room aside the huge monies they are made to pay through the PTA prior to the examination. Those who are unable or refuse to pay are sometimes taken through stress to frustrate them and in extreme cases delayed for some time before allowing them to write their examination.

Due to the widespread acceptance and normalization of examination malpractice across Ghana, some students go to extreme lengths to engage in it. In some instances, individuals enroll in private schools but abandon regular classes to work in the school's town or nearby areas, solely to raise enough money to bribe invigilators and teachers for assistance during exams. This trend is not limited to private institutions; public schools also face similar issues. It is increasingly common for final-year students in public schools to skip classes entirely after registration, believing that they cannot succeed without cheating. This misguided mindset leads them to prioritize raising funds for bribery over attending lessons.

As a result, mock exams—once a crucial tool for exam preparation—have lost their value, overshadowed by the growing reliance on malpractice. Alarming, some students vanish shortly after starting school in their first year, only to reappear in their third year during registration. When schools refuse to register them, these students often seek help from influential community figures like chiefs, politicians, and religious leaders. Sadly, many of them still manage to pass, not due to academic excellence, but through bribery. This growing culture of dishonesty severely undermines the credibility of educational qualifications in Ghana. Isaac Appodey expresses the importance of maintaining dignity in examinations as he cites John Dewey who posits that “Education is not preparation for Life, education is life itself.”⁴⁴ Appodey's assertion highlights that the experiences and

⁴¹ Achio as quoted in Abubakari, *Causes and Effects of Examination Malpractice in Public Basic Schools at Afram Plains, Ghana*, 11-12.

⁴² Chileshe as cited in Abubakari, *Causes and Effects of Examination Malpractice in Public Basic Schools at Afram Plains, Ghana*, 1.

⁴³ Appodey, <https://www.modernghana.com/news/1331826/the-menace-of-examination-malpractice-in-ghana.html/> as assessed on April 6, 2025.

⁴⁴ John Dewey as quoted in Appodey, <https://www.modernghana.com/news/1331826/the->

lessons gained through education are inseparable from real-life experiences, suggesting that learning and living happen simultaneously, not sequentially.

A comprehensive understanding of the entrenchment of examination malpractice within Ghana's educational system necessitates an examination of the fundamental factors that perpetuate this phenomenon.

4.2 Causes of Examination Malpractice

From the Ghanaian terrain, Sankpo has contributed by citing Adamu Shehu and Ike Onyechere who hold that examination malpractices are driven by factors such as incomplete syllabi coverage, poor candidate preparation, and desperation to succeed at all costs, pressure to uphold school performance rankings, and weak enforcement against offenders.⁴⁵ The impetus for the canker among students has been identified and shared by Adedeji as follows: "Examination malpractice among students is driven by declining moral values, student laziness, weaknesses of teachers and lecturers, poor parental guidance, peer pressure, weak supervision, lack of self-confidence, government inaction against offenders, and, in some cases, the weak faith, greed, and lack of vision among private school owners."⁴⁶

Abubakari avers that, examination malpractice can also result from factors such as poor guidance and counselling, truancy, absenteeism, and laziness.⁴⁷ The temptation to cheat apart from the causes enumerated above in the view of Dabone et al. can be rooted in some lecturers' insistence on students reproducing word for word answers from their handouts while completely rejecting answers that were

paraphrased.⁴⁸ It is against this backdrop that Martin Luther King Jr. once posited that, "we have a high blood pressure of theory but an anemia of practice," meaning that their cognitive abilities far exceed their practical skills.⁴⁹

Scholars, including Basil Olatunbosun Jimoh, have identified various causes of examination malpractice, such as societal dishonesty, inadequate teacher supervision, high school fees, linking teacher promotions to exam success, the obsession with success at all costs, poor teaching quality, and failure to complete the syllabus before exams.⁵⁰ In some cases, where WAEC officials are involved in the leakage, they are rewarded with huge sums of monies for their mischievous acts and middlemen do not distribute it to teachers, parents and students for free but at high costs to enrich themselves. The above point is subscribed by Folson and Awuah who posit that, the first form of examination malpractice involves WAEC Information and Communication Technology (ICT) workers leaking exam questions for profit, using agents and sub-agents who negotiate prices with school proprietors.⁵¹

Folson and Awuah further give shocking and disturbing revelations from the Basic Education Certificate Examination (B.E.C.E) that; the BECE question leakage begins weeks before the exams, promoted through social media ads targeting school heads and proprietors, involving two types of cartels—first-sourced cartels, who obtain questions directly from WAEC officers and sell them to second-sourced cartels, who sometimes pass them on with solutions, with prices ranging from GH¢2,000–GH¢2,500 per paper for first-

[menace-of-examination-malpractice-in-ghana.html/](https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/religion-doing-sermon-dexter-avenue-baptist-church/) as assessed on April 6, 2025.

⁴⁵ Adamu Shehu and Ike Onyechere as quoted in Sankpo, "Examination malpractice in Ghanaian Schools," 134.

⁴⁶ Adedeji, "Influence of Islamic Teachings on the Attitude of Students Towards Examination Malpractices in Nigeria," 233.

⁴⁷ Abubakari, *Causes and Effects of Examination Malpractice in Public Basic Schools at Afram Plains, Ghana*, 14.

⁴⁸ Dabone, Graham, Fabea, and Dabone, "The Perception and Reasons of Examination Malpractice among Students," *International Journal of Innovative Research*

and Development, Volume (4) (Issue 4) (2015): 145-148, 145.

⁴⁹ Martin Luther King Jr., <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/religion-doing-sermon-dexter-avenue-baptist-church/> as assessed on April 6, 2025.

⁵⁰ Basil Olatunbosun Jimoh, Examination Malpractice in Secondary School in Nigeria: What Sustains It? *European Journal of Educational Studies*, Volume (1) (Issue 3) (2009): 10-108, 15.

⁵¹ Folson and Awuah, "Combating Examination Malpractices in the Basic Education Certificate Examinations (BECE) in Ghana," 15.

sourced cartels and GH¢1,000–GH¢1,500 for second-sourced cartels.⁵²

4.3 Consequences of Examination Malpractice

4.3.1 Physical Consequences of Examination Malpractice

Examination malpractice causes serious harm to individuals, educational institutions, communities, and the nation as a whole. Unpacking the detrimental effects of examination malpractice, Fumilusi has lamented that examination malpractice is a societal ill that undermines the credibility of academic certificates, as repeated misconduct within a system casts doubt on the integrity and acceptance of the qualifications it awards.⁵³ In the spirit of agreement, Theodora Olufunke Bello has strongly affirmed that examination malpractice negatively impacts not only the students involved but also their peers and society at large, often resulting in severe consequences such as result cancellation, repeating exams or an academic year, future exam bans, or even expulsion from school.⁵⁴

Examination malpractice carries significant physical consequences that impact students, teachers, invigilators, and educational institutions. Those found guilty may face legal prosecution, including imprisonment and fines, as examination malpractice is treated as a criminal offense in many jurisdictions. Students risk having their results cancelled, certificates withheld, or being permanently barred from future examinations, effectively ending their academic pursuits. Teachers and invigilators may face dismissal, loss of professional licenses, and permanent damage to their careers. Beyond the individual, institutions involved may suffer reputational harm, diminished public trust, and heightened scrutiny from regulatory bodies. These outcomes highlight the severe and far-reaching implications of examination malpractice on both personal and institutional levels.

Aside the effects listed above, examination malpractice to a large extent could be the genesis of corruption in our societies. This is because, once the students successfully cut corners without actively learning and preparing to pass examinations but get the grades on a silver platter through foul means, then in future when they become bosses or find themselves in the working environment either as superiors or subordinates, they are likely to engage in corrupt practices in order to enhance their finances without necessarily resulting to hard work.

The net effect of this would be the production of some civil engineers who would pocket a big chunk of the money allocated for building roads, buildings, and airports inter alia and using an insignificant amount left to produce substandard infrastructure which deteriorates before the expected date. It tends to produce greedy politicians who only think of embezzling state funds for their private matters and health professionals who do not only lack the necessary skills to take care of patients and so their actions and inactions leading to an upsurge of patients' death but also those who smuggle drugs and other equipment to sell and enrich themselves.

The teaching field is also not spared from the consequences. As a result of their inability to give what they don't have, they become frustrated and vent their anger on innocent students who did not contribute in any way to their situation. Knowing that their competencies do not match the expectation from their employers and students, they have to resort to foul means during examinations to assist their ill-prepared students pass the examination, and the chain of the evil practice continues unabated.

To some corrupt teachers who engage in the act, if the students (especially the female students) cannot pay the money in cash, then they must do so in kind by demanding sex from them. Innocent and vulnerable female students who are ill-prepared and have no hope of passing the examination on their own cannot

⁵² Folson and Awuah, "Combating Examination Malpractices in the Basic Education Certificate Examinations (BECE) in Ghana," 15.

⁵³ Fumilusi, "A Religious-Ethical Perspective of Examination Malpractice in Nigeria," 188.

⁵⁴ Theodora Olufunke Bello, "Moral Theology and Religious Moral Education: A Panacea for Examination Malpractices in Nigeria," *Social Science Education Journal (sosced-J)*, volume (2) (issue 1) (): 165-172, 165.

help but give in to such incessant demands from their teachers. The attendant consequences of illicit sexual encounters include, but are not limited to, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), Teenage Pregnancies, Social Stigma, Emotional Distress, Trauma, Reputation Damage, Blackmail, and Exploitation, among others. Some students after having such illicit sexual encounters with their teachers who are in some cases old enough to be their parents transfer their frustrations to innocent teachers who played no role in the evil scheme by way of disrespecting them all. This is among the reasons for students' disrespect towards teachers in recent times.

4.3.2 Spiritual and Emotional Consequences of Examination Malpractice

Aside the physical consequences of examination malpractice listed above, there are spiritual and emotional implications which the paper proceeds to discuss. Practicing examination malpractice has profound spiritual implications on the culprit, notably internal damage manifesting as guilt, shame, and a seared conscience. These repercussions not only affect one's moral compass but also one's relationship with the divine.

Guilt sets in the moment the culprit becomes aware of how their action or inaction has violated God's moral or ethical standards. As one reflects on the deceit and deception they had practiced, it leads to an inner turmoil and a sense of unworthiness before God. This sense of guilt becomes even pronounced in those who are sensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. As they are rebuked by the Spirit of God, those who regret confesses their sins to earn forgiveness and others who harden their hearts end up in destruction.

In cases where culprits are caught, handcuffed by the police in full glare of onlookers, the shame and disgrace becomes quite burdensome. Unlike guilt, which focuses on specific actions, shame impacts one's self-identity, fostering feelings of being inherently flawed. Stigmatization by the public can lead to an emotional burden on the offender who may

find it difficult to appear in public including faith communities and spiritual practices, hindering their spiritual growth. Those who become tough to withstand the guilt, shame and disgrace that attends the menace develop a thick skin that can absorb all manner of criticisms and finally end up with a seared conscience, wherein sensitivity to moral convictions diminishes. This view is shared by Paul in 1 Timothy 4:2, where he avers that, persistent sin can desensitize individuals, making them less receptive to spiritual guidance. This moral insensitivity becomes a barrier for one's repentance and spiritual renewal.

To, summarize, examination malpractice has damning effect on the spiritual wellbeing of an individual as it erodes one's moral integrity and alienate them from God's presence. Upholding honesty is essential for spiritual well-being and maintaining a clear conscience before the divine.

5.0 THE OFFSIDE TRAP AS A METAPHOR FOR DECEPTION

The offside trap in football is a deliberate and strategic act of deception, where defenders work together to lure attackers into an offside position, making them believe they are in a legitimate scoring position when, in fact, they are violating the rules. This calculated tactic, requires timing, teamwork, and intentional deceit—tricking attackers into thinking they are in a valid scoring position when they are actually not.⁵⁵ It serves as a fitting metaphor for the dynamics of examination malpractice in Ghana's educational system.

Just as the offside trap creates a false opportunity that leads to a penalty, examination malpractice offers students a misleading path to success that ultimately undermines their moral integrity and devalues academic achievement. To excel at all costs in examinations in Ghana due to pressure from parents and society creates an environment that enables academic dishonesty. The parents and society thinking in a way serve as partners in the crime of ensuring students use illegal means of attaining academic credentials they do not merit tantamount to

⁵⁵ FIFA, *Laws of the Game 2021/22* (Zurich: FIFA, 2021), 94.

players who give pass to an attacker in an offside position only to be caught by the referee in the case of football and the examination (for instance, WAEC) in the case of student with its attended penalties. This reflects the deliberate and coordinated deceit found in the offside trap. Highlighting this parallel, the metaphor not only reveals how deception operates but also urges the general public to uphold integrity and honesty in both athletics and academics.

6.0 RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS ON DECEPTION AND DISHONESTY

6.1 Biblical Teachings on Deception and Dishonesty

At its core, deception is substituting a lie for the truth, a concept reflected in the frequent use of the New Testament terms *planaō* and *apataō*. Georg Benedikt Winer has rightly observed that the two terms are used interchangeably in Scripture, with no significant distinction between their meanings.⁵⁶ The genesis of deception can be traced from the initial deception of Eve in Genesis 3 to Satan's final attempt to mislead humanity in Revelation 20, deception has been a recurring theme in human history, with Scripture portraying Satan as the source of all religious deception—“the serpent of old... who deceives the whole world” (Rev 12:9).⁵⁷

Aside from the Genesis 3 event, Old Testament teaching against deception can be found in the following: The negotiation between Esau and Jacob typifies this age-old concept. From Genesis 25:29–34, while Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau returned from the field exhausted and claimed he was on the verge of dying from hunger. Jacob leveraged his bargaining power to secure Esau's birthright before giving him food, and the ensuing

narrative highlights the troubles that arose from his tough negotiation approach.

Psalm 101:7 says, “No one who practices deceit will dwell in my house; no one who speaks falsely will stand in my presence” (New International Version, (NIV)). Drawing on the above text, it is evident that those who engage in examination malpractice act deceitfully and therefore, place themselves outside God's favor and fellowship, as God clearly condemns deceit. Bello puts it this way: “Christians should live with admirable character and be role models in every community they find themselves in.”⁵⁸ The fact that God condemns deception is also contained in Proverbs 12:22. The text reads, “The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in men who are truthful”, NIV. Kevin Kabel observes that this proverb highlights the contrasting emotions of God—His abhorrence for certain behaviors and His pleasure in others—emphasizing that the focus is on these extreme divine reactions rather than merely on his preferences.⁵⁹ Kabel further contributes to the reflection on the two biblical texts above by noting that God, who perceives the true intentions of the heart, is easily displeased by even minor dishonesty but requires substantial honesty to be truly delighted, as mere truthful speech from a person with dishonest motives does not bring Him joy.⁶⁰ The involvement in examination malpractice reflects moral failure, which is ironic given that many perpetrators claim religious affiliation, despite no known religion endorsing such immoral behavior.⁶¹

Al Sturgeon has observed that while the Bible consistently denounces lies and deception, the teachings of Jesus remain the most central and authoritative for Christians.⁶² In this well-known sermon, Jesus called his followers to a higher standard than the religious leaders of the

⁵⁶ Georg Benedikt Winer, *Grammar Idiom of the New Testament*, trans. J. Henry Thayer (Andover, Mass. Flagg and Gould, 1825; reprint, Andover, Mass: Draper, 1970), 500.

⁵⁸ Bello, “Moral Theology and Religious Moral Education: A Panacea for Examination Malpractices in Nigeria,” 170.

⁵⁹ Kevin Kabel, <https://calvaryheightsbc.com/blog/2024/02/01/proverbs-12-22/> as assessed on April 22, 2025.

⁶⁰ Kevin Kabel, <https://calvaryheightsbc.com/blog/2024/02/01/proverbs-12-22/> as assessed on April 22, 2025.

⁶¹ Fumilusi, “A Religious-Ethical Perspective of Examination Malpractice in Nigeria,” 189.

⁶² Al Sturgeon, “The Truth Shall Set You Free: A Distinctively Christian Approach to Deception in the Negotiation Process,” *Pepperdine Dispute Resolution Law Journal*, Volume (11) (Issue 395) (2011): 395-419, 411.

time, condemning the use of oaths as a deceptive means of legitimizing potentially unreliable communication. On another occasion, Jesus warned in Matthew 7:21 that religious claims alone do not suffice; genuine faith demands obedience. His words directly condemn those who hide examination malpractice behind a façade of religiosity. Jesus in addition from John 8:44 declares that Satan speaks lies from his very nature, for he is a liar and father of all lies. The texts above highlights Jesus' negative stance against examination malpractice.

Another striking event in the Bible that exposes God's outright hate for deception is the Acts 5:1-11 event. Ananias and his wife Sapphira, after selling their piece of land, planned to keep part of the money for themselves and deceive the apostles by presenting the remainder as if that was the total amount. Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, sensed within his spirit the lie that Ananias had uttered and so rebuked him for hiding the truth. Unfortunately for Ananias and his wife, who later came into the scene to utter falsehoods in line with her husband's statement, they were both killed one after the other for deception.

Paul warned in 2 Corinthians 11:3 that just as the serpent deceived Eve through cunning, believers' minds could be led astray from sincere devotion to Christ, and he emphasized in 1 Timothy 2:14 that it was the woman, not Adam, who was first deceived and fell into transgression. In his letter to the church in Rome, chapter thirteen verses one to seven (Rom. 13:1-7), Paul extensively teaches that God establishes all governing authorities and that individuals must submit to them because they exist to uphold justice and punish wrongdoing. Respecting academic regulations therefore is not merely a civic duty but a spiritual responsibility, and failure to do so invites both earthly and divine consequences.

6.2 Islamic Perspective on Deception and Dishonesty

From an Islamic standpoint, examination malpractice contradicts religious ethics and opposes the Divine Command Theory, as God would not command the immorality demonstrated by such misconduct. The fact that the three main Religious Traditions, namely Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional Religion, preach honesty, and yet people who profess to be members of such Religious Traditions endorse and promote examination misconduct is mindboggling. Sharing a parallel thought, Fumilusi has emotionally stated that "It is pathetic that many people do not see examination malpractice as a fraud; hence there is a need to inculcate morality into the conduct of examination."⁶³ From the Islamic context there are numerous verses from the Qur'an and teachings from the Sunnah (Hadith of the Prophet, PBUH) that clearly emphasize that cheating, whether directed at Muslims or non-Muslims, is strictly prohibited.

Aliyu Mamman and Musa Gambo K.K. on their part have noted that, the Holy Qur'an strongly condemns cheating and those who engage in it, warning of severe consequences, as a true Islamic society is founded on honesty, justice, and brotherhood, with no tolerance for any form of dishonesty.⁶⁴ For instance Qur'an 2:42 says "And cover not the truth with falsehood, nor conceal the truth when you know what it is." The verse preaches that individuals have a moral responsibility to be honest and transparent, especially when they are aware of the truth. Aside the text above, Qur'an 17:36 clarifies that, someone who engages in examination malpractice is a liar for claiming knowledge they do not possess, which Allah has forbidden, warning that every hearing, sight, and heart will be held accountable. Deception in weight measurement is tackled from the Quran; "Woe to Al-Mutaffifoon (those who give less in measure and weight, decrease the right of others). Those who, when they have to receive by measure from men, demand full measure,

⁶³ Fumilusi, "A Religious-Ethical Perspective of Examination Malpractice in Nigeria," 189.

⁶⁴ Aliyu Mamman and Musa Gambo K.K., "Islam and the Prohibition of Al-Gaish(Deception) in Business: The

Ethical Marketing Perspective," *Lapai Journal of Management Science (Lajomas)*, Volume (11) (Issue1) (2022):73-85, 77.

and when they have to give by measure or weight to (other) men, give less than due" [Al-Mutaffifeen 83:1-3].

Examination malpractice is a form of deception, similarly condemned under Islamic teachings. Just as short-changing others in trade is unjust, cheating in exams—by gaining an unfair advantage or misrepresenting one's true ability—is an act of dishonesty and injustice that Islam warns against. It violates trust and fairness, core principles emphasized in the quoted verse.

6.3 African Traditional Religious Perspective on Deception and Dishonesty

African culture is deeply grounded in strong moral values, requiring individuals to uphold traditional beliefs and customs to ensure longevity and avoid curses, with immoral acts like adultery and stealing condemned, and suspected offenders proving their innocence through oaths or consultations with soothsayers.⁶⁵ Kemi Ogunyemi shares a similar thought by noting that, to avoid being ostracized, individuals must embody virtues like honesty, fairness, justice, generosity, and hard work, and those who excel in these qualities are sometimes honored with chieftaincy or royal titles that reflect their exemplary character.⁶⁶ Deliberately mixing truth with falsehood or hiding it is condemned.

Honesty is a deep-seated value in the Akan-Ghanaian traditional context. This becomes evident during the naming ceremony of a newborn baby. As part of the ceremony, two contrasting liquids with respect to taste are put into the mouth of the baby three times, and anytime it is given to the baby, the one officiating the ceremony tells the baby to be honest at all times, irrespective of the situation. The ceremony aims to inculcate honesty and truthfulness in the child right from infancy. The proverbial Akan Tradition also teaches honesty,

as can be gleaned from the proverb: Truth is like fire; it cannot be hidden under dry leaves. The proverb seeks to convey the thought that even if someone tries to hide the truth with lies (like dry leaves over fire), the truth will eventually burn through and be exposed.

Peter Kwasi Sarpong's view has been reflected by Paul Appiah-Sekyere, Joseph Oppong and Augustine Mary Mensah who write, Traditional Akan ethics firmly rejects laziness, individualism, abortion, suicide, and any harm or mischief toward others.⁶⁷ Kwame Gyekye adds that, the Akans place great value on hard work as the key to success, teaching their youth to embrace diligence, as reflected in the common Bono (Akan) saying "*Adwuma, adwuma*" ("Work, work") with the response "*adwuma ye*" ("work is good"), emphasizing hard work and rejecting laziness.⁶⁸ The first mention of laziness among other detestable ethics underscores how the Akan-Ghanaian philosophy frowns on dishonesty and cheating. Another Bono-Twi saying that condemns laziness goes as "*aniha mu nni hwee se hia*", literally translated, there is nothing in laziness but poverty. The proverb serves as a cultural critique of indolence and its consequences. It implicitly links academic dishonesty, such as cheating, to a lack of diligence and self-discipline. It conveys the idea that individuals who resort to malpractice in place of genuine effort not only forfeit true intellectual development but also undermine their moral integrity. Consequently, rather than attaining meaningful achievement, such individuals risk perpetuating a cycle of personal stagnation and contributing to the erosion of societal values essential for long-term development.

In their 2022 publication, Richmond Osei Amoah and Augustine Kojo Peprah affirmed that African morality is essentially composed of five distinct characteristics, viz, "theocentric, communalistic, anthropocentric,

⁶⁵ Gabriel E. Idang, "African Culture and Values," *Phronimon*, Volume (16) (Issue 2) (2016):97-111,103.

⁶⁶ Kemi Ogunyemi, ed., *African Virtue Ethics Traditions for Business and Management* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2020), 4.

⁶⁷ Peter Kwasi Sarpong as cited in Paul Appiah-Sekyere, Joseph Oppong and Augustine Mary Mensah, "Christian Ethics and Traditional Akan Ethics: A Comparative Study,

Christian Ethics and Traditional Akan Ethics: A Comparative Study," *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies*, Volume (4) (Issue 1) (2018): 16-27, 19.

⁶⁸ Kwame Gyekye, *African Cultural Values: An Introduction* (Accra: Sankofa Publishing Company, 1996), 101-102.

utilitarian and shame-oriented.”⁶⁹ Gleaning from the above, the fact that African Morality is anthropocentric and utilitarian means it values human welfare and the greater good; examination malpractice is therefore condemned for undermining societal progress and harming the community's future well-being. In addition, the communalistic and shame-oriented perspective of African morality makes examination malpractice not only a harm to the individual but also brings shame and dishonor to their family and community, highlighting the collective impact of personal wrongdoing and is therefore frowned upon.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS (OVERCOMING THE OFFSIDE TRAP)

From the discussions so far, it is apparent that the canker of examination malpractice is a complex web that requires a multidimensional approach and a concerted effort from all major stakeholders. To start with, the government of the day, through the Minister of Education, as a matter of urgency, should declare a war on the canker, just as successive governments have all pledged support to fight against illegal mining (also known as *Galamsey*). Stringent laws should be passed by parliament, and the ones already passed should be enforced irrespective of the caliber of people who are found guilty. In dealing with culprits of the menace in the Court of Law, interference from opinion leaders such as chiefs, politicians, religious leaders among others should not be tolerated in order not to sacrifice justice on the altar of mercy (plea). Sankpo expresses the laxity in dealing with the canker as he notes; individuals arrested for examination malpractice often disappear from public attention after the exams, leaving Ethical values should be a priority of the education service at all levels of educational ladder and examinable as well so as to inculcate sound values in the students to conscientize them

against the menace. The government should task the National Commission for Civic Education (N.C.C.E) to engage the public on the suicidal effect of examination malpractice since the issue at hand borders on national development. Just as they are able to sensitize the public on the need to vote and vote alright during electioneering periods, they should equally do the same in the fight against the menace.

There is an urgent need to reconsider and revitalize the educational curriculum by placing greater emphasis on practical learning, aligning it more closely with traditional educational approaches, and enhancing its responsiveness to contemporary real-life challenges. The theory-based education, in which the one who is able to memorize the more is seen as the most intelligent, should be given a second look. Prioritizing of practical-based studies should not be exclusive to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) schools but mainstream Senior High Schools. Apart from injecting more practical in the national education curriculum moral principles must also form its framework. To this end Boaheng comments, Christians should actively collaborate with other stakeholders in shaping national education curricula and policies, as their absence may allow competing religious ideologies, potentially misaligned with biblical principles, to dominate educational discourse and influence.⁷⁰

Apart from the government, religious leaders and proponents also have a crucial role to play. In a country which boasts of seventy-one point three (71.3%) percentage of her populace professing the Christian faith and nineteen point nine (19.9%) of the population been Moslems,⁷¹ ministers of the gospel, Imams, Sheikhs and all preachers especially have the onus to address it from the pulpit when they engage the public space. Although it is crystal clear that cheating in examinations

⁶⁹ Richmond Osei Amoah and Augustine Kojo Peprah, “The Foundation and Nature of Traditional African Morality: A Review of Selected Literature,” *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (EHASS)*, Volume (3) (Issue 7) (2022): 279-285, 282.

⁷⁰ Boaheng, *A Contextual Political Theology for the Ghanaian Society and its Implications for Human Flourishing*, 199.

⁷¹ Eric Jean-Ive Abrahams-Appiah, “Ghana to Become a Majority Muslim Nation by 2096: A Critical Examination of Ghana’s 2000, 2010, 2021 Censuses and its Implications for Christian Missions,” *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies (ERATS)*, Volume (9) (Issue 9) (2023): 455-471, 460.

contravenes God's command for mankind to be truthful at all times. Jesus' statement in Matthew 7:21 conveys the idea that mere profession of faith in him is not enough to guarantee one's entrance into the kingdom of God but those whose profession (faith) is proven by works. Preachers must let the congregants know that God expects us to be truthful at all times including the examination hall. Examination malpractice, congregants must know should not be seen as a form of genuine help. Paul exhortation on submission to governing authorities from Romans 13:1-7 should be applied to examination setting too. In the case of Basic and Senior High Schools final examination, the governing body WAEC is the authority whose rules should be obeyed. Tertiary institutions also have rules governing their examinations which does not differ much from that of WAEC rules. Christians and Muslims alike must uphold and respect legitimate authority, recognizing it as divinely appointed to avoid incurring God's judgment as can be gathered from Romans 13:2. Resorting to examination malpractice is tantamount to resisting God's will and Christians should know doing that would incur God's wrath in judgement. Just as preachers find everything wrong with adultery, divorce, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, pansexual, Non-binary, malice, fornication, witchcraft, envy, hatred, covetousness among others and so address them from the pulpit, so should examination malpractice feature in sermons to help fight the canker.

From the perspective of school administrators, combating examination malpractice can be effectively approached through the institutionalization of moral recognition awards. One proposed strategy involves naming an award after a locally revered figure—renowned for their integrity, whether deceased or living—and presenting it termly or annually to the student who demonstrates exemplary honesty. This initiative could be integrated into the school's annual speech and prize-giving ceremony, thereby broadening the scope of recognition beyond academic excellence to include moral character. Such an award would reflect traditional African practices, wherein individuals known for their

virtuous conduct were honored with chieftaincy or royal titles. By adopting this culturally grounded model, schools not only celebrate moral uprightness but also create a platform that encourages other students to emulate these values in pursuit of similar recognition.

Parents, as key stakeholders, play a vital role in curbing examination malpractice. According to Fumilusi, parents significantly influence exam misconduct and should therefore model integrity by neither promoting academic dishonesty nor forcing their children into specific career paths. Instead, they should counsel their children to understand that success isn't limited to white-collar professions. If a child appears to struggle academically, parents must recognize that this does not signal failure. Alternative, rewarding paths exist in skilled trades like plumbing, carpentry, and electrical work, as well as in creative or manual professions such as music, photography, mechanics, and landscaping. Opportunities in entrepreneurship, vocational training, and online services are also viable. When parents and children adopt this broader perspective, exams lose their "do-or-die" significance, reducing the pressure to succeed at all costs.

Parents should support their children in discovering their interests and aspirations from early childhood. Early clarity can inspire focused effort and self-driven learning. In today's world, imposing careers on children is counterproductive. Whether a child dreams of being an artist, tailor, farmer, doctor, or engineer, parental encouragement is essential. With such support, children become more intrinsically motivated and responsible for their learning, irrespective of external supervision or societal expectations.

The fact that majority of the people caught in Examination malpractice are students make them key stakeholders in the fight against the canker. They are expected to demonstrate personal responsibility in their academic pursuits through adequate preparation and by consciously eschewing dishonest practices such as cheating and plagiarism. In addition, by rejecting participation in such acts and actively dissuading peers, students contribute to the preservation of educational credibility. Students who find it wicked to expose their peers who act

contrary to established school rules should have a change of mind and attitude to report culprits in order to reinforce institutional commitment to fairness. Students who are committed to championing the fight can form Clubs that would move from campus to campus to play an advocacy role by preaching about the essence of restoring academic integrity as they highlight the negative implications of cheating in various facets of human endeavors. Drama and choreography grounded in sound ethical and moral values can be organized frequently by the club to address the menace.

8.0 CONCLUSION

The issue of examination malpractice, as examined across global, African, and specifically Ghanaian contexts, reflects a deeply rooted crisis stemming from historical shifts, structural weaknesses, and moral decline. The transition from traditional African communal learning to formal Western examination systems introduced not only pedagogical changes but also new ethical challenges. In Ghana and similar settings, factors such as poor preparation, institutional complicity, and societal pressure have intensified the problem. The consequences are profound—academically undermining the value of qualifications, socially breeding incompetence, and morally eroding integrity. Religious and cultural teachings uniformly condemn malpractice, framing it as a harmful and deceptive act. To effectively combat this crisis, a comprehensive approach is needed, incorporating moral education, institutional reform, parental guidance, and societal accountability. Reclaiming the ethical foundation of education is essential to restoring its credibility and ensuring it produces competent and principled citizens.

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About the Author

Samuel Boahen (MA) is a PhD Candidate at the All Nations University, Koforidua (Ghana). He holds Master of Arts in Ministry (Trinity Theological Seminary-Legon, Accra), Master of Arts in Christian Ministry in Management (Christian Service University-Kumasi), Post Graduate Certificate in Theology (Christian Service University-Kumasi), Post Graduate Diploma in Education (Valley View University-Techiman Campus) and Bsc. Agricultural Engineering (Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology-Kumasi). Boahen's research interest lies in African Christian Theology, Biblical Studies, Systematic Theology and Missiology. Boahen has co-authored two academic articles in renowned journals and presented papers at various conferences. He is a Reverend Minister of the Methodist Church Ghana-Sunyani Diocese.