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# BEYOND FORGERIES: ENHANCING JAMB UTME SECURITY MEASURES FOR TRANSPARENCY AND RELIABILITY IN NIGERIA

ABEEB IBRAHIM ADEYEMI

JOINT ADMISSIONS AND MATRICULATION BOARD

# INTRODUCTION

❑ In Nigeria, achievements at any level of education are crowned with certification for those who successfully complete the course of study with good academic records. Thus, at the end of secondary school education, students are expected to sit for public examinations such as the West African Senior School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE), conducted by West African Examination Council (WAEC), Senior School Certificate (SSCE), conducted by National Examinations Council (NECO), the National Technical and Business Certificate Examinations (NTCE/NBCE), also conducted by the National Business and Technical Examinations Board (NABTEB).

❑ The Examination Malpractice Act 33 of 1999 revisits the issue and stipulates a minimum punishment of fifty thousand naira (50,000.00) and a maximum of five years imprisonment, without an option of fine, for violators of the acts described in the Act (Mahfouz, 2024). The offences identified in the Act are cheating at examinations, stealing of question papers, impersonation, disturbances at examination, obstruction of supervision, forgery of result slip, breach of duty, conspiracy and aiding, etc.

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# STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

❑ Examination in Nigeria has been plagued by widespread exam fraud, which undermines the credibility of the examination process and erodes public trust in Nigeria's education system. Fortunately, the imperative of stamping examination malpractice out of the polity is not lost on the Registrar of JAMB, Prof. Is-haq O. Oloyede, a man of impregnable integrity, who has set a new standard in public service with his avowed commitment to ensuring that right things are done and things are done right.

❑ The persistence of exam fraud poses a significant threat to the principles of transparency, meritocracy, and equal opportunity in higher education. Over the years and in current times, these examination bodies had to combat malpractices encountered before, during and after examinations. These malpractices aim to aid students who are either academically weak or lazy by either inflating scores, using foreign materials during examinations, impersonating or being aided by some unscrupulous individuals among the invigilating team.

# RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this study is to explore strategies for enhancing security measures within the JAMB UTME to address the pervasive issue of exam fraud. Specifically, the study aims to:

▶ To find out the current security features sufficient that can curb subsequent result forgery cases in JAMB UTME Result.

▶ Assess the effectiveness of existing security measures in deterring and detecting fraudulent activities.

▶ Explore innovative technological solutions and institutional reforms to enhance exam security and promote transparency.

▶ Examine the implications of enhancing security measures for the reliability and credibility of the JAMB UTME.

# SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study holds significant implications for stakeholders involved in Nigeria's education system, including policymakers, educators, students, and parents. By addressing the pervasive issue of exam fraud within the JAMB UTME, the study aims to restore public trust and confidence in the JAMB examination process, thereby promoting fairness, transparency, and meritocracy in higher education. Furthermore, the findings of this study can inform the development of evidence-based interventions and policy reforms to strengthen exam security and uphold the integrity of Nigeria's education assessment system.

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- Concept of JAMB Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME)

The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) was established in 1978 with the responsibility of ensuring a uniform standard for the conduct of matriculation examination and placement of suitable candidates into the nation's Universities. Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) was founded by the federal government as the central placement examination body in 1978. In 2010 JAMB revamped Unified Matriculation Examination (UME) examination practice and joined both exams together to form Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME).

In 2013 JAMB introduced an online form of examination known as Computer Based Test (CBT). This CBT was expected to boost efficiency in the administration of examinations, and the scoring of tests, reduction in logistics and related costs, improve the security of examinations and the processes involved and ultimately lead to improved quality of education.

▶ **Concept of Examination Malpractice**

Examination malpractice is an unlawful behaviour or activity engaged in by students to have personal advantage in an examination over their colleagues or mate who are taking the same examination. Malpractice could be committed before, during or after the examination by either the student taking the or by officials assigned with the administration of the examination (Olushola, 2016). Examination malpractice could be due to several factors. Abdulkareem and Alabi, (2013) posited that examination malpractices have immediate and remote causes which are linked to the family, school and the society. Specifically, examination misconduct originates from students, teachers school-heads, parents, examination officials and security operatives.

# PROCESS OF CHECKING JAMB UTME RESULTS

Prof. Oloyede stated clearly that the only way to check 2024 UTME result is to send UTMERESULT to 55019 or 66019 using the same phone used by the candidate in registering for the UTME exercise (JAMB Bulletin, 2024). This is different from what obtained last year, hence, the results, at the moment, are not and cannot be found on the Board's website. Candidates are urged to follow the method specified above to obtain their results. They need not visit any cybercafé or patronise any third-party entity to check their result. The public is also advised to be wary of any candidate parading printed result slip as currently, the result is not on any paper format as being circulated on social media by some individuals.

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The following are the features incorporated into JAMB UTME results obtained the security features of UTME results are listed below:

**Candidate's Photo**: This photo is located at the top right-hand side of the result sheet just below the header of the document.

**Horizontal Divider Lines:** The document is divided into four (4) significant sections by three (3) horizontal lines with the middle line of a thickness of about 2px and the other two (2) of about 4px.

**Document Sections**: The sample documents appear to have four (4) sections divided by three (3) horizontal lines as described above. This contain candidates Bio-data, registration number (which ends with two (2) letters in uppercase), examination number, and the breakdown of the candidate's score in each subject taken, the candidate's choice of institutions and courses, the address of the examination centre and a reference number at the bottom right-hand corner and QR Code and text in the bottom right-hand corner that reads "REGISTRAR"

**Watermark**: The document contains a watermark composed of the candidate's registration number printed in grey colour.

**QR Code**: A QR code containing the name and aggregate score of the candidate is printed centralized at the bottom of the document.

**Printing Instruction**: The instruction "To be printed with Colour Printer" is inscribed at the left-hand margin of the document in a bottom-to-top orientation starting from just below the middle divider line up to the result breakdown section.

# CHALLENGES FACING SECURITY MEASURES AND RELIABILITY IN NIGERIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

The Nigerian education system faces various challenges, including issues related to security and the reliability of assessments. The security measures and reliability covers all the examination bodies in Nigeria which encompasses technological innovations such as biometric authentication, encryption, and block-chain technology to mitigate identity fraud and data breaches.

❖ **Security Measures in Nigerian Education:** The prevalence of examination malpractice in Nigeria, including cheating, impersonation, and leakage of examination materials. Weak security measures contribute to the perpetuation of malpractice.

❖ **Technologies for Security Enhancement:** Integrating biometric technology into examination processes has been proposed as a means to enhance security and prevent impersonation. Block-chain's decentralized nature offers potential solutions for maintaining the integrity of academic records.

❖ **Reliability of Assessment:** Issues such as biased test items or cultural insensitivity can undermine the reliability of assessments. Lack of standardized procedures for setting, administering, and grading examinations can compromise the reliability of results.

❖ **Government Initiatives and Policies:** The Nigerian government has introduced various policies and regulations to address examination malpractice and enhance the reliability of assessments which is yet to achieved the stated goals of such policy. Government investments in technology infrastructure, such as computer-based testing facilities, aim to improve the security and reliability of examinations is not adequate and need more support and funding.

# PROCESS ON HOW JAMB ENHANCES THE SECURITY MEASURES AND RELIABILITY IN THE UTME

The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) has put various programmes and policies towards enhancing its security measures in the yearly Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) in Nigeria, beyond just tackling forgeries, a multifaceted approach is necessary. The following are the strategies put in place by the Board:

❖ **Biometric Verification:** every year, there's robust biometric verification systems which ensure that the person taking the exam is the same as the registered candidate. Biometric data such as fingerprints scans are done during registration and verified on the exam day.

❖ **Advanced Encryption:** the Board utilize advanced encryption techniques to secure exam papers and digital assets related to the examination process on the exams delivery server. This prevents unauthorized access and tampering of exam delivery server.

❖ **Remote Proctoring:** The JAMB ensure that accredited JAMB CBT are well equipped with Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) to monitor the candidates and general conducts of the examination.

❖ **Stakeholder Collaboration:** JAMB has collaborated with various stakeholders including government agencies, security agencies, educational institutions, technology companies, and security experts to develop and implement comprehensive security measures.

❖ **Training and Awareness Programs for the Officials:** JAMB always conduct regular training and awareness programs for exam administrators, invigilators, and candidates to educate them about the importance of exam integrity and the consequences of cheating.

❖ **Penalties for Violations:** JAMB has always ensure enforce and strict penalties for individuals found guilty of exam malpractice, including disqualification from taking future exams, legal action, and cancellation of exam results.

# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this study will be anchored in Social Control Theory and Institutional Theory. Social Control Theory posits that individuals are motivated to conform to societal norms and values to avoid sanctions and maintain social order. Applied to exam fraud, this theory suggests that enhancing social control mechanisms, such as surveillance and punishment, can deter individuals from engaging in fraudulent behavior. Institutional Theory, on the other hand, examines how organizational structures, norms, and values shape individual behavior within institutions. By strengthening institutional safeguards and promoting a culture of integrity, policymakers can create an environment that discourages exam fraud and promotes transparency and reliability in the JAMB UTME.

# METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study adopts the descriptive survey method. The justification for using a descriptive survey in this research lies in its ability to efficiently collect standardized, quantifiable data from a large population, providing a comprehensive snapshot of the phenomena being studied. This approach is versatile, cost-effective, and conducive to both broad generalizations and detailed comparisons. The instrument used to collect data for this study was the questionnaire entitled: 'Beyond Forgeries: Enhancing JAMB UTME Security Measures for Transparency and Reliability in Nigeria'. The total population of this study is 2000 which comprises the Examination Invigilators (Technical Officer, BVRO, Supervisor, Resident Monitor, Proctors, Roving Team, Security Agencies, and the relevant stakeholders) using Krejie and Morgan (1970) sampling, the total sample size is 322 participants. Regression analysis would be used to analyse the study. Regression analysis is a statistical technique used to examine the relationship between two variables: one dependent (outcome) variable and one independent (predictor) variable. The decision to use regression analysis is justified when the research objective is to explore or predict the relationship between two variables, the assumptions of regression analysis are met, and the data is suitable for such analysis.

# SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study show that, the multiple correlation coefficient stood at 0.366 which indicates a high correlation between Technological Innovation and Reliability Measures in JAMB. The multiple coefficients of determination of the variables stood at 0.134 indicating that about 13.4% of the total variation in Reliability Measures is explained by variations in the independent variables (technological innovation) captured in the study. The adjusted $R^2$ being 0.134 also indicates that the independent variable will still explain 13.4% of the variations in reliability measures in JAMB even if other variables were added to the study.

# CONCLUSION

Securing UTME results is not a one-off act but a work-in-progress. With candidates and the general public getting to know the various security features on the printed UTME results fraudulent individuals would continue to attempt to compromise them, thus requiring a concerted effort by JAMB to ensure sustained security. Based on the analysis and findings, the study concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship between security measures and forgeries activities in JAMB UTME. The study also concluded that there is a significant relationship between technological innovations and reliability measures in JAMB UTME.

JAMB UTME security measures can be enhanced in other to improve transparency and reliability in Nigeria, thereby addressing fraudulent issues associated with forgeries of JAMB UTME scores or results.

# RECOMMENDATION

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Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, it was recommended that JAMB as an organization should ensure that security measures such as data security, double-checking and verification of candidates UTME scores, and also encryption of JAMB UTME data to avoid forgeries. The study also recommended that advanced and sophisticated data security system such as block-chain, data encryption and online monitoring and surveillance tools should also be incorporated into the JAMB data management system in other to ensure JAMB UTME results presented by candidates are reliable. Also, increasing public emphasis on the list of top scorers in public examinations has led some candidates to mutilate or forge their results to claim a score among the highest scorers. This in itself can raise diverse opinions and feelings among members of the public that can lead to potential tensions. As a recommendation, JAMB could adopt a mix of the various verification options here detailed t to enable public or third-party verification of UTME results and obtain the list of top best scorers.