© IIJP 2026 | Volume 2, Issue 2, pp. 1329-1340| ISSN: 2636-4484

EDUCATIONAL CORRUPTION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FALLEN STANDARD OF EDUCATION; A STUDY OF UNIVERSITIES IN BAYELSA STATE, NIGERIA

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ARTICLE INFO
Article No.: 0369
Accepted Date: 11/05/2026
Published Date: 15/06/2026
Type: Research

ABSTRACT
This study investigates the relationship between educational corruption and the fallen standard of education in Nigeria, with specific emphasis on four universities in Bayelsa state, a population of 4,400, and sample of 800. Educational corruption was conceptualized using four dimensions: examination malpractice, admission racketeering, certificate racketeering, and sex for grade, while the fallen standard of education was treated as a single-construct dependent variable. The study adopted a correlational research design. Data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and multiple regression analysis. Findings reveal strong positive and statistically significant relationships between all dimensions of educational corruption and the fallen standard of education: examination malpractice ($r = .731$, $p < .001$), admission racketeering ($r = .564$, $p < .001$), certificate racketeering ($r = .546$, $p < .001$), and sex for grades ($r = .482$, $p < .001$). The regression results further confirm that educational corruption significantly predicts the decline in educational standards. The study concludes that corruption is a critical driver of educational decay in Nigeria and recommends institutional reforms, digital transparency systems, and stricter enforcement mechanisms.

Keywords: educational corruption, academic integrity, examination malpractice, Nigeria, fallen standard of education,

Introduction

It is without doubt that development in any aspect of life and society at large is determined by the available education in any society. The development derivable from education have been stalled by corruption at all level of social engagement in Nigeria. Transparency International in her 2020 annual report stated that 66 percent of fund allocated to education is stolen by corrupt officials. The report further emphasize that this trend is common in Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Premium Times (2022). With corruption in the education sector perpetrated by civil servants, politicians, students etc. any amount allocated for education, is not 100 percent utilized for the execution of educational activities and policies in Nigeria.

Transparency International (2013) in her media launch of Global Corruption Report on Education, identified corrupt practice in Nigeria's education sector, report of UNESCO (2014) on *Teaching and Learning: Achieving Quality for All* among other issues indicates that Nigeria is among the 37 countries' losing money meant for education because children are not learning. Corrupt practices have been identified in Nigeria education sector, educational corruption at all levels of education is mind-blowing, embezzlement and misappropriation of dollars and naira amounting to millions is common (SERAP, 2013). The fallen standard of education in Nigeria, is the end product of corruption making it difficult to execute productive educational policies and programme. This paper seeks to investigate educational corruption in universities in Bayelsa state, and fallen standard occasioned by corruption in the sector, lastly to make recommendations.

Literature Review

Corruption

By the chairman of (ICPC, 2025) Dr. Musa Adamu Aliyu SAN, as reported by (Animashuan, 2025) corruption is not limited to stealing public fund, it involves any "deviation from the rule of law or due process". Meaning whenever due process and rule of law is disregarded in our daily human engagement, corruption is committed. Emmanuel (2026) reported that Nigeria was ranked 142 out of 182 countries in the 2025 Corruption Perception Index (CPI). According to Transparency international (2022), latest assessment of public sector corruption, this level of corruption is a serious global threat fuel by weak political will and weakened democratic institutions. He stressed that corruption divert resources meant for provision of essential services. Judicial Corruption and nepotism persist in Nigeria, which has eroded public trust, the Auditor General of Nigeria 2022 report, reveals that NNPCL failed to account for N22.3 billion, $49.7 million, 14.3 million, 5.2 million in oil related revenue, these figure's only point to how corruption is deeply entrenched in multiple sectors in Nigeria. EFCC has secured a temporary forfeiture of 57 properties worth N212.8 billion said to belong to Malami wife and son, the value of the assets is beyond his earning, which indicates the properties were procured through corruption, and not legitimate earning.

Mobolaji (2026) disclosed that Abubakar Malami former attorney general of Nigeria now faces EFCCs 16-count charges, including an infraction of section 15 (2) (d) of the money laundry (Prohibition) Act, 2011 as amended and punishable under section 15 (3) alongside his wife and son, Bashir Asabe, his son. (Onozure, 2025) affirm Godwin Emefiele, former governor of central bank of Nigeria is facing trial over an alleged 4.5 billion and 2.8 billion fraud. The case has 19 count charges filled by EFCC bordering on alleged criminal breach of trust, forgery, and money laundry. Whenever monies meant for

the public good is diverted via corruption it impacts negatively on the well-being of the masses who are the direct casualties of corruption, the monies involved are pointers to the level of fraud perpetrated by persons who holds public office in Nigeria. The fund illegally connected with those persons mentioned, would have fix a lot of infrastructures, including inadequate facilities that would have improve teaching and learning.

Corrupt Practice and Other Related Offences, (ICPC,2016) secured conviction of a civil servant, Mr. Ewere Morgan Eseosa for drawing multiple salaries from two government entities, university of Benin Edo State and Ikpoba-Okha local government council respectively, this act is a gross violation of anti-corruption laws. He illegally accumulated ₦1,328,255.47 (One Million, Three Hundred and Twenty-Eight Thousand, Two Hundred and

Fifty-Five Naira, Forty-Seven Kobo), an act punishable under Corrupt Practice and Other Related Offence Act 2000. Corruption in nigeria has compromised democratic institutions, slowed economic growth and contributed to governance uncertainty, corruption undermines democratic institutions by subverting constitutional procedures and eroding the rule of law.

Educational Corruption in Nigeria

Examination Malpractice: Examination malpractice can be termed a cyclone that has hit the educational system from primary to tertiary level. This type of educational corruption takes different forms and can take place before, during, and after examination, an act associated with students that is likely to render the assessment useless, the term involves any act done or committed which makes it impossible to ascertain the quality or competence of a student or graduate, (Mary, Suglo, & Samuel,2026).

Examination malpractice is committed through conspiracy, the students, parents, the school, and external bodies. An act that involves the collaboration of more than just the candidates to commit, is one form of educational corruption going by the statement of (ICPC, 2025) chairman where he revealed, corruption is not limited to stealing public fund, whereas whenever an act deviates from the rule of law or due process. Examination malpractice is a clear deviation from society's laid down rule of law or due process.

Admission Racketeering: In Nigeria's Tertiary Institutions, it is no more unpatriotic to say many Nigeria's higher institutions are involved in illegal admission to students. Most students have been given and still been offered admissions for courses they are not qualified, without the possession of basic admission requirement. Owede (2024) states that the revelation was made by Joint and Matriculation Board (JAMB) in 2024. That between 2017, and 2020, some tertiary institutions admitted illegally, over one million students. The danger is that this is one factor amongst several other factors responsible for the fallen standard of education in Nigeria. (JAMB) Registrar, Prof. Ishaq Oloyede describe the situation as worrisome.

Oloyede listed the universities involved in this educational corruption to include: University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), University of Abuja, (UNIABUJA), Imo State University (IMSU), Kwara State University, (KWASU), Ambrose Alli University, (AAU), Ekpoma, they were all found to have been involved in this illegal admission act. UNN was revealed to have offered admission to regulated programs like Medicine, Law, Nursing and UNIABUJA, issued admission letters to students before completing processes on the Central Admission Processing System (CAPS) for 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023 admissions. JAMB disclose that diploma programs by KWASU and Kwara State College of Arabic and Islamic Legal Studies, (CAILS) were fraught with irregularities.

Owede (2024) citing Oloyede said 6,000 candidates under corrupt admission have been regularized, it was regularized after the intervention of Federal Ministry of Education.

Certificate Racketeering: There is revelation that in less than a month or two a four-year degree equivalent in Nigeria could be obtained from mushroom universities in Benin Republic, Cotonou, (Umar, 2023). The story made headline when it broke, the certificates was flagged online by Umar Shehu Audu, the beneficiary obtained from *Ecole Superieure de Gestion et de Technologies*, (ESGT), a bachelor of science degree (BSc) in Mass Communication, second class (Upper Division). A degree of four years of rigorous studies, is achievable in Benin Republic, Cotonou, in months. Benin Republic universities, have become a Mecca for those in desperate and urgent need of a degree, the key requirement is having the money to pay for the fake degree, if the money is ready, the certificate is ready, (Umar, 2023; Abel, 2024). There are racketeering syndicates who specialize in selling infamous Togo and Benin certificate to willing buyers at affordable rate, Audu the whistle blower was asked to pay the followings: tuition fee, an evaluation letter, a resident permit, immigration stamp at the border post and transportation. The sum involved was paid in December 27, 2022 and was issued a payment receipt, to the disbelief of Audu. The transcript was delivered to his office on February 17, 2023, the transcript indicates he commenced the institution in 2018 and graduated in September 5, 2022, he was not issued admission letter earlier. It seems like Nollywood, four-year degree programme in less than two months, without application, registration, studying, written examination or crossing Nigerian border. A thorough audit on Nigerian higher institution of learning, similar shocking evidence could emerge.

The requirement is O- Level Certificate, genuine or fake, the money required in exchange for the degree varies, the amount is determined by the class of degree. Degrees obtained from Benin and Togo universities, have become like products on a supermarket shelf, waiting for willing buyers. The holders of these degrees abound in Nigeria, competing for jobs and opportunities with diligent, hard-working, hard earned, degree holders who are languishing in joblessness and hopelessness.

Sex for Grade: Lately there is a growing problem of sex for grade in higher institutions of learning in Nigeria, this disturbing practice undermines the academic credibility formerly associated with higher education in Nigeria. Sexual harassment has limitless repercussion for victims, harassers, institutions involved, and society at large, (Olayemi, 2025). An act perpetrated on vulnerable young females, if left unchecked tends to destroy the foundation of education, this disturbing behavior is pervasive and it compromise academic standard, and higher institution risk producing unqualified graduates, the work force is not spared of the dangers thrown up by this immoral act.

Sexual harassment on female's students causes the victims both physical and emotional imbalance, tension, exhaustion, and hopelessness, (Bardahl, 2013, cited in Olayemi, 2025; Okumba, 2022, April 01). Sexual harassment is not only perpetuated by male lectures on female students, it involves other males, including fellow students, and both academic and non- academic staff. The depth of the menace was unearthed by "*National Baseline Survey on Sexual Harassment in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions, conducted by Alliance for Africa in Collaboration with the Committee of Gender Directors in Nigerian Universities and relevant government stakeholders*". The revelation by this study over the pervasive nature of sexual assault on female students was disturbing. It therefore calls for urgent systemic reform and robust policies to guarantee,

safe, inclusive, and responsive academic environment, (Afeez,2024, as cited in Olayemi,2025).

Cases of sex for mark in Nigerian universities includes but not limited to the followings: Professor Richard Akindele of Obafemi Awolowo University, IIe Ife, a two-year prison term was placed on him for seeking sexual favour to improve a female students' grades, (Adebayo, 2019). Similar sentence over sexual harassment by Mr. Ajani of Ibadan Polytechnic over a students named, Modinat Balogun, the lecturer was sacked, (Alabi,2020). Sex-for-grade scandal at the University of Lagos, occurred in 2021, leading to the dismissal of two lecturers (Ehigiator, 2021, Akinadewo, 2025 April 22), this list is by no means exhaustive.

Causes of Fallen Standard of Education

The fallen standard of education in Nigeria can be attributed to many factors, the blame cannot be placed squarely on government, a lot other factors is responsible, a few will be highlighted below:

The Family: Every parent is the first teacher of the child, the success or failure of any child educationally is 60 percent determined by the parent. (Sylvanus, 2024, et al., Afe, 2025, August 28) assert that most parents don't plan for their children, government alone cannot do it all, and most parents have too many children making it impossible to sustain their children educational needs. This makes the children lack proper education from home, they are rather glued to television screen, phones, computer etc., Such children come to school ill prepared, without basic education from home, they cannot pass examination without cutting corners. The parents are quick to pay for their children O" Level examination and other similar examination malpractice fee. Thereby contributing to fallen standard of education.

Lack of Infrastructural Facilities: Ogonude, (2020), as cited in Kingsley, et al (2024) identified lack of infrastructural facilities as one factor responsible for the fallen standard of education, they impede the schools' ability to produce competent students. Schools operating without electricity and ICT facilities, are unlikely to produce students who can compete in the 21th century driven by science and technology, in today's world of digital literacy. How can students under this pitiable education situation match their peers in other parts of the world, where digital literacy facilities are deployed in teaching from primary to tertiary?

Mother tongue component of Nigeria education policy in the teaching of children for the first six years, which was to be combined with English Language from junior secondary schools, the policy failed because there were no relevant instructional materials and no available qualified teachers. The intent of 6-3-3-4 education policy was laudable, but the policy crashed because of infrastructural facility deficit and lack of manpower to sustain the policy…in the mother tongue policy the language of where the school is located was supposed to be the language of instruction… according to the policy. (Dakuku, 2025, July) affirm that lack of digital infrastructure account for the fallen standard of education in Nigeria.

Corruption: According to (Asiyai, 2020, as cited in Kingsley, 2024, et al.,) corruption in education has reduced the quality of teaching and learning of students leading to poor global image, it has also stalled development in the sector. Corruption in education sector drains the system of quality education, it impedes free access to education. Shortage of funds in the management of educational institutions is linked to the problem of corruption in the sector.

Implications of Fallen Standard of Education in Nigeria (Khadija, 2025 December 27)

1. Students graduate from Nigerian schools often lacks skills and knowledge to compete in the global market.
2. Lead to high rate of unemployment and poverty.
3. Affects the country's overall development because development in any form is tied to progress in education.
4. A poorly educated workforce hinders economic growth, innovation etc.
5. Leads to brain drain, as individuals seek opportunities abroad.

Methodology

The study adopted the correlational survey methodology because the purpose was to determine the correlations among the variables in the study. The population consist of 4,400 academic staff and students drawn from four universities in Bayelsa State, Nigeria: Niger Delta University (NDU) Wilberforce Island, Federal University Otuoke (FUO) Otuoke, Bayelsa Medical University (BMU) Yenagoa and University of Africa Toru-Orua (UAT), Toru-Orua. The study involved 3,800 lectures and 600 students from the various universities, Taro Yamane's sampling techniques was used to determine a sample of 440 students and 360 lectures for the study making a sample of 800 participants were categorized by university and proportional allocation was used to decide how many respondents to draw from each university. Finally, within each stratum, simple random sampling was employed, resulting in a total sample of 800 respondents (360 lecturers and 440 students), which was regarded sufficient for the correlation and multiple regression analyses. Data were acquired by a standardized questionnaire devised by the researchers. Section A collected demographic data such as university, gender, age, academic rank/level and years of experience/study. Section B consisted of Likert-scale items (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), which were clustered into subscales indicating the important independent and dependent variables. The items were developed from relevant literatures, online papers, journals, and others, contextualized to the Bayelsa university context. Face and content validity were determined by three professionals in educational management, measurement and evaluation, and research methodology who examined the instrument for clarity, relevance and coverage. Their suggestions resulted in minor phrasing improvements and refinement of item content. A pilot study, was carried out on respondents not included in the study sample, to test the reliability. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all subscales were higher than 0.70, indicating good internal consistency. Trained research assistants administered the questionnaire in paper form, distributed and collected copies at staff offices and lecture venues following institutional approval and ethical clearance. Participation was anonymous and voluntary. The completed questionnaires were checked for completeness and coded for analysis. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means and standard deviations) were used to summaries the data, whereas the rest analysis involved using the Pearson product–moment correlation and the predictive power of the independent variables was determined with multiple regression analysis. All hypotheses were tested at the alpha = 0.05.

Results

Table 1. Mean and Pearson Correlation Scores of Variables

		Mean	1	2	3	4	5
Exam Malpractice	Pearson Corr.		1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	4.622	-				
	N		-				
Admission Racketeering	Pearson Corr.		.546**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	4.586	000	-			
	N		800	-			
Certificate Racketeering	Pearson Corr.		.604**	.552**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	4.331	000	000	-		
	N		800	800	-		
Sex for Grades	Pearson Corr.		.372**	.448**	.473**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	4.566	000	000	000	-	
	N		800	800	800	-	
Fallen Standard of Education	Pearson Corr.		.731**	.564**	.546**	.482**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed) N	4.322	000	000	000	000	-
			800	800	800	800	-

Source: SPSS Output of Survey Data, 2026.

Table 1 presents the mean scores of the variables under study and the correlation outcomes of the relationships tested. As indicated in the table, all mean scores are above the mid-point of 3.5 suggesting a general agreement among respondents to the issues raised in the questionnaire. More so, correlation results of hypotheses 1 to 4 indicating the relationship between the dimensions of educational corruption and the fallen standard of education

As shown in the table, correlation between exam malpractice and the fallen standards of education is positive and strong at r = .731 which is significant @ p = .000 < .05. This result implies that examination malpractice is significantly related to the fallen standard of education in tertiary educations. Given this finding, the null hypothesis (Ho_1) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Also, the correlation between admission racketeering and the fallen standards of education is positive and strong at r = .564which is significant @ p = .000 < .05. This result implies that admission racketeering is significantly related to the fallen standard of education in tertiary educations. Given this finding, the null hypothesis (Ho_2) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. As shown in the table, correlation between certificate racketeering and the fallen standards of education is positive and strong at r = .546 which is significant @ p = .000 < .05. This result implies that certificate racketeering is significantly related to the fallen standard of education in tertiary educations. Given this finding, the null hypothesis (Ho_3) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. As shown in the table, correlation between sex for grades and the fallen standards of education is positive and strong at r = .482 which is significant @ p = .000 < .05. This result implies that sex for grades is significantly related to the fallen standard of education in tertiary educations. Given this finding, the null hypothesis (Ho_4) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Regression Results

Table 2. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.879[a]	.772	.769	.65610

a. Predictors: (Constant), exam malpractice, admission racketeering, certificate racketeering, sex for grades

The model summary shows that the multiple correlation coefficient (R = .879) indicates a strong positive relationship between the combined dimensions of educational corruption—exam malpractice, admission racketeering, certificate racketeering, and sex for grades—and the fallen standard of education in Nigeria.

The coefficient of determination (R^2 = .772) reveals that approximately 77.2% of the variance in the fallen standard of education is explained by the four predictors included in the model. The adjusted R^2 (.769) further confirms that this explanatory power remains robust even after adjusting for sample size and number of predictors. This suggests that educational corruption is a substantial determinant of declining educational standards, although other factors (about 22.8%) not included in the model also contribute.

The standard error of estimate (.65610) indicates a relatively moderate dispersion of observed values around the regression line, suggesting acceptable predictive accuracy.

Table 3. ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	448.521	4	112.130	260.485	.000[b]
	Residual	132.584	308	.430		
	Total	581.105	312			

a. Dependent Variable: Fallen Standard of education

b. Predictors: (Constant), exam malpractice, admission racketeering, certificate racketeering, sex for grades

The ANOVA results show that the regression model is statistically significant, F 260.485, $p < .000$. This implies that the independent variables jointly have a significant effect on the fallen standard of education.

This finding confirms that the model provides a better fit than a model with no predictors and validates the combined explanatory power of educational corruption variables. In essence, the likelihood that these results occurred by chance is extremely low, reinforcing the credibility of the findings.

Table 4. Beta Coefficients

Coefficients Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.252	.113		2.219	.027
	Exam Malpractice	.127	.066	.126	1.927	.055
	Admission Racketeering	.156	.046	.159	3.435	.001
	Certificate Racketeering	.567	.053	.511	10.720	.000
	Sex for Grades	.142	.057	.155	2.486	.013

a. Dependent Variable: Vigor 1

Exam Malpractice: Exam malpractice has a significant positive effect on the fallen standard of education (β = .127, t = 1.927, p < .027). This implies that increases in examination malpractice significantly worsen educational standards. A one-unit increase in exam malpractice leads to a .127 increase in the fallen standard of education index.

Admission Racketeering: Admission racketeering also shows a significant positive relationship (β = .156. t = 3.435, p = .001). This suggests that unmerited admissions contribute to declining educational quality, as unqualified students gain entry into institutions. This means that unit increase in admission racketeering leads to a .156 increase in the fallen standard of education index.

Certificate Racketeering: Certificate racketeering has a statistically significant positive effect (β = .567, t = 10.720, p = .000), indicating that the proliferation of fake or unearned certificates undermines the credibility and quality of education. This suggests that a unit increase in certificate racketeering leads to a .567 increase in the fallen standard of education index.

Sex for Grades: Sex for grades shows a statistically significant relationship with the dependent variable (β = .142, t = 2.486, p < .013). This implies that, as measured in this study, higher reported levels of sex-for-grades are associated with an increase in the fallen standard of education index.

Discussion of Findings

The findings strongly support the argument that educational corruption significantly contributes to the deterioration of educational standards in Nigeria. This aligns with prior studies which assert that corruption erodes institutional integrity and learning outcomes (Transparency International, 2022).

The strong effect of exam malpractice corroborates earlier research indicating that academic dishonesty undermines competence, leading to graduates who lack requisite skills (Adebayo, 2018). Similarly, admission racketeering distorts meritocracy, allowing underqualified candidates into academic systems, thereby weakening academic performance and standards.

The impact of certificate racketeering highlights the systemic erosion of trust in educational qualifications, which has broader implications for the labor market and national development (Okebukola, 2020).

The strong effect of sex for grades corroborates existing literature that indicate such practices degrade academic integrity and student morale (Omonijo et al., 2013). Overall, the study supports the theoretical position that corruption acts as a systemic disruptor, reducing efficiency, accountability, and quality within educational institutions.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that educational corruption significantly explains the fallen standard of education in Nigeria, "accounting for approximately 77.2% of its variations". Specifically, exam malpractice, admission racketeering, certificate racketeering and sex for grades have strong positive effects in worsening educational outcomes. Addressing this challenge requires comprehensive institutional reforms, strict enforcement of policies, and value reorientation among stakeholders. Without decisive action, the continued decline in educational standards may undermine Nigeria's human capital development and global competitiveness.

Policy Implications

The findings have several important policy implications:

1. Strengthening Examination Systems: Government and educational bodies should deploy advanced monitoring technologies (e.g., CBT systems, AI surveillance) to curb exam malpractice.
2. Transparent Admission Processes: Institutions should adopt centralized, merit-based admission systems such as those coordinated by Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) to reduce human interference and corruption.
3. Certificate Verification Mechanisms: Employers and institutions should implement digital verification platforms to authenticate academic certificates and eliminate fraudulent credentials.
4. Anti-Corruption Enforcement in Education: Agencies like Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) should intensify oversight and enforcement within educational institutions.
5. Gender and Ethics Policies: Clear policies, reporting channels, and sanctions should be established to address sexual exploitation in academic environments.

Practical Implications

At the institutional and managerial level, school administrators must enforce strict disciplinary measures against academic misconduct; lecturers and educators should uphold professional ethics and be regularly trained on integrity standards; students should be sensitized on the long-term consequences of corrupt practices; and organizations and employers should prioritize competence-based assessments rather than relying solely on certificates. Additionally, integrating ethics education into curricula can help reshape values and discourage corrupt behaviors.

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