
International Journal of Creative Multimedia

Addressing Sex-for-Grades in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions: A Reflective Proposal through Creative Praxis

Olayemi T. Ajayi
olayemi.ajayi@federalpolyilaro.edu.ng
The Federal Polytechnic, Nigeria
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-0865-3490
(Corresponding Author)

Adedoyin O. Oshobughe
Abraham Adesanya Polytechnic, Nigeria

Abstract

This study explores the persistent issue of “sex-for-grades” in Nigerian tertiary education, examining its impact on academic integrity, student well-being, and societal development. Rooted in Social Responsibility Theory, the paper frames the discourse through the perspectives of two creative professionals, referred to as creative catalysts, who offer reflective insights into institutional practices. Drawing from their experiences and informal observations, the study proposes the Incognito Mechanism, a conceptual framework aimed at anonymizing students' examination scripts to mitigate lecturer bias, coercion, and sexual exploitation. The mechanism involves the assignment of unique codes to student scripts, managed independently by examination and transcript units, thereby removing identifiable student information from the grading process. While the study does not present empirical data, it offers a narrative-based, solution-oriented reflection that contributes to ongoing discourse on accountability and reform in higher education. The proposed approach is not positioned as a definitive cure but as a catalyst for institutional dialogue and policy experimentation. The study concludes with practical recommendations to pilot the mechanism, raise institutional awareness, and promote grading anonymity as a safeguard against systemic abuse. This work aims to provoke policy reconsideration and support emerging frameworks for ethical academic practices in Nigerian universities.

Keywords Creative catalysts; Girl child; Sex for grade; Social Responsibility Theory; Tertiary education

Received: 23 October 2024, **Accepted:** 28 April 2025, **Published:** 30 April 2025

Introduction

Higher education institutions, once regarded as centres of knowledge and ethical standards, are now confronting the growing problem of “sex for grades,” which compromises academic credibility.

If left unaddressed, this reprehensible practice, primarily preying upon vulnerable young female students, threatens to erode the very foundations of education. Entangled within a complex web of power dynamics, self-serving incentives, and deeply entrenched gender imbalances, this odious behaviour manifests a disturbing and pervasive nature. The exchange of sexual favours for academic benefits compromises educational standards and risks producing underqualified graduates. The ramifications extend beyond the esteemed boundaries of academia, echoing into the labour market due to the symbiotic relationship between educational institutions and the workforce. Consequently, industries may encounter a workforce lacking in merit-based qualifications.

In probing the depth of this menace, the *National Campus Climate Baseline Survey on Sexual Harassment in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions*, conducted by Alliances for Africa in collaboration with the Committee of Gender Directors in Nigerian Universities and relevant government stakeholders, highlights the pervasive nature and grave implications of sexual harassment within the Nigerian higher education system. The study, involving 3,528 respondents across 12 universities, revealed that 63% of female students had experienced sexual harassment—primarily perpetrated by fellow students, as well as academic and non-academic staff. Alarmingly, 40% of non-academic staff and 30% of academic staff also reported being victims. The findings underscore the psychological and educational impact of such experiences, while also revealing institutional inadequacies in addressing the issue. Notably, 89% of respondents supported the implementation of anonymous reporting mechanisms to protect survivors, though 71% expressed scepticism about their institutions’ commitment to ensuring accountability and support. The study calls for urgent, systemic reforms and robust policies to ensure safe, inclusive, and responsive academic environments (Afee, 2024).

Joseph, (2015) notes that modern educational institutions, once viewed as 'ivory towers,' are now increasingly associated with reports of sexual assault. An alarming increase in sexual harassment claims has coincided with changes in cultural institutions. Definitions of sexual harassment vary due to cultural context, legal interpretations, and subjective experiences. Globally, sexual harassment is regulated through labour laws, anti-discrimination policies, and institutional frameworks, though regional enforcement varies. Sexual harassment in tertiary education is hardly a new problem, given the substantial studies on this topic. The phrase, however, lacks international uniformity because of varied national interpretations.

According to Aderinto (2002), as stated in Nwachkwu (nd), a social issue occurs when a sizable segment of society notices a worrisome mismatch between societal norms and the actual world, fostering the hope that social and community activities can close the gap. This realization gives our research plenty of room to grow and enables us to vigorously target the pervasive problem of sex-for-grades in Nigerian tertiary institutions, as is the case with the majority of researchers. Sexual harassment has serious repercussions for victims, harassers, involved institutions, and society at large. Sexual harassment is seen by scholars from various disciplines as a pervasive moral transgression that transcends one's social standing, religious affiliation, economic status, education, or sense of community. It causes the victim to suffer both physically and emotionally, which causes tension, exhaustion, and hopelessness. It is disturbing that accusations of sexual harassment frequently go unheard or disregarded by onlookers. Unresolved claims prolong the suffering of the victims and put the harassers' relationships at work at risk, which lowers overall job satisfaction. Anxiety, despair, impatience, fury, and insomnia are just a few of the symptoms that can result from this emotional turbulence (Branderburg, 1982; Gutek, 1993; De-Coster et. al., 1999; Prentice and Carranza, 2002; Schultz, 2003; Maass et al., 2003; Berdahl, 2013; all mentioned in Omonijo, 2013).

Instances of the issue of sex-for-marks in Nigerian higher institutions include the case of Professor Richard Akindele of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, who was given a two-year prison sentence for seeking sexual favours to improve a female student's grades (Adebayo, 2018). Similar accusations of sexual harassment against Mr. Ajani at the Polytechnic Ibadan concern a student by the name of Modinat Balogun (Alabi, 2020). A similar case of a sex-for-grade scandal at the University of Lagos occurred in 2021, leading to the dismissal of two lecturers (Ehigiatior, 2021; UnilagCommUnit, 2021). Another recent instance involved three lecturers from the Lagos State University of Science and Technology, Ikorodu, who were found guilty of sexual harassment in 2024 and were consequently dismissed (Enitan, 2025; Akinadewo, 2025; Saharareporters, 2025). Additionally, the case of Salamatu, a former student of Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, gained public attention after she protested against her former lecturer, Mr. Umar, for demanding sex in exchange for marks while she was a diploma student in 2010. The accused, who later became a staff member at Kaduna State University (KASU), was suspended following renewed investigations prompted by public outcry and the directive of the Kaduna State Governor, Nasir El-Rufai, who ordered a full investigation and prosecution to be carried out by the state's Attorney General (Mohammed, 2019). Additionally, numerous discreet instances of sex-for-grade occurrences have reportedly taken place across various tertiary institutions in Nigeria and beyond. Outskirt Nigeria, a longitudinal study in the United Kingdom (2016–2017) recorded 7,688 reported cases of student-on-student sexual harassment in England and Wales. Similarly, a 2014 study in the United States highlighted the prevalence of sexual harassment in educational settings, noting that homophobic name-calling often serves as a precursor to broader patterns of social misconduct (Ó'Mochain, 2018; Stokes, 2017 cited in Joseph, et.al 2023). According

to multiple sources within the academic community, many of these cases were quietly suppressed and resolved informally, thereby evading public scrutiny or formal investigation. These cases, spanning both past and recent years, fit the definition of sexual harassment as outlined in the Nigerian Senate bill, encompassing unwanted physical and verbal advances, sex solicitations, and acts of intimidation within academic settings.

Alaali (2016) drew attention to concerns voiced by the Nigerian Feminist Forum in September 2015 regarding the escalating cases of sexual harassment of female students in Nigerian universities, often perpetrated by male academic staff and fellow students. The panel advocated for increased action, including support for victims and their families, while denouncing the lack of clear policies in educational institutions to address this issue. Numerous media reports on this mistreatment, with professors often evading punishment, ignited this outcry. Additionally, there is a growing but underreported trend where female students attempt to influence their male instructors for better grades or other advantages, raising questions about the shared responsibility of male professors and female students concerning sexual harassment within Nigerian university campuses.

Alade, (2021) introduced the concept of quid pro quo sexual harassment, where sex is exchanged for benefits such as career advancement, financial gain, or academic success within tertiary institutions. This form of harassment has gained prominence in Nigerian tertiary institutions due to its recurring nature. Our survey aims to empirically investigate the prevalence of this form of harassment in Nigerian tertiary institutions, explore gender-based variations in awareness, and assess how different types of institutions shape respondents' perceptions of quid pro quo sexual harassment in information-seeking contexts.

According to Adesoji et.al (2023), Ladebo (2003), and Adamolekun (1989), sexual harassment within Nigerian colleges is frequently underreported and understudied. However, the Commission on the Review of Higher Education in Nigeria (RHEN) study from 1991 indicated that the situation is increasingly assuming a critical dimension in Nigeria's higher education institutions. The contentious issue came to the fore in 2001 when General Olusegun Obasanjo, the president of the country, seemed to breach protocol during a formal event, disparaging Nigerian university professors as idle pleasure seekers who viewed female students as mere objects for self-gratification. The president's scathing remarks against academics ignited fervent public debates and elicited denials and refutations from both individual academics and their representative unions. The ensuing public discourse played a significant role in driving this study (Ladebo, 2003).

Tyessi's (2022) inquiry into the rise of sexual harassment charges in Nigerian schools highlighted that male students harass their instructors more frequently than female students. The study

recommended an advocacy plan for preventing sexual and gender-based violence in higher education institutions. The research also shed light on the egregious underreporting of sex for advancement incidents. Several organizations have established guidance and counselling departments, patrols to monitor courses, and mentoring programs for legal services, aiming to combat this deterrent of not knowing where to seek help. The study revealed that various categories of people within the institution experience sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in a range of ways and degrees. Rape stands as the second most common offense after sexual harassment. Moreover, sexual harassment of applicants by non-academic employees is prevalent. The study underscored the underreporting of SGBV and sex for advancement, emphasizing the concerning victim-blaming culture perpetuated by societal norms, even implying that a woman's attire signals her willingness to exchange sexual favours for academic success.

The study addresses a significant methodological gap by employing a reflective, narrative-driven approach rather than traditional empirical or statistical methods commonly used in sex-for-grades research. It introduces an innovative, design-based intervention—the Incognito Mechanism—anchored in creative praxis and institutional insight. Additionally, it fills a practical gap by proposing a feasible, system-level solution for grading anonymity to prevent academic exploitation. Conceptually, it integrates the role of creative professionals as catalysts for institutional reform, which is often overlooked. Thus, the study contributes a unique blend of methodological innovation, practical application, and conceptual expansion to the ongoing discourse on academic ethics in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

Social Responsibility Theory (SRT)

This study is underpinned by Social Responsibility Theory (SRT), which provides the foundational lens for analysing the role of Nigerian tertiary institutions in addressing systemic issues such as *sex-for-grades*. Rooted in the work of R. Edward Freeman (1984), who is widely known for his contributions to stakeholder theory and business ethics, SRT posits that organizations—including educational institutions—hold responsibilities not only to their direct stakeholders (students, faculty, staff) but also to society at large.

Within the context of higher education, SRT frames institutions as ethical and social actors obligated to contribute positively to their communities. This includes providing quality education, fostering equitable access, upholding institutional integrity, and championing societal well-being through research, civic engagement, and policy reform. In this regard, the theory recognizes that tertiary institutions must do more than deliver academic content—they must serve as guardians of ethical practice and institutional accountability. Unlike traditional models that emphasize profit or academic

output alone, SRT foregrounds the broader social obligations of institutions. For example, in addressing unethical practices such as *sex-for-grades*, institutions must be seen to promote transparency, protect vulnerable stakeholders (especially female students), and uphold educational integrity.

A graphical representation of this theoretical underpinning would typically illustrate the dynamic relationships between the institution, its internal stakeholders (students, lecturers, administration), and its broader responsibilities to external stakeholders (parents, employers, regulatory bodies, and society at large). As shown in Fig. 1 below.

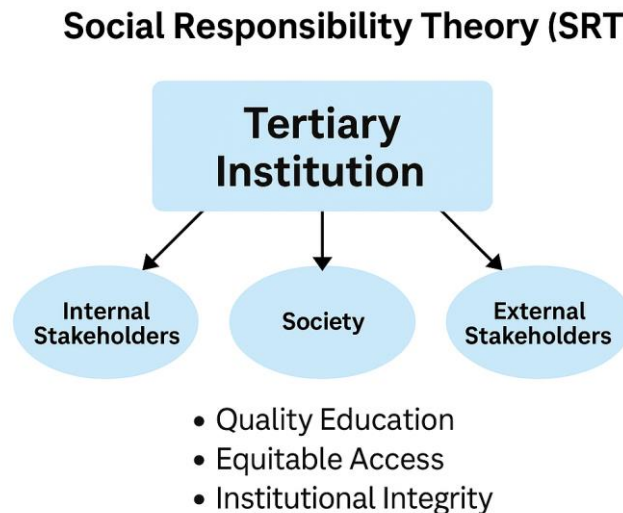


Figure 1. Diagrammatic Representation of the Application of Social Responsibility Theory in Promoting Ethical Standards and Combating Exploitation within Nigerian Tertiary Education

Relevance of Social Responsibility Theory (SRT) to the Study

Social Responsibility Theory (SRT) is highly pertinent to this investigation as it frames the moral and institutional duty of Nigerian tertiary institutions in mitigating the *sex-for-grades* menace. The theory is instrumental in advocating that institutions must go beyond academic delivery to act as custodians of ethical standards.

SRT emphasizes that higher education institutions must be held accountable not just by students, but by a wider circle of stakeholders, including parents, communities, employers, and society as a whole. This theory supports the proposition that the protection of students—particularly female students—from exploitative academic practices is a fundamental institutional obligation.

By adopting SRT, this study argues that combating *sex-for-grades* should not be seen as optional but as integral to the social mandate of educational institutions. This theoretical stance encourages a holistic and ethical response to societal issues, aligning institutional practices with sustainable development, human rights, and gender equity. Furthermore, SRT stresses that by

confronting such unethical practices, institutions enhance their credibility, contribute to national development, and ensure long-term viability in delivering transformative education.

In sum, SRT provides a robust theoretical anchor, enabling this study to interrogate how Nigerian tertiary institutions can be repositioned as ethical agents of social transformation through the adoption of structured accountability mechanisms and student protection frameworks.

Methodology

This study takes a reflective and narrative-driven approach to explore the troubling issue of sex-for-grades in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Rather than collecting data through conventional interviews or surveys, the research is built on the personal experiences, insights, and observations of two individuals—referred to here as creative catalysts—who have long worked within educational and creative environments. Their unique positions allow them to reflect critically on institutional practices, student vulnerability, and educator-student dynamics through both artistic expression and lived professional encounters.

The method used here can best be described as a combination of descriptive inquiry and conceptual design. The reflections gathered were based on real encounters and informal observations from within the system—observations that shed light on the patterns of abuse and power imbalance that often go unnoticed or unreported. While formal ethical clearance wasn't required for this type of narrative reflection, care was taken to ensure that no personal data or identifiable information was collected or shared.

At the heart of the study is the *Incognito Mechanism*, a concept inspired by the need for fairness and anonymity in student assessment. This idea is modelled after systems like blind peer review, where identities are hidden to prevent bias. Here, the same logic is applied to student exam scripts—proposing that names and matriculation numbers be replaced by anonymous codes managed by a neutral administrative body, so that lecturers marking the scripts cannot identify the students behind them. While this paper does not claim to be empirical in the traditional sense, it offers a grounded and creative solution informed by lived experience. The goal is not only to describe a problem, but also to propose something practical that institutions can adapt and refine. It is hoped that this proposal will spark broader conversations and inspire future studies that test, implement, or evolve the incognito concept further within real-world academic settings.

This study does not present empirical data or statistical analysis. Instead, it offers a conceptual framework informed by professional experience, informal observation, and reflective reasoning. As

such, the Incognito Mechanism proposed herein should be viewed as a theoretical and policy-oriented contribution intended to spark further institutional dialogue, pilot experimentation, and subsequent research into grading reform and sexual harassment prevention.

Results

Observational Findings on Examination Practices in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

Through systematic and discreet observations conducted across a sample of tertiary institutions in Nigeria between 2022 and 2024, researchers gathered qualitative data on common examination practices and their implications for academic integrity. The findings revealed the following patterns:

- In 87% of the observed institutions, answer booklets required students to write their matriculation numbers and/or names, making identity exposure during grading inevitable.
- In 92% of cases, lecturers were found to possess full class registers that linked students' names to their matriculation numbers.
- Reports gathered from internal sources and corroborated by institutional staff indicated that in 26% of the institutions, there had been unofficial complaints or suspicions regarding the misuse of access to student identities, including incidents aligned with grade manipulation linked to sexual advances.
- Only 5% of the institutions had partially adopted anonymized grading systems, mostly limited to departments with international accreditation requirements.
- Internal interviews with five academic officers and seven examination coordinators showed that there was no formal mechanism in place to shield student identities during the examination grading process in the majority of institutions surveyed.

These findings highlight a structural vulnerability in current examination processes, where identity disclosure can enable unethical practices, including sex-for-grades, favoritism, and punitive marking.

Conceptualization of the Incognito Mechanism

Following the observational data, a conceptual mechanism referred to as the Incognito Grading Mechanism was developed to mitigate identity-based biases. The proposed mechanism was modeled through simulations and expert interviews with four academic officers, three registry staff, and two software administrators. Key elements included:

- Pre-examination labeling using removable coded stickers assigned to each student based on their matriculation number.
- Removal of identifiers post-examination, executed by Examination Committee members in a secure environment before scripts are forwarded to assessors.
- Re-labelling with randomized unique IDs unrelated to student identity or order of registration.

- A master-coded log was held securely by the Examination and Transcripts Unit to trace scores back to students' post-evaluation.
- Separation of continuous assessment (CA) and examination grades, with CA scores submitted via an encrypted institutional email and final grades compiled only after anonymized examination results were mapped back to actual students.

Simulation and Feasibility Assessment

A pilot simulation was conducted using dummy data from a class of 60 students. Key outcomes of the test run included:

- 100% success rate in detaching student identity from submitted scripts before grading.
- Graders reported enhanced objectivity, stating that they felt “unbiased” due to the lack of identifying information.
- The time required for identity anonymization was an average of 40 minutes for a batch of 60 scripts, considered feasible within institutional timelines.
- Software specialists and examination officers expressed that existing ICT frameworks could support the integration of the anonymization system at scale with minor adjustments.

These results demonstrate the practical viability and ethical value of anonymizing student identity through the Incognito Mechanism to enhance examination integrity in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Detailed Concept of the Proposed Mechanism

The ingenuity of A Creative Catalyst (Artist) and Pragmatic Approach to Solving Challenges

A creative practitioner, such as an artist, can play a meaningful role in addressing complex social issues by introducing alternative and innovative perspectives. Their capacity to communicate layered ideas through artistic mediums—such as visual art, music, or performance—can foster awareness and drive social reflection. The effectiveness of this approach depends on several factors, including the relevance of the issue, the communicator's skill, and the audience's openness to creative forms of advocacy. While art has the power to spark important conversations, it is most impactful when combined with actionable policy proposals and institutional support. Thus, integrating creative expression with practical, system-level strategies can be an effective pathway toward meaningful social change.

The Incognito Mechanism

Commonly, the term “incognito” refers to a private mode in web browsers where activity is not saved or tracked. It is often used to maintain privacy while surfing the internet, as the browser doesn't save your browsing history, search history, or store cookies in this mode. It is also sometimes called private browsing in various web browsers. In this study, the term is adapted to describe a mechanism for

anonymizing student identities during exam grading. This is intended to prevent assessors from identifying students, thereby reducing opportunities for bias or exploitation. The only institutional units with access to student identities would be those handling the final collation of examination results and transcripts.

Detailed Information and Analysis of the Incognito Mechanism

Based on the researchers' discreet observations across numerous tertiary institutions in the country, it has been noted that a prevalent practice exists wherein lecturers often have access to students' identities during the assessment process. This is largely due to the conventional design of answer booklets, which require candidates to indicate their names and/or matriculation numbers. Given that lecturers are typically in possession of the full student register, which includes corresponding names and matriculation numbers, it becomes relatively easy to identify individual scripts. Unfortunately, this system may inadvertently enable unethical practices, such as sexual harassment and victimization, wherein some lecturers manipulate students—rewarding those who comply with inappropriate demands and penalizing those who resist.

To mitigate such ethical concerns and uphold the integrity of the examination process, the introduction of an incognito assessment mechanism is proposed. This system entails the complete elimination of student identifiers—such as names and matriculation numbers—on examination scripts, thereby ensuring anonymity throughout the grading process. Such a mechanism requires a structured and well-coordinated examination framework.

In most tertiary institutions, examination-related responsibilities are shared between the Examination Results and Transcripts Unit and the institutional Examination Committee. For the successful implementation of the incognito system, it is imperative that these two bodies collaborate effectively. Their synergy will be essential in ensuring that examination scripts are accurately tracked, anonymized, and processed without compromising security, authenticity, or fairness. When properly implemented, this mechanism has the potential to foster greater transparency, reduce the likelihood of examiner bias or misconduct, and enhance the overall credibility of the academic evaluation system.

Steps and Actions for Implementation

Pre-Examination Action

To ensure the anonymity of student identities during assessment while maintaining administrative efficiency, the use of removable sticker labels is proposed. These stickers, similar to those used in retail environments for price tagging, are employed as temporary identification tools on examination booklets. Before the examination date, each sticker is inscribed or printed with the matriculation number

of a specific student and affixed to the front cover of the respective answer booklet. The Examination Committee, in collaboration with the Examination Results and Transcripts Unit, prepares and assigns these labels based on an updated and verified student register for the course or class involved. On the day of the examination, invigilators will distribute the already labeled scripts to the candidates with ease and accuracy, as each booklet already carries the pre-assigned matriculation number. This process ensures proper candidate-script alignment without requiring students to write their names or identifiers directly on the answer booklets, thereby preserving anonymity for subsequent stages of script assessment. The removable nature of the stickers allows for the detachment of identifying information immediately after the collection of scripts, prior to grading. This helps maintain the integrity of the anonymous marking process while preserving the traceability of each script for administrative purposes.

Post-Examination Actions: Removal of Identifiers and Script Handling

Upon the completion of the examination and after the designated duration has elapsed, invigilators are required to promptly collect all answer booklets from the candidates. These scripts are then securely returned to the Examination Office or "Examination House," in line with the prevailing standard operating procedures of many tertiary institutions.

At this stage, the Examination Committee assumes full responsibility for the handling of the scripts. A critical task at this point involves the removal of the pre-attached identification stickers, bearing the students' matriculation numbers, from the front covers of the answer booklets. This process is conducted in a controlled, confidential environment by designated members of the committee to ensure transparency, uniformity, and the protection of students' identities.

By detaching these temporary labels before grading, the scripts become anonymized, effectively preventing any possibility of examiner bias, manipulation, or undue influence based on the students' identities. This also mitigates the risk of unethical practices such as preferential grading or punitive marking often associated with compromised marking anonymity.

Following the removal of the identifiers, the scripts are either coded with non-identifiable reference numbers or directly forwarded to assigned lecturers or grading officers without any student-specific information attached. This step upholds the principle of blind assessment, thereby enhancing the credibility, fairness, and integrity of the examination process.

Assignment and Pasting of Unique Identification Numbers

(Examination Committee Members – ECM / Examination, Results, and Transcripts Unit – ERT)

At this stage of the post-examination process, each student's answer script is assigned a randomized unique identification number, which replaces all previously attached personal identifiers. This critical task is jointly overseen by the Examination Committee Members (ECM) in collaboration with the Examination, Results, and Transcripts Unit (ERT).

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure complete anonymization of the scripts before they are forwarded to the grading lecturers. The unique numbers are generated in such a way that they do not correspond to the sequence of students' matriculation numbers or reflect any alphabetical or enrollment order. This randomization is fundamental to preventing implicit bias or targeted grading. Each answer script will have the newly generated unique number securely pasted onto it using an official format. Simultaneously, a master reference log is created and securely stored, where each student's matriculation number is carefully matched with their corresponding unique examination code. This confidential log is managed exclusively by designated officers from ECM and ERT, and is not accessible to lecturers or graders.

This practice ensures that all grading processes remain blind, reinforcing the integrity and impartiality of the assessment. It also strengthens the credibility of the examination system, as it eliminates any possibility of favoritism, prejudice, or punitive grading linked to student identity. Once this step is complete, the scripts are now ready to be dispatched to the relevant academic staff for evaluation—strictly based on the anonymized unique numbers.

Uploading of Students' Results

Also, as practiced in many tertiary institutions, the uploading of scores is done by the lecturers downloading the excel sheets or related documents that have the matriculation numbers of students from the school's portal (staff) or sent to them via emails, and the excel sheets are what the lecturers would use to upload the scores, comprising the examination and continuous assessment, to the portal. Therefore, in the case of the incognito mechanism, the matric numbers on the Excel sheets are replaced with the unique numbers that the scripts are sent to the lecturers. With that, by the time the lecturers download and upload the students' scores, they are not privy to the identities of the students; only the members of the two units are privy to the identities of each student's script.

Post-uploading Process/ Release of Results

The post-uploading phase is a crucial step in the examination process, overseen by the Examination, Results, and Transcripts (ERT) Unit. At this stage, the ERT unit assumes responsibility for harmonizing each student's identity with the corresponding unique identification number previously assigned during the anonymization phase.

Once lecturers complete the grading exercise and submit scores using only the unique codes, the ERT unit meticulously cross-references the anonymized codes with the original student records through the secure master reference log. This ensures accurate mapping of each score to the rightful student, maintaining the integrity and confidentiality of the assessment system.

After successful collation and verification of all results, the outcome is submitted for review to the institution's highest academic decision-making body—typically the Academic Board or Senate, depending on the structure of the institution. This body undertakes a final quality assurance check, ensuring that the entire process adheres to established academic and ethical standards.

Only upon formal approval by this governing body are the results officially released to students. This structured approach guarantees transparency, impartiality, and fairness in the evaluation and publication of academic results, further strengthening trust in the institution's examination and assessment system.

Discussion

One of the most significant enablers of sex-for-grades practices in Nigerian tertiary institutions is the unrestricted access lecturers have to students' identities during the grading process. This access creates a fertile ground for unethical behaviours, including academic bias, undue favouritism, coercion, and punitive grading practices, especially in cases where power dynamics are exploited for sexual gratification. To address this concern, the Incognito Mechanism, as proposed in this study, offers a comprehensive and innovative safeguard. By ensuring that lecturers remain unaware of the identities behind submitted examination scripts, the mechanism dismantles the opportunity for targeted misconduct, thereby disrupting the exploitative dynamics that fuel the sex-for-grades culture. It is important to note, however, that the Incognito Mechanism only applies to the examination component of student assessment, which typically accounts for 70% of the final grade. Continuous Assessment (CA), constituting the remaining 30%, is based on classroom participation, assignments, quizzes, and mid-term evaluations throughout the semester. As such, the CA process cannot be anonymized, since it inherently involves direct interactions between students and lecturers.

To uphold the integrity of the overall assessment process, lecturers will be required to submit examination scores and CA marks separately. The proposed model involves creating a dedicated mini portal for CA uploads or utilizing a secure institutional email channel handled by the Examinations, Results, and Transcripts (ERT) Unit. Lecturers must prepare CA scores in ascending order of matriculation numbers to allow seamless integration with the final results. The ERT Unit will

subsequently input the anonymized examination scores—mapped to unique identifiers—and merge them with the CA scores to generate comprehensive student grades.

Given the additional responsibilities that will fall to the ERT Unit under this new mechanism—including managing unique identifier tracking, verifying and harmonizing CA scores, and processing final result sheets—it is advisable that the institution consider increasing the number of personnel within the unit to ensure efficiency and accuracy. This study acknowledges that while existing efforts—such as whistleblower platforms, awareness campaigns, and policy enforcement—have provided valuable tools for fighting sexual harassment in academia, these measures have often lacked preventive depth. The Incognito Mechanism provides a structural and systemic solution that proactively eliminates opportunities for misconduct before they arise. By leveraging technological and procedural innovations, this mechanism not only promises to reinforce ethical grading practices but also contributes meaningfully to restoring institutional integrity and rebuilding public trust in higher education. Drawing on the perspectives of two creative academic catalysts and adopting a multimodal lens, this initiative encourages broader discourse and institutional reform.

In conclusion, the Incognito Mechanism emerges as a pragmatic and forward-thinking intervention in the campaign against sex-for-grades. Its potential lies not only in deterring malpractices but also in championing transparency, fairness, and accountability. Further research and pilot implementations are recommended to refine and institutionalize this model for a safer, equitable, and morally sound academic environment.

Conclusion

There is no denying that sex-for-grades has contributed to a range of socioeconomic challenges, and urgent action is required to address this pervasive issue. This study proposes a practical intervention—the Incognito Mechanism—to help address the entrenched ethical issues affecting academic integrity. The mechanism aims to anonymise students' examination scripts, thereby preventing lecturers from easily identifying individuals via matriculation numbers. A key implication of the proposed mechanism is that lecturers would no longer have access to identifying information when assessing the main examination component (worth 70 marks), which helps eliminate the opportunity for bias or coercion, as they are no longer going to identify the students' scripts through any means other than for them to mark the scripts that will be carrying unique numbers untraceable to any student, duly prepared by the ERT unit. The mechanism could serve as a timely and strategic measure to combat the troubling prevalence of sex-for-grades in academic settings. In essence, this paper issues a call to action for educators, administrators, and policymakers to collaborate in eliminating the harmful practice of sex-for-grades. Through the lens of creative catalysts, the study envisions a future where students' pursuit

of knowledge is no longer compromised by exploitation or fear. In doing so, it paves the way for a brighter and fairer educational landscape, one in which female children can develop without fear and where the principles of academics are kept with unshakable integrity. It is therefore recommended that both students and staff be adequately sensitised to the concept and operation of the incognito system. Additionally, institutions should consider adopting computer-based examinations—particularly for core courses—to minimise reliance on hand-marked scripts and reduce grading-related vulnerabilities. In conclusion, the incognito mechanism should be viewed as a viable and critical first step towards dismantling the systemic issue of sex-for-grades. A request for increased sensitivity and understanding among students about the subtleties of this mechanism is thereby advised to support this. Other recommendations include:

- i. *Advocate for the implementation of the Incognito Mechanism on examination scripts to anonymise student identities and minimise grading bias.*
- ii. *Introduce awareness programmes for both students and academic staff to explain the purpose, process, and benefits of the incognito mechanism, thereby promoting a culture of fairness and accountability.*
- iii. *Encourage the adoption of computer-based examinations—particularly for core subjects—to reduce reliance on handwritten scripts, streamline the grading process, and limit opportunities for misconduct.*
- iv. *Establish clear reporting channels and support systems within institutions to empower students to report sexual harassment or exploitation safely and confidentially.*
- v. *Work in partnership with educational technology units to regularly review and enhance the incognito mechanism, ensuring it effectively prevents identity tracing through student numbers or other identifiers.*
- vi. *Foster an inclusive academic environment where students feel safe to express concerns or report harassment without fear of reprisal.*
- vii. *Advocate for institutional policy reforms and strict enforcement of anti-sexual harassment frameworks, promoting a zero-tolerance stance on all forms of misconduct.*
- viii. *Collaborate with key stakeholders—including government agencies, NGOs, and advocacy groups—to address the sex-for-grades crisis through policy reform, awareness campaigns, and coordinated support efforts.*

References

- [1] Adamolekun, O. (1989). Sexual harassment on campus: A counsellor's reflection. *Nigerian Journal of Counselling and Development*, 4(November), 53–57.

- [2] Adebayo, B. (2018, December 17). *Nigerian professor in sex-for-grades scandal gets prison term*. CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/2018/12/17/africa/nigerian-profesor-jailed-in-sexual-assault-case>
- [3] Afeez, B. (2024, November 27). *Survey finds 63% of female students are sexually harassed*. University World News. <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20241127070228750>
- [4] Akinadewo, M. (2025, April 22). *Lecturers dismissed as LASUSTECH enforces zero-tolerance on misconduct*. The Guardian Nigeria. <https://guardian.ng/news/nigeria/metro/lecturers-dismissed-as-lasustech-enforces-zero-tolerance-on-misconduct/>
- [5] Alabi, M. (2020). *Sex scandal: Inside details of why Ibadan Polytechnic lecturer was sacked*. Retrieved August 13, 2023.
- [6] Aderinto, A. A. (2002). The concept of social problem. In U. C. Isiugo-Abanihe, A. N. Isamah, & J. O. Adesina (Eds.), *Currents and perspectives in sociology* (pp. 337). Malthouse Press.
- [7] Alaali, A. (2016, October 11). *Concern rises over sexual harassment on campuses*. African News Page. <http://www.africannewspage.net>
- [8] Alade, T. I. (2021, October 11). *Quid pro quo sexual harassment*. ScienceDirect. <https://www.sciencedirect.com>
- [9] Berdahl, J. L. (2007). The sexual harassment of uppity women. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92(2), 425–437. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.92.2.425>
- [10] Bradshaw, Z., & Slade, P. (2003). The effects of induced abortion on emotional experiences and relationships: A critical review of the literature. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 23(7), 929–958.
- [11] Brandenburg, J. B. (1982). Sexual harassment in university: Guidelines or establishing grievance procedures. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 8, 320–336.
- [12] Cozzarelli, C. (1993). Personality and self-efficacy as predictors of coping with abortion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 65(6), 1224–1236.
- [13] De Coster, S., Estes, S. B., & Mueller, C. W. (1999). Routine activities and sexual harassment in the workplace. *Work and Occupations*, 26, 21–49.
- [14] Dobbin, F., & Kelly, L. E. (2007). How to stop harassment: Professional construction of legal compliance in organizations. *American Journal of Sociology*, 112, 1203–1243.
- [15] Dobbin, F. (2009). *Inventing equal opportunity*. Princeton University Press.
- [16] Enitan, D. (2025, April 22). *Lagos varsity fires three lecturers over sexual harassment allegations*. Punch. <https://punchng.com/lagos-varsity-fires-three-lecturers-over-sexual-harassment-allegations/>
- [17] Ehigior, S. (2021, June 3). *UNILAG sacks two lecturers in sex-for-grades scandal*. ThisDay. <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2021/06/03/unilag-sacks-two-lecturers-in-sex-for-grades-scandal/>

- [18] Fitzgerald, L. F., Gelfand, M. J., & Drasgow, F. (1995). Measuring sexual harassment: Theoretical and psychometric advances. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 17(4), 425–445. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15324834basp1704_2
- [19] Gutek, B. A. (1993). Changed women and changed organizations: Consequences of and coping with sexual harassment. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 42, 28–48.
- [20] Joseph, J. (2015). *Sexual harassment in tertiary institutions: A comparative perspective*. ResearchGate. <https://www.researchgate.net>
- [21] Joseph, O. A., Joseph, A. A., Osho, O. P., Bello, A. A., Fagbamila, O. D., Atolagbe, E., & Fagbamila, O. (2023). Sex for grades: Untold stories of sexual harassment in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. *Papers in Education and Development*, 41(2).
- [22] Ladebo, J. O. (2003). Sexual harassment in academia in Nigeria: How real? *African Journal Review*, 7(1), 117–161.
- [23] Lowenstein, L., Deutsch, M., Gruberg, R., Solt, I., Yagil, Y., Nevo, O., & Bloch, M. (2006). Psychological distress symptoms in women undergoing medical vs. surgical termination of pregnancy. *General Hospital Psychiatry*, 28(1), 43–47.
- [24] Major, B., Cozzarelli, C., Cooper, M. L., Zubek, J., Richards, C., Wilhite, M., & Gramzow, R. H. (2000). Psychological responses of women after first-trimester abortion. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 57(8), 777–784.
- [25] Maass, A., Cadinu, M., Guarnieri, G., & Grasselli, A. (2003). Sexual harassment under social identity threat: The computer harassment paradigm. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85, 853–870.
- [26] Menon, J. A., Shilalukey Ngoma, M. P., Siziya, S., Musepa, M., Malungo, J., & Serpell, R. (2011). Sexual harassment in academia: Perception, understanding, and reporting of sexual harassment in a Southern African university. *Journal of Peace, Gender and Development Studies*, 1(1), 8–14.
- [27] Nwachukwu, L. E. (n.d.). *Sexual harassment in Nigerian higher institutions: A sociological analysis*. Academia.edu. <https://www.academia.edu>
- [28] Omonijo, D. O., Uche, O. C. O., Nwadiafor, K. L., & Rotimi, O. A. (2013). A study of sexual harassment in three selected private faith-based universities, Ogun State, South-West Nigeria. *Open Journal of Social Science Research*, 1(9), 250–263. <https://doi.org/10.12966/ojssr.12.03.2013>
- [29] Prentice, D. A., & Carranza, E. (2002). What women and men should be, shouldn't be, are allowed to be, and don't have to be: The contents of prescriptive gender stereotypes. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 26, 269–281.
- [30] Sahara Reporters. (2025, April 13). *Lagos university sacks three lecturers over sexual harassment*. <https://saharareporters.com/2025/04/13/lagos-university-sacks-three-lecturers-over-sexual-harassment>

- [31] Shaban, A. R. (2018, December 17). *Nigerian professor jailed 2 years in 'sex for grades' case*. Africanews. <https://www.africanews.com/2018/12/17/nigerian-professor-jailed-2-years-in-sex-for-grades-case/>
- [32] Schultz, V. (2003). The sanitized workplace. *Yale Law Journal*, 112, 2061–2193.
- [33] Steinberg, J. R., Tschann, J. M., Furgerson, D., & Harper, C. C. (2016). Psychosocial factors and pre-abortion psychological health: The significance of stigma. *Social Science & Medicine*, 150, 67–75. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2015.12.007>
- [34] Tracy, O. (2018). *Sexual harassment among university students in Nigeria*. Semantic Scholar. <https://www.researchgate.net>
- [35] Tyessi, K. (2022, November 2). *Sex for grades on the rise in higher institutions, research reveals*. ThisDay. <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2022/11/02/sex-for-grades-on-the-rise-in-higher-institutions-research-reveals/>
- [36] University of Lagos Communication Unit. (2021). *Governing council approves dismissal of two lecturers*. University of Lagos. <https://unilag.edu.ng/governing-council-approves-dismissal-of-two-lecturers/>

Acknowledgment

The authors gratefully acknowledge the support and contributions of all who assisted in the completion of this work.

Funding Information

Not applicable.

Authors' Bio

Yemi Ajayi is a highly respected media consultant and award-winning administrator with a distinguished academic and professional profile. Renowned for his extensive contributions to academia, he has authored and co-authored numerous peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, books, and poems. Widely referred to as a “*mindset engineer*,” Yemi is celebrated for his innovative teaching methodologies and profound insights into pedagogical frameworks and relationship dynamics. He currently lectures in Graphics, Robotics, Digital Art, and other core art-related courses at the Department of Art and Design, The Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro, Ogun State, Nigeria. His dedication to academic excellence and integrity is reflected in his various roles, including Departmental Examination Officer, Special Adviser to the Head of Department on Academic Matters, and Patron to the National Association of Art and Design Students (FPI Chapter). As a mentor, teacher, and counsellor, Yemi is deeply committed to the development of both students and faculty members. He has served as a keynote

and guest speaker at numerous national and international conferences, seminars, and workshops, and actively contributes as a research reviewer for global academic events and publications. In the professional consultancy sphere, Yemi is the Chief Value Adder at Kingdomway Global Edu-Consults Inc., Nigeria, focusing on educational reform, training, and strategic leadership development. He also serves on the Editorial and Advisory Boards of the *International Journal of Arts and Humanities* (United Kingdom). Additionally, Yemi holds the position of Editor-in-Chief at *Stardom Publishing Agency International* and serves as a Reviewer for the *Asian Journal of Arts and Humanities*. Through his work in academia and consultancy, Yemi Ajayi continues to inspire, influence, and shape the future of education and the creative industries across Nigeria and beyond.