

SCHOLARLY BLACK MARKETS AND CHEATING IN DIGITAL EXAMS

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ABSTRACT

This letter is in response to recently published news, talking about abusing the current pandemic and digital exams. It also highlights concerns about the activation of scholarly black markets.

Keywords: Black Market, Digital Exams, News

DESCRIPTION

The COVID-19, or Coronavirus disease 2019, outbreak altered everyone's life throughout the world, forcing various services, even teaching, to shift online. Online education is an unavoidable choice for decongesting classrooms in the face of social distancing restrictions and aiding in the reduction of infection transmission in universities (Moralista & Oducado, 2020). Online education, according to some academics, results in increased academic dishonesty, is mechanical and lacks empathy when compared to class-based sessions, and is not easy to administer technologically, so some professors are unsure about whether they supported digital education (Moralista & Oducado, 2020). Nonetheless, due to the current pandemic, many schools and universities practice digital exams in which students answer the exam questions, online, with less invigilation superiority.

Among the obstacles associated with online education, assessing student performance has emerged as among the critical focuses of academics (Bilen & Matros, 2021). Now, recent news is alarming the increasing issue of cheating in online exams (Henry, 2021; Rowan & Murray, 2021; Subin, 2021). Bilen & Matros (Bilen & Matros, 2021) in their article wrote that fraud should indeed be assumed in the digital examination, as opposed to the face-to-face assessment because the examiner directly views cheating proof in the face-to-face exams, while there are just secondary fraud indications in the online exams. Cheating is thus a component of the equilibrium procedure in the online exams. They displayed cheating in online examinations and highlight that such cheating on exams has a detrimental externality on those who do not fraud. Their solution was using cameras to record students and their computer screens. The offered solution is based on its application success in online chess competitions.

Bilen & Matros (2021) further suggest even when a student rejects the camera installation, the instructors should be permitted to make the ultimate decision if the person is guilty of cheating, with proof of cheating kept private. They in conclusion say that unlike with online chess programs, it will still be difficult to put this advice for public colleges into action, which is that teachers should be permitted to make the final choice for individuals who reject to use a camera. As a result, institutions should create a standardized examination policy that requires a camera to capture each student's computer monitor and location. A camera will also aid in the verification of a student's identification and the elimination of the chance of some other individual taking the exam.

From a different point of view, their suggestion might not be fully feasible as it involves costs for the cameras, their maintenance, and required technical supports. It also may be against some

privacy rights. On the other hand, Cahapay (2021) in a study from students' perspective has noted anxiety about tracking technologies and external distractions among the main challenges faced by students during the online exams. In fact, the addition of the suggested cameras can boost this anxiety. While performing the exam, students are anxious about taken data from the tracking technologies such as cameras or microphones of the online exams. Also, an issue can be interfered with students' focus and increased their nervousness about monitoring gadget's noise (Cahapay, 2021).

Stress of Technology

Students already are dealing with the stress of technology (internet, electricity, etc.) failure during the exam, as reported by Cahapay (2021), and adding a camera can boost the stress. Also, the paper states that another issue is the stress by the suspicion that they are being watched. Tracking methods, into the bargain, can make some groups fearful of clicking too frequently or resting their eyes for fear of being labeled as cheaters. The report also stated that a few students have sobbed or urinated at their desks due to the fact that they were not permitted to leave their seats.

Besides, Bilen & Matros (2021) explain that rivalry among exam participants can be comparable to what is observed in chess competitions. Each student has incentives to cheat since if they feel the rest of the class is cheating, they must perform higher than average in order to pass the exam. As a result, a student's chances of passing the exam without cheating are extremely limited when professors use grade curves. After all, the cost of cheating decreases in this scenario because the alternative to cheating is failing the class. As a result, they suggest giving students less time but easier questions on examinations.

Easier questions on examinations also may not be feasible when considering a written examination is a ubiquitous approach for assessing a students' progress in a particular subject, where the requisite cognitive competence is described by elements such as learning outcomes. The effectiveness of the written examination to judge the student's performance is heavily dependent on the questions offered in the examination. A decent and appropriate examination paper must have a variety of difficulty levels to accommodate students' varying skills (Jones, Harland, Reid & Bartlett, 2009).

Therefore, the problem explained by Bilen & Matros (2021) is still unsolved. But now, there will be increasing concerns about the loss of confidence in the competence and legitimacy of university graduates if the COVID-19 takes longer or if the online exams become a new norm. Even Sorooshian (Sorooshian, 2017a), since a few years ago has alarmed the fake graduates; he also warned against a new iteration of the Scholarly black market wherein theses and academic papers are offered to students hoping to graduate through questionable circumstances (Sorooshian, 2017b). This black market has now made an appearance at the digital exam to serve as a fraud incentive.

For subjective exams, as they are home-based now and typically an open-book type, lecturers usually prefer to have exams as a case analysis or essay writing. This gives opportunities to the black market who offers to sit for the exam for students. For the purpose of this letter, the author used the live chat function of three websites that were offering assignment writing for students, with a student role who is in quest of someone to answer a university digital exam on his behalf with a pass guarantee. Two of the cases offered to do so for money. They offered to take the exam question *via* phone, email, or even mobile communication applications and deliver an answer within the given time frame. They then promise that their text will be original and they attach results generated by similarity-checking software.

CONCLUSION

This letter emphasized the need of utilizing digital exams as a result of the COVID-19 pushes. It has explained that exam cheating is an unresolved issue. Besides, it alarmed the new sort of scholarly black market activity that occurred during this period. Considering the fact that trust in the quality truthfulness of graduates is a vital concern for all businesses, a starting trend of cheating in exams can negatively influence the current trust in the education industry. Hence, colleges and schools are recommended to become even more cautious in determining the validity of their exams. Theorists and practitioners are invited as well, to offer solutions for solving the growing cheating issue.

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