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CHALLENGES AND ETHICAL CONCERNS OF AI-BASED EXAM SURVEILLANCE IN INDIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Abstract:

Maharashtra's Copy-Free Campaign 2025 introduced AI-based exam surveillance to ensure fairness and transparency in board exams. The government's intent is commendable, as students who work hard should not be unfairly disadvantaged by those who engage in malpractices. However, unequal enforcement, lack of uniform monitoring, and loopholes in implementation have led to serious ethical and practical concerns.

- Urban exam centers strictly follow AI monitoring, while many rural centers still allow large-scale organized cheating.
- Some teachers, school authorities, and even law enforcement officials have been found facilitating malpractices.
- The "Dhule Pattern" has shown that live AI monitoring is possible and effective, but it has not been widely implemented.
- Recent mass cheating incidents, such as in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, prove that challenges still exist.

This paper presents a balanced analysis of the successes, limitations, and necessary reforms to ensure a truly copy-free and fair examination system.

1. INTRODUCTION

Examinations are meant to assess students' knowledge and academic integrity. However, cheating in exams has been an ongoing issue, leading the Maharashtra State Board to introduce AI-based live surveillance using Zoom, Google Meet, and InMeet.

- In urban centers, AI surveillance is strictly enforced, ensuring fair exams. However, in some rural centers, large-scale cheating continues under the pretext of infrastructure challenges.
- The inconsistency in implementation has created an unfair situation where some students follow strict rules while others find ways around them.
- This urban-rural divide in monitoring must be addressed to maintain the credibility of board examinations.

2. UNDERSTANDING THE DISPARITIES IN IMPLEMENTATION
2.1. The Success of AI Monitoring in Urban Centers

- Urban centers strictly follow AI surveillance, making large-scale copying nearly impossible.

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- Live streaming and digital monitoring ensure real-time detection of malpractices.
- Students appearing for exams in urban areas must comply with strict rules, which makes the system transparent.

2.2. Challenges in Rural Centers

- Many rural centers claim a lack of internet connectivity and infrastructure as reasons for not fully implementing AI surveillance.
- Reports confirm that some rural schools still allow mass copying, facilitated by insiders.
- While not all rural schools engage in malpractices, cases of organized cheating show that selective enforcement of surveillance creates an uneven playing field.

2.3. The Financial Angle: Selling Exam Privileges

- Reports indicate that some private institutions demand money from students, promising them a "safe" exam center with lenient supervision.
- This has led to a situation where students who paid bribes had their expectations shattered when authorities cracked down on malpractice.
- Such practices harm both genuine students and the credibility of the education system.

3. SOLUTIONS THAT HAVE WORKED: THE "DHULE PATTERN"

The Dhule Pattern has proven to be a successful AI-based monitoring model.
It ensures:

- All invigilators join a centralized Zoom meeting with mobile cameras fixed in the exam hall.
- Authorities can observe exams in real-time and act immediately if malpractices are detected.
- It does not require high-cost infrastructure, making it affordable for both urban and rural centers.

4. LEGAL ACTION AND THE CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR MASS COPYING CASE

- A mass cheating scandal in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar resulted in police cases against 25 individuals, including teachers, invigilators, and police officers.
- This case proves that exam fraud is sometimes an organized effort, not just individual student misconduct.
- The presence of security personnel alone does not prevent malpractice—it requires technological intervention.

5. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A FAIR EXAMINATION SYSTEM

5.1. Digital Question Paper Distribution to Prevent Leaks

Proposal: Send question papers digitally one hour before the exam to the exam center chief for printing.
Alternate Proposal: Display question papers on digital screens inside classrooms to eliminate physical paper handling.

5.2. Universal AI Surveillance in All Exam Centers

All exam centers should be required to install CCTV cameras and AI-based live streaming. Exam footage should be stored and reviewed post-exam for compliance verification.

5.3. Legal Accountability for Exam Centers and Officials

Institutions found guilty of facilitating mass copying should be permanently blacklisted. Teachers and officials involved in malpractice should face legal action to deter future offenses.

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6. CONCLUSION: BALANCING REFORM WITH REALITY

The Copy-Free Campaign 2025 is a well-intended reform, but its inconsistent execution has raised new challenges. While some exam centers follow the rules strictly, others find loopholes.

1. AI-based surveillance has proven successful but must be expanded to all exam centers.
2. Mass malpractice incidents prove that stronger monitoring and legal accountability are needed.
3. The "Dhule Pattern" offers a practical solution, but its implementation must be state-wide.
4. A transparent, corruption-free exam system benefits not just students but the entire education sector.
5. Maharashtra has the technological capacity to eliminate cheating completely. What is needed now is the political and administrative will to ensure that fairness in exams is not just a slogan, but a reality.

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