COUNSELLING STRATEGIES FOR MITIGATING BRIBERY AND CORRUPTION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ENUGU EDUCATION ZONE, NIGERIA

Eberechukwu Francisca Chigbu[1] (Ph.D), Oguzie, Alphonsus Ekejiuba[2] & Obi, Joy Sylvia Chisara.[3] (Ph.D)

[1,2&3]Department of Guidance and Counselling, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
[1]E-mail: chigbueberechukwu@gmail.com Phone: 08100435102
[2]E-mail: ae.oguzie@unizik.edu.ng Phone: 07032388453
[3]E-mail: js.obi@unizik.edu.ng Phone: 08033298777

Abstract

The study investigated counselling strategies for mitigating bribery and corruption in secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone. One research question and one null hypothesis were formulated to guide the study. The study was tested at .05 level of significance. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population for the study consisted of 59 school counsellors in the 31 public secondary schools in the area. The number is small and manageable; so no sampling was done. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled Counselling Strategies for Bribery and Corruption Scale (CSB-CS). The instrument was validated by three experts from the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Mean, standard deviation and t-test statistics were used for data analysis. The findings of the study revealed that secondary school counsellors in Enugu Education Zone perceive organizing seminar, workshop that will benefit the staff and the students on good moral and ethical conduct, helping to build an accountable, responsible and transparent life style for staff and students through sensitization, educating the staff and students on the importance of adhering to stipulated rules and regulations of the school system, encouraging the development of positive mindset towards life and encouraging the development of students' and staffers' talents and strengths as the strategies that can be used in mitigating bribery and corruption in the Zone. Again, it was found that there was no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female counsellors on the strategies they use in mitigating bribery and corruption in Enugu Education Zone. The study recommended among others, that guidance counsellors should be recognized,

motivated, empowered and given the opportunity to offer valuable services needed for effective management and eradication of bribery and corruption among staff and students.

Key words: Counselling, Strategy, Mitigating, Bribery and corruption, Schools

Introduction

Education is an important tool for instilling into citizens skills, good morals, attributes and values for creating national awareness, positive change and development. A child's attribute as well as character is sharpened with the relevant skills, knowledge and competences needed to enhance social, economic and political development of society. The federal Government of Nigeria (2014) in the National Policy on Education recognized education as a pillar for piloting national development. Onyilofor (2012) avers that education that is worthwhile is education that involves sustainable deepening of knowledge and acquisition of skills for improving the quality of various academic disciplines, especially guidance and counselling service delivery in higher education within a career long life perspective. Secondary school education is imperative to the education of a child. It equips individuals with the abilities that will enable them to explore the world and manipulate it for survival, establishment and self fulfillment. The broad goal of Nigeria's secondary school education as specified by the FRN (2013) is summed up as preparing students for useful living within the society and higher education. And when this federal objective is neglected and sacrificed on the altar of corruption achieving, sustainable development will be futile.

A major issue posing a big challenge to educational development in Nigeria is bribery and corruption. Corruption is one of the global threats impeding systems' effectiveness, which has permeated the education system in Africa and Nigeria in particular. The sting of bribery and corruption is damaging the educational system, especially at the secondary school level. A country whose education system is damaged by the cankerworm of corruption would continue to face development challenges. Dayo and Adeola (2019) define bribery and corruption as offering, giving, receiving, or soliciting any item of value to influence the actions of an official or someone else in charge of a public or legal duty. According to them, corruption is a form of dishonesty or criminal activity undertaken by a person or organization entrusted with a position

of authority, often to acquire illicit benefits. Corruption can be seen as the systematic use of public office for personal gains thereby impacting significantly on access to education, equity and quality (Hallak & Poison, 2002; Nwankwo & Nweke 2016). Transparency International (2010) sees corruption as the abuse of power by individuals to whom power is entrusted for personal gains. Adebanjo (2014) also opines that bribery and corruption is an immoral and criminal act, a mindset to do wrong and a disposition to exhibit dishonest behaviour by committing an offence against morality, the law and the ethical norms of society. Corruption, in education, is incongruous with goals of education. Goals of education as it concerns sustainable development and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) cannot be achieved in a climate of unmitigated, systemic bribery and corruption. This is, no doubt, disturbing, as it is challenging. The question then arises, what is the frequency of corrupt practices in our secondary school system? Asiyai (2020) confirms that Nigeria recorded the first case of corruption in the education industry in the year 1906, when the primary school certificate examination questions leaked. World Bank (2003) reports that in education, more than 67% respondent expressed that bribery is part of everyday life.

Additionally, a survey by Egwuonwu (2010) in Ebonyi State reveals that the secondary school education is heavily affected by corruption, being at least the third most corrupt public service. Corrupt practices in secondary schools are categorized into bribes, examination malpractices, payoff, and embezzlement; others are bypassing method, academic fraud, favouritism, nepotism and preferential treatment. All these constitute abuse of power for private gains. These practices are most prevalent in education planning decision and processes, school administrative/management, student external and internal examinations, teachers' moral and ethical conducts, among other practices. In congruence to the above assertion, Heyneman (2002) maintains that corruption in the admission and selection process is frequent in many countries as entrance tests are secretly sold to desperate candidates before the tests are administered. Furthermore, Heyneman asserts that oral examinations are even more open to corruption since they are more subjective and difficult to monitor. Concurring with the above, Bryon (2002) states that admission exams are usually administered orally, which is notoriously compromised. Quoting Bryon in extenso,

"*poor high schools also produce students who leave poorly prepared for college. Therefore, parents must hire private tutors to ensure that their children pass the entrance exams.*

The catch is that the most popular tutors are professors who also sit on the committees that decide who is admitted to college and who is refused. The examinations are oral. Grading criteria are wholly subjective. The "tutorial fees" end up being defacto bribes".

Again, private tutoring can increase the practice of inequalities and favouritism among students. This usually poses threats to other students, who cannot afford for private tuition, and also to the school, as the teacher teaches parts of the school curriculum during school hours and then asks the students to pay for the other half during private lessons. No wonder, a key informant during this research by name Mrs Chinedu Chukwumaikem revealed the first instruction given to her at a school where she works (Jesuit International School, Portharcourt) was that she should not organise private tuitions for students.

Incontestably, if we surmise that corruption is any action which deviates from a normative standard in order to gain personal advantage, what are its various faces? It is a tall ladder with various rungs, including; corner cutting, sensuality, immorality, cultural aberration, betrayal of trust/confidence, abuse/misuse of power/office, favouritism/selfishness, extortion, bribery, dishonesty/deceit, financial dishonesty, business dishonesty, sub standardization, counterfeit/fake, piracy, financial deceit(advance fee fraud), cheating, falsification/forgery. Blackmail/cover-up and sycophancy. USAID (2003) avers that sexual harassment by teachers is frequent in many countries. In agreement to the above, Rossetti in USAID (2003) reveals in a study of sexual violence in Botswana that 67% of girls reported sexual harassment by teachers, 11% of the girls surveyed seriously considered dropping out of the school due to harassment and 10% consented to sexual relationship for fear of deliberate reductions on their academic grades and performance. Grieved with the above indicated sexual behaviour by teachers, Kader (2010) demands that there must be an end to the practice of male teachers demanding sex with school girls or female teachers as it shows selfish disrespect for the rights and dignity of women and young girls. Additionally, Kader insists that having sex with learners betrays the trust of the community and also is against the law. This illicit sexual behaviour in secondary education presents the entire society with serious threats to the foundation of its morals and values, as well as the future of the younger generation of leaders.

Teachers' absenteeism is another serious and widespread problem in many countries. A survey of a thousand secondary schools carried out by the World Bank (2003) in seven developing countries found that teacher absence ranged from 13% to 58%. In addition, those

present in the school engaged into their private businesses (Chandhury, Rogers & Hammer, 2004). Another corrupt practice by teachers involves the use of sub-standard textbooks, which are not approved by the state. They engage in this unholy act because of the gifts they receive from these textbook writers. Students' corrupt practices are not ruled out from indecent and unethical conducts in secondary schools. This is a situation by which students use money to influence their teachers, invigilators or supervisors while some female students use sex to influence their school principal or proprietor to enable them have access to 'expo-materials' during examinations. Students also use mercenaries to facilitate examination malpractice.

Consequently, there are causes of corruption in secondary school education. Firstly, poor teachers and irregular payment. Also, poor funding from government which puts teachers under great pressure of indulging in bribery and corruption. Again, lack of infrastructure makes monitoring of classroom teachers difficult. Bad roads, railways and poor internet connection make supervision of teachers nearly impossible. These hindrances promote, to a high extent, corrupt practices in our school system. Another cause has to do with poor accreditation system for schools as a result of lack of transparent regulations. More so, poor organizational structure and administrative procedures also facilitate bribery and corruption. Teachers are not promoted at when due, and sanctions are not placed when offence is committed as a result of poor management. Decentralization of power is influenced by favouritism and bribery; this, in turn, gives rise to poor accountability.

Corruption in education system can be disastrous than in any other economic sectors because it contains immoral, amoral and illegal conduct, which involves either minor or young people. These young people are said to be future leaders, yet the environment exposes them to corrupt practices. These wrong practices inadvertently deprive a country of competent leaders. If an education system does not hinge on the concept of merit, honesty and fairness, then the social, economic and political future of that system will collapse. Corruption threatens equal access, quantity and quality of education; this, in turn, leads to human capital flight (brain drain) and churning out of half baked graduates into the labour market and society in general. Corruption has a way of magnifying the very worst twists of fate. It makes it impossible to respond effectively to crises; it fuels poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, contempt and disillusion. It is painfully obvious to state that corruption in our secondary school stifles development. It siphons resources that could be used to improve infrastructures and strengthen education. The United

Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) (2003) view corruption as an insidious plague having several corrosive effects on a nation. UNCAC aver that corruption undermines the rule of law, quality of life and democratic principle; leads to violation of human rights and threatens human security and distortion of markets.

Corruption is a major obstacle to the effective and efficient use of resources (human and material) and should be drastically curbed through building an accountable and transparent educational system and putting in place sanctions for bribery and corrupt practices; drafting official rules and codes of conduct, recruitment and career development rules and creating avenue for accessing teachers and parents. Moreover, there is also the need for funding so as to promote effective educational administration and counseling practices.

Counselling, as an instrument, can be used to curb ugly incidences of bribery and corruption. This could be done by introducing counselling strategies. Omorgie (2005) advocates the need to strategize ways of curbing bribery and corruption in secondary schools. One of the strategies is the introduction of guidance and counselling. Guidance and counselling is one of the educational support services provided in schools to help students manage their psycho-social and learning problems (Onyeahalu, 2005). Chigbu, Oguzie and Obi (2020) perceive counselling as a specialized helping process whereby information is disseminated to a group or individuals, so as to effectively engage them in interactions that will help them find solutions to their problems as well as make decisions for a better future. Counselling, from this point of view, entails a change in behaviour after a person has examined themselves, their communication method with other people and their general way of life. Such self-examination brings out the perfect way of conducting people's disposition/behaviour in a morally and socially acceptable manner. By so doing, an individual understands their strengths and weaknesses, study the environment in relation to people around them, and imbibes such experiences required to develop the right attitude and values to living. All these character formation processed will help them to adjust positively to society and avert the ugly incidence of bribery and corruption. All these changes are applicable to students, teachers, parents and school administrators. No wonder Uba (2010) states that to curb the canker of bribery and corruption, especially with regards to examination malpractice, there is great need for counsellors who have the professional training to work with students and get the best out of them. In the context of this study, bribery and corruption co-exist and operate on the same continuum. However, bribery is more specific as it deals with offering

or accepting financial or material gratification in the course of carrying out any official task. In this instance, the bribe so offered and accepted serves as an inducement. Corruption, on the other hand, also includes, but not limited to, monetary or material inducement. It encapsulates every form of abuse of power and use of one's position to seek selfish ends, deviating and disobeying laid down rules and regulations, negligence and all other forms of irresponsible conduct.

Bribery and corruption practices are evil vibes, which a counsellor can avert in the school environment by the use of counselling strategies to help students and staff build capabilities to resist this evil, inculcate in them intrinsic beliefs about the importance of living a justifiable life free from bribery and corruption, help them become dedicated to good morals and ethical conduct, build an accountable and transparent life style, adhere strictly to official rules and regulations of the school system, develop positive mindset towards life, and adopt other positive human qualities needed to shun bribery and corruption. A counsellor can use vocational, personal, social, and educational strategies to effect positive changes in individuals. Vocational services as a coping strategy can be used to curb bribery and corruption in secondary schools. It will help to assist individuals to choose careers, prepare them to enter into the world and make progress devoid of corrupt practices. The strategies involve services provided by the counsellors to assist students start early enough to plan for proper vocation in terms of their interests, abilities, aptitude, duration in training, sponsors, family and societal needs (Egbule, 2006). This strategy in the long run, will help an individual to mitigate bribery and corruption. Offering Personal-social guidance services is a coping strategy used to help individuals take care of socio-personal problems relating to personality maladjustment (Egbule, 2006). These services will help the individual to adjust his/her life in order to exhibit good morals and ethics, build an accountable and transparent lifestyle and develop a positive mindset. It is clear that education service in guidance and counselling takes care of all issues associated with education as it relates to school physical environment, activities within the school, school rules and regulations, students' progress, the extra curriculum and academic curriculum of the school.

Therefore, to effectively manage and utilize these strategies/services in the school, there is need for sufficient deployment of professional counsellors to help maximize the potential and aspirations of the individual despite all odds and limitations. In other words, counseling services are necessary for mitigating bribery and corruption. Anchoring on the above, the main purpose of

this study is to determine counseling strategies for mitigating bribery and corruption in secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Corruption remains one of the major challenges in the education system of Nigeria, especially at the secondary school level. Based on this rising tide of corruption in secondary education, there is a general outcry that standards of education are falling and morals flagging. In Nigeria, this scenario presents the entire society with serious threats to the foundation of its morals and values, as well as the future of the younger generation. This is against the backdrop of the fact that given that presently secondary schools in Enugu Educational Zone are prone to various forms of bribery and corruption, which have been severally illustrated in some research studies and other documented evidence, Research reveals that the secondary school education is heavily affected by corruption, being at least the third most corrupt public service. Most corrupt practices prevalent in secondary schools include giving and accepting bribes, embezzlement, favouritism, nepotism and preferential treatment. However, there is paucity of research with respect to how the counsellor can mitigate bribery and corruption in Enugu Education Zone.

Policy implementation is one of the challenges of education. Good policies are drawn, but are rarely implemented. Most teachers absent themselves from school without adequate permission and without sanction meted to the offending staffers. Consequently, their students perform poorly academically, thus, distorting their basic foundation for higher learning. This is most likely to negatively affect the quality of education they receive which may in the long run lead them into corrupt practices at the expense of their lives. The researchers feel that this can be curbed by school counselors' effective engagement.

To this end, the study examined the counselling strategies for mitigating bribery and corruption in secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone. This gap in knowledge, learning and moral is the crux of this study, especially at this time when bribery and corruption is threatening the fabric of our nation, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to determine counselling strategies for mitigating bribery and corruption in secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone, Nigeria.

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Ascertain the counseling strategies for mitigating bribery and corruption in Enugu Education Zone, Nigeria.

Research question

The following research question was raised to guide the study:

1. What are the counseling strategies for mitigating bribery and corruption in Enugu Education Zone?

Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was formulated and tested at .05 level of significance:

Ho1: There is no significant difference between the mean response scores of male and female school Counsellors' responses on mitigating bribery and corruption in secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone.

Method

The study adopted descriptive survey design. This design, according to Blog (2000), uses survey to gather data about varying subjects. This data aim to know the extent to which different can be obtained among these subjects. The study was conducted in 31 secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria. The population for the study consisted of all the 59 school counsellors currently serving in the 31 secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State. The population was small and manageable, so no sampling process was required as all 59 school counsellors were used.

A structured questionnaire titled Counselling Strategies for Bribery and Corruption Scale (CSB-CS) with a 4 point response format. The instrument has 6 items and was face validated by three experts; one in Measurement and Evaluation Department, and the remaining two from Guidance and Counseling Department all in the Faculty of Education. Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The internal consistency of CSB-CS was calculated using Cronbach Alpha Reliability Estimate. A similar population of 15 school counsellors from Nsukka Zone of Enugu State was used during the pilot study. Cronbach Alpha reliability Estimate was used to analyze the data collected from the pilot study and the reliability coefficient stood at .63. Two research assistants participated in the study and helped the researchers in distributing copies of CSB-CS to the respondents. Mean, standard deviation and grand mean were used to answer the research question while t-test statistics was used to test the null hypothesis at .05 level of significance.

The decision rule indicates that any item whose mean score is equal to or greater than 2.50 is regarded as 'agree', while any items whose mean scores are less than 2.50 are regarded as 'disagree'. The decision rule for the research hypothesis was that if the calculated t-value is greater than the table t-value at a chosen level (.05) and a degree of freedom (n_1-n_2-2) the null hypothesis of no significant difference is rejected, but if the calculated t-value is less than the null hypothesis is not rejected.

Research Question: What are the counselling strategies for mitigating Bribery& Corruption in Secondary Schools in Enugu Education Zone?

Table 1: Mean () Rating with Standard Deviation of the Strategies used by School Counsellor in mitigating Bribery and Corruption in Enugu Education Zone.

S/N	Counselling Strategies for Mitigating Bribery and Corruption	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	$\overline{X}$	SD	Decision
1	To organize seminars and workshops that will benefit the staff and students on good moral and ethical conduct.	22	17	8	2	3.20	0.87	Agree
2	To help build an accountable, responsible and transparent lifestyle for staff and students through sensitization.	21	18	9	1	3.6	0.86	Agree
3	To educate the staff and students on the importance of adhering to the stipulated rules and regulations of the school authority.	26	11	9	3	3.20	1.00	Agree
4	To encourage development of positive mindset towards life	24	11	9	5	2.92	1.09	Agree
5	To cater for educational needs of staff and students	07	9	13	20	2.06	1.07	Disagree
6	To encourage the development of staff and students' talents and strength.	30	11	6	2	3.39	0.87	Agree
	N = 49 Grand Mean					2.98	0.96	Agree

Data presented in Table 1 revealed that the respondents agreed with 5 of the items. Out of the 6 identified strategies used by the counsellor in mitigating bribery and corruption in Enugu Education Zone. The items they agreed with are 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 with mean scores of 3.20, 3.16, 3.20, 2.92 and 3.39 respectively. They, however, disagreed with item 5 as their recorded mean score is 2.06. The values of their standard deviation ranged from 0.87 to 1.09, which indicated that the respondents were not too far from the mean and from the opinion of one another in their responses; the items were valid. The respondents recorded a grand mean score of 2.98, which is above the 2.50 bench mark, indicating that strategies used by school counselors in mitigating bribery and corruption in Enugu Education Zone are to imbibe good morals and values to the staff and the students; to build an accountable, responsible and transparent life style for staff and students; to assist them in keeping the school rules and regulation, and to encourage the development of students talents and strength.

Null Hypothesis:

There is no significant difference between the mean response scores of male and female counselors' responses on their strategies in mitigating bribery and corruption in Enugu Education Zone.

Table 2: t-test Result of Mean Rating of Male and Female Counsellors on their Strategies in Mitigating Bribery and Corruption in Enugu Education Zone, Nigeria.

Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	dF	t-cal	T-crit	Decision
Female Counselors	13	2.98	0.96	4.7	0.93	± 1.96	NS Do not reject
Male Counselors	36	2.93	0.93				

Significant at p.05, df =49, critical t-value = ± 1.96

The t-test analysis in table 2 above indicates that the calculated t-value is 0.93 while the critical t-value is ± 1.96at 0.5 level of significance. This implies that the calculated t-value is less than the critical t-value. Thus, there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male

counsellors and female counsellors on their strategies in mitigating bribery and corruption inn Enugu Education Zone, Nigeria.

Discussion

The finding in table 1 revealed that counselling strategies for mitigating bribery and corruption in secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone are organizing seminar, workshop that will benefit the staff and the students on good moral and ethical conduct, helping to build an accountable, responsible and transparent life style for staff and students through sensitization, educating the staff and students on the importance of adhering to stipulated rules and regulations of the school system, encouraging the development of positive mindset towards life and encouraging the development of students' and staffers' talents and strengths. This is in agreement with Egbo (2015) who indicated the counselling strategies for curbing bribery and corruption (examination malpractice) in secondary schools in Enugu State as to encourage the development of a positive mindset towards life; to encourage the development of students'/staffers' talents and strengths and to help build transparent life style of staff and students.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study and the conclusions that followed, it was concluded that organizing seminar and workshop that will benefit the staff and the students on good moral and ethical conduct, helping to build an accountable, responsible and transparent life style for staff and students through sensitization, educating the staff and students on the importance of adhering to stipulated rules and regulations of the school system, encouraging the development of positive mindset towards life and encouraging the development of students' and staffers' talents and strengths are the counselling strategies that can be used in mitigating bribery and corruption in secondary school in Enugu Education Zone. It was also concluded that there was no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female counsellors on the strategies they use in mitigating bribery and corruption in Enugu Education Zone.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are apt for policy:

(1) Guidance counsellors should be recognized, motivated, empowered and given the opportunity to offer valuable services needed for effective management and eradication of bribery and corruption among staff and students.

(2) Students, teachers and parents should be sensitized through media jingles to understand the need to curb bribery and corruption in education setting.

(3) There should be adequate funding and support of guidance and counselling services/activities in the secondary schools by the Federal, State and Local governments and other financial institutions.

(4) There is need for effective development and embedding of ethical values, the code of conducts, and educational policies and procedures.

(5) Integrating corruption prevention initiative in education system and relevant curricula.

(6) Receiving, reviewing and taking action on corruption reports, and making reports to the public and appropriate government authorities where necessary (whistle blow).

(7) The government should adopt punitive measures and show commitments and willingness to punish those who sabotage its effect.

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