

INFLUENCE OF CORRUPT PRACTICES ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF STUDENTS IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

The study examined the influence of corrupt practices on academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State. Four research questions and four null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Relevant literatures were reviewed which gave more insight in building the study. The study was a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised of 21,782 students in the two selected public universities (Nnamdi Azikiwe University (NAU), Awka; and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU), Igbariam) in Anambra State. The sample for this study comprised 325 students as respondents. Simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting students from the two public universities in Anambra State. The researcher-developed instruments titled: "Corrupt Practices Questionnaire (CPQ) and "Students Academic Achievement of 100 level students in Edu 101" was used to collect data for the study. The instruments were duly validated by experts. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach alpha statistics. The reliability coefficient value of .86 was obtained and was considered adequate for the study. Data collected were analyzed using mean analysis for research questions and the hypotheses that guided the study were tested using paired sample t-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance. The study showed that bribery, plagiarism, significantly influence the academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State to a high extent. The study concluded that corrupt practices influence academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State. Based on the findings and conclusion, the study recommended among others that the government and educational planners should ensure that lecturers pay is comparable with those of their counterparts in other establishments. This would help in checking the incidence of lecturers looking elsewhere for money to meet their basic needs and which might lead to absence or reduction in corrupt practices.

Keywords. bribery, plagiarism, corrupt practices, academic achievement, students, public Universities.

Introduction

Academic achievement represents performance outcomes that indicate the extent to which a person has accomplished specific goals that were the focus of activities in instructional environments, specifically in schools, colleges, and universities. Therefore, academic achievement should be considered to be a multifaceted construct that comprised different domains of learning. The field of academic achievement is a very wide-range and covers a broad variety of educational outcomes; the definition of academic achievement depends on the indicators used to measure it. Among the many criteria that indicate academic achievement, there are very general indicators such as procedural and declarative knowledge acquired in an educational system, more curricular-based criteria such as grades or performance on an educational achievement test, and cumulative indicators of academic achievement such as educational degrees and certificates (Hattie, 2013). All these criteria have one thing in common. They represent intellectual endeavours and thus, more or less, mirror the intellectual capacity of a person.

The poor academic achievement of school students which has been on the increase in both internal and external examinations has generated so many accusations and counter accusations by various groups and individuals. Okoye (2012) defined poor academic achievement of the individual or candidate in a learning situation as one in which a candidate fails to attain a set standard of achievement in a given evaluation exercise such as tests, examination or series of continuous assessments. A candidate who scored less or below the standard is regarded as showing a poor academic achievement in school.

According to Priye (2015), some have accused parents for this improper care of their children at home and others have attacked students' lackadaisical attitudes towards their academic work, future progress and development, while some have launched verbal and physical assault on teachers and school administrators. Nevertheless, a good number have blamed the entire educational system. The problem is actually due to weak achievement among the students in recent times and this problem is now of concern to educational leaders on one hand, and heads of households on the other hand. However, recent research in the struggle to unravel the root cause of poor academic achievement of students has also directed its search light to the corrupt practices prevalent in the educational system in recent times as it has become unprecedented, even almost uncontrollable.

The term corruption has become a household name in every part of the country especially in a developing nation like Nigeria. Obi and Obikeze (2006) viewed corruption as a situation whereby government officials and private economic agents allow personal interests to override considerations of public interest. Thus, it prevails both in public and private settings in society and the driving force goes beyond massive accumulation of wealth. According to Akpochafo (2010), there are different types of corruption, such as political, bureaucratic, economic, judicial, moral and security corruptions and so on. However, in an educational setting like tertiary institutions especially public universities, one is mainly concerned with moral and bureaucratic corruptions.

A corrupt society according to Lewis (2008) produces corrupt leaders and followers; corrupt leaders copy or establish corrupt institutions and corrupt institutions create a multiple of corrupt systems. This might explain why there is hardly any institution or system that is corruption free in Nigeria. Consequently, tertiary institutions in Nigeria like Universities, Polytechnics, and Colleges of education etc., are not immuned to this ugly affliction. In this study however, while ignoring the administrative aspect, the research would focus on corruption in the academic sphere of tertiary institutions.

In actual fact, corruption is believed to be one of the major causes of low standard/quality of education in Nigeria, especially in tertiary institutions. Thus, corruption in tertiary institutions is believed to be partly perpetrated by some students and partly by some lecturers. On the part of the students, some of them might be engaged in either full time or part time employment or occupation which keeps them away from school or classes and probably hinders independent study. Many of the students are married and so are contending with family problems. On the other hand, some female students use their beauty to seduce some lecturers, while some of them serve as call girls in big hotels/lodges etc. Furthermore some of them engage in indecent dressing to entice both male lecturers and students.

Onwuka (2014), stated that the educational system has become as corrupt as the public and private sector. Such corrupt practices like embezzlement and misappropriation of budgets allocated for education, bribery for admission into favourable schools, buying and selling of scores and academic degrees; ghost teaching sessions, examination malpractices, favouritism among others had led to the educational system producing such negative results as; mismanagement of educational funds, excessive bureaucratic burdens, etc, all of which had influenced students attitude negatively and by extension led to poor academic achievement as students could now bribe their teachers to get good grades or pass school examination, leaving them with no incentives to work hard as they should. In line with this, Okoli (2015) observed that the educational sector is generally considered to be particularly prone to corruption, due to the size of the educational budgets. Parents could often be manipulated and tolerate corruption as they strive to provide the best educational opportunities for their children.

In discussing the concept of corruption, Nwanze (2012) was quick to identify some offshoots of corruption. They include bribery, nepotism, misappropriation, fraud and embezzlement; others are extortion and favouritism. He then proceeded to identify some of the causes of corruption to include weak institutional

enforcement framework; lack of ethical standards in Government business; poor reward system; and extended family. While it is true that poor and mismanaged economy could cause corruption, it might not be true that people are corrupt because of poverty, otherwise only the poor people would have been corrupt (Nwanze, 2012). It is on record that people who corruptly looted the treasury in developing countries are the rich. It takes the will of any one to decide either to be or not to be corrupt. There are still both rich and poor citizens who are of high moral integrity in Nigeria.

Bribery has also become common practice. According to a report by Hallak and Muriel (2015), 35% of students now could pay their way into a college. Where students could not get admission via single window admission system, they could pay or use influence or political power to get admission into top colleges or colleges of their choice. Parents want the best for their children; hence they are often exploited by unscrupulous officials controlling access to places. Bribery is a serious blight that undermines the quality of education in Nigeria as students could now bribe their teachers to get good grades or pass school examinations, leaving them with no incentives to work as hard as they should (Okoli, 2015).

The act of bribery is a major hindrance to improved academic achievement. Teachers, who collect bribe from parents to only focus more on their children, are said to favour certain students over others at school and especially in their classes because they have been compensated. The favouring of the one over the many can cause severe psychological hindrances in all the children. The preferred children might reach a point where they believe themselves to be elites, and this could bring about arrogance that could eventually affect hardwork as much as children who receive less attention might reach the limit of their patience and lose interest (Izobel, 2012). More than that, it could affect psychologically other students who might feel cheated and unwanted and as such causing an academic rift.

Plagiarism is the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own. Plagiarism is the "wrongful appropriation" and "stealing and publication" of another author's "language, thoughts, ideas, or expressions" and the representation of them as one's own original work. Uche (2017) referred to plagiarism as presenting someone else's work or ideas as your own, with or without their consent, by incorporating it into your work without full acknowledgement. All published and unpublished material, whether in manuscript, printed or electronic form, is covered under this definition. Plagiarism may be intentional or reckless, or unintentional. Under the regulations for examinations, intentional or reckless plagiarism is a disciplinary offence. According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, to "plagiarize" means:

- a. To steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own
- b. To use (another's production) without crediting the source
- c. To commit literary theft
- d. To present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source

The appointments of headship in schools, colleges and universities are now being based on political affiliation instead of quality performance at a competitive selection interviews. In some African countries, Salmi and Helma (2013) opined that Heads of States appoint senior members of staff in tertiary institutions. This corrupt method of appointment has favoured the introduction of unwholesome vices by way of reciprocation into the tertiary institutions. This has equally eroded the clamour for autonomy as fiscal accountability is now mortgaged by conscience in a bid to be loyal to the politicians through whose efforts one gained the employment.

The problem of corruption like a canker worm has eaten deep into the fabric of educational system and if left unchecked would not only influence students' academic achievement negatively, but will by extension influence the way they view success in life as well as reduce their respect for laws and regulations. It is therefore pertinent to conduct an empirical study to critically examine the various corrupt practices in the Nigerian educational to determine their influence on student's academic achievement.

Statement of the Problem

Corruption is one of the major developmental challenges in Nigeria educational system. Corruption has also contributed immensely to the fallen standard of education in Nigeria. It has jeopardized the quality of education from primary to tertiary level. Teachers, school administrators, parents, students and all other stakeholders are involved in the ills of corruption.

Academic failure is not only frustrating to pupils and parents, Its effects are equally grave on the society in terms of dearth of manpower in all spheres of the economy and politics. Hence, there is a generic compliant

that the standard of education has fallen, a fall that is often attributed primarily to teachers. Millions of naira is being pumped into education in Nigeria in general, notwithstanding the issue of poor performance in education that has continued to persist.

However, recent studies have attempted to shift a greater part of the factors contributing to student's poor achievement to the prevalence of corruption in terms of embezzlement and misappropriation of budget allocated to education, examination malpractice, plagiarism, cheating and misconduct, disruptive behaviour, ghost teachers, bribery for admission into favourable schools and favouritism, in the educational system in Nigeria. One may conclude that a school environment characterized by corruption makes for poor quality of education.

It is against this backdrop that this study is designed to deliberate on the influence of corrupt practices on academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State. The simulation exercise will display the corrupt practices prevalent in the Nigeria education sector and its influence on academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of the study was to examine the influence of corrupt practices on academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State. Specifically, the study sought to

1. Investigate the extent bribery influences the academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State.
2. Find out the extent plagiarism influences the academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does bribery influence the academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State?
2. To what extent does plagiarism influence the academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State?

The following null hypotheses guided the study and were tested at .05 level of significance:

H₀₁: Bribery does not have any significant influence on the academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State.

H₀₂: Plagiarism does not have any significant influence on the academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State.

Methodology

The study design was descriptive survey. The study made use of descriptive survey design because it enabled the researcher to collect original data from the respondents and described the present conditions as they exist in their natural settings. The area of the study was situated in public universities in Anambra State: Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka; and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam. The population of the study comprised 21,782 Students of 100 Level Students in the two selected public universities in Anambra State.

The sample for this study comprised 325 students as respondents. Simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting 100 level students from the two public universities in Anambra State. The public universities selected were Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka; and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam. In selecting the respondents, 175 students were selected at random from 100 level students of Faculty of Education Nnamdi Azikiwe University while 150 students were selected from Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam making a total of 325 respondents for the study. The instrument for data collection was made up of two instruments. One of the instruments is a researcher-developed questionnaire titled "Corrupt Practices Questionnaire (CPQ)". The instrument is in line with the study research questions with 4 clusters which contain 27- items and was structured in the following order: Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VLE). The second instrument was Academic Achievement scores adopted from the same students' scores in Edu 101 course. The questionnaire was content and face validated by three experts in Educational Management and

Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam. The topic, the scope and purpose of the study, research questions, and hypotheses were presented to the experts as guide. These experts ascertained the clarity and relevance of the items to the research work. The experts made some helpful suggestions and recommendations that were corrected to make the instrument fit for the study. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach alpha statistics. An average reliability coefficient of .86 was considered adequate for the study. Direct method by physical contact was used to administer and collect the instrument by the researcher and three briefed research assistants. They helped in the administration and collection of the questionnaire after completion by the respondents. The reason is to ensure a high return rate of the instrument. About 300 instruments were returned. Data collection lasted for three weeks from the period of administration. Data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation for research questions and paired sample t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at the .05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent does bribery influence the academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State?

Table 4.1: Students mean rating on the extent bribery influenced the academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State

Decision key: Very high extent (VHE), High extent (HE), Very low extent (VLE), Low extent (LE).

S/N	Item statement	N	Mean (\bar{X})	SD	Decision
1	Students offer lecturers money, goods or services in exchange for passing grades	300	3.26	.71	HE
2	Lecturers offer students pass grades in exchange for money, goods or services	300	3.31	.61	HE
3	Favouritism in awarding marks to students who pay lecturers (sorting) lead to students' poor academic achievement	300	3.27	.64	HE
4	Lecturers sexually harass female students in sex-for-marks corruption while male students are extorted in cash-for-marks misconduct	300	3.34	.53	HE
5	The female students bring themselves as low as going after some old lecturers for marks	300	3.32	.65	HE
6	Students do not comply with class activities because they know lecturers that will always pass them	300	3.21	.57	HE
7	Students who pay for examination question papers does not possess the necessary academic requirements	300	3.22	.63	HE
8	Lecturers threaten students that non-purchase of their textbooks would lead to examination failure	300	3.21	.66	HE
9	Some students hardly come to school yet when results are published they score pass marks while the few ones that study lament often of poor grades	300	3.27	.54	HE

10	Students need degree-level qualifications more than ever and are under great pressure to get university places and to leave with good grades, opening up fertile territory for corruption and cheating	300	3.21	.69	HE
11	The use of institutional authority or name for personal gain in the process of higher education delivery or reception	300	3.18	.73	HE
12	Impersonation on the part of students during examinations	300	3.24	.64	HE
13	Examination misconducts, unethical sale of handouts, wrongful marks alteration are some of the most pervasive forms of academic corrupt practices in the school	300	3.16	.78	HE
14	Some lecturers demand some amount of money from some students that concluded not to buy the handout or were unable to pay for it	300	3.33	.57	HE
15	Lecturers collect money for late submission of assignments	300	3.41	.36	HE
Total Mean			48.94	9.31	
Average Mean			3.26	.62	HE

Analysis in Table 4.1 above showed the extent bribery influenced the academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra state. The table revealed that students agreed to a high extent to the fact that bribery influences the academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State.

On the other hand, the average mean showed that students agreed to a high extent with mean ratings of 3.26. Therefore, the study concluded that bribery influences the academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State to a high extent.

Research Question 2: To what extent does plagiarism influence the academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State?

Table 4.2: Students mean rating on the extent plagiarism influenced the academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State

S/N	Item statement	N	Mean (\bar{X})	SD	Decision
16	Submitting someone's work as their own deteriorate the academic achievement of students	300	3.36	.61	HE
17	Taking passages from their own previous work without adding citations declines the thinking abilities of students	300	3.27	.54	HE
18	Re-writing someone's work without properly citing sources demoralizes the spirit to know more	300	3.34	.62	HE
19	Using quotations, but not citing the source declines the reasoning capacity of students	300	3.32	.65	HE
20	Interweaving various sources together in the work without citing reduces the academic achievement of students	300	3.32	.65	HE

21	Citing some, but not all passages that should be cited deteriorate the core value of learning	300	3.21	.73	HE
22	Melding together cited and uncited sections of the piece kills the core value of students' progress	300	3.32	.64	HE
23	Providing proper citations, but fails to change the structure and wording of the borrowed ideas enough hampers the academic achievement of students	300	3.21	.69	HE
24	Inaccurately citing the source misleads students' academic achievement	300	3.37	.54	HE
25	Relying too heavily on other people's work deteriorate the academic achievement of students	300	3.21	.69	HE
26	Students' inabilities to produce original thought into the text kills their capacities	300	3.28	.68	HE
27	Students gets low grades on a particular class works due to plagiarism	300	3.43	.37	HE
Total Mean			39.65	6.96	
Average Mean			3.31	.58	HE

Date on Table 4.2 above showed the extent plagiarism influence the academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State. The table revealed that students agreed to a high extent to the fact that plagiarism influences the academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State with the response to all the items falling within the range of 2.50 – 3.49. On the other hand, the average mean showed that students agreed to a high extent with mean ratings of 3.31. Therefore, the study concluded that plagiarism influences the academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State to a high extent.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: Bribery does not have any significant influence on the academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State.

Table 4.5: Paired sample t-test of students on the significant influence of bribery on the students' academic achievement (SAA) in public universities in Anambra State

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	p-value
Bribery – SAA	300	8.510	.416	299	.000

Significant at $p < .05$

Analysis in Table 4.5 shows the paired sample t-test of students on the significant influence of bribery on the students' academic achievement in public universities in Anambra State. The result showed that p-value of .000 < .05 level of significance resulted in the decision to accept the alternative hypothesis at $p(.000) < .05$ and reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, the study concluded that bribery significantly influences the academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State.

Hypothesis Two:

Plagiarism does not have any significant influence on the academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State.

Table 4.6: Paired sample t-test of students on the significant influence of plagiarism on the students' academic achievement (SAA) in public universities in Anambra State

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	p-value
Plagiarism – SAA	300	17.800	.685	299	.000

Significant at $p < .05$

Analysis in Table 4.6 shows the paired sample t-test of students on the significant influence of plagiarism on students' academic achievement in public universities in Anambra State. The result showed that p-value

of .000 < .05 level of significance resulted in the decision to accept the alternative hypothesis at $p(.000) < .05$ and reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, the study concluded that plagiarism significantly influences the academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State.

Summary of the Findings

The findings of the study were summarized as follows:

1. The study showed that bribery influences the academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State to a high extent.
2. The study inferred that plagiarism influences the academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State to a high extent.
3. The study showed that bribery significantly influences the academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State.
4. The study showed that plagiarism significantly influences the academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State.

Discussion of the Findings

Findings the study on the extent bribery influences academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State revealed that bribery significantly influence the academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State to a high extent. This finding is as a result of students agreeing to the facts that students offer lecturers money, goods, or services in exchange for passing grades; lecturers offer students pass grades in exchange for money, goods, or services; favouritism in awarding marks to students who pay lecturers (sorting); lecturers sexually harass female students in sex-for-marks corruption while male students are extorted in cash-for-marks misconduct; female students bring themselves as low as going after some old lecturers for marks; students not complying with class activities because they know lecturers that would always pass them; students do not possess the necessary academic requirements as a result of paying for examination question papers; lecturers threatening students that non-purchase of their textbooks would lead to examination failure; some students who hardly come to school score higher marks while the few ones that study hard lament often of poor grades when results are published; students needing degree-level qualifications more than ever and are under great pressure to get university places and to leave with good grades, opening up fertile territory for corruption and cheating; the using of institutional authority or name for personal gain in the process of higher education delivery or reception; impersonation on the part of students during examinations; examination misconducts, unethical sale of handouts, wrongful marks alteration are some of the most pervasive forms of academic corrupt practices in the school; some lecturers demanding some amount of money from some students that concluded not to buy the handout or were unable to pay for it; lecturers collecting money for late submission of assignments; among others. This finding is in line with the findings of Dimkpa (2011), Kuranchie, Twene, Mensa and Arthur (2014) and Okeke (2015). They opined that corrupt practices exist in the academic institutions which entail bribing lecturers for grades and lecturers demanding for money from students for pass marks are the prevailing corrupt practices in the academic institutions.

Findings from the study on the extent plagiarism influences on the academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State revealed that plagiarism significantly influence on the academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State to a high extent. This is as a result of the students agreeing to the fact that submitting someone's work as their own deteriorate the academic achievement of students; taking passages from their own previous work without adding citations declines the thinking abilities of students; re-writing someone's work without properly citing sources demoralizes the spirit to know more; using quotations, but not citing the source declines the reasoning capacity of students; interweaving various sources together in the work without citing reduces the academic achievement of students; citing some, but not all passages that should be cited deteriorate the core value of learning; melding together cited and united sections of the piece kills the core value of students' progress; providing proper citations, but fails to change the structure and wording of the borrowed ideas enough hampers the academic achievement of students; inaccurately citing the source misleads students' academic achievement; relying too heavily on other people's work deteriorate the academic achievement of students; students inability to produce original thought into the text kills their capacities; and students getting low grades on a particular classroom works due to plagiarism, among others are the plagiarism acts that influenced academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State. This study is in consonance with the findings of Adedimeji (2015) and Nwankwo and Nweke (2016). Their study indicated that plagiarism

undermined the value of students' progress and deteriorates students' academic achievement in schools. The study also revealed that lifting of other peoples' works do not add value to students' academic improvement.

Conclusion

Corruption is a major disciplinary issue facing the Nigerian polity and the universities being a microcosm of the large society has not been spared, as corrupt practices have slowly and insidiously infiltrated the universities in diverse forms. The most prevalent of these, based on the findings of this study are bribery, plagiarism. The study therefore concluded that bribery, plagiarism significantly influence the academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State to a high extent.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were proffered:

1. Governments and educational planners should ensure that lecturers pay is comparable with those of their counterparts in the other establishments. This will help in checking the incidence of lecturers looking elsewhere for money to meet their basic needs and which may lead to absence or reduction in corrupt practices.
2. All academic papers, textbook, projects etc by the lecturers and students should be subjected to plagiarism check before acceptance for use or sale within the institution.

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