

SECONDARY SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS' KNOWLEDGE OF CORRUPTION IN NIGERIAN SOCIETY: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING AND VALUE REORIENTATION

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ABSTRACT

Corruption is a global phenomenon whose degrees of prevalence as well as the measures being taken to address it vary from one nation to another. Nigeria is not an exception in the “struggle” with corruption. The aim of this study therefore was to investigate secondary school adolescents’ knowledge of corruption in Nigerian society with its implications for counselling and value reorientation in society. It examined secondary school adolescents’ perspectives on practices constituting corrupt practices in Nigerian society. The study further determined secondary school adolescents’ attitudes towards corrupt practices in Nigerian society. It also examined their perspectives on how corrupt practices can be curbed in Nigerian society. The study adopted a survey design. The population of the study comprised all the senior secondary school students in Osun State, Nigeria. The sample size comprised 200 senior secondary school students selected across Osun Central senatorial district in the State, using a simple random sampling technique. The Researchers developed a questionnaire titled *Adolescents’ knowledge of Corrupt Practices Assessment Questionnaire (AKCPAQ)* which was used to collect data for the study. Percentages, mean, standard deviation, ranking and weighted mean were used to analyse the data. The results showed that secondary school adolescents in Nigeria lack adequate knowledge of practices that constitute corrupt practices in society. Also, majority (84.0%) of the secondary school adolescents expressed unfavourable attitudes towards known corrupt practices. The results further showed that corrupt practices in Nigeria can be ended if people at all levels of authority discharge their responsibilities with integrity and government caters for the citizenry as it should. The study recommends among other things that the sensitization of secondary schools’ adolescents on behaviour and practices that constitute corrupt practices in society.

KEYWORDS: Value, Corruption, Adolescents, Nigeria, Secondary Schools

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1. INTRODUCTION

The functionality of any society requires having individuals or group of people either selected through electoral or any other acceptable process to steer the affairs of that society. For these selected or elected individuals to get the common goals of the society or nation achieved, the commonwealth that society or nation must be judiciously managed for the benefit of all. However, when the individuals saddled with leadership responsibility of the nation begin to take advantage of their position to engage in illegal, dishonest, unwholesome acts while rendering their services, the development is usually described as corruption (Uche, 2014). The Department for International Development (2015) described corruption as the misuse of resources or power for private gain. Transparency International (2021) defined corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. According to this global body, corrupt practices or behaviours manifest in many forms which include public servants demanding or taking money in exchange for services; politicians misusing public money or granting public jobs or contracts to their sponsors, friends, families; and corporations bribing officials to get lucrative deals.

The reports of the second survey of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on corruption indicated that 30.2 percent gave a bribe or were asked to give a bribe by a public official among Nigerian citizens who had at least one contact with a public official in the 12 months prior to 2019 survey (UNODC, 2019). It is however important to stress that corruption is not peculiar to Nigerian society alone. It is correctly described as a global phenomenon with respect to developmental status of the nation whether advanced, primitive, modern or traditional (Moyosore, 2015). Nevertheless, the prevalent rate and its adverse impacts on the developing nations like Nigeria call for concern. Despite the Anti-Corruption campaign and measures of the current administration of President Muhammadu Buhari commenced in 2015, the available data indicate that not much success has been achieved. The score of Nigeria in 2020 Corruption Perception Index (CPI) as published by Transparency International still indicates that Nigeria is among the

highly corrupt nations, while Sub-Saharan Africa is the lowest performing region on the CPI (Transparency International, 2020).

The global effort towards completely getting rid of various dimensions of corrupt practices stem for its attendant adverse effects on development of nations and the general well-being of citizens in their respective country. The detrimental impacts of corruption in society permeate all facets of human lives. According to UNODC (2020), corruption hinders development, worsens income inequality among the populace, reduces both domestic and foreign investment, culminates in inefficient allocation of public funds, lowers public sector services, and also deprives citizens of access to public services.

While the adverse effects of corruption in Nigerian society is widely acknowledged, empirical findings do not suggest that there is a significant level of agreement on the specific behaviour or practices that constitute corruption in Nigeria. For instance, in a study carried out by Olawuyi, Ajayi and Uyanne (2018) to examine corrupt practices in the educational system among university students and staff, it was reported that both students and staff agreed that promotion of teachers or lecturers based on loyalty to constituted authority at the expense of meritocracy, diversion of budget or other resources allocated to schools, diversion of funds meant for procurement of materials and construction of facilities by few individuals in authority, and insistence on selecting the head for a particular position from a certain part of local government, state or geopolitical zone constitute corrupt practices. They however differed on practices such as acceptance of gratification from parents to ensure access to schools, awarding good grades to students that they do not merit, adjusting criteria for admission to favour certain segment of individuals, approval of school projects for personal and political interest rather than educational needs, exposing examination questions or tests to high-paying or influential candidates before the actual commencement of examination, selection of accreditation team based on nepotism instead of merits and professionalism. While students considered these practices as corruption, the staff perceived them as normal in the system. While the work of Olawuyi,

Ajayi and Uyanne (2018) remains an important contribution to knowledge, the work did not specifically examine secondary school adolescents' knowledge of corrupt practices in Nigeria as well as their attitude to them. The need to explore this area however can hardly be overemphasised.

Asiyai (2020) also reported examination malpractices, collection of illegal charges by principals, extortion of money by teachers and withholding of textbooks allocated to schools, favouritism, irregular movement of teachers during school hours and inducement to secure admission as prevalent corrupt practices found in secondary schools in Edo State. The administrative strategies for curbing corruption in secondary schools as identified by Asiyai (2020) include good remuneration for teachers, formation of anti-corruption clubs, and proper value orientation. Adesina and Oluyemi (2012) also reported that the majority (84.3%) of the respondents in their study were aware of the prevalence of corrupt practices in society while 5.0% shared a contrary opinion. Useful as the findings of Asiyai (2020) as well as that of Adesina and Oluyemi (2012) are, a study specifically focused on adolescents' knowledge of corrupt practices and their attitude to them would be a very relevant addition to the wealth of information on corruption in Nigeria and globally.

In the same vein, Olayiwola & Ajayi (2014) argue that attitude, behaviour and feelings are interrelated terms. Similarly, Hayes, (2010) defines attitude as an individual's prevailing tendency to respond either favourably or unfavourably to an object (person or group of people, institutions or events). In addition, Gatti, Paternostro and Rigolini (2003) report that 75% of individuals in their study sample agree that the acceptance of bribes as an action that is never justifiable. This outcome therefore is an indication of unfavourable attitude towards corrupt practices. Moreover, findings of UNODC (2019) on corruption in Nigeria show that citizen's attitudes about the acceptance or refusal of bribes can influence the behaviour of others when faced with request for bribes. These studies, important as they are, did not cover secondary school adolescents' knowledge of corrupt practices as well as their attitude towards them. The researchers opine that this is a major research gap that is necessary to be filled because, among other reasons,

secondary school adolescents constitute a very significant segment of a nation's population.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

While it is widely acknowledged by all and sundry that corruption impedes the development and progress of any society, not many individuals easily come to term on behaviour and practices that constitute corrupt practices. Experiences in contemporary Nigerian society have shown that the nation's previously cherished values such as good character, good family name etc., are fading out at a very alarming rate with vices gaining prominence rapidly. Consequently, children and youths who are usually referred to as the future of our nation are already part of the nation with deteriorating values. With this ugly development in society, cleansing the mind of the youths, who are the future generation of the country, becomes a herculean task; nonetheless not impossible to achieve. However, these occurrences and the need to secure the future for the incoming generation, call for drastic steps with all hands being on deck.

One of the ways of preparing these youths for future leadership is by ensuring that they do not imbibe the culture of corruption that is fast gaining ground in the country. To do this effectively, it is imperative to find out if these youths have the correct conception of corrupt practices in the country, correct attitude towards corrupt practices in Nigerian society as well as the correct perspectives on how these corrupt practices can be eliminated.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to

1. examine secondary school adolescents' perspectives on practices constituting corrupt practices in Nigerian society.
2. determine secondary school adolescents' attitudes toward corrupt practices in Nigerian society.
3. examine secondary school adolescents' perspectives on how corrupt practices can be stopped in Nigerian society

1.3. Research Questions

For this study, it is necessary to answer the following questions:

1. What are the practices that constitute corrupt practices in Nigerian society from the secondary school adolescents' perspectives?
2. What is the secondary school adolescents' attitude towards known corrupt practices in Nigerian society?
3. What are the secondary school adolescents' perspectives on how corrupt practices can be ended in the Nigerian society?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This study employed in the survey research design. It allows the researcher to obtain information from a representative sample of a particular population on a phenomenon of interest to the researcher. Since the researcher have no intention to manipulate any variable in the study, the survey design was found appropriate for a study of this nature.

2.2. Participants

The study participants were 200 public senior secondary school adolescents selected using a simple random sampling technique.

2.3. Instrument

The instrument titled Adolescents' knowledge of Corrupt Practices Assessment Questionnaire (AKCPAQ) developed by the researchers were used to collect data for the study. AKCPAQ consists of 36 items of which items 1-16 measured practices that constitute corrupt practices in Nigeria, items 17-26 measured attitudes towards corrupt practices, while the rest of the items concentrated on how to stop corrupt practices with a four-point Likert scale response format of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree. The instrument AKCPAQ reported a moderate Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficients of 0.68 when the instrument was pilot-tested.

2.4. Data Collection Procedure

The researcher visited the selected secondary schools in Ife North Local Government Area of Osun State, Nigeria to seek permission to carry out the study. With the permission of the school authorities, questionnaires were administered to the students by the researchers assisted by three trained research assistants. The

questionnaires were explained to the students before administering them, and all the completed questionnaires were retrieved from the respondents the same day, collated and coded for data analysis.

2.5. Ethical Considerations

The researchers received ethics approval for the study from the Research Committee of the Department of Educational Foundations of their institution. The participants in the study were well informed about the purpose, procedure and importance of the study. Participation in the study was voluntary and the participants were given the privilege of anonymity. All the data collected were kept confidential and stored securely for processing.

2.6. Analysis of Data

The data collected was analysed using descriptive statistical tools such as frequency and percentage, mean, standard deviation, ranking and weighted mean.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Secondary School Adolescents' Perspectives on Practices that Constitute Corrupt Practices in the Nigerian Society

Table 1 shows the distribution of the secondary school adolescent respondents that participated in the study by

Table 1: Distribution of the Demographic Characteristics of Adolescents by Gender, Age, Class and Discipline

Variables	Demographic Characteristics	N Participants	%
Adolescents by Gender	Male	95	47.5
	Female	105	52.5
	Total	200	100.0
Adolescents by Age	14-16yrs	161	80.5
	17-19yrs	33	16.5
	Above 19yrs	6	3.0
	Total	200	100.0
Adolescents by Class	SS1	80	40.0
	SS2	85	42.5
	SS3	35	17.5
	Total	200	100.0
Adolescents by Discipline	Science	82	41.0
	Arts	56	28.0
	Commercial	62	31.0
	Total	200	100.0

gender, age, class and discipline. In terms of gender 95 (47.5%) were male while 105 (52.5%) were female. In terms of age, 161 (80.5%) respondents were between 14-16 years, 33 (16.5%) were between 17-19 years while the age of 6 (3.0%) of the respondents were above 19 years. As shown in the distribution, most of the sampled adolescents were of 14-16 years of age. In addition, 80 (40.0%) of the respondents were in SS1 class, 85 (42.5%) in SS2 while 35 (17.5%) were in SS3 class. In terms of academic discipline, 82 (41.0%) in Science, 56 (28.0%) were in Arts, while 62 (31.0%)

were in Commercial class.

The result in Table 2 shows that 79.5% of the secondary school students agreed that promotion of workers based on loyalty to one's superior at the expense of meritocracy constitute corrupt practice while 72.0% also considered insistence on selecting the head for a particular position from a certain part of local government, state or geopolitical zone as corrupt practice. However, 79.0% disagreed that diversion of allocated budget or other resources without approval is a corrupt practice. Also, 56.0%, 77.5%, and 82.5% disagreed that diversion of funds meant for procurement of materials and construction of facilities by few individuals in authority; offering bribe or financial inducement to secure opportunity or avoid punishment, and recruitment and promotion of workers without due process constitute corrupt practices. Similarly, 72.0%, 86.5%, and 86.5% disagreed that accepting gratification from contractors before awarding government contracts; bypassing standard criteria for admission to favour certain individuals, and exposing examination questions or tests to high-paying or influential candidates before the commencement of exams constitute corrupt practices. Likewise, 74.0%, 65.0%, 81.5% and 87.0% disagreed that selection of inspection team members based on nepotism instead of merits and professionalism; allocation of salaries to ghost workers; promotion of friends or colleagues without regard to their qualifications; and sexual harassment of junior female colleagues by superiors in offices were part of corrupt practices. Findings further show that 89.0% of the adolescents did not regard illegal deduction of staff salaries by some government officials as a corrupt practice; 86.0% disagreed that unnecessary absence from work without taking permission constitutes corrupt practice while 86.5% also disagreed that collection of illegal fees from motorists by law enforcement agents is part of corrupt practices in the Nigerian society.

3.2. Secondary School Adolescents' Attitude Towards Corrupt Practices in Nigerian Society

The result in Table 3 shows that the majority (84.0%) of secondary school adolescents expressed unfavourable attitudes towards corrupt practices while 16.0%

Table 2: Secondary School Adolescents' Perspectives on Practices that Constitute Corrupt Practices in the Nigerian Society

S/N	Practices	Agree		Disagree	
		f	%	f	%
1	Promotion of workers based on loyalties to superior or authority at the expense of meritocracy.	159	79.5	41	20.5
2	Diversion of allocated budget or other resources without approval.	42	21.0	158	79.0
3	Diversion of funds associated with procurement of materials and construction of facilities by few individuals in authority.	88	44.0	112	56.0
4	Offering bribes or financial inducement to secure opportunity or avoid punishment.	45	22.5	155	77.5
5	Recruitment and promotion of workers without due process.	35	17.5	165	82.5
6	Accepting gratification from contractors before awarding government contracts.	56	28.0	144	72.0
7	Bypassing standard criteria for admission to favour certain segment of individuals.	27	13.5	173	86.5
8	Exposing examination questions or tests to high-paying or influential candidates before the actual commencement of exams.	27	13.5	173	86.5
9	Selection of inspection team members based on nepotism (man-know-man) instead of merits and professionalism	52	26.0	148	74.0
10	Allocation of salaries to ghost workers.	70	35.0	130	65.0
11	Promotion of friends or colleagues without regard to their qualifications.	37	18.5	163	81.5
12	Sexual harassment of junior female colleagues by superiors in offices	26	13.0	174	87.0
13	Illegal deduction of staff salaries by some government officials	22	11.0	178	89.0
14	Unnecessary absence from work without taking permission	28	14.0	172	86.0
15	Insistence on selecting the head for a particular position from a certain part of local government, state or geopolitical zone	144	72.0	56	28.0
16	Collection of illegal fees from motorists by law enforcement agents	27	13.5	173	86.5

expressed favourable attitudes towards corrupt practices in the Nigerian society.

Table 3: Secondary School Adolescents' Attitude Towards Corrupt Practices in Nigerian Society

Nature of Attitude	Score Range	f	%
Favourable	10-15	32	16.0
Unfavourable	16-40	168	84.0
Total		200	100.0

The result in Table 3 shows that the majority (84.0%) of secondary school adolescents expressed unfavourable attitudes towards corrupt practices while 16.0% expressed favourable attitudes towards corrupt practices in the Nigerian society.

3.3. Secondary School Adolescents' Perspectives on how Corrupt Practices can be stopped in society

Table 4: Secondary School Adolescents' Perspectives on how Corrupt Practices can be stopped in society

S/N	Items	x	SD	Rank
1	People in authorities should rule with integrity	3.6	0.7	1st
2	Attitudinal change should be promoted among the citizens of the nation.	3.6	0.5	1st
3	Government officials and leaders should be made accountable for their actions and inactions	3.5	0.6	4th
4	Corrupt individuals should always be disgraced in society	3.5	0.7	4th
5	Stringent laws should be enacted for prosecuting corrupt individuals in society.	3.4	0.8	8th
6	Government should ensure that the citizens are well catered for.	3.6	0.7	1st
7	Life imprisonment should be made the consequence of corruption	3.0	1.1	10th
8	Every corrupt individual found guilty should be executed without delay.	3.4	0.8	8th
9	Corrupt official should be banned from any future position in the country	3.5	0.8	4th
10	Properties of the corrupt individuals should be confiscated to serve as deterrent to other.	3.5	0.8	4th
	Weighted Mean	3.5		

Result in Table 4 shows secondary school adolescents' perspectives on how corrupt practices can be stopped. Considering the weighted mean of 3.5 which is used as criterion of acceptance, it shows that the secondary school adolescents were of the opinion that corrupt practices can be stopped if people in authorities should rule with integrity ($x = 3.6$, $SD = 0.7$); through promotion of attitudinal change among the citizens of the nation ($x = 3.6$, $SD = 0.5$); when government well cater for the citizens ($x = 3.6$, $SD = 0.7$); when government officials and leaders are held accountable for their actions and inactions ($x = 3.5$, $SD = 0.6$); when corrupt individuals are always disgraced in society ($x = 3.5$, $SD = 0.7$); when corrupt official are banned from any future position in the country ($x = 3.5$, $SD = 0.7$), and when properties of the corrupt individuals are confiscated to serve as deterrent ($x = 3.5$, $SD = 0.8$).

4. DISCUSSION

The findings of the study showed that secondary school adolescents lack adequate knowledge about practices that constitute corrupt practices in Nigerian society. This is evident as the majority of the students disagreed that diversion of allocated budget or other resources without approval; diversion of funds associated with procurement of materials and construction of facilities by few individual in authority; offering bribe or financial inducement in order to secure opportunity or avoid punishment; recruitment and promote of workers without due process; accepting gratification from contractors before awarding government contracts; bypassing standard criteria for admission to favour certain segment of individuals constitute corrupt practices. Most students only agreed that promotion of workers based on loyalty to one's superior at the expense of meritocracy and insistence on selecting the head for a particular position from a certain part of local government, state or geopolitical zone constitute corrupt practices in the society. This finding is consistent with findings of Olawuyi, Ajayi and Uyanne (2018) that suggest that students expressed inadequate understanding about practices that constitute corruption in the educational system.

The study revealed that majority (84.0%) of secondary school adolescents expressed unfavourable attitudes towards known corrupt practices. This outcome is

expected as most of the citizens do condemn the act of corruption due to its adverse implications. Nevertheless, not many students acknowledge that corrupt practices transcend embezzlement of public funds as many do involve in one form of corrupt practice or the other without understanding or acknowledging it. The finding corroborates those of Gatti, Paternostro and Rigolini (2003) that the majority of their respondents value the acceptance of bribes as an action that is never justifiable. This outcome is an indication of unfavourable attitude towards corrupt practices.

The findings of the study further stated that corrupt practices can be stopped if people in authorities rule with integrity; when attitudinal change among the citizens of the nation is promoted; when the government well caters for the citizens; when government officials and leaders are held accountable for their actions and inactions; when corrupt individuals are always disgraced in society; when corrupt officials are banned from any future position in the country, and when properties of corrupt individuals are confiscated to serve as deterrent. This outcome suggests good governance as an antidote of corruption in the Nigerian society. This finding is similar to what Asiyai (2020) reported as administrative strategies for curbing corruption in secondary schools, in which good remuneration for teachers, formation of anti-corruption clubs, proper value orientation topped the ranking. Measures such as payment of good remuneration to teachers is an indication of government prioritizing citizens' welfare and well-being while attitudinal change among the citizens of the nation could be ensured through measures such as formation of anti-corruption clubs and proper value orientation.

5. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that secondary school adolescents lack adequate knowledge of what constitutes corrupt practices in Nigeria. However, the students expressed unfavourable attitude towards practices that are known to be corrupt practices in the country.

6. RECOMMENDATION

Consequent upon one of the key findings of this study

that secondary school students lack adequate knowledge of what constitute corrupt practices in Nigeria, and based on the fact that the importance of having adequate knowledge of what constitute corrupt practices cannot be overemphasised if adolescent students are to make informed decisions on this subject, it is recommended that a well-coordinated sensitization programme on what constitute corrupt practices in Nigeria should be incorporated into secondary school curriculum and be taught by teachers specially trained to anchor such programme. This programme should also place emphasis on the negative effects of not arresting the increasing prevalence of corrupt practices in the country. In addition, the said sensitization programme should be structured to educate secondary school students to be well behaved and patriotic. Secondary school teaching and learning outcomes should be assessed periodically and a testimonial should be issued to each student at the end of his/her secondary school education showing performance in terms of character, patriotism and comprehension of what constitute corrupt practices in the country. If secondary school adolescents can be successfully educated to be patriotic to the nation, it will go a long way in making them to have zero tolerance for corrupt practices before and when they step into leadership positions in the country.

An additional finding of this study, that majority of secondary school adolescents agreed that corrupt practices do not augur well for the generality of the citizens at the end of the day, is an indication that if these secondary school adolescents are well motivated by all relevant authorities, they will not only avoid getting involved in corrupt practices but will also support the effort of the government to stamp out corrupt practices from the country. To this end, it is recommended that deliberate and comprehensive efforts should be made to acquaint secondary school adolescents with detailed information about countries that have succeeded in stamping out corrupt practices from their societies and how this has made such countries relatively better places to live comfortably. Steps taken by the leadership of such countries in this kind of feat and their commitment to the progress of their countries should also be taught.

The study further reveals that majority of secondary school adolescents agreed on a number of measures that could be taken in order to address the challenge of corrupt practices in Nigeria effectively. This shows that the challenge of corrupt practices in the country is not without possible and effective solution. It is therefore recommended that government and all relevant agencies should be more proactive and sincere in addressing the problem of corrupt practices in the country.

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