

Strategies to be adopted by Counsellors towards Re-orientation against Bribery and Corruption in Anambra State

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Abstract

This study, guided by three research questions, examined the strategies to be adopted by counsellors towards re-orientation against bribery and corruption in Anambra State. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The population was all government owned secondary school counsellors numbering 264. Data collection was by the use of Re-orientation against Bribery and Corruption Questionnaire (RBCQ). The instrument was validated and reliability coefficient of 0.76 was obtained. Data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation. The findings of the study revealed the incidence of bribery and corruption to include but not limited to abuse of public power for private gain, embezzlement of public funds, extortion. It also revealed the causes of bribery and corruption to include poor remuneration of workers, lack of accountability and transparency among government officials, among others. The study further suggested some strategies to be adopted by counsellors to include launching anti-corruption crusade, organising seminars and workshop on the dangers of bribery and corruption and as well as creating enlightenment programmes for value re-orientation. The study finally made some recommendations which include establishing counselling centres in all government establishment, organising seminars by counsellors for value re-orientation and discouraging disparities among workers' pay package.

Keywords: re-orientation, bribery, corruption, counsellors, strategies

Introduction

There is a growing worldwide concern about bribery and corruption at the present time. This may be attributed to some factors. These factors include but not limited to, a consensus that bribery and corruption is universal, it exists in all countries both developed and developing (World Bank, 2017), in the public and private sectors as well as in a non-profit and charitable organisations. Secondly, it plays a more central role in politics than at many other times. Governments have fallen, careers of world renowned public figures buried and reputations of well-respected organisations and business firms badly tarnished

on account of it. Thirdly, bribery and corruption has been a major obstacle in the process of economic growth, development and in modernizing a country.

Increasing public interest and concern over bribery and corruption have resulted in a large amount of scholarly research on the subject. Admittedly, there are still gaps in the current state of information and knowledge on the matter and much more empirical research that has been conducted thus far has yielded fresh inputs into the problems. Corruption is a phenomenon no country is immune to. It has been a well-known fact for quite some time. The classical view that corruption concerns only less developed countries does not hold. Even though developing countries do score worse in corruption ratings, these indices also show that more than two-thirds of the countries worldwide suffer significantly from corruption. It therefore does not suffice to address corruption solely as an issue less developed countries have to deal with. Combating corruption rather calls for a re-orientation of the value system.

Corruption is a serious challenge in the public sector in Nigeria (Ezeifekwaba, 2019). This can be attested from exposure of various probe panels that have been established at various times by various regimes in the nation. Actually, corruption is at the core of the crises in issues such as legitimacy and governance, rule of law and the welfare of the citizens. Political and economic environments as well as poor professional ethics bring about corruption (Stefan, 2018). He however noted that not all corrupt practices result in payment of bribe. For example, a public employee who claims to be sick but goes on vacation is abusing the public position for personal use. Thus, he is engaging in act of corruption even through no bribe is paid. Corruption has severally affected the growth and proper utilization of resources in the nation. It has also posed as an obstacle in the process of the development of many countries (Gray & Kaufmann, 1998; Enste & Heldman, 2017).

Corruption has fierce impacts on economic and societal development and has permeated through the entire sectors of the economy. Corruption is a complex social phenomenon and the motivations to engage in corrupt behaviour are multifaceted. Corruption is the result of interaction at the micro, meso-, and macro level (Bicchieri & Ganegonda, 2016; Diment & Schulte, 2016). Surprisingly, corruption has rarely been the focus of attention, but rather has been analyzed in a broader context of crime. Until the 1980s, corruption was mainly a topic of political, sociological, historical and criminal law research and just recently come to the fore in the field of economy. It is worthy to note however, that corruption in this context refers to bribery and corruption. It is against this backdrop that this paper is to examine the strategies counsellors should adopt towards reorientation against bribery and corruption in order to curb the prevalence in Anambra State.

There is no single clear definition of corruption. This is due to the fact that corruption exists in different forms involving different participants. The best known form is obviously bribes paid by private individuals or companies to public officials. Corruption also appears within the civil service. There are two varieties existing – the “bottom top”

and the “top down” corruption (Rose-Ackerman, 1999). When low level officials collect bribes, where they have to share with superiors, it is called “bottom top” corruption. Giving a share of their bribes to superiors, they are protected of being fired and getting prosecuted, if a complaint arises. The top down corruption works in the other direction. There are two reasons for this kind of corruption. First, superiors might fear that a subordinate denounces them; second, if the contracts are decided upon top-level, but the inputs are given by the subordinates, the superiors depend on the co-operation of their subordinates.

Going by this popular definition of abuse of public office for private gains, it then takes into account that corruption exists in different guises including bribery, trafficking, embezzlement, and as well as patronage. This paper deals with counsellors’ strategies for re-orientation against bribery and corruption. In this context, corruption is defined as the use of public office for private gain (Myint, 2000). It is the use of official position, rank or status by an office holder for his own personal benefit. It involves the improper and unlawful behaviour of public service officials, both politicians and civil servants, whose positions create opportunities for the diversion of money and asset from government to themselves and their accomplices. Following from the above definition, examples of corrupt behaviours include bribery, extortion, fraud, embezzlement, nepotism, cronyism, appropriation of public assets and property for private use, and influence peddling. Corrupt activities such as fraud and embezzlement can be undertaken by an official alone and without involvement of a second party. While others such as bribery, extortion, and influence peddling involve two parties – the giver and the taker in a corrupt deal. The “second” type (i.e. two party type) of corruption can arise under a variety of circumstances concerned with the following:

- Government contracts: bribes can influence who gets the contract, the terms of the contract and sub contract when the project is implemented.
- Government benefits: bribes can influence the allocation of monetary benefits such as credit subsidies and favoured prices and exchange rates.
- Government revenue: bribes can be used to reduce the amount paid as taxes, fees, dues, custom duties, electricity and other public utilities charges collected from business firms.
- Time savings and regulatory avoidance: bribes can speed up the granting of permission, licenses and permits to carry out activities that are perfectly legal. This is the so-called ‘grease money’.
- Influencing outcomes of legal and regulatory processes: bribes can be used to provide incentives to regulatory authorities to refrain from taking actions and to look the other way. Similarly, bribes can be given to favour one party over another in court cases or in other legal and regulatory proceedings.

This ugly monster that has devastated almost all the sectors of economy has some casual factors. This implies that some factors aid and support corrupt practices. According to Vienna (1999), disparities among civil servant income, lack of accountability and

transparency among others cause them to engage in corrupt behaviours. Political and economic environment as well as poor professional ethics and legislation also bring about bribery and corruption (Stefan, 2018).

Looking at the above scenario, there is need for re-orientation against bribery and corruption, if the society is to be better, hence the counsellors' intervention. A counsellor is seen as a person who has acquired those special skills and techniques through a professional training which enables him/her give educational, vocational, personal, and social counselling both within and beyond the school setting (Abubakar, Aliyi & Dikki, 2016). The counsellor has important roles to play in co-ordinating and monitoring the services as well as the people involved in the school system. This role should be extended to other sectors of human existence especially where there maybe room for bribery and corruption. The roles of the counsellors in this write up are mainly to organise re-orientation programmes against bribery and corruption. The counsellor can achieve this through appropriate placement of workers in different careers as is the case in the school system, helping individuals to understand themselves for proper adjustment. According to Kabir (2017), counsellors should further extend their roles to organising anti-corruption crusades for both public and civil servants, organising seminars for value re-orientation against bribery and corruption. In the words of Abubakar, Aliyi and Dikki (2016), they opined that counselling centres should be established in all government establishments. They further stated that there is supposed to be laws and policies against bribery and corruption.

Counselling, according to Egbo (2014), is a social service offered to individuals who are undergoing problems and need professional help to overcome it. Counselling has been used to denote a wide range of procedures including advice giving, supports and encouragement in times of troubles or needs. According to Anwana (1997), it is a more specialised service which requires training in personality development in order to handle exceptional group of individuals. These groups of individuals can be found in all sectors of the society – government, judiciary, educational institutions, civil service, legislature, among others. Hence the counselling services.

Counselling helps to bring changes in life, change in thought, change in emotion, and change in behaviours. Counselling takes place in the context of a helping relationship in which the counsellor and the client work together to resolve a problem, change behaviours and/or foster personal growth and awareness. Although clients may have a number of helping relationship with friends or family, the counselling relationship is different in a number of ways (Kabir, 2017). It is not reciprocal; the counsellor is a trained professional; the counselling relationship is confidential; among others. Counselling deals with personal, social, vocational, empowerment and educational concerns. Counsellors work only in areas in which they have expertise. These areas may include intra and interpersonal concerns related to school or college adjustment, employment issues, family issues, rehabilitation, orientation among others.

Counselling is a process in which clients learn how to make decisions and formulate new ways of behaving, feeling and thinking. Counsellors focus on the goals their clients wish to achieve. Clients explore their present level of functioning and the changes that must be made to achieve personal objectives. Thus, counselling involves both choice and change, evolving through distinct stages such as exploration, goal setting, and actions. Counselling is about taking control and making the changes the client wants. Within the safety of the therapeutic relationship, the client can express deeply-held feelings such as anger, anxiety, pains etc. By making sense of the past and gaining insight into present behaviour, more options can be created for change in the future. Counselling therapy can be the path towards living in a more satisfying and fulfilling way.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to find out the strategies counsellors should adopt towards reorientation against bribery and corruption in Anambra State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Identify the incidence of bribery and corruption in Anambra state.
2. Identify the causes of bribery and corruption in Anambra state.
3. Suggest strategies to be adopted by counsellors towards re-orientation against bribery and corruption.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the incidence of bribery and corruption in Anambra state?
2. What are the causes of bribery and corruption in Anambra State?
3. What strategies are to be adopted by counsellors towards reorientation against bribery and corruption?

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. According to Onah, Osondu, Agbo and Nwosu (2016), survey research helps the researcher to identify present conditions as well as information on which to base sound decisions. It is also designed to describe the characteristics of a particular population in an accurate manner. This design was found appropriate for the study because the study sought information from the respondents relative to their opinions, beliefs and behaviours.

The population of the study comprised all practicing counsellors in government owned secondary schools numbering 264 (Planning, Research and Statistics PRS, 2020). There was no sampling because the number could be managed. The instrument for data collection for the study was a self-developed structured questionnaire titled “Re-orientation against Bribery and Corruption Questionnaire” (RBCQ). Items of the questionnaire were generated from the definitions of the concepts. The instrument has two sections - A and B. Section A contains the respondents’ demographic data while section B is made up of 3 clusters of six items each making it a total of 18 items in the questionnaire. The instrument uses four point rating response category of Strongly Agree

(SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) with numerical value of 4, 3, 2, 1 respectively. The instrument was subjected to face and content validation. Three experts were used; two from Guidance and Counselling, and one from Measurement and Evaluation, all from Educational Psychology Department, Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe. The reliability of the data collected was determined using Conbrach Alpha. The three clusters yielded 0.74, 0.76, and 0.78 respectively with the overall reliability index of 0.76, which is high enough for the study. Copies of the instrument were distributed by the researchers with the help of two research assistants who were briefed before the administration to the respondents. Mean scores and standard deviation were used to answer the three research questions. Items with mean scores of 2.50 and above were accepted while items with mean scores below 2.50 were rejected.

Presentation of results

Research Question 1: What are the incidences of bribery and corruption in Anambra State?

Table 1: Responses on the incidence of bribery and corruption in Anambra State

| S/N | Items on incidence of bribery and corruption in Anambra State | Mean | SD | Remarks |
|-----|--|------------|------|----------|
| 1 | People abuse public power for personal gain | 3.10 | 0.62 | Accepted |
| 2 | All corrupt behaviours result in payment of bribe | 2.10 | 0.51 | Rejected |
| 3 | Corruption exists in all sectors | 3.12 | 0.62 | Accepted |
| 4 | Corruption is a severe obstacle confronting the process of development | 3.00 | 0.60 | Accepted |
| 5 | Extortion is a form of corrupt behaviour | 2.90 | 0.54 | Accepted |
| 6 | Embezzlement of public fund is a corrupt practice | 2.84 | 0.54 | Accepted |
| | Grand mean | 2.8 | | |

From the table 1, the data revealed that item nos. 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6 with mean scores of 3.10, 3.12, 3.0, 2.90 and 2.8 respectively were all above 2.50; therefore all are accepted as incidences of bribery and corruption. Item no. 2 has mean score of 2.10 which is below 2.50 and is therefore rejected.

Research Question 2: What are the causes of bribery and corruption in Anambra State?

Table 2: Responses on the causes of bribery and corruption in Anambra State

| S/N | Items on causes of bribery and corruption in Anambra State | Mean | SD | Remarks |
|-----|--|-------------|-------------|----------|
| 7 | Lack of accountability and transparency among government officials | 3.04 | 0.61 | Accepted |
| 8 | Disparities in civil servants' income | 2.85 | 0.58 | Accepted |
| 9 | Political and economic environment | 3.10 | 0.63 | Accepted |
| 10 | Lack of professional ethics and legislation | 2.85 | 0.51 | Accepted |
| 11 | Government poor remuneration to workers | 3.12 | 0.63 | Accepted |
| 12 | Eroded value system | 3.00 | 0.62 | Accepted |
| | Grand mean | 3.03 | 0.62 | |

From the table 2, it was observed that the respondents accepted all the items on numbers 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 with the mean responses of 3.04, 2.85, 3.10, 3.12, 2.85, 3.00 respectively. This shows that all the statements are causes of bribery and corruption.

Research Question 3: What strategies could counsellors adopt toward re-orientation against bribery and corruption in Anambra State?

Table 3: Strategies to be adopted by counsellors towards re-orientation against bribery and corruption in Anambra State

| S/N | Items on strategies to be adopted by counsellors towards re-orientation against bribery and corruption in Anambra State | Mean | SD | Remarks |
|-----|---|-------------|------|----------|
| 13 | Creating awareness on the dangers of bribery and corruption | 3.02 | 0.59 | Accepted |
| 14 | Establishing counselling centres in all government establishments | 2.61 | 0.25 | Accepted |
| 15 | Organising seminars and conferences for re-orientation against bribery and corruption | 2.8 | 0.79 | Accepted |
| 16 | Advising the government on the need for enhanced worker's pay package | 3.12 | 0.64 | Accepted |
| 17 | Organising campaign on the need for hardwork among government officials | 2.9 | 0.35 | |
| 18 | Creating enlightenment programmes for value re-orientation | 2.50 | 0.70 | Accepted |
| | Grand Mean | 2.84 | | |

From table 3, all the items were accepted by the respondents as strategies to be adopted by the counsellors towards re-orientation against bribery and corruption. Item no. 16 has the highest mean of 3.12 indicating that the government should be advised to enhance the pay package of workers. Other items have mean scores above 2.50; they were all accepted.

Discussion of the findings

Based on the findings on table 1, it implies that bribery and corruption exist in Anambra State. It indicated that use of public power for personal gain, extortion, embezzlement are all incidence of corruption. This supports the assertion that it exists both in developed and developing countries (World Bank, 2017). The finding also agrees with the opinion of Myint (2000) that embezzlement is a form of corrupt behaviour. Further, the finding supports the assertion of (Gray & Kaufmann, 1998) that corruption poses as an obstacle in the process of development of many countries. On the contrary, not all corrupt practices result in payment of bribe as opined by Stefan (2018).

The result presented in table 2 revealed that bribery and corruption are caused by some factors including lack of accountability and transparency, poor government remuneration of workers, disparities in civil servant income, political and economic environment, lack of professional ethics and legislation among others. This is in line with the opinion of Stefan (2018) who opined that political and economic environment as well as poor professional ethics and legislation bring about bribery and corruption. This study also supports the assertion of Vienna (1999) in his opinion that income disparities among civil servants causes them to engage in corrupt behaviours. The findings also agree with the statement of Ezeifekwaba (2019) that corruption is a serious challenge in the public sector of administration.

The findings in table 3, with the grand mean of 2.84 which is above the criterion mean of 2.50, clearly indicated the strategies to be adopted by counsellors towards re-orientation against bribery and corruption in Anambra State. This substantiates the claim of Abubakar, Aliyu and Dikki (2016) that counselling should be extended beyond the school setting to other sectors of human existence. They further opined that counselling centres should be established in all government establishments. The finding is also in line with the statements of Kabir (2017) in his opinion that counsellors should extend their roles to organizing anti-corruption crusades for both public and civil servants. He further stated that they should organise seminars for value re-orientation.

Conclusion

It is undoubtedly clear from the result of the study that corruption exists in Anambra State. Some factors are responsible for bribery and corruption in Anambra State which include among others disparities of income among government workers, lack of accountability among government officials, lack of professional ethics, poor remuneration of workers. The study also revealed that there are strategies counsellors should adopted for re-orientation against bribery and corruption. These include but not limited to organising

anti-corruption crusade, advising government on the need for enhanced workers' pay package, and organising enlightenment programmes for value re-orientation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were put forward:

1. Establishment of counselling centres in all government establishments.
2. The counselling centres should be charged with the duty of organising seminars and workshops on value re-orientation periodically.
3. Disparities among worker's pay package should be discouraged.

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