



Research Paper: Influence of Corrupt Practices on Students' Moral and Spiritual Development in Taraba State Institutions of Higher Learning



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Abstract

Objective: Corruption in higher education institutions poses a significant threat to students' ethical standards and spiritual well-being. In Taraba State, Nigeria, concerns have been raised about increasing incidences of unethical behaviors among academic staff and students. The study aimed to examine the influence of corrupt practices on the moral and spiritual development of students in tertiary institutions in Taraba State.

Methods: A descriptive survey research design was employed. The study population consisted of approximately 17,000 students. Using purposeful sampling, 200 students were selected based on their accessibility, willingness to participate, and relevance to the study's focus. Data were collected using a structured instrument titled *Corrupt Practices, Students' Moral and Spiritual Development Questionnaire (CPSMDQ)*, which demonstrated a reliability coefficient of 0.69 based on the Cronbach alpha method. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to address the research questions, and the Chi-square test was applied to test the hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results: Findings indicated a high prevalence of corrupt practices such as examination malpractice and sexual harassment. These behaviors significantly compromised students' moral and spiritual development, contributing to the erosion of traditional values, reduced appreciation for diligence and creativity, and increased involvement in prostitution and sexual exploitation.

Conclusion: Corruption has a detrimental impact on the moral and spiritual growth of students in higher institutions. The study recommends that SERVICOM and institutional anti-corruption units be empowered and supported to investigate, monitor, and sanction corrupt practices within academic environments.

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1. Introduction

Every civilized society upholds distinct values and norms, with education serving as a key tool for transmitting these principles to the younger generation. Such values often include integrity, good character, honesty, diligence, respect for authority, and adherence to law and order. However, as society evolves, these values are increasingly being diluted, and corruption has crept into various aspects of life, including the education sector. Corrupt practices encompass a range of unethical behaviors where individuals exploit their positions for personal gain, engaging in illegal or dishonest acts while performing their duties. These actions violate moral, social, or administrative standards (Tanzi, 1994; Lawal, 2006). In Nigeria, corruption has deeply embedded itself into the societal fabric. The frequency with which individuals in various institutions and sectors indulge in corrupt practices is troubling, as the issue spans across all levels of society and stages of development.

Nigeria has consistently ranked among the most corrupt nations in global assessments conducted by Transparency International and other organizations monitoring corruption. According to Uzochukwu (as cited in Oluwaleye, 2017), Nigeria was ranked 38th out of 195 countries in terms of corruption. Alarmingly, this widespread issue has also infiltrated the university system, which reflects the broader society (Alutu and Alutu, 2006). The deterioration within the education sector has prompted concern from scholars like Okojie (2012), who expressed dismay over the declining state of tertiary institutions in the country. Okojie (2012) observed that corruption in Nigeria has reached an alarming level, and that universities, as vital components of society, have not been shielded from its effects. He noted that the core values

essential for civility and national progress are steadily being undermined.

The university is traditionally regarded as the ivory tower, a prestigious center of learning where individuals are molded into men and women of integrity, found worthy both in character and scholarship. Regrettably, the same greed, obsession with material gain, and ambition for power through dishonest means (once largely confined to the wider society) have gradually infiltrated this once-honorable institution, giving rise to widespread corrupt practices (Odunaya & Olujunwon, 2010). A major concern is that the competence of many lecturers no longer aligns with the quality of graduates being trained. This prompted the Federal Republic of Nigeria, in its National Policy on Education (2014), to emphasize that no nation can exceed the quality of its teachers. According to the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (Teacher's Code of Conduct, 2002), a teacher is a professional equipped to impart knowledge, attitudes, and skills to learners. Therefore, university lecturers are expected to possess not only academic expertise but also exemplary skills, values, and character. The Academic Staff Union of Universities (Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities, 2006) expressed its commitment to establishing and maintaining high standards of academic performance and professional conduct. Unfortunately, the reality paints a different picture, as corrupt practices have become deeply rooted and widespread within the university system.

Arogundade et al. (2015) define academic corruption as any dishonest behavior within educational institutions carried out by administrators, lecturers, students, or other stakeholders, which negatively impacts the

academic mission of such institutions. This form of corruption encompasses various acts of misconduct in the academic setting, especially in tertiary institutions, that ultimately undermine the quality of education. [Alutu and Alutu \(2006\)](#) found that some lecturers actively facilitate examination malpractice. Indeed, corrupt practices take many forms among both staff and students. Studies at the global, national, and state levels have revealed a range of unethical behaviors within the university system. The authors of this paper note that higher institutions in Taraba State are not immune to these challenges, which include the sale of substandard academic materials, exam malpractice, absenteeism, sexual harassment, proliferation of part-time programs, coercion in the purchase of textbooks, and discriminatory practices based on religion, politics, ethnicity, or social background, as well as nepotism. [Galtima \(2012\)](#) further highlighted widespread corruption in Nigerian universities, particularly in admissions and related practices. Notably, Taraba State University, Jalingo, has been the focus of recent media reports involving numerous corrupt activities. These included staff in the ICT unit altering students' results, awarding higher grades or degree classifications in exchange for money, and changing poor grades into better ones for undeserving students.

No issue arises without a root cause, and the prevalence of social vices among university students, particularly those that hinder their moral and spiritual development, warrants deeper examination. Several factors may be encouraging students to engage in such behaviors. One prominent influence is peer pressure, where students adopt corrupt practices simply because their friends do the

same. Family expectations also play a role, especially when average or struggling students face pressure to produce impressive academic results without the necessary support or ability. Additional contributing factors include students' lack of awareness regarding their rights within the university system and a general trend of academic laziness manifested in poor study habits, lack of inquiry, and disengagement from meaningful academic activities. [Omenka \(2013\)](#) attributed the roots of corruption to factors such as poverty, weak cultural and institutional frameworks, the government's failure in punishing corruption effectively, and the absence of role models in leadership. He argued that widespread poverty, severe material deprivation, structural inequalities, and pressures from extended family networks further fuel the culture of corruption among students.

Various factors influence students' moral and spiritual development in the context of corrupt practices. The key among these is family background, lecturer effectiveness, interpersonal relationships, and access to relevant information. The family, as the primary unit of socialization, plays a vital role in shaping children's attitudes toward others and society at large. It supports a child's mental development, ambitions, and core values. Families instill moral and spiritual values through discipline, guidance, teaching life principles, and cultivating belief systems. An individual's character and moral compass are often rooted in their family upbringing. When a family upholds strong moral and spiritual standards, these are typically passed on to the children. Another critical factor is the effectiveness of lecturers. The quality of education a student receives is often a reflection of the quality of their instructors. As the saying goes, one cannot give what they do

not possess. Effective lecturers contribute significantly to the development of graduates who are both competent and morally upright. When lecturers carry out their duties with commitment and integrity, they not only enrich students' academic experience but also help nurture positive student-lecturer relationships. Lecturers who combine intellectual competence with sound character serve as role models by sharing personal philosophies, recommending enriching reading materials, and demonstrating ethical behavior, thereby positively influencing students' moral development (Kohlberg, 1981).

The application of role models plays a significant role in teaching morality and promoting character education. Teachers are naturally viewed as role models in terms of behavior and character. However, many educators struggle to grasp how modeling can effectively contribute to students' moral and character development. According to Sanderse (2012), role modelling is seldom employed as a deliberate teaching strategy, and only a small fraction of students actually perceive their teachers as role models. Therefore, for role modelling to have a meaningful impact on students' moral education, teachers must first understand the moral relevance of the traits they exhibit and how these traits can be consciously cultivated by their students (Sanderse, 2012).

Observations and interactions suggest that many students lack awareness of their rights within the academic community, leading them to navigate campus life passively, without understanding the consequences of their actions, whether positive or negative. This gap is largely due to inadequate orientation. While numerous studies have documented the

various forms and causes of corrupt practices globally, there remains a shortage of empirical data specific to the types and drivers of corruption in post-secondary institutions in Taraba State. This study attempts to bridge that gap by identifying which global patterns of corruption might be present among staff and students in Taraba State's higher institutions, and how these could be influencing students' moral and spiritual development (Omenka, 2013)

Every action has an outcome, whether positive or negative, but in the case of corruption within Taraba State institutions, the consequences are predominantly detrimental. These unethical practices undermine the quality of education, producing graduates who often struggle to compete with their peers or defend their academic qualifications when it matters most. Aina and Ogundele (2013) highlighted that many graduates fall short of expectations in their fields because they did not earn their certificates legitimately. This has broader implications for national development, as it erodes the credibility of Nigerian academic qualifications, both locally and internationally. The prevalence of students obtaining certificates through dishonest means sends a damaging message across all sectors of society. Similarly, Badey and Eyichukwu (2016) linked the declining standard of education and widespread corruption to the emergence of poorly trained graduates. This situation poses a serious threat to national progress, leaving the country reliant on foreign expertise and hindering self-sustained development.

Considering the impact of corruption among students in Nigeria, Memory and Memory (2013) examined corrupt academic practices which, according to them, have

either knowingly or unknowingly led the Nigerian education system into a serious state of widespread examination malpractices and related misconduct. They observed that unless academic corruption is properly tackled, the education system will keep producing poorly trained graduates, weaken the quality of tertiary education, and diminish the role of universities, particularly in research and development. However, earlier studies appeared to focus mainly on the economic impact of corrupt practices, highlighting the need for this study to explore how such practices influence students' moral and spiritual values.

Morality and spirituality remain the key foundations that guide and instruct individuals on what is right or wrong. They exert a strong influence on personal decisions, such that one may refrain from certain actions not because they are legally prohibited, but because of deeply rooted moral and spiritual values shaped by personal beliefs or religion. It is evident that corrupt practices significantly affect students' moral and spiritual development. Global empirical studies have highlighted the consequences of corruption, such as graduates' inability to meet the expectations of the labor market and their failure to defend their qualifications when required. However, these studies have largely focused on the economic impacts of corruption (Memory and Memory, 2013). There appears to be a gap in the literature, particularly in Taraba State, concerning the various forms and causes of corrupt practices. Therefore, this study was conducted to assess the extent to which corrupt practices influence students' moral and spiritual development. Based on the topic, the researchers of this study intend to examine the following objectives:

i. To identify the various forms of corrupt

practices that could influence students' moral and spiritual development.

ii. To determine the causes of corrupt practices among staff and students of tertiary institutions of learning in Taraba State.

iii. To determine the influence of corrupt practices on students' moral and spiritual development in Taraba State institutions of higher learning.

2. Methods

2.1. Research Design, Statistical Population, Sample, and Sampling Method

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the influence of corrupt practices on the moral and spiritual development of students in higher institutions across Taraba State, Nigeria. This design was considered appropriate because it allows for the observation and description of phenomena as they exist naturally, without manipulating any variables. The study population consisted of approximately 17,000 students enrolled in various higher institutions in Taraba State. For the research, Taraba State University, Jalingo (TSUJ) was purposively selected as the study location. Within TSUJ, the Faculty of Education was also purposively chosen due to its academic focus and direct relevance to ethical and moral development. From this faculty, 600 final-year students were identified based on the rationale that, being close to graduation and entry into wider society, they are more likely to encounter ethical challenges; a final sample of 200 students was purposively selected out of them, ensuring diversity in gender, academic discipline, and readiness to engage with the research topic. At all stages, sample selection was guided by the relevance of participants to the study's

objectives and their ability to provide informed responses.

2.2. Instruments

Data for the study were collected using a researcher-designed questionnaire titled Corrupt Practices, Students' Moral and Spiritual Development Questionnaire (CPSMDQ). The instrument consisted of two sections:

Section A collected the respondents' demographic information.

Section B contained 30 items designed to elicit responses related to corrupt practices and aspects of moral and spiritual development.

To establish the validity of the instrument, it was reviewed by three experts: two from the field of measurement and evaluation and one from guidance and counselling, all affiliated

with the Faculty of Education at Taraba State University.

2.3. Data Collection and Analysis

To determine the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted with 177 final-year students from the Federal University, Wukari (FUW). The Cronbach Alpha method was used to assess internal consistency, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.69, which was deemed acceptable for the study's purpose. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. Additionally, the Chi-square test was employed to test the null hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance.

3. Results

The results of the data analysis are explained below:

Table 1

Forms of Corrupt Practices among Staff and Students of Tertiary Institutions of Learning

Items	Mean	S.D
Sexual harassment of female students	3.24	0.84
Sales of inferior textual material	3.10	0.75
Examination malpractice	3.65	0.89
Absenteeism	2.98	0.82
Discrimination based on religion, ethnicity, political, or social preference	2.78	0.85
Proliferation of part-time programs	2.67	0.79
Force sales of textual material	2.92	0.81
Bribing of the examination master/mistress	2.65	0.88
Not following the timetable	2.56	0.90
Admission and certificate racketeering	2.72	0.87
Grand Mean/Standard Deviation	2.93	0.84

Table 1 showed the mean and standard deviation ratings of the various forms of corrupt practices among staff and students of tertiary institutions of learning in Taraba State. All items had means in the range of 2.50 to 4.00; the cluster had a mean of 2.93 and a standard deviation of 0.84. This showed that

respondents agreed to the factors itemized as forms of corrupt practices among staff and students of tertiary institutions of learning. The result revealed that examination malpractice and sexual harassment of female students are the most prevalent practices of corruption in tertiary institutions of learning in Taraba State.

Table 2

Causes of Corruption Practices among Staff and Students of Tertiary Institutions of Learning

Items	Mean	Std. Dev.
Poor modelling by lecturers and staff	3.48	0.74
Poor home training	3.12	0.78
Lack of access to the right information	3.52	0.67
Peer pressure due to the wrong association	2.98	0.72
Improper orientation	3.05	0.77
Economic situation of the family	2.67	0.69
Lecturer ineffectiveness	2.98	0.71
Pressure from the school management	2.54	0.68
Laziness leading to poor study habits	3.21	0.73
Dishonest and faulty system	3.16	0.77
Grand Mean/Standard Deviation	3.07	0.73

Table 2 presents the mean and standard deviation of responses on the causes of corrupt practices among staff and students of tertiary institutions in Taraba State. All items had the means in the range of 2.50 to 4.00; the cluster had a mean of 3.07 and a standard deviation of 0.73, which demonstrated that respondents

agreed with the factors itemized as the causes of corruption among staff and students. The result showed that a lack of access to the right information and poor modelling by lecturers and staff are the major causes of corruption in tertiary institutions of learning in Taraba State.

Table 3

Influence of Corruption on Students' Moral and Spiritual Development

Items	Mean	S.D
Prone to engage in societal vices like collecting and giving bribes	3.78	0.64
Erosion of traditional ethical values	3.21	0.76
Heaven helps those who help themselves	2.86	0.69
Increases the crime rate and conflicts	3.66	0.77
Loss of trust in the school management system	3.53	0.83
Increases the level of prostitution and sexual slavery	3.76	0.74
Erosion of students and staff's integrity	3.71	0.79
Decreases the value of hard work and innovation	3.69	0.68
Helps to get things easily done	3.18	0.77
It is a norm because everybody is doing it	3.06	0.73
Grand Mean/Standard Deviation	3.44	0.74

Table 3 displayed responses on the effects of corruption on students' moral and spiritual development in tertiary institutions of learning

in Taraba State. All the items had the mean values in the range of 2.51 to 4.00; the cluster had a grand mean of 3.44 and a grand standard deviation of 0.74; this confirmed that

respondents agreed that corruption affected students' moral and spiritual development which was included among others erosion of

traditional ethical values, decrease in the value of hard work, innovation, and increase in the level of prostitution and sexual slavery.

Table 4

Chi-square Test of Significant Influence of Corrupt Practices on Students' Moral and Spiritual Development

	Value	df	Sig
Pearson Chi-Square	228.192	198	.000
Likelihood Ratio	154.363	190	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	22.548	1	.000

Table 4 showed the Chi-square test on the significant effect of corrupt practices on students' moral and spiritual development ($\chi^2 = 228.192$, $df = 198$, $p = .000$). This signifies that the influence of corrupt practices on students' moral and spiritual development is statistically significant. Thus, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant influence of corrupt practices on students' moral and spiritual development, was rejected. This implies that corrupt practices among staff and students significantly influence students' moral and spiritual development.

4. Discussion

The findings revealed that various forms of corrupt practices exist among staff and students in tertiary institutions, including examination malpractice and the sexual harassment of female students. This aligns with the findings of Alutu and Alutu (2003), who noted that lecturers often aid and abet examination malpractice. Similarly, the finding is consistent with Galtima (2012), who reported a high level of corruption in university systems, particularly in areas such as admission and other unethical practices. It was also discovered that the causes of corruption in tertiary institutions include a lack of access to accurate information and poor role modelling by lecturers and staff. This supports

the finding of Sanderse (2012), who observed that role modelling is rarely employed as a deliberate teaching strategy, and only a small percentage of students view their teachers as role models. The finding also agrees with Omenka (2013), who identified the root causes of corruption as poverty, cultural background, failure of the government to impose sanctions, weak institutional frameworks, and lack of exemplary leadership.

The findings further revealed that corrupt practices significantly impact students' moral and spiritual development. These effects include the erosion of traditional ethical values, a decline in the appreciation of hard work and innovation, and an increase in prostitution and sexual exploitation. This supports the findings of Aina and Ogundele (2013), who observed that many graduates fail to meet expectations in their fields because they did not genuinely earn their certificates. The result also aligns with Okojie's (2012) assertion that corruption in Nigeria has reached alarming levels, and the university system, being a reflection of society, cannot remain untouched by this trend, as values that promote civility and development are being steadily undermined. Additionally, the findings are consistent with Odunaya and Olujunwon (2010) who noted that greed, the pursuit of material wealth, and the desire to

succeed through dishonest means, issues common in the broader society, have gradually infiltrated institutions of higher learning, leading to a dominance of corrupt practices in these supposed centers of excellence.

5. Conclusion

Corruption is a huge issue with social, political, and economic dimensions, impacting every aspect of life and weakening the rule of law. It damages educational systems, diminishes moral values, and increases inequality. The findings of this study indicated that corruption significantly affects students' moral and spiritual growth. Based on the findings, the researchers recommend that tertiary institutions of learning should support SERVICOM and anti-corruption units to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of corruption in tertiary institutions of learning, management, staff and students of universities should help in preventing corruption by acting with personal integrity and making ethical choices, school management should always dole-out severe punishment to erring academics and other staff members without delay, to serve as deterrent to other members of the school community.

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Conflict of interest

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