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CONSEQUENCES OF CORRUPTION IN A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY AND RECORDS AS A TOOL FOR CONCEALING MALPRACTICE

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Abstract

Corruption has emerged as one of the critical issues in institutions of higher learning. The fight against corruption has become increasingly sophisticated and as such requires a multi-disciplinary approach. Records are key in providing evidence that can be used to convict perpetrators. However, while records are supposed to provide evidence of malpractices, some records are manipulated to supply wrong information and by so doing, corruption is concealed and perpetuated in universities. The study aimed at establishing how corruption is hidden and perpetuated through the use of some records in a public university in Zimbabwe, yet records should serve as proof of malpractices. The study was underpinned by the post-positivist paradigm, and the quantitative research approach was used. The study adopted a survey design with questionnaires administered to the four administrative sections of the university. The results indicated that abuse of authority, favouritism and tribalism were common forms of corruption in this higher institution of learning. The study concluded that while corruption is cancerous and evil, and tarnishes the image of this institution, it is the poor records management practices that contribute immensely to higher levels of malpractices. The study recommends improved records management and that there should be civics and ethics education on corruption in order to curb the cancerous spread of malpractices in this university.

Key words: corruption, records management, records, accountability, university

Introduction

Corruption is considered a global problem, common in both developed and developing countries (Nduku & Makinda, 2014), and Africa seems to be the most corrupt region in the world (Transparency International (TI) 2010) while Zimbabwe is a thoroughly corrupt nation (Simonović 2018). The Transparency International's Corruption Perception index has shown a marginal deterioration on Zimbabwe's ranking from 2016 to 2019 (The Standard 2019), but Makamure (2020), a Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC) spokesperson who chairs the Committee on Prevention, Public Education and Corporate Governance, sees some small gains to build on going in to the future. Transparency International Zimbabwe (TIZ) (2019) notes that Zimbabwe ranks low at 160 out of 180 countries and remains trapped amongst a cluster of countries that are perceived to be very corrupt and continue to slide. In Zimbabwe, corruption has become endemic and remains a major issue that is stalling the

country's social development. Corruption in institutions of higher learning in Zimbabwe has emerged as one of the critical issues and efforts to curb it are becoming multidisciplinary. One strategy to combat corruption is to make use of reliable records that provide evidence to assist in the prosecution and conviction of corrupt individuals. The ISO 15489 (2016:4) states that a record, regardless of form or structure, should possess the characteristics of authenticity, reliability, integrity and usability to be considered authoritative evidence of business events or transactions and to fully meet the requirements of the business.

The World Bank (2000:5) emphasises that a well-managed records and information system provides a cost-effective deterrent to fraud and corruption. However, some records are manipulated to hide and perpetuate malpractices and corruption. Millar (2010) avers that the documentary quality imbues records with an aura of authenticity or truth but it is not reasonable to assume that all records are truly authentic or honest representations. Okello-Obura (2012) examined the need for effective records and information management as a cornerstone ingredient in fighting corruption and concluded that corruption is a "disease" that needs a "vaccine" called effective records and information management. Some records that are received or generated do not contain facts or are manipulated or forged and as such they perpetuate malpractices and corruption. Nduku and Makinda (2014) aver that institutions of higher education such as universities are expected to use education as a tool to fight corruption which exists in educational institutions. Archivists and records managers are of the view that records play a vital role in providing documentary evidence of transactions that may expose malpractices and can be used by courts of law to convict corrupt officials.

Background to the study

Nduku and Makinda (2014) understand corruption to mean that citizens or businesses have to pay for a service that should have been provided free of charge, or that the citizens or businesses that do not pay do not get the services that they are entitled to. Amundsen (2000), cited in Kržalid (2015), identifies embezzlement, bribery, fraud, extortion and favouritism as the five major manifestations of corruption, while Kržalid (2015) and Kivutha et al. (1996), cited in Etyang (2014), argue that corruption encompasses commission of unlawful act; cheating; mismanagement of funds; malpractice; irresponsibility; unfaithfulness; indecency; immorality; sinfulness; underpayment of salaries; inequality; destructiveness; bribery; tribalism; injustice; fear; oppression and ill feelings. Since education is a public good, Heyneman (2004) thinks that the definition of education corruption includes the abuse of authority for personal and material gain. Nyoni (2017) notes that the common types of corruption that seem to be prevalent in Zimbabwe include bribery; fraud; embezzlement; extortion; abuse of power; nepotism and favouritism. Interestingly, in his article *The Curse of Corruption in Zimbabwe*, Nyoni (2017) raises a debatable argument that corruption has both positive and negative effects. He further argues that in the case of Zimbabwe, bribery that seeks to "grease the sticky wheels" is "efficient corruption" and a blessing in disguise because it replaces unnecessary bureaucracy.

Corruption in Zimbabwe is not new. Since the Willowgate Scandal of 1988, Zimbabwe has had to grapple with numerous cases of corruption in the private and public sectors (Sunday Mail 2020). Transparency International Zimbabwe (2019) is of the view that if Zimbabwe is to register any meaningful strides in its fight against corruption, strong and independent institutions mandated to fight corruption with full freedom to discharge their legal mandate impartially without interference from any quarters must be in place. According to Lumumba (2014), 'political will' is the ability to spell out clear anti-corruption policies and interventions and effectively implement them without fear, favour and regardless of who is involved whether these are allies, friends, families or colleagues. The Standard of 26 May 2019, article titled *Ending corruption to achieve SDGs* notes that ending corruption is at the

heart of the UN's 17 SDGs whose primary aims are to end poverty, hunger, inequality and advance quality education among other goals.

The anti-graft efforts are intended to fulfil the United Nations Convention Against Corruption, SADC Protocol Against Corruption and the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption to which Zimbabwe is a signatory. The Anti-Corruption Trust of Southern Africa (2019) contends that corruption is a complex and sophisticated crime, yet the law enforcement agents, prosecutors, and magistrates are not receiving adequate training to ensure that they are always equipped to deal with the crime. Corruption thus requires highly trained investigators drawn from various fields such as forensic auditing, financial intelligence, accounting, engineering, police services and records management. Shepherd and Yeo (2003) state that records typically contain information relating to the parties involved in an activity and to the contents or subject matter of the activity itself. The International Records Management Trust (IRMT) (2009) defines a record as documentary evidence, regardless of form or medium, created, received, maintained and used by an organisation (public or private) or an individual in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business. Records are supposed to convey evidence in part (Millar 2010). Therefore, to a certain extent, authentic and reliable records can serve as evidence to identify abuse, misuse and non-compliance with financial institutions and other laws and regulations (Palmer 2010).

Seniwoliba and Boahene (2015) investigated corruption in Ghana's universities and identified administrative and academic sources of corruption manifesting in admissions; procurement; leadership influence recruitment, promotions/ appointment; academic dishonesty; plagiarism, and favouritism among many others. Based on desktop analysis of corruption and development of higher education in Nigeria, Osumah (2014) reveals that corruption proliferates in the education sector just as in other sectors in Nigeria, but with serious crippling effects on the ranking and standard of tertiary education. Shore (2018) examined discourses of corruption in the context of growing concerns about fraud prevention and anti-corruption in universities and found that universities are prone to fraud and corruption. The other finding was that fraud has risen to record levels with dramatic surge. These corrupt activities in higher education pose a serious obstacle to the efficient functioning of the education sector (Kržalid 2015). The Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC) signed and concluded memoranda of understanding (MoU) with Zambia's and Botswana's anti-corruption organs to combat corruption through mutual legal assistance, sharing of information informally and capacity building training, among others. The ZACC is also engaging the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science and Technology Development, to assist in developing anti-corruption curricular for schools, colleges, and universities.

The fight against corruption is not the responsibility of one institution; it takes a joint effort from all stakeholders (Matanda-Moyo 2020) and requires multifaceted and multidisciplinary approaches and strategies (Lumumba 2014). Lindberg (2009) is of the view that to minimise corruption, government and organisations should redirect their focus towards promoting good records and information management practices as one of the corruption prevention strategies, instead of directing a lot of resources towards investigating and detecting corruption. To Kirinya (2018), good records management practices promote efficiency in the operations of an organisation by eliminating bureaucracies and other loopholes that underpin corruption. It is considered that the more records management is improved and integrated into the day to day management of public institutions, the easier it will be to prevent irregularities that could conceal cases of corruption by preventing or minimising the risks that frequently accompany them (Mingo 2018).

Ngoepe and Makhubela (2015) note that records provide the critical evidence that a particular action or transaction took place and can be used as evidence in a court of law. However, to a lawyer, all evidence, even documentary evidence, is potentially unreliable and the courts work with imperfection every day from liars, cheats and scoundrels to mis-recollections, selective memory, and doubtful motive (Smith 1996). As a result, without reliable and authentic records, the government cannot administer justice, and offenders can be set free while victims are denied justice. Evidence could be any information that can be used to prove facts in dispute and all the material that can be used to prove or disprove the facts is evidence. While corrupt practices such as fraud leaves behind some evidence in the records to trace the fraud (Khan 2006), it is important to note that some forms of corruption like bribery offered to a judge, with intention to influence a decision on a judgment in a case, may leave no record (Okello-Obura 2012). Besides being the corporate memory of any organisation, records are kept for the purposes of providing valuable evidence (Okello-Obura 2012), for good governance and accountability (Kemoni & Ngulube 2008; Ndenje-Sichalwe & Ngulube, 2008; Shepherd, 2006). The importance of records in fighting corruption cannot be underestimated. A lack of capacity to investigate, prosecute and preside over corruption cases has resulted in a number of acquittals of accused persons due to incomplete or poorly compiled dockets (The Anti-Corruption Trust of Southern Africa 2019). Organisations can use records as tools to conceal corruption through opacity, which is directly associated with the inaccessibility of information, the lack of transparency, mistrust and even lying (Mingo & Martinez 2018).

A major problem faced in various countries is that of inflated payrolls resulting from “ghost workers”; a classic example of how records are used to perpetuate and conceal corruption. In this act, a personnel file, which is the record that shows a person truly exists (The World Bank 2000), is created for a non-existent employee and a salary is drawn. In carrying out this act, perpetrators take advantage of poor records management and lack of adequate supervision. The integrity of records refers to record qualities as being reliable, authentic and accessible in that they are whole and without corruption (International Council on Archives 2016). The principle of integrity demands that the information generated by or managed for the organisation should have a reasonable and suitable guarantee of authenticity and reliability, while the principle of protection requires that there be a reasonable level of protection of records and information that are private, confidential, privileged, secret, classified, essential to business continuity, or that otherwise require protection (ARMA 2017). Some organisational records seem to be part of misinformation. Misinformation is the holding of factual beliefs that are wrong and can be mere lack of information, falsehoods, and unverified assertions (Onsare 2017).

Statement of the problem

Anecdotal evidence from the researchers indicates that the current status quo of records management systems in the majority of universities in Zimbabwe do not have positions for records managers or archivists in their organisational structures except for the Midlands State University and Zimbabwe Open University. The absence of a dedicated department or section in charge of the management of university-wide records and general lack of trained records managers compromises the quality, structure and contents of records in these institutions, such that some of the records that are received and generated are questionable. While a record derives its meaning from a combination of its content, structure and context, these three do not necessarily provide unquestionable proof, but records share three other desirable qualities that records are static, unique and authentic for them to be considered trustworthy documentary evidence (Millar 2010). The International Council on Archives (ICA) (2016:13) argues that as records are the product of work processes, it follows that the quality and trustworthiness of records depend on the quality and integrity of the work processes that

generate them, which means if the work processes are poorly defined or inconsistent or not followed correctly, the records produced may not be adequate. In universities, corruption can happen at virtually every level, from the lecture hall to the highest office and it even occurs in accounts offices when students are invoiced more than expected or during procurement processes when people obtain fake receipts, thus diverting university funds for personal gains (Nduku & Makinda 2014; Nyaude 2018). The aspects of corruption and unlawful actions such as bribery, fraud and corruption in institutions of higher education, are omnipresent and also the acceptance of fake and dubious diplomas as proper by higher education institutions (Kržalid 2015); therefore, corruption is rampant. The most prevalent forms of corruption in higher education institutions are when staff present false records with inflated figures of expenditure in order to benefit themselves. In some cases, supporting documents are manipulated, doctored and accepted into the records management system as authentic records. This demonstrates that records can be used as tools to conceal corruption through obstructive practices such as deliberately destroying, falsifying, altering or concealing evidence to impede investigation since the evidence will be already altered (Mingo & Martinez 2018). An investigation into a Ugandan bank's practices by the country's Auditor General (AG) revealed grave manipulation of records, where some computer files were deleted by bank officials to destroy evidence (Kirinya 2018). This is not just a corrupt act in itself, but also a means to cover up corruption. The ICA (2016) reminds us that integrity is the term that is used to describe record qualities as reliable, authentic and accessible, which means the records are whole and without corruption. Just because a person can provide the content, structure and context of records and confirm that they are static, unique, and authentic, it does not mean that the records are truthful (Millar 2010). The purpose of the study was to establish the consequences of corruption and how records are used as tools for hiding and perpetuating corrupt practices in a public university in Zimbabwe.

Research questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

- 1) How does corruption manifest itself in the university?
- 2) How are records used to hide malpractices?
- 3) What are the consequences/effects of corruption in this university?
- 4) How does corruption affect this university?

Methodology

The study adopted a survey design underpinned by the post-positivist paradigm and the quantitative methodology. Bearing in mind the sensitive and clandestine nature of corruption, the study collected data using a largely closed-ended questionnaire. During the preliminary discussions, researchers realised that heads of sections that were targeted for the interviews were afraid and not keen to report corruption cases because of their positions and possible disclosure of their identity. Researchers realised that in a similar study (Kržalid, 2015) focus group discussions did not yield meaningful results because participants were afraid. The census method was appropriate to this small group of 65 employees who constituted the present study's population. A self-administered questionnaire was distributed to four sections under the University Registrar who were involved with use of records in university operations. The employees completed the questionnaire and the researchers collected 43 completed copies from their section heads but 22 copies were not returned. This gave a response rate of 66 per cent. The quantitative data was analysed statistically using Microsoft Excel. This study focused on what Rummyantseva (2005) refers to as general (administrative) corruption as distinct from education-specific type of corruption. Seniwoliba and Boahene (2015) refer to these as administrative and academic corruptions.

Demographic profile of the respondents

Respondents were asked questions about personal information such as their gender, education, department and experience. The majority of respondents were from the Finance department (19: 44.2%) followed by Human Resources (8: 18.6%), then Admissions (7: 16.3%) and, lastly, University Services (6: 14%). In terms of gender, 12 (27.9%) were males and 31 (72.1%) were females. Analysis by level of education revealed that 18 (41.9) were master's degree holders, 18 (41.9) held a bachelor's degree and 7 (16.3%) were diploma holders. In terms of experience, 26 (60.5%) indicated that they had spent between 0-10 years in the university, 11 (25.6%) had 11-20 years, no one indicated experience of between 21-30 years but 4 (9.3%) had 11-20 years of experience at this university. Only 2 (4.7%) have been in this university for more than 30 years.

Results and discussions

Respondents were asked to indicate the type of corruption that was prevalent in their sectional units. It emerged that abuse of authority, with 22 (51.2%) respondents, was common followed by favouritism (18:41.9%) and tribalism (12:27.9%). Collusion (2:4.7%) and sextortion (3:7%) were not very common. Table 1 presents findings about forms of corruption or malpractice common in the university.

Table 1: Forms of malpractices common in the university

Form of corruption	Number of respondents	Percentage
Abuse of office/authority	22	51.2%
Favouritism	18	41.9%
Tribalism	12	27.9%
Fraud	7	16.3%
Embezzlement	6	14%
Forgery	6	14%
Misappropriation of public funds	5	11.6%
Unlawful gifts	5	11.6%
Deception	4	9.3%
Kickbacks	4	9.3%
Sextortion	3	7%
Collusion	2	4.7%

Abuse of office/authority was regarded by 22 (51.2%) as the most common malpractice in this university. Kržalid's (2015) views it as a form of behaviour where personal interests are placed ahead of public interests in discharging duties and the most typical example of abuse of office in the education sector is related to disbursement of budget allocations (Kržalid, 2015). Kemoni, Ngulube and Stilwell (2007) believe that records can be used as instruments of abuse of power.

The second most common type of corruption in this university was favouritism, which was acknowledged by 18 (41.9%) respondents. This confirms Kirya's (2019) findings that other types of corruption include favouritism in student admissions and staff appointments. Tribalism, as a common form of corruption, was identified by 12 (27.9%), confirming Lumumba's (2014) observation that after independence, African leaders used nepotism, ethnicity, race and other factors as key considerations in the allocation and application of national resources. Similarly, Nyoni (2017) states that abuse of power, favouritism and nepotism are quite common in institutions of higher education. Regarding tribalism where 12 (27.9%) confirmed its existence, it is important to note that Zimbabwe has around 18 ethnic

groups which probably explains why some of these have complained of marginalisation in employment opportunities since some department posts in some universities are only occupied by one 'tribe'. This finding confirms Mhlanga's (2013) observation that in Zimbabwe, evidence shows that ethnicity continues to be a major factor in Africa to date.

In the current study, sextortion (a form of corruption in which sex is the currency of the bribe) was identified by only 3 (7%) respondents, resulting as not common in this university. According to TIZ (2019), International Association of Women Judges (2010) coined the term sextortion to refer to a form of corruption where people in positions of authority and power seek to extort sexual favours in exchange for something within their power to grant or withhold. The finding corroborates that of TIZ (2019) which noted that sextortion is the least talked about form of corruption in Zimbabwe (with 7.7% acknowledging it), yet focus group results indicated that sextortion is deeply rooted within Zimbabwean society. This finding is contrary to Veneranda Langa's *The Standard* newspaper article, *Sex predators prey on women*, which reported that a sizeable number of women have been victims of sexual abuse at their workplaces. However, Kirya (2019) views sexual exploitation, mainly of female students, faculty, and staff by males, as a serious problem in higher education, while Kržalid (2015) takes sexual harassment of pupils/students as one of the examples of violence or threat in the education sector.

Fraud (7:16.3%) and misappropriation of public funds (5:11.6%) were less common types of corruption in this university, but confirms Kržalid's (2015) observation that one of the manifestations of fraud in the education sector is the abuse of budget, which the media reports often mention as abuse of funds. Corruption involves cheating for personal gains, abuse of position, acceptance of bribe of any nature for personal gain at the expense of others or the society as a whole, favouritism, nepotism, clientelism, soliciting or extortion of bribes and embezzlement of public goods, among others (Nduku & Makinda, 2014).

Use of records to conceal corruption

The other objective sought to find ways in which records are used by staff to hide or conceal corruption, thus, perpetuating it at an organisational level. Respondents were asked to identify those corrupt practices that had been picked or witnessed in their respective university section. For ease of interpretation and better appreciation of the significance of the results, the responses of 'Rarely', 'Sometimes', 'Very often' and 'Always' are considered together as meaning the same, while the result of 'Never' is considered alone. Table 2 presents the results of types of corruption found in the four university sections.

Table 2: Type of corruption found in my section

Type of corruption in my department/section	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Very often	Always
Forging of documents regarding expenses	13 (30.2%)	5 (11.6%)	12 (27.9%)	3 (7%)	1 (2.3%)
Employment of unqualified personnel	13 (30.2%)	9 (21%)	11 (25.5%)	3 (7%)	
Promotion of underqualified personnel	15 (34.8%)	11 (25.5%)	6 (14%)	2 (4.7%)	1 (2.3%)
Human Resource officials temper with records on leave days and cash is exchanged	25 (58%)	4 (9.3%)		1 (2.3%)	1 (2.3%)
Irregular admission of students	14 (32.5)	7 (16.3%)		7 (16.3)	3 (7%)
Abuse of votes by heads of sections	14 (32.5%)	5 (11.6%)	9 (21%)	2 (4.7%)	3 (7%)
Misrepresentations such as forged invitation letters and signatures created and submitted to support claims and benefits	15 (34.8%)	7 (16.3%)	8 (18.6%)	3 (7%)	
Under invoicing	19 (44.2%)	6 (14%)	4 (9.3%)		

Results indicate that records are used to hide and conceal corruption through employment of unqualified personnel (23:53.5%), thus confirming Kirya's (2019) observation that corruption and fraud in higher education hinder human capital formation, especially in developing countries. The finding confirms Nduku and Makinda's (2014) observation that in terms of recruitment of personnel, the politicisation of the process of identification and appointment of human resource personnel is characterised by favouritism, ethnocentricity, and nepotism qualification which in turn compromise the quality of the staff. However, it is a policy in Zimbabwe state universities that job applicants must be requested to make six copies of the application and attachments as a control system, in order for the application to be vetted by six different sections of the university to ensure transparency and to stop corruptly recruiting individuals. Nevertheless, corrupt officials find ways of circumventing the process by, for instance, coaching their preferred candidate on how to respond in the interview, holding caucus meetings behind doors before interview dates to rig the recruitment process among other malpractices. Millar (2010) argues that some records that are authentic evidence can be filled with outright lies.

A total of 17 (39.9 %) respondents admitted that corruption is hidden and perpetuated in records through irregular admission of students. This finding corroborates with Kirya's (2019) finding that corruption ranges from political capture of universities to favouritism in admissions. In the current study, 14 (32.5) respondents denied that there is such malpractice like irregular admission of students in this university.

The human resource related malpractices such as promotion of under qualified personnel 20 (46.5%) and employment of unqualified personnel 23 (53.5%) confirm a similar finding where it emerged that in Italy there were rampant nepotism and favouritism in university appointments (Kirya 2019). Ansa (2019) cited in Kirya's (2019) reports that in 2019, nine

professors from Catania University and the institute's dean were suspended by a preliminary investigations judge for their involvement in rigging selection competitions for recruitment of professors and researchers. In line with these findings, Majoni (2019) in *The Standard August 4-10, 2019*, posits that the post-colonial state in Zimbabwe inherited the cultures of nepotism and cronyism from the colonizers and perfected them in such a way, that they are now difficult to eradicate.

Forging of documents regarding expenses (21:49.8%) speaks to embezzlement of funds. Okello-Obura (2012) notes that embezzlement as part of corruption is performed in a manner that is premeditated, systematic and/or methodical, with the explicit intent to conceal the activities from other individuals, usually because it is being done without their knowledge or consent. Ngoepe and Makhubela (2015) contend that failure to manage records properly has been a contributory factor to the growing menace of corruption in the running of public affairs. Proper scrutiny of records and documents enables officers in financial institutions to detect and intercept fraud types such as falsification of bank records, issuing and using counterfeit notes and unauthorized payments and withdrawals (Mingo & Martínez, 2018). Forging documents confirms Kržalid's (2015) observation that another form of fraud which has become ever more frequent in education concerns the issue of certificates or diplomas, where it is possible to buy a fake diploma directly via the World Wide Web, and also the acceptance of dubious diplomas as authentic by higher education institutions.

Sound records management systems are the key to corruption prevention while poor records management systems aid in corrupt practices. Good governance is dependent on good records management (Omollo 2011). It is encouraging to note that 19 respondents denied under invoicing happens in this university though 10 (23.3%) confirmed its existence. This finding contradicts that of Nduku and Makinda (2014) who indicate that corruption occurs in accounts offices when students are invoiced more than expected.

Regarding hiding corruption through malpractices such as misrepresentations using forged invitation letters and signatures created and submitted to support claims and benefits, 18 (31.9%) respondents revealed that it happens in this university and this confirms Nduku and Makinda's (2014) finding that corruption occurs in accounts offices during procurement processes when people obtain fake receipts, thus diverting university funds to personal use. However, 15 (34.8%) respondents denied misrepresentations such as forged invitation letters and signatures created and submitted to support claims and benefits ever happening in this university.

A total of 19 (44.3%) respondents revealed that malpractices such as abuse of votes by heads of sections do conceal corruption in records of this university. This finding confirms Barata's (2001) observation that access to accurate and complete records is a crucial function contributing to increasing the exposure of corruption. This implies that corruption does occur but accurate records can expose it. Ngoepe and Ngulube (2013) highlighted that the availability and implementation of key records management of documents such as strategy, policy, procedure, file plans, retention schedules, disposal authority and vital records goes a long way in helping organisations to mitigate risks like corruption.

Consequences of malpractices in the university

In the majority of cases corruption has negative impact on institutions. Respondents were asked to indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement with the suggested possible consequences and effects of corruption in their university. For ease of interpretation and better appreciation of the significance of the results, the responses of 'Strongly disagree' and 'Disagree' are considered together as 'Disagree' and the result of 'Agree' and 'Strongly agree' are considered as 'Agree'.

Respondents were asked to indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement to whether corruption redirects scarce resources to somewhere else other than the intended destination in their university. Figure 1 presents the results.

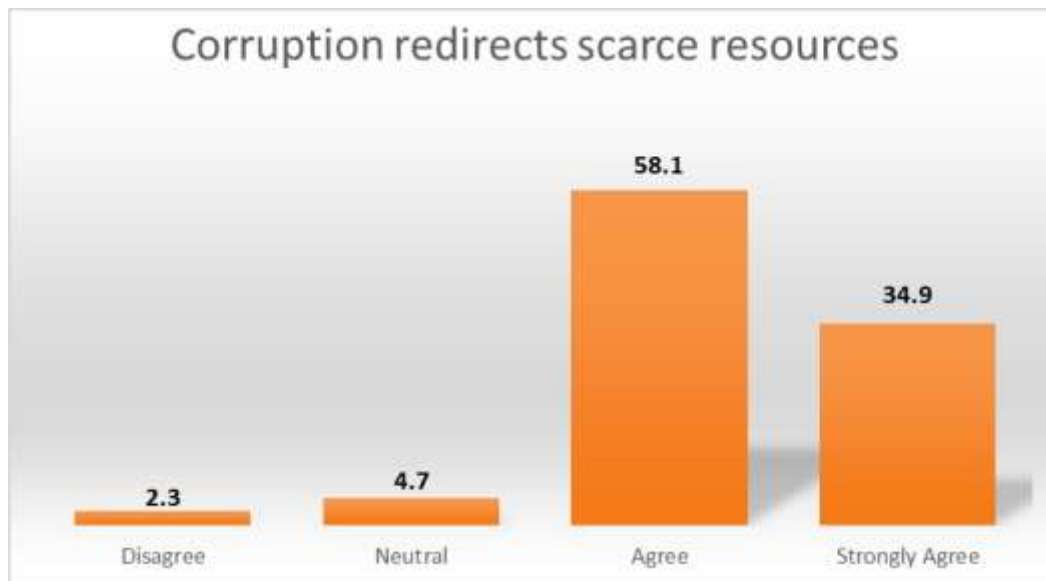


Figure 1: Corruption redirects scarce resources in the university

The majority of 40 (93%) respondents agreed that corruption redirects scarce resources to somewhere else other than the intended target corroborating *The Standard's* (2019) assertion that corruption diverts resources from their intended purposes, and sends a country down a dismal development path by deflecting allocated resources away from their original purpose. Again, the finding is not a departure from Nyoni (2017) who states that the most terrible effect of corruption in Zimbabwe, which has always been lamented by the business community, is the increased high cost of transaction. This makes it difficult to set up a business or invest in Zimbabwe since bureaucrats frequently use their arbitrary power to create delays and barriers in granting licences and permits to collect more bribes. Nduku and Matinda (2014) believe that corruption creates a sense of insecurity, exacerbates poverty, instils a sense of misery, threatens the strength of good values and adds to the misfortune of the vulnerable segments of the society such as the poor, the marginalized, the disabled, women and the youth. The 2.3 per cent who disagreed that corruption redirects scarce resources from the university may be in agreement with Nyoni's (2017) controversial and debatable argument that corruption is not always bad and especially corruption that seeks to "grease the sticky wheels" is "efficient corruption".

Figure 2 shows the results of respondents' degree of agreement or disagreement in relation to whether corruption leads to substandard products in their university or not. Again, for ease of interpretation and better appreciation of the significance of the results, the responses of 'Strongly agree' and 'Agree' are considered as 'Agree', and the results of 'Disagree' and 'Strongly disagree' are considered as 'Disagree'.



Figure 2: Corruption leads to substandard products in the university

The majority of 38 (88.3%) respondents agreed that corruption leads to substandard products. Indeed, corrupt activities compromise efficiency. The result corroborates Nyoni (2017) who laments that high costs of transaction, including bribes, deter investment making it difficult for the business community to invest, and discourage investment and growth in Zimbabwe. Regrettably, it is the most vulnerable and poorest populations who are disproportionately affected, reducing access to services including health, education and justice (*The Standard*, 2019). In most cases, corruption involves bribing authorities to allow certain things to happen, but Nyoni (2017) argues that bribery can be considered as a blessing in disguise because it is indeed a replacement of weak rules and unnecessary bureaucracy.

Figure 3 shows the results of the extent to which corruption decimates the moral fibre in their university.



Figure 3: Corruption decimates moral fibre in the university

The majority of 37 (85%) respondents agreed that corruption decimates the moral fibre of the university community, while another 6 (12.5%) and only 1 other (2.5%) disagreed. This finding corroborates Kržalid's (2015) view that external factors such as the decline in ethical values are important in terms of explaining corruption in the education sector, while Lumumba (2014) contends that corruption leads to erosion of social values.

Respondents unanimously indicated that corruption impedes development in their university. Figure 4 displays the result.

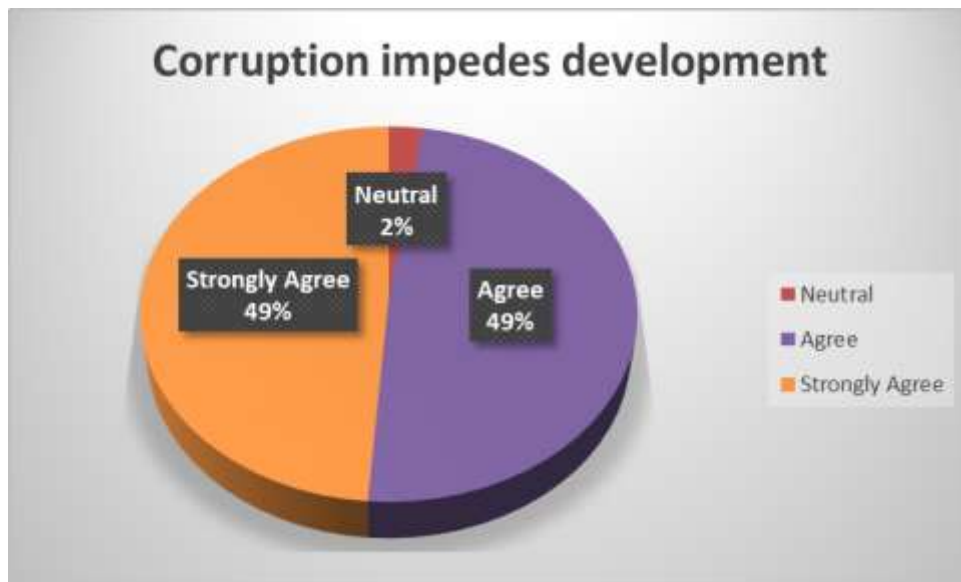


Figure 4: Corruption impedes development in the university

Corruption raises poverty levels and it remains a major obstacle to the achievement of the UN's SD Goal of improving quality education. The majority of 42 (98%) respondents agreed that corruption impedes development with 1 (2%) being neutral. This finding shows that corrupt behaviours in education prevent progress of a society and many citizens suffer either from petty or quiet corruption which results in reduced productivity (Kržalid, 2015). Lumumba (2014) contends that corruption negatively affects growth and development and increases and skews public expenditure on basic needs such as education. In Choruma's (2019) view, corruption in Zimbabwe is largely considered to be deeply entrenched and has reached alarming levels to the extent that it can now be said to be one of the major threats to socio-economic transformation and sustainable development.

Respondents were asked to indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement to whether corruption results in embarrassment in their university.

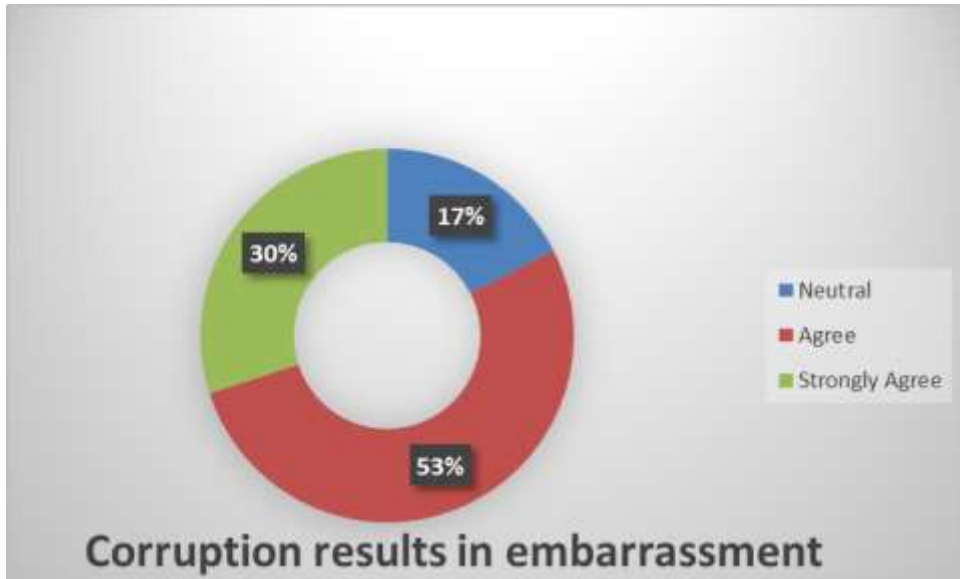


Figure 5: Corruption results in embarrassment in the university

In the current study it emerged that 36 (83%) respondents agreed that corruption results in embarrassment, thus corroborating Keorapetse & Keakopa’s (2012) finding that corruption results in embarrassment and humiliation. The finding also confirms The *Sunday Mail Analysis*’ (2020) observation that the then Cabinet ministers in Zimbabwe, Enos Nkala and Maurice Nyagumbo, resigned and lost their jobs as a result of embarrassment brought about by the Willogate Scandal of 1988.

Figure 6 displays the results of the extent to which corruption results in negative coverage in the university under study.

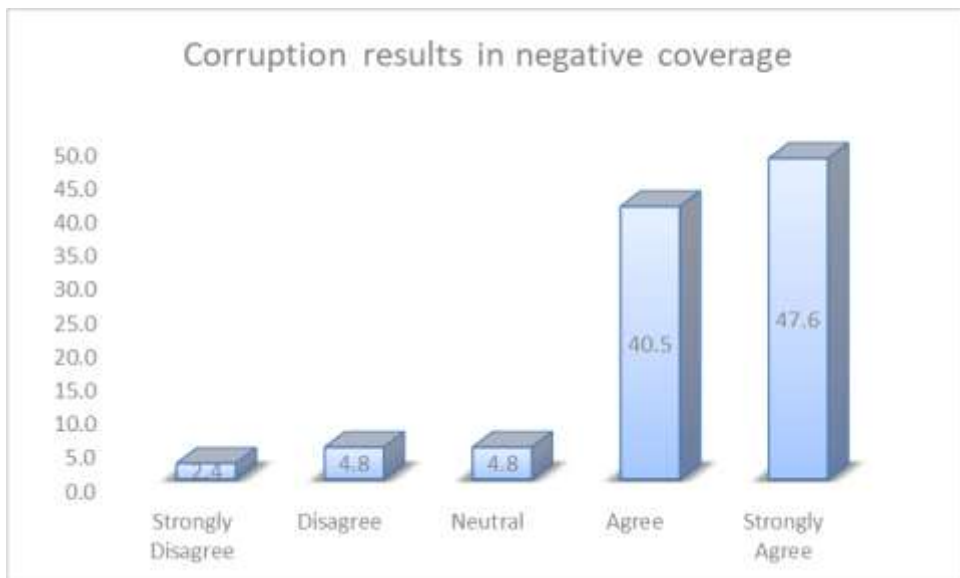


Figure 6: Corruption results in negative coverage in their university

The majority of 38 (88%) respondents indicated that corruption results in negative coverage in their university, which dovetails with Keorapetse & Keakopa (2012) who states that corruption results not only in humiliation, but also in negative media coverage. Kržalid (2015) notes that corrupt behaviours in education damages the reputation of teachers,

professors, and the entire academic community in the public and among international partners. However, in the current study, 2 (4.8%) remained neutral, while 3 (7.2%) disagreed that corruption results in negative coverage of their university.

Respondents were asked to indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement with respect to whether corruption results in demotion in their university. Again, for ease of interpretation and better appreciation of the significance of the results, the responses of ‘Strongly agree’ and ‘Agree’ are considered as ‘Agree’, and the results of ‘Disagree’ and ‘Strongly disagree’ are considered as ‘Disagree’. Figure 7 presents the results.

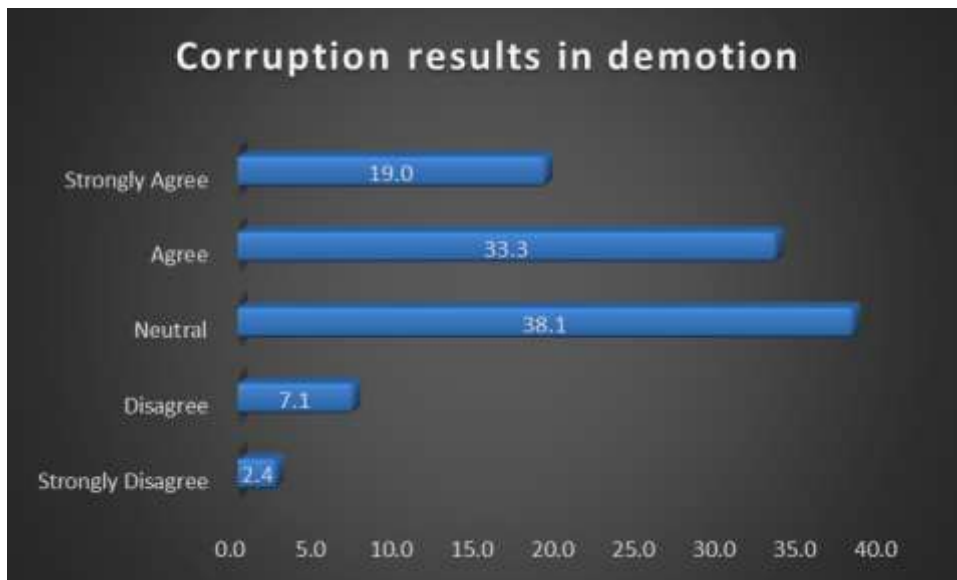


Figure 7: Corruption results in demotion in the university

The finding revealed that the majority of 22(52.3%) respondents indicated that corruption results in demotion, thus confirming Keorapetse and Keakopa’s (2012) finding that corruption results in loss of position, and this implies demotion. Nevertheless, a significant number of 16 (38.1%) respondents, were neutral and only 4 (9.5%) disagreed that corruption results in demotion. This suggests that corruption is indirectly encouraged by failure to demote those who are involved in malpractices in this university. Ngoepe and Makhubela (2015) believe that effective management of records contributes to quick administration of justice since records provide information through which evidence is derived and decisions are made. Employers make decisions such as demotion, suspension or discharge based on the gravity of the malpractice.

Figure 8 presents the results of the respondents’ degree of agreement or disagreement with whether corruption in their university results in imprisonment or not. Again, for ease of interpretation and better appreciation of the significance of the results, the responses of ‘Strongly agree’ and ‘Agree’ are considered as ‘Agree’, and the results of ‘Disagree’ and ‘Strongly disagree’ are considered as ‘Disagree’.



Figure 8: Corruption results in imprisonment

The majority of 26 (61%) respondents agreed that corruption results in imprisonment of university officials, while 6 (14%) disagreed and 12 (27%) were neutral, thus confirming Ngoepe and Makhubela's (2015) argument that, if court and police records are not accurate there might be serious implications such as withdrawal of cases leading to travesty of justice; lawyers, prosecutors and magistrates could dispute the authenticity of records and the perpetrators are freed. Therefore, the possibility of an arrested person being imprisoned due to corruption is high if evidence is presented in a competent court of law. Justice Lawrence Gidudu attributed the 95 per cent conviction rate of corrupt persons in Uganda to the fact that their investigations have gone digital since corruption is a sophisticated crime that uses computers, mobile phones and communication gadgets. He further indicated that they end up being convicted because they get the evidence from the phones and the computers while deleted evidence from computers, servers and phones should be retrieved (Gidudu 2020). The finding in the current study shows that records and information provide verifiable evidence of fraud that can lead investigators to the root cause of fraud. In an investigation on FIFA match-fixing scandals of 2010/2014, electronic mails and other documents led to the arrest and prosecution of Henrietta Rushwaya, the former CEO of Zimbabwe Football Association (Dewah & Porogo 2017). However, it is noteworthy that a lot of people accused of corrupt practices are often set free because there are no evidential records and information to prove them guilty of fraud or embezzlement (Bendu 2006). This is because the conviction of a person on corruption matters depends on authentic, trustworthy records and information as evidence of decisions and transactions.

Conclusion and recommendations

The article is based on the study that aimed at investigating the consequences of corruption in a public university and how records are used as tools for concealing malpractice. The study concludes that corruption exist in various forms in this institution of higher learning. Malpractices are concealed in the university's records and perpetuated in the system. It emerged that abuse of authority, favouritism and tribalism were common forms of corruption in this higher institution of learning. The study further concludes that poor records management practices contribute immensely to levels of corruption and that records are indirectly used to perpetuate corruption through various malpractices that are concealed in the

university records. However, corruption has many negative consequences that include tarnishing the image of the university, impeding development, loss of employment, demotion, embarrassment and many others.

In view of the findings and conclusions, the study recommends that:

1. the university should ensure integrity of records and proper records management to avoid concealing corruption and all malpractices in the university records. Ngoepe and Makhbela (2015) advise that records need to be managed by qualified people in the area of records management
2. the university should create and establish a Records Committee to ensure that there are trustworthy records managed in the university system
3. there should be civics and ethics education on corruption, corrupt officials in this university should be named and shamed, but within the confines of the law to avoid litigation. This could probably restore the moral fiber of the university employees
4. there should be an anti-corruption strategy to campaign against all forms of corruption in the university. This strategy must include the creation, receipt and submission of accurate records to the university sections
5. this university establishes an Anti-Corruption Committee that will be charged with discussing malpractices in the university, documenting them and forwarding them to the University Security Committee or directly to ZACC for further investigation and prosecution. The records that are created as a result of these activities must be appropriately secured to avoid them being tampered with or being destroyed
6. The Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science and Technology Development, through Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE), the regulatory body, should promote transparency, good governance, accountability and anti-corruption measures in order to stamp out malpractices, curtail corruption and mismanagement of resources in state universities.

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