

The Education Sector in Monrovia, Liberia: A Study on Corruption Perceptions and Experiences among Residents

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Award of the Bachelor of Arts Degree in Global Challenges

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Abstract:- Corruption in the educational sector has the proclivity to jeopardise the future of young Liberians, preventing many from accessing quality and affordable education at the detriment of their future. This study aims to understand the subjective perceptions and practical experiences of corruption in the education sector in Monrovia, Liberia. This research was motivated by four questions: How do residents of Monrovia perceive corruption in education services? What are the contributing factors to corruption in education services in Monrovia? How does corruption in education services affect the quality and accessibility of education in Monrovia? And lastly, what potential strategies and interventions can be implemented to tackle corruption in education services in Monrovia? A sample size of 128 participants selected participants utilized survey questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups to collect data, with quantitative data analyzed using Google Sheets and qualitative data analyzed through the Delve app. This study found that cash bribes and transactional sex for grades are the most prominent experiences among the residents of Monrovia. Moreover, the findings also showed that 98% of the participants had been involved with corruption in education services. Therefore, this research seeks to provide insights that can inform policy and interventions to improve the education system in Monrovia while also contributing to the growing body of research examining the impact of corruption in the education sector in Liberia and beyond.

Keywords:- Corruption, Bribery, Education, Experience, Perception, Principal-Agent Theory.

I. INTRODUCTION

The presence of corruption in education services has far-reaching consequences in urban Liberia. It does negatively affect the quality of education. It also undermines public confidence in institutions (Ahmad, E., & Khwaja, A. I. (2006). For Monrovia, Liberia, a nation striving to recover from conflict and political instability, it is crucial to grasp how corruption is perceived and experienced within its education system. According to a study conducted by Li & Meng in 2020, people's perception of corruption and their assessment of corruption efforts are closely linked to their trust in the political system and its

legitimacy. While the exact sources of perceived government corruption are not fully understood, scholars have focused on factors such as media exposure and political knowledge as influencers on citizens' perceptions of corruption and the effectiveness of corruption measures, regardless of whether they live in democracies or authoritarian regimes. The problem of corruption in Liberia's education sector has roots in the country's socio-economic factors that have evolved. To truly understand the extent of corruption in education, it is essential to consider the context. In this overview, we will explore the aspects of this issue.

Liberia's education system has been plagued by corruption due to its history of instability and economic challenges. Ever since it was founded by enslaved people years ago, Liberia has faced periods of conflict, civil war and political instability. These tumultuous times have significantly disrupted the education system, leading to issues with infrastructure, resources and quality education. After gaining independence, patronage networks were established in Liberia, where political elites distributed government positions and resources among their supporters. This practice resulted in appointing individuals within institutions who may not have necessarily upheld standards or integrity (Transparency International, 2019).

Furthermore, the economic hardships faced by people living in Monrovia have also contributed to fostering corruption within the education sector. Insufficient government funding for education, coupled with low teacher salaries and delayed payments, have put a strain on educators. As a result, teachers and school administrators often resort to practices as a way to supplement their income. The conflicts that ravaged Liberia, including the First Liberian Civil War from 1989 to 1996 and the Second Liberian Civil War from 1999 to 2003, severely disrupted the country's education system. Schools faced disruption, causing many teachers and students to be displaced. Consequently, the education infrastructure became fragile and susceptible to corruption. In response to these challenges, Liberia implemented reforms aimed at rebuilding the education system after the conflicts (Human Rights, 2005). These reforms were designed to tackle corruption issues and improve access to education. However, despite these efforts, persistent challenges

remained due to corruption within institutions hindering the implementation of reforms. The appointment process has been marred by corruption fueled by the influence of elites. Of merit-based selection in recruiting and promoting educators, nepotism and favouritism often overshadow practices.

Liberia, including its capital city, Monrovia, has taken steps to combat corruption in the education sector. Various administrations have introduced policies and initiatives with a focus on enhancing transparency and accountability. However, progress in eradicating corruption has been slow and inconsistent. In conclusion, the history of corruption in Monrovia's education system is closely intertwined with Liberia's challenges, as well as its experience with civil conflicts. It is crucial to have an understanding of the context in order to effectively address the corruption that continues to plague this region's education sector.

In developing nations, there is room for improvement in providing services like education, as mentioned by Wraith & Simpkins in 2010. One significant challenge lies in the lack of motivation among workers, who often require incentives to enhance their performance. It is crucial to strengthen mechanisms ensuring accountability for those receiving these services. Corruption within the education sector can affect students, teachers and the wider community. It can result in hiring practices and even the illicit sale of credentials. Transparency International (2022) highlights that educational corruption can lead to compromised quality opportunities for disadvantaged groups to access high-quality education and slower economic growth. This idea is supported by research conducted by Mocan and Scafidi (2015), which demonstrates a link between corruption, lower test scores, and higher dropout rates. For example, Heyneman's study in 2013 revealed that when educators engage in bribery, it undermines accountability and disregards standards maintenance – ultimately impacting students' academic performance, deteriorating learning outcomes and jeopardising the bright future of young people.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Corruption in Education: A General Perspective*

Corruption poses a challenge in education, impacting the quality, accessibility and fairness. Looking at this issue from a perspective reveals that it transcends borders and affects systems worldwide. Heyneman (2007) emphasises how corruption undermines institutions at their core. It distorts resource allocation, leading to access to opportunities and ultimately compromising the quality of education. Students' learning outcomes are hindered as a result. Corruption in education encompasses practices such as misappropriation of funds, favouritism based on connections, bribery and cheating during exams – all erode trust in educational establishments. The Global Corruption Report on Education (2019) by Transparency International provides an overview of the forms of corruption within the education sector. It highlights that these practices are not isolated incidents but rather part of an issue. The report stresses that corruption leads to misallocation of funds, reducing the availability of

resources for teaching and learning. Another study by UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report (2017) underscores the importance of addressing corruption to achieve the education goals outlined by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4. The primary objective of this goal is to ensure that education maintains a standard. According to the report, addressing corruption and promoting transparency in education systems worldwide is crucial. While their research covers areas, Rose Ackerman (1999) and Lambsdorff (2007) provide insights into the issue of corruption within governments and institutions. They emphasise the importance of governance and accountability in tackling corruption across sectors, including education. Numerous studies have explored corruption within systems globally. Heyneman (2007) argues that such corrupt practices lead to lower-quality education, unequal access to opportunities and erode trust in institutions. Corruption in the education sector encompasses a range of issues, such as misappropriation of funds, favouritism during hiring processes and biased admissions. These unethical behaviours affect outcomes and have significant social and economic consequences. A study conducted in Sub-Saharan Africa by Maaz and Drori (2018) revealed that corruption within the education sector worsens inequalities and undermines the quality of education in low-resource settings. The effects of corruption extend beyond levels; they have implications for national development and achieving global educational goals. This research is based on the Principal-Agent Theory, which suggests that corruption often arises when governing bodies (the government) and those responsible for delivering education services (the agents) have conflicting interests. In the context of education, this theory implies that individuals with decision-making power may exploit their discretion over resources for gain, resulting in practices.

Corruption and its detrimental impact on education development in Liberia have been challenges. Issues like misappropriation of funds, biased hiring practices, and unequal resource distribution within the education sector have been identified as problems (Eisele, 2019). The diversion of resources meant for purposes has hindered the country's ability to invest sufficiently in infrastructure development, teaching materials and teacher training. One notable example demonstrating corruption in Liberia is the mishandling of funds allocated to the Ministry of Education. An audit conducted in 2020 revealed irregularities in management within the ministry, including missing funds and questionable expenses (Eisele, 24-34). These instances directly affect students' access to quality education. Reports have extensively highlighted nepotism during the hiring and appointment processes (Eisele, 12-15). The practice of appointing individuals based on relationships rather than merit undermines professionalism within the sector and limits opportunities for deserving candidates (Eisele, 10). According to a report by UNESCO on education in Liberia from 2015, corruption is a barrier to achieving Development Goal 4. It hampers the country's progress. When corruption infiltrates the education system, it poses a challenge to the objective of ensuring access to high-quality education for all. This unfortunate situation results in resources being diverted from their intended purposes, leading to a lack of

quality education for vulnerable populations. Hence forth, it's paramount to understand the experience and perception of how this unfortunate situation affects the population and streamline strategies to tackle the issue from their experience.

B. Perception And Experience Of Corruption

Many studies have shed light on the understanding of how corruption is perceived and experienced by residents in Monrovia, Liberia and beyond. According to a study conducted by Smith et al. (2017), in a context, community members often feel powerless when faced with corruption. They witness resources being redirected or misused, generating feelings of disillusionment and frustration within communities (Smith et al., 35). Real-life instances that exemplify residents' perception of corruption include concerns regarding payments made by parents to secure admission for their children. These experiences erode trust in the education system, nurture the belief that corruption is unavoidable in accessing education. Many other researchers have done extensive study on corruption in Liberia highlighting the educational sector to be one of the affected areas (Smith et al. 27).

C. What Other Studies Found In Liberia On Corruption

In the context of examining corruption in schools in Monrovia, Liberia, a study conducted by Aliou Mohamed Kromah Niwet Arunberkfa (2019) highlights the importance of understanding the nature of corrupt practices. The study identifies forms of corruption: parental involvement, student misconduct, teacher misconduct and exam-related misconduct. For example, teacher misconduct is prevalent in both schools and universities in Monrovia. Teachers often request money from students in exchange for grades (ThisDay, 2023). This unethical behaviour undermines the system as those who should be instrumental in nurturing children's education instead contribute to corrupting their mindset. Another form of corruption arises from teachers receiving pay while administering end-of-year exams determining students' promotion to the grade level. Additionally, corrupt parental practices involve incentivising their children for grades or directly bribing teachers or administrators for favourable outcomes Aliou Mohamed Kromah & Niwet Arunberkfa (2019). However, in the absence of measures to curb these activities in the educational sector, these experiences continue to exacerbate, but before identifying measures, it's paramount to dig out the contributing factors that fuel the motivation of these experiences to get a nuanced understanding that inspires a well inform solution toward fighting corruption practices in the education sector.

D. Factors That Contribute To Corruption In The Education Sector In Liberia

The Ministry of Education in Liberia has a role in allocating and distributing school funds and supplies. However, there are issues regarding accountability and transparency within this process, which can lead to practices within schools. One significant challenge is the absence of a comprehensive and standardised financial management system. Without guidelines and procedures for budgeting, tracking expenditures and reporting finances, opportunities

for corruption arise. Moreover, ensuring that funds are used appropriately and effectively becomes challenging without defined processes and systems in place. Another contributing factor is the capacity and resources within the Ministry of Education itself. Insufficient staff numbers and limited training opportunities for management personnel can hinder their ability to monitor funds and distribute supplies effectively. This lack of knowledge about procedures makes the system more vulnerable to corruption. In addressing this issue, mechanisms have been implemented to involve stakeholders such as parents, communities and civil society organisations overseeing school funds and supplies. However, due to a lack of transparency and citizen participation in decision-making processes, an environment conducive to corruption exists at all levels of education. Additionally, the absence of procurement guidelines and oversight mechanisms can contribute to practices within schools by allowing favouritism, inflated prices or illicit payments. When bidding procedures lack transparency and fair competition, it increases the risk of misallocating resources and fostering corruption while procuring supplies. The consequences of corruption within institutions are far-reaching, directly affecting the quality of education while undermining opportunities for students. Diverting funds and resources can result in deteriorating infrastructure, inadequate teaching materials and limited access to resources. Ultimately, the students suffer the most as their right to a quality education is compromised. Henceforth, there have been reports from Afghanistan where parents claim that teachers and government employees illegally sell textbooks to students. In another instance, when ministry employees in Kenya misused over \$54 million in education aid funds, donors stopped funding the program. This impacted the provision of quality education to individuals in rural areas in Kenya (CMIU4, 2019).

Moreover, the behaviour and professionalism of teachers play a role in shaping practices. This includes sextortion and gender-based violence within school premises as questionable teacher recruitment, placement and promotion practices. Additionally, instances of teacher misconduct, such as absenteeism and child labour exploitation within institutions, fall under this category. There have been reported cases where salaries are assigned to "teachers" who either do not exist or remain perpetually absent while administrators pocket the funds. In Nigeria, during the half of 2016, there were approximately 8,000 documented incidents of phantom instructors or teachers receiving higher salaries than they were officially entitled to. These incidents resulted in the misappropriation of billions of naira. It is disheartening to acknowledge that some educators mistreat students or engage in practices such as demanding fees from families or exploiting students for sexual favours or unpaid labour (ThisDay, 2023). Furthermore, according to a study conducted by Parley, W. W. (2015), interviews with students from 10 schools in Monrovia revealed that a significant majority of them (90%) reported being approached for bribes by teachers. The evaluation of these schools showed that about a quarter of the students admitted to paying bribes in order to improve their grades. At the same time, 36% said they did so to advance to grades. Additionally, 10% mentioned paying

principals, 45% acknowledged paying teachers, and 15% disclosed making payments for entrance.

In conclusion, corruption within Liberia's urban education system presents a challenge that extends beyond issues such as mismanagement and favouritism. It directly impacts the quality, accessibility and fairness of education, thereby hindering the achievement of United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4. Previous research has established a framework based on the Principal Agent Theory that helps illuminate how corruption can emerge due to conflicting interests within the education sector. These conflicts often arise when decision-makers possess authority over resources and exploit them for gain, ultimately undermining the integrity of the educational system. The research conducted by Li and Meng (2020) emphasises the link between the trust citizens place in how the system perceives government corruption and the effectiveness of measures taken against corruption. Regardless of the type of government in power, media influence and political awareness play a role in shaping how citizens view this issue. The negative consequences of corruption also impact students, teachers and communities. It leads to hiring practices selling qualifications and lower test scores—all contributing factors to an increase in students dropping out. Transparency International (2022) highlights the repercussions of corruption, ranging from hindering growth to depriving marginalised groups of opportunities. In Liberia's context, corruption within the education sector has hindered efforts towards recovery after periods of conflict and political instability. There have been reports of funds being misused and instances where family connections play a role—highlighting this problem further. To summarise, it is crucial to understand how Monrovia residents perceive and personally experience corruption within the education sector. This study aims to provide insights into this matter and contribute to solutions to establish a high-quality education system in Liberia.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This research was designed to explore the subjective perceptions and experiences on corruption in the provision of education services among residents in Monrovia, Liberia. Interview, focus group and questionnaire survey were designed to collect qualitative and quantitative data to produce explorative and descriptive findings for the study. This study aims to understand how residents of Monrovia, Liberia, perceive corruption in education services, identify the main contributing factors, and propose potential strategies to policy makers and potential stakeholders to address corruption in the education sector in Monrovia.

B. Methods Of Data Collection

The data collection method was categorized into three methods—surveys, interviews, and FDGs: Firstly, it employed structured survey questionnaires to gather both qualitative and quantitative data on corruption perceptions and experiences within Monrovia's education sector, targeting students, teachers, parents, and education administrators. Secondly, in-depth interviews were

conducted with key figures, including education officials, school administrators, teachers, and students, to understand systemic corruption issues better. Finally, focus group discussions involving students and teachers facilitated open dialogue, revealing shared perspectives and shedding light on the impact of corruption across various stakeholders in the education system.

C. Participants

The research consisted of a group of 128 individuals. This group comprised 100 survey respondents, 10 interviewees and two focus groups, with 9 members each totaling 18 participants. This was a convenient sampling, the sampling involved students from five universities and four high schools in Monrovia as administrators, from five universities and five high schools. The focus group participants were selected from six institutions located in Monrovia.

D. Sampling

To derive at a sample size of 128, the slovin's formula was used to calculate. The slovin's formula was utilized for this study because it estimates population characteristics with specified confidence and margin of error, ensuring representative results for this study.

Below are the calculations:

$$n = 1 + 2N * e^2$$

Where;

n represents the desired sample size.

N corresponds to the population size.

e denotes the margin of error (expressed as a decimal).

Given the values provided,

Population size (N) = 1,678,000

Margin of error (e) = 0.09 (, to 9%, in decimal form)

$$= 1,678,000 / (1 + 1,678,000 * (0.09)^2)$$

Now, let's perform the calculations;

$$n \approx 1,678,000 / (1 + 13,591.8)$$

$$\approx 128.40$$

Therefore, when rounded to the number we find that a sample size of approximately 128, is needed for a confidence level of 91% a margin of error of 9% an assumed population proportion of 80% and a population size of approximately 1,678,000.

IV. RESULTS

The research reveals a concerning presence of bribery in the education sector of Monrovia, where both cash and sexual favors are exchanged for grades. Participants unanimously rated the level of corruption as high, with a score of 5 out of 5 on a scale of 1 to 5. These findings raise serious concerns about transparency and accountability in the education sector in Monrovia, Liberia. Interestingly, all participants admitted to engaging in corrupt practices related to education and shared concerns about the negative impact this could have on Liberia's youth.

To provide empirical evidence for these results, the research utilized various data collection methods, including quotations from students, teachers, administrators, and other educational stakeholders. These quotes serve to illustrate and provide concrete examples of the issue of corruption in the urban Liberian education sector. The results are organized into four sections, covering the most prominent forms of corruption described by participants, their subjective perceptions and experiences with corruption in education, their views on contributing factors, and potential consequences and recommendations.

A. Bribery In Schools

When the sampled residents of Monrovia described their perception on corruption in education services in Monrovia, it was not just from an assumptive point of view nor from a guesstimate perspective. Instead, they provided their perspectives from an experienced standpoint with a harsh and angry tone in their responses. Henceforth, with their subjective perspectives on corruption in the provision of education services in Monrovia, each could elaborate on their perspectives by referencing the first-hand experience that they have encountered in the education sector in Monrovia. Many of them alluded to the fact that bribery is the most prominent corruption in the education sector, with the massive involvement of teachers, parents, school administrators and the Ministry of Education being the propagators of the uncontrollable proliferation of corruption in the education services in Monrovia. The many definitions and perspectives from their responses will be categorised into two main parts: cash payment and sext for grades.

B. Buying Of Grades

Participants describe bribery as the buying of grades among students and teachers in the different education institutions within Monrovia. They mention it as an act where a student pays cash to a teacher in return of a grade he or she does not merit. 0

Teachers make the test very difficult to cause students to fail and request them to pay money for an A plus, B plus and etc. Another participant stated that *“Nowadays, teachers/instructors do not push themselves to explain the lessons for students to understand and pass because they*

want to collect money at the end of the period from student to give them free passing marks.” While this has become common among young people in education institutions in Monrovia, teachers have become more comfortable, open, and receptive to the act. They have made this abnormal and illegal behavior as normal due to the fact that it has become their convenient source of increasing their income at the expense of the students. As exemplified in another study, Heyneman (2013) discovered that educational bribery could result in a lack of responsibility and a disregard for the standard of instruction, which can be detrimental to students' academic results. And with the active role of bribery in the education services in Monrovia, Liberia, students' academic performances remain at stake.

“My teacher asked me to pay 10 USD for a mark I didn't get, and since I didn't had the money to pay, he refuse to give me a retake and he fail me” Since buying or paying for grades has become a piece of old tackle amongst instructors, lecturers and teachers in schools in Monrovia, they coerce students to pay money by threatening remarks that subject them to comply with their demands. Since this has created a “common sense of concern for marks than for knowledge” among students. In effect, as the threatening remarks provoke their grade marks, many students prefer to focus more on instructions on “payment for grades rather than studying for grades”. For example, a participant stated that, *If you do not comply, you will surely complain, this is what teachers from our university tell us.* And another participant mentioned that *‘One of our biology teachers told us that even if you pass the benchmark or not, everyone should put 10USD in their test papers while handling it over to me’*

This was also emphasized in a study conducted by Parley, W. W. (2015), highlighting that 90% of the students from 10 schools in Monrovia were interviewed in a study, and they claim that they are frequently asked for bribes. Many students in Monrovia have become injured in the act of paying money for grades, and teachers have adopted it as their alternative means of increasing their monthly income and sustaining their household all alone the academic year.

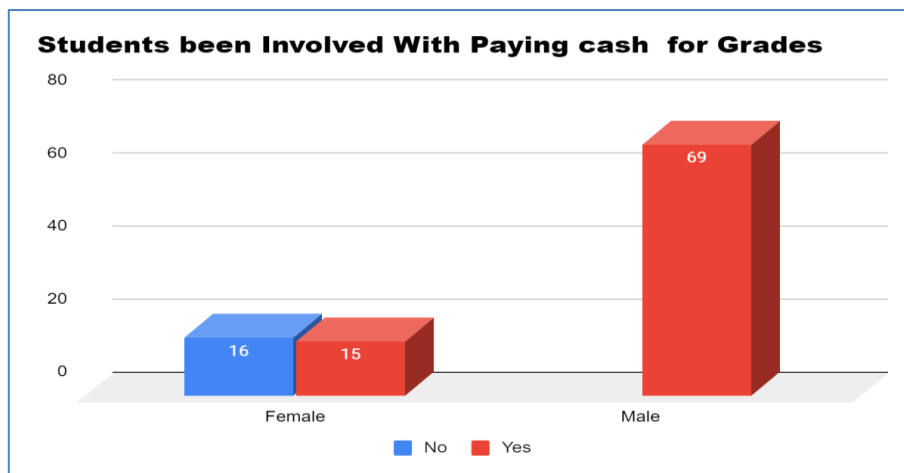


Fig. 1: Students been involved with Paying cash for Grades

The above graph shows quantitative data on the young people who have been indulged in paying money for grades. Out of the 100 survey participants, exactly 69 male participants have been practically indulged with paying money for grades to their teacher and lecturers for academic promotion, 15 females have also been involved in paying money for grades while 16 females have never attempted to pay any form of cash for grades. However, it stills becomes interesting to understand the underlying factors of why a very few have categorically not been involved in paying money for grades and they have been females only. However, this research results will provide a nuanced understanding and empirical information on that.

C. Sex For Grades

In Monrovia, sex for grades amongst students is a situation in which a student engages in sexual activity with a teacher, professor, or another academic authority figure in exchange for favorable grades, academic favors, or other benefits. Most predominantly, this situation occurs in tertiary institutions in Monrovia while a very few in grades schools. In this research finding, in both the interviews session and focus groups discussion, it was emphasized that next to paying money for grades as a form of bribery is also sex for grades. In many instances where a female is from an underprivileged background, financially strangled or attractive to teachers and unable to comply with the teacher or lecture financial request, she offers her body in exchange of the payment and this is the very good reason why in the above visualization, few participant were exempted from paying cash and they are all females. In a similar study by Parley, W. W. (2015), added that most students engage in this corrupt practice of using money to energize their peers or teachers, while some female students use sex to influence their school's administrators or teachers to give them more authority to tackle exam questions and answers or promote them to the next level.

Below are few responses from both male and female on sex for grades:

Female respondents “When I was in school and I missed an exam, my professor asked me to pay money instead of giving me a retake. And when I told him I never had money, he now told me to visit him at his place, in a text message that could clearly depict his intention” Male respondent stated that ‘I have encountered a girl who her lecturer asked her for sex in exchange of grades’.

Another male respondent “ Nowadays, many young girl in Monrovia are proud of loving to their teachers, highly hoping that they will always have the best grades in class’ while a female respondent said that “I don’t pay money to teachers/lecturers, I know how to handle them with my own techniques.” The above are implicit evidence from respondents on how sex for grade in Monrovia schools has become a normal game to tap into for exploitation.

In the above graph, 15 participants of the survey, being females, stated that they have paid cash in exchange for grades. And from the various quotes from the interviewer, this could also imply that these students could have been engaged in sexual activities with their instructors, therefore, they were exclusively exonerated from the cash payment.

D. How Do Residents In Monrovia Perceive Corruption In The Provision Of Education Services?

Corruption in the education sectors in Monrovia has become prominent and widespread. The proliferation has created a fervent environment of normalization of the act in the mind of young people in Monrovia. It has been normalized as the best deal of the day. Based on the perspective of participants regarding the corruption in the provision of education services in Monrovia, it stands to be at a very alarming rate–They affirmed that corruption in the education service is at a high rate that is having a devastating effects on not just the students performances but as well the future of the next generation of young people in Liberia. They expressed their view in a disenchanting tone and with a radiant disgust in their gesture. However, their perspective on the proliferation of corruption is highly rooted and fueled by their eminent counter with corruption in educational services.

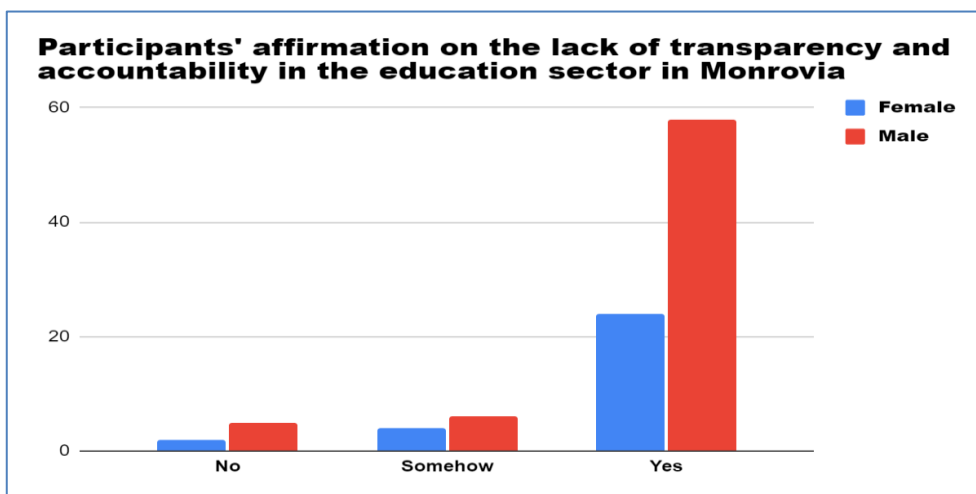


Fig. 2: Participants’ affirmation on the lack of transparency and accountability in the education sector in Monrovia

In the above graph, participants showed a strong view of distrust in the provision of education services in Monrovia. Out of the 100 participants of the survey, only 7 percent disagreed with the affirmation, while 93 percent including both the interview and focus groups participants all agreed that there is a strong lack of transparency and accountability in the education sector in Monrovia, Liberia. This could also imply that the government and Ministry of education who are the eye-tracker and system evaluators of every educational institution in Monrovia have become

heedless in strengthening the education sector and have even become part of the problem. A student respondent mentioned that “The government has forgotten the face of her father ” which means the government has no direction on fighting corruption, careless and insensitive of the future of education for Liberia and Liberians. Insinuating that the face of a father is direction, restriction, and caution, and this is what the government lack and it’s amounting to the massive destruction of our education systems and promise no light for the future of our young people.

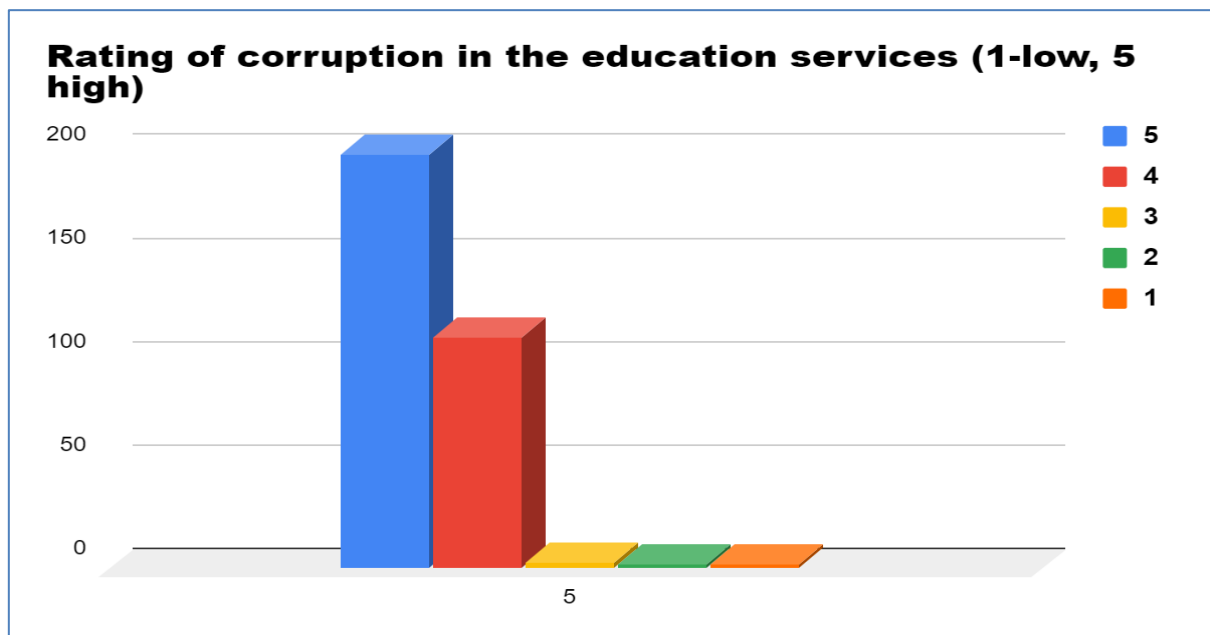


Fig. 3: Rating of Corruption in the education services

Moreover, the above graph exemplifies how the residents of Monrovia perceive corruption in the education sector. Out of the 100 participants that took part in the research survey, 45 percent rated the corruption on a scale of 1-5 (1 low-5 high) as 5/5 while 33 percent rate it at 4/5 and 28 percent rating it 3/5 which conveys the extreme high rate of corruption in the education sector in Monrovia, Liberia. In the interview session, many of the participants could actually express their disappointment in the government and other relevant stakeholders' reluctance to fight the high rate of corruption in the education sector. Respondents from the interview and focus group state that “If there was a possibility, I could have rate the high rate of corruption in schools as 100/100, due to the massive corrupt activities in the education sector in Monrovia.”Another respondents emphatically stated that “In fact, I rate it 100/5 because corruption is in all levels of the education institutions in Monrovia, from primary to tertiary”

“ We all grade the high rate of corruption 5/5, because we ourselves know, we have been involved and we are even still involved.” While their views are subjective, it’s important to note that those claims are motivated and inspired by their practical experience over the years and to date. However, as corruption pervades the education sector in Monrovia, Liberia, many young people(students) bear financial burden, verbal torture of grades, sextion and other acts that robs their integrity, lackluster their academic performances, discourage their study motivation, and increase their inaccessibility of educational opportunities in Monrovia.

E. Everyday Experiences with Corruption in the Provision of Education services in Liberia.

In Monrovia, young people are challenged with corruption in education services more predominantly and with their engagements in the act ranking from daily, weekly, and monthly. Meanwhile, their practical involvement of corruption in this particular sector, depicts the growing culture of corruption in the education sector and could have the propensity to retard the future of brilliant young people across the country.

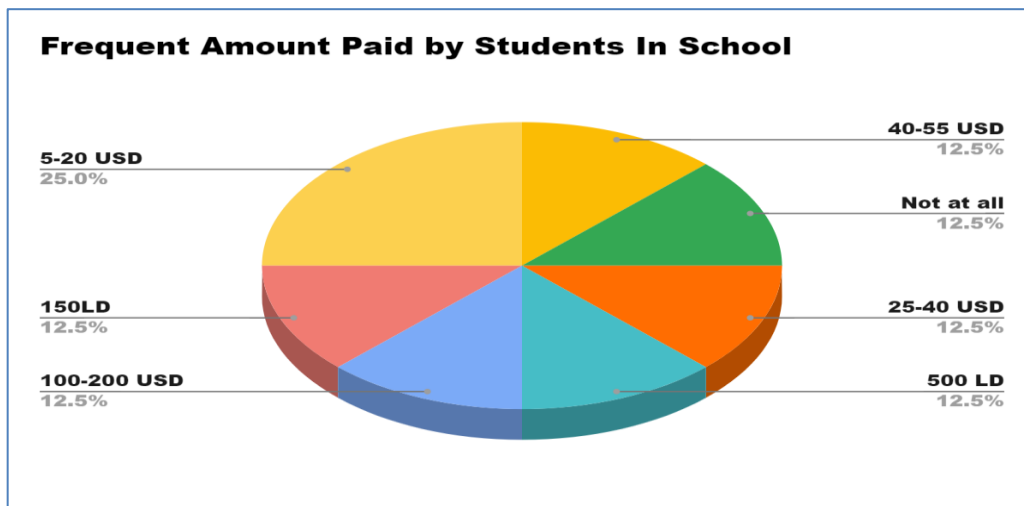


Fig. 4: Frequent Amount Paid by Students in School

The above graph exemplifies the practical experience of the involvement of corruption in the educational services in Monrovia amongst students—the fees they usually pay. However, 25 percent of the participants expressed that they paid 5-20 USD in exchange for grades. Henceforth, the amount of fees requested by teachers or lectures is very exorbitant, and this request is done in a day, considering the fact that the majority of the Liberian population lives below the poverty lines—less than a dollar a day (World Bank, 2023). Therefore, this financial request and payment becomes a grave challenge for young people enduring for success in the education sector in Monrovia. As a result, young people constraint themselves out of their average affordability, to comply with teachers and lectures’ requests, deprived from other educational opportunities and become subject to education malpractices at the detriment of their academic competence and their future careers “One of my university professors told me to pay 50 USD for a course I didn't perform well in and I never wanted to repeat the course”. This practical experience also pervades in grade schools among adolescents in Monrovia. Young people are introduced to corruption at a very early age, creating a mindset of fraud and corruption amongst these young people. Moreover, it provides a smooth passage of class

exams, making students indolently reluctant to study and demotivate their efforts to compete academically. “My son personally came to me and told me to give him 100 Liberian Dollar(LD) in order to comply with his teacher request on a quiz he fail, so that he can have a passing mark” Most often, the teachers are the primary introducers of corruption to young people, they galvanize students with promising high passing marks, that students might think even studying hard could not avail them the marks. “Our school principal announced that no teacher should sell pamphlets in our high school, but one of our teachers used to force us to buy his pamphlet for 5 USD, and he threatened the class that, anyone who does not purchase, will have serious issues during the final exams” This becomes rampant to the extend even the some government officials get out of your dopamine to perform corruption just for little to nothing benefit. “During my national exams, a military officers who was one of the invigilators asked me to pay an amount of 400 Liberian Dollars for flexibility fees”

These experiences have stunted the enhancement of educational standards and a merit based system of education that provides equality, integrity, fairness and transparency in the education sector in Monrovia.

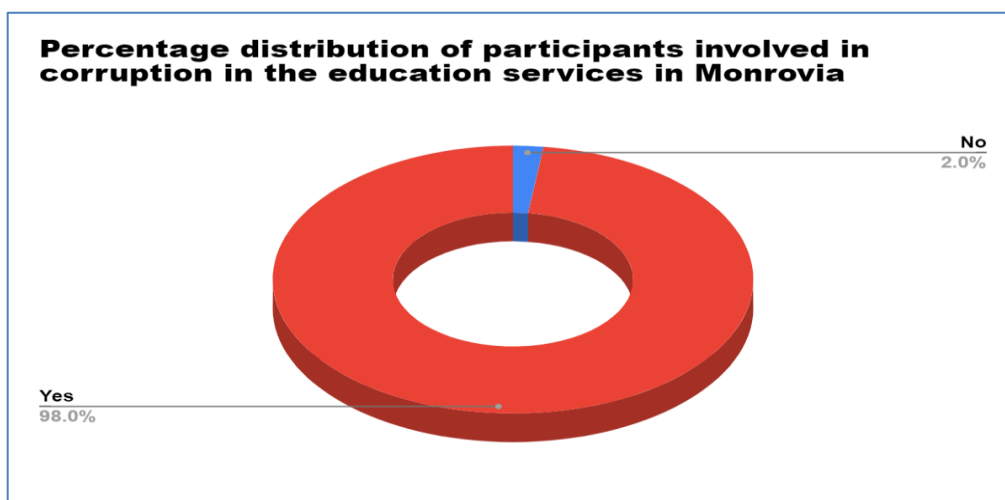


Fig. 5: Percentage distribution of Participants involved in corruption in the education services in Monrovia

The above graph is a clear representation of the proliferation of corruption in the education services in Monrovia. Out of the 100 participants that took part in the survey, 98 percent confirmed being involved practically with corruption in the sector while, all the participants of both the interview and the focus group stated that they have all been involved with illegal activities in the provision of education services in Liberia. To that effect, it was astonishing and extremely concerning to know that some relevant stakeholders in the educational sector (Ministry of Education) are oblivious of the hiking activities of corruption in the education sector in Monrovia. Which could exemplify a delinquency in their due diligence as a body solely responsible for the sector, *“Currently, I can't tell you that there is a high rate of corruption in the education sector, we have a corruption reporting system, and now, I can not tell you that we have high rate of corruption, because the cases of corruption reported can not valid that claim as far as I am concerned and as what you might think of high high high”*. Meanwhile, in the midst of this rampant corruption in the education sector, the government plays a pivotal role, the government remains the prime stakeholder in effectuating systemic and immediate change to fight against this issue of corruption in the education sector, unfortunately, they are oblivious of the wide-spread of corruption. However, it's likely that this may be an insensitive act on the part of the government or they have not just done their due diligence on the education sector, to explore some of these prominent practices. It's paramount for the government—the Ministry of education, to do their research and stand on their toes in fighting this issue. Unfortunately, in the case of Monrovia, Liberia, the government has been dormant in fighting against corruption in Monrovia and somehow contributing to the very increase of corruption. According to a participant *“The government or ministry of education, does not even care about those backyard schools that are not recognized by the ministry of education in order to function. And these schools employ unqualified teachers who just sign up to exploit students through bribery”*. Moreover, another participant elucidated on the government deficiency to cater for teachers compensation and remuneration *“The government refuses to pay the teachers for months, and some of us do not have any second source of generating income, therefore, we have to be selling expensive pamphlets and collecting money from students to even pay for our transportation.”* Lastly, all of these practices in the education sector in Monrovia have not yet elicited the attention of the government, and this is because the government has pay less attention on fighting corruption in different sector of the country *“Well, it's not only about the education sector, but the government does not even care about the proliferation of corruption in Liberia as a whole, therefore, the education sector is of no exemption”*.

F. Contributing Factors To Corruption In The Provision Of Education Service In Monrovia, Liberia

The most significant factors contributing to corruption in Monrovia's education sector, according to respondents, encompass low teacher salaries and salary delays, with teachers resorting to requesting money from students, as well as broader themes such as the teachers' low salaries,

teacher's creed, parental involvement in corrupt practices, administrative shortcomings, and a lack of accountability processes within schools, alongside issues like inadequate monitoring by the Ministry of Education and school administration, student laziness, the erosion of passion among teachers, and a dependency syndrome stemming from teaching being the sole income source for many educators. For more context, corruption has always been influenced and fueled by several factors, and in this study, many corruption drivers emerged as the above sentence provides a snippet. Meanwhile, participants of the study provided numerous factors. However, below are the most prominent ones that encapsulate their overall views on the contributing factors to corruption in the education services in Monrovia, Liberia: One of the respondents described that *“Low salary and delay of salaries are the main factors that are increasing this corruption thing in Monrovia”* and this is why some teachers prominently indulge themselves into requesting money from students to sustain their household. Another researcher also found out that several causes of Corruption in the schools have been grouped into different themes. These include low salaries received by teachers, Teacher's creed, Parent's participation in the act of corruption, administration failure to run the school properly and Lack of accountability process in the schools (Kromah (2019). Meanwhile, some of the prominent contributing factors to corruption in the education sector in Monrovia include: *“Lack of monitoring of schools by the ministry of education and schools administration are the main factors that are contributing to the high rate of corruption in Monrovia, because they are the main key stakeholders that have the legitimate power to change almost everything in the education sector.”* Another participant state that *“Laziness of Students are also the main factors, because nowadays, students do not want to study the hard way, they want to take shortcuts.”* For most students who can comply with the financial requests of teachers and lecturers, they become extremely reluctant towards hard studies and for quality education. This was also emphasized in another study by Parley, W. W. (2015) described that corruption in education services causes students in private schools to be lazy, and it impedes the acquisition of quality education among young people in Monrovia, Liberia. Another respondent mentioned that *“Lack of teaching passion is one greatest factor, because many of these teachers jump into the field just to earn money because there is no job in the country and teaching is one available to them.”* Lastly, a female school administrator stated that *“Dependency syndrome which I consider as teaching being solemnly depending on their petty teaching salary as their only source of income and there, everything needs to come from there, even if the salary can not suffice his monthly allowance, he/she capitalizes bribery to sustain themselves.”* Therefore, these contributing factors present an implicit view of not just how these illegal practices impact or affect the growth and competence of young people as well the future of integrity and transparency in the education sector of Monrovia and where to begin the revolution of tackling corruption in the education sector.

G. Consequences Of Corruption In The Education Sector

As corruption stands to be at the peril of institutional structures, galvanizing unaccountability, underdevelopment, incompetency, and retrogression amongst others, it's imperative to understand that the consequence of corruption in the education sector becomes more perilous to our

society. In Monrovia, the proliferation of corruption in the education sector does not just raise a dire concern about students' performance and competency but also predicts the uncertainty of the fate of the next generation of Leaders in Liberia.

Table 1: Consequences Of Corruption In The Education Sector

Perception of corruption's negative impact in the education sector	
Do you think corruption in the education sector negatively affects our education sector?	
Agreement Level	Number of Respondents
Yes	84
No	5
Somehow	11

The table above provides insight into participants' awareness of the impact of corruption on the education sector. According to the data, 84 percent of respondents acknowledged that corruption has a negative effect on education. This suggests that people are well aware of the consequences of corruption, yet the problem persists. Inattention to this issue could result in numerous detrimental consequences for Liberia's future and its young people. In interviews and focus group discussions, participants highlighted potential consequences of failing to address corruption in Monrovia's education sector. These objections included concerns about a massive brain drain, a decline in the value of the education system, and a lack of beneficial outcomes for students. Participants also expressed worries about a lack of competition among students, which could impede the pursuit of quality education. It is worth noting that education is crucial for national progress, and therefore, addressing corruption in this sector is of utmost importance.

V. DISCUSSION

The research findings and literature review revealed several original discoveries regarding corruption in the education sector of Monrovia. These findings shed light on the extent of corruption and its ranging impact on the residents in the area. The research has uncovered corruption is prevalent in the education sector, which goes beyond what previous studies acknowledged. It is surprising to see that 98 per cent of participants admitted to engaging in practices related to corruption in the education services. This highlights how rooted these behaviours are, affecting both students and educators. The presence of bribery and individuals exchanging favours for benefits among residents was not commonly discussed in the existing literature; instead, paying for grades was more prominent. These findings underscore the measures people are willing to take due to socio-economic constraints on education, illustrating the serious consequences. Interestingly, this study provides a nuanced understanding of how corruption impacts those within the system. An astonishing 95 per cent of participants expressed their realization about the lack of transparency

and accountability within the education sector, emphasizing awareness about flaws perpetuating corruption.

The survey, interviews and focus group discussions revealed corruption levels in Monrovia schools. The data showed that 45% of respondents rated 5/5 for corruption, while 33% rated it at 4/5. These findings highlight the need for reform. One concerning aspect discovered in this research is the pressure educators face due to salaries, which is identified as a significant driver of corruption. It is disheartening to realize that those entrusted with shaping minds are caught in a cycle of hardship. Another crucial factor contributing to corruption is the lack of monitoring and accountability by the Ministry of Education and school administrations. This revelation underscores their failure to provide oversight despite having the power to drive change. The study also uncovered a trend among some students increasingly inclined towards taking shortcuts instead of putting in hard work. Moreover, it sheds light on how limited job opportunities have led teachers to choose this profession for income rather than their passion for teaching, contributing to corruption's origins. Lastly, the study highlights a dependency syndrome among educators who rely on their teaching salaries, pushing them towards bribery to make ends meet. This discovery of relying on practices for income was quite surprising. It further demonstrates the relationship between difficulties and corruption within the education sector. To sum up, these findings shed light on corruption in the Monrovia education system. This study reveals aspects of corruption, emphasizing the urgent need for comprehensive policy reforms to combat its widespread influence.

VI. STUDY LIMITATIONS

While this research offers insights into corruption in the education sector of Monrovia, it is essential to acknowledge some limitations. Firstly, the findings may not be easily generalized to regions within Liberia due to the study's focus on urban Monrovia. Additionally, relying on accounts introduces the possibility of bias, as recall accuracy

can vary. It is worth noting that the research did not include an analysis of government policies and initiatives aimed at combating corruption, which could have provided contextual information. The absence of a perspective also limits our understanding of how corruption dynamics may have evolved. Moreover, thoroughly exploring solutions could have incorporated a more comprehensive range of expert opinions and perspectives. These limitations emphasize the need for research to encompass a geographical scope, utilize diverse data sources and provide a comprehensive view of policy contexts and historical trends.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Having discussed the different issues around the subjective perception and individual experiences with corruption in the provision of education services, their perspective on the contributing factors, and the potential consequences among residents in Monrovia, the study proffer potential recommendation that could be implemented for massively fighting the increase of corruption in the education service in Monrovia, Liberia.

Below are potential recommendations this study proposes:

- Increase teachers' salaries and avoid delay in payment: Create a consistent and effective system that disburses payment of teachers timely and allocate at least 20 per cent of the national budget to education to increase teachers' salaries and enhance other educational facilities.
- Subsidies for Public Schools: To ensure that schools can pay their teachers reasonable salaries and on time, the government must provide subsidies for schools to support them in providing educational facilities as well.
- Tracking students' promotion to classes—if a student failed, and wants to change his/her school, the tracking system must flag this out to ensure that the student gets back in the same class without jumping to the next class unqualified.
- Deploy people (Ministry of Education agents) who will ensure that there is check and balance, monitoring school administrators and ensuring that they operate with the updated academic curriculum, financial principle, restriction regulations and legal compliance as mandated by the Ministry of education.

VIII. CONCLUSION

In the complex landscape of Monrovia's education sector, the issue of corruption emerges as a formidable adversary, casting a shadow over the aspirations of the young generation. Through a meticulous examination of perceptions, experiences, contributing factors, and consequences, our investigation unveils a compelling narrative of corruption's grip on education. At the heart of this disheartening reality lies the prevalence of bribery, echoing through the voices of students and teachers alike. The practice of trading grades for money underscores the corrosive effect of economic hardships, where educators, tasked with molding minds, find themselves embroiled in a

cycle of financial pressure. Normalizing this practice within the system showcases the dire need for reform. Moreover, the disconcerting accounts of students resorting to trading sexual favors for academic benefits offer a sobering reflection on the stark vulnerabilities that socio-economic challenges can amplify, emphasizing the urgency for intervention. Zooming out to the societal level, the collective sentiment of government apathy resonates as a more significant concern. This sentiment aligns with the sentiments shared by participants, underscoring the systemic nature of the issue. The unanimous agreement on corruption's negative impact speaks volumes about the shared understanding of its far-reaching consequences. This consensus, reflected in survey responses and interviews, acts as a catalyst for change, urging immediate action. In conclusion, the unveiling of these stark truths presents Monrovia at a crossroads. The education sector, poised to be a catalyst for progress, is threatened by the pervasive influence of corruption. While the journey to address this complex issue is arduous, the potential for a brighter, equitable future remains. It is a call to action, a rallying cry to confront the systemic challenges head-on, dismantle the entrenched norms, and pave the way for a new chapter in Monrovia's education journey

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I humbly appreciate and thank my supervisor, Dr Laine Munir. She has not just played the role of a supervisor but is a prolific supporter and guide in my research journey. From the embryo stage of my capstone research journey to the worthy end, she has provided unwavering support, inspiring me to learn more while completing my research. I am truly grateful to have had this phenomenal academic supporter (Dr. Laine) as my supervisor in my capstone journey at the African Leadership University.

Moreover, I want to extend my warm acknowledgement and deserved appreciation to my research facilitator, Mr. Kwame Norvixoxo. Mr Kwame has been very instrumental in my introduction to the basic concepts of academic research and provided me with the basic foundation for academic research. His thought-provoking and critical feedback in our lesson sessions has embedded me with essential research skills that have facilitated my research journey thus far. I am sincerely grateful for the relentless support he has handed me throughout my research journey at the African Leadership University.

Furthermore, my comrades at the African Leadership University Global Challenges department have also played a pivotal role in my research journey and my overall journey to completing my final year at ALU. Meanwhile, I could not have achieved this successful milestone in my academic journey without the selfless support of the abovementioned personalities. Onward and forward, I remain grateful to these individuals and owe them a debt of gratitude.

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