

Predictive Influence of Petty Corruption on Operations of Southern African Universities

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of petty corruption on the operations of institutions of higher learning in Southern African countries. The study was prompted by the fact that Petty corruption has not received much attention as big or grand corruption from many researchers. Petty corrupt practices may cause more harm to operations in public institutions in the long term although they may appear petty and must be ignored. A cross-sectional survey research design was adopted following a quantitative approach. The target population of lecturers working in the participating universities was 2684. 446 lecturers were drawn from eight (8) institutions of higher learning in Southern African countries using a stratified purposeful sampling strategy. An online survey (Google forms) was used to collect data from respondents via their email addresses, which were retrieved from their university websites. Data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version, 26. The study found that petty corruption negatively affects the operations of universities in the Southern African region. The implication of this study suggests that more attention should be paid to all forms of petty corrupt practices such as lateness, absenteeism, presentism, and favouritism to address impact of petty corruption on teaching and learning activities in institutions of higher learning in Southern African countries.

Keywords: anti-petty corruption; direct consequences; indirect consequences; malpractices; petty corruption.

I. INTRODUCTION

Corruption is an abuse of public office by officials for illegitimate private gains or self-aggrandisement (Nguyen et al. 2016). A great deal of research has been conducted on big or grand corruption and its impact on societies and national economies. Albeit these efforts by researchers, only a few researchers focussed on petty or quiet corruption (Riley 1999). The majority of writers have focused on big or grand corruption with the view that petty corruption or quiet corruption has no significant impact on the national economic performance and that of public entities, which may be untrue (Madsen 2013; Riley 1999). This notable omission by many researchers and the separation of the two types of corruption has invoked researchers in the realisation that petty corruption is worth exploring further, hence the initiation of this study.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section provides an overview of the literature, which is related to investigating petty corruption in Southern African countries' institutions of higher learning. The types of petty corrupt practices prominent in institutions of higher education operating in the region are discussed in this section.

Corruption

Researchers have identified different types of corruption; big or grand, and petty corruption (Nguyen et al. 2016). Grand corruption is committed more on a bigger scale with high monetary stakes and is popularly known for its vast direct negative consequences to the economy. This type of corruption involves prominent government bureaucrats such as ministers, chief executive officers, and Director Generals to mention a few examples (Nguyen et al. 2016; World Bank, 2010).

In comparison, petty corruption is meagre, incidental, or low-level acts that involve unofficial payments of little amounts of money (or no money exchanges) or favours garnered from those seeking services. It can be in the form of behaviours that compromise standards of performance and may compromise beneficiaries of services. Petty corruption is mostly practiced by low-ranked officials and gullible high ranked officials in the public service. Petty corruption occurs when public officials are afforded a level of freedom in their jobs as they deem fit and are unlikely to be held accountable and responsible when things go wrong (Nguyen et al. 2016; Riley 1999; Tran-Nam 2017). It is worth noting that corruption in the public service has been differentiated and categorised into big or grand and petty or quiet corrupt practices. Petty corruption is not akin to a standalone fire that can be extinguished in an instant, and hence the need to take it more seriously before it does a lot of damage to economic development and operations of public entities like universities (Abjorensen 2014; Riley 1999).

Quiet corruption, which is synonymous with petty corruption, as the name implies, is silent and lethal in the long term. World Bank (2010) labelled petty corrupt practices as quiet corruption in describing the failure of public servants as well as all other people who are entrusted with the mandate of delivering goods or services provided for the benefit of the public, failing to do so deliberately. So, quiet corruption and petty corruption are closely related. Quiet corruption/petty corruption is endemic and pervasive in institutions operating in the Southern African countries (schools, hospitals, SOEs, and universities). Quiet corruption/petty is usually ignored or taken as a norm, is hidden and silent, and cannot be seen and hence more lethal. When perpetrated, the stakeholders who are supposed to benefit from the services are denied or suffer most in the long run (Morris, 2011; Mutahaba, 2013).

Past research revealed that petty or quiet corruption is two-way traffic as both involve the corrupted and corruptor. Corrupt officials who demand bribes or gifts before rendering public services initiate petty corruption. The benefactors of such services may receive a shoddy service or no service at all unless they give inducement to the officers. Tran-Nam (2017) revealed that how kickback demands happen; extortion or hold up means deliberate rejection of legitimate or qualified applications (those meeting the criteria) are coerced into offering a bribe. It is manifested in the approval of illegitimate applicants (those not meeting all the requirements) getting services upon offering bribe at the expense of applicants who met the criteria, for example, at the university level. It is problematic and unsustainable for firms to conduct business in a corrupt manner because it negatively impacts operations in the long run. Therefore, considering the cost of corruption in public organisations, people are required to pay for services where they are not supposed to pay anything (Nguyen et al. 2016).

Petty Corrupt Practices

Bribes offered to government officials and administrators to bypass legislations can be quantified, but petty corrupt practices are difficult to quantify. Usually, with petty corruption accusations, it is one's word against someone's word unless the culprit is caught red-handed. Organisations cannot record the amount of money paid in bribes to government representatives for reporting purposes. Companies are not prepared to do so because they know that it is criminal. However, there are instances where whistle-blowers have revealed the amounts involved (Clarke, 2010). It is worth noting that most studies on corruption rely on business leaders' views on the levels of corrupt practices and the influence on their company operations. The opinions of business leaders are central to providing relevant answers to questions in most cases and may not be involved in either big or grand corruption, or petty corruption. This approach is not ideal for corruption measurement as it does not quantify the cost of malpractices in financial terms (Clarke 2010; Tran-Nam 2017).

Correspondingly, it is unlikely for people to implicate themselves knowingly if they are engaged in petty or quiet corruption. A person will not reveal his/her involvement in petty malpractices or grand corrupt practices (Nguyen et al. 2016; Clarke, 2010). For example, bribery is an unlawful and immoral act in most parts of the world and may lead to an arrest. Thus, it is unlikely that a person will admit to having bribed an official with money or in kind. There are cases of women who have offered sexual favour in exchange for a job in the public and private sectors. Sexual harassment could be regarded as petty or quiet corruption because it affects the operations of the organisation in that the person offered the job might not have the relevant skills and experience to deliver. People rarely come forward with information that can be used to gauge the magnitude of malpractices affecting

operations in an organisation in the form of petty or quiet corruption (Clarke 2010).

Clarke (2010) argued that petty and grand corruptions are hard to quantify or estimate. The reason is that petty malpractices are usually ignored and considered insignificant or are not detectable until it is too late. Institutions of higher learning have no time to count how many stationaries were used for unintended purposes. There could be a lot of shrinkages brought about by these malpractices, which can amount to thousands of dollars if people were required to account for all the resources entrusted to them. One may also argue on how people can account for the damage caused by a lecturer who is always absent from work or who attends an hour lecture 30 minutes late. The problem is that these malpractices are not sanctioned by the supervisor, who is also guilty somewhere in the line of duty (Mutahaba, 2013). Information provided by respondents may not be entirely accurate as respondents may advertently withhold information because they are aware that they engaged in illegal business activities (Clarke, 2010). These revelations suggest petty corruption and big/grand corruption measurements are complex, and researchers are forced to rely on inaccurate data provided by respondents.

Nguyen et al. (2016) suggested a solution to the problem of inaccurate data could be mitigated by researchers using the index tools such as the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) and the World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators (WBWGs) to determine the extent of corruption of whatever nature. The impact of petty corruption could be measured through exclusive company data, as well as the perceptions of staff. Research on organisations would undoubtedly reveal different results because each organisation is unique in how it operates, and staff is unique in how they perceive phenomena. In other words, the impact of petty corruption on university operations in Southern African countries cannot be generalised because of operational variances. It is also a fact that how varied results may shed light on what is happening in different universities in the region (Mantazaris, 2018; Clarke 2010; Camargo, Sambaiga, Kamanyi, Stahl, & Kassa 2017; Stahl & Kassa, 2018).

Petty corruption is manifested in different ways in an organisation. Petty corruption cannot be ignored since it has a significant impact on the operations of an organisation in the long run. Petty corruption is born out of big/grand corrupt practices and may result in big/grand corruption if not nipped in the bud. Nguyen et al. (2016) contended that the solution to eradicating petty corruption lies in institutional efforts to improve service delivery through policy development, reviews, and structure amendments. Transparency and effectiveness of procedures can put an end to administrative-related petty corruption. Riley (1999) maintains that minimising petty corruption includes conducting widespread education/awareness campaigns, limiting the authority of bureaucrats, promoting transparency and openness, as well as involving staff in the fight against any forms of corruption that negatively impact on organisation operations.

State of Petty Corruption in Africa

In Africa, it is generally held and agreed that big or grand corruption is the main cause of poor service delivery in the public sector, schools, hospitals, state-owned enterprises (SOEs), and universities. Through grand corruption, funds and other resources that should have benefitted the general public are stolen and misused for self-gratification of public servants or people who are supposed to use these resources for the common good of the general public by producing essential services (Harrison-Cudjoe, 2018). Attention to big or grand corruption is much more visible as compared to petty corruption. One wonders what the magnitude of poor service delivery would be had researchers also revealed the devastating effects of petty corruption. Petty corruption may sound petty as the term may imply but may exert a significant negative influence on operations (Harrison-Cudjoe, 2018; Argandona, 2005; Mutahaba, 2013).

The World Bank (2010) construed petty corruption as quiet corruption in explaining the failure of public servants as well as all other people who are entrusted with the mandate of delivering goods or services provided for the benefit of the public, failing to do so deliberately. Petty corruption is endemic and pervasive in African institutions (schools, hospitals, SOEs, and universities) in rural or urban, and has severely curtailed provision of service delivery. The stakeholders who are supposed to benefit from the services ended up suffering most in the long run (Mutahaba, 2013).

Devastating Effects of Petty Corruption

Petty corruption or malpractices perpetrated by public servants or teachers, doctors, and lecturers to mention a few examples, often do not involve the exchanges of money, and that is why they are more dangerous and destructive to the lives of the benefactors of such services and goods. Petty corruption is manifested in the form of observable behaviours such as absenteeism and is hard to see or note malpractices (Harrison-Cudjoe, 2018). Deviations from expected and desired standard performance occur from officials who are expecting bribes from clients to perform their jobs. In perpetrating petty corruption, rules are bent for personal benefit. For example, Mutahaba (2013) argued that there are recent findings that revealed that in several African countries, teachers in primary schools were found to be absent in schools for between 15% to 25% of the time when they were supposed to be on duty, due to absenteeism. An example of petty or quiet corruption is absenteeism. Presentism is another example of the petty malpractices among teachers in the public schools. The cause of concern with these malpractices is that researchers have paid little or no attention to it in the case of grand corruption (Mutahaba, 2013; World Bank, 2010).

Consequences of Petty Corruption

The bone of contention with petty corruption is that it has direct and indirect consequences to the operations of an organisation in the long term. A direct implication of petty

corruption is that it curtails or limits the productivity potential of households, firms, companies, schools, hospitals, and universities. Its indirect consequences are that it creates mistrust of public institutions by the public (World Bank 2010). Examples abound of examples of the direct effects or consequences of petty corruption such as low job effort on the part of teachers' perpetual absence from work that hamper the students' development in the long run. Although teachers may claim that assignments were given to learners' to complete in their absence. Therefore, absenteeism ends up having negative consequences on the quality of education in public institutions (Madsen, 2013).

For example, because of petty corruption, learners may later in life suffer the consequences of petty corruption since their teachers were always absent from work causing them to lose valuable learning time because of that. Cognitive skills development is also affected as well as the mental health of the learner in adult life. Some learners in their adulthood complain and lament about lost learning opportunities in schools. The above examples are just a tip of the iceberg, and this shows that petty corruption may be more dangerous than big or grand corruption that is clear to see as compared to what lies below the surface (Madsen, 2013; Mutahaba, 2013).

Controversy on Petty Corruption

Research on petty corruption is controversial in that some researchers reported that petty corruption is beneficial to organisations while others have observed a negative picture. For example, Nguyen et al. (2016) in their study of small and medium enterprises in Vietnam, found a positive relationship between petty corruption (in the form of bribery) and innovation. Bribes involving offering a little amount of money were perceived not necessarily as signifying grand corruption but an enabler of operational effectiveness (Nguyen et al., 2016). Paying bribes in little sums of money to accelerate a business application, for instance, is, in certain societies considered somewhat beneficial to organisations that are inefficient or slow in carrying out their mandate. Offering petty cash to public officials is referred to as greasing the wheels or palms (Nguyen et al. 2016). In Burundi, Nicaise (2019) found that petty corruption is perceived as a lawful complementary practice influenced by a range of factors such as harsh working conditions, peer pressure, and friendship ties. Research on public healthcare in Sierra Leone revealed that healthcare workers such as nurses engaged in petty corruption practices, i.e. bribes and extortion in exchange for healthcare services such as the provision of medical injections or feeding of patients (Riley 1999). Accordingly, corruption is certainly not trivial to those who live in societies where it is practiced. Petty corruption is destructive especially when viewed from the angle of needy people. For instance, it is too costly for poor people to pay a bribe every time they require a service that they are entitled to by being citizens (Riley 1999). Petty corruption in the public service deprives poor people of their fundamental human rights like food, education, water,

medical care, and shelter while enriching the corrupt officials (Riley (1999)).

Equally, Tran-Nam (2017) posited that petty corruption causes socio-economic challenges. Petty corruption retards poverty alleviation efforts in poor communities. It also causes disunity and resentment among citizens and breeds hate towards the government and public officials. Similarly, Nguyen et al. (2016) in their findings noted that petty corruption creates an atmosphere of mistrust in institutions by the public.

Impact of Petty Corruption on Institutions

Due to the malpractices from petty corruption, individuals become lazy and incompetent due to dependency on extorting little money and favours from those that require their services. Petty corruption is a phenomenon that diminishes human resource capabilities ultimately causing a significant dent to innovation. Moreover, research by Clarke (2010) in Sub-Saharan Africa revealed that people seeking services from low-ranked officials paid in kind and bribes close to about 5% of annual sales turnover to secure favours and services. In total, this body of research provided a mixture of findings on petty corruption. Nguyen et al. (2016) for example, reversed their findings several times. As if that was not enough, they went on to extinguish their audiences hope of relying on their findings cautioning that, their short term findings were not to be generalised to imply that petty corruption was entirely beneficial to any organisation. With this in mind, it is fair to ask the question; is petty corruption petty and insignificant? Since the findings on petty corruption point that they are both not petty and insignificant, this is an indication that further exploration is required globally to re-think on the long-term effects of petty corruption combined. This is partially in line with Tran-Nam (2017) call to future researchers to explore vast corruption content available globally to generate knowledge on the negative impact of petty corruption on various sectors of an economy, instead of only focusing on big or grand corruption.

Sources of Petty and Big or Grand Corruption

Research findings indicate that petty corruption and big corruption are rooted in social behaviours and networks, common values, rational (intentional) motives, governance ineffectiveness, lack of accountability, relationships, and issues that relate to culture, and power that some individuals perpetrate over the allocation of scarce resources (Nicaise 2019; Tran-Nam 2017). Nicaise (2019) identified the source of petty corruption and petty corruption in Burundi as a reward power. Firstly, under socio-economic conditions where workers' salaries are low, they are forced to engage in corrupt activities to sustain their livelihoods. Secondly, ineffective control measures lead to the manipulation of the system by workers to their benefit. Further, social, political, and professional environments influence individual behaviours and actions. Individuals may be influenced by their social networks to engage in petty corrupt activities.

Bribery, comradeship, power distance, nepotism, and regionalism are some practices harbouring on petty corruption (Nicaise 2019; Slot, de Swart, Weisha, Oortwijn, van Wanrooij, and Raets 2017).

According to Riley (1999), petty corruption is influenced by the appetite to have more money, peer pressure, societal norms, family demands, and opportunity creation. Among a mixture of research findings on what causes petty corruption, there is consensus among researchers that petty corruption is socially embedded. The case in Africa where you find that even the village head is also involved in petty corruption in the sense that even when he/she is presiding over a village court case, he/she tilts the verdict in favour of those who give him favours. Nicaise (2019) supports this line of argument that petty corruption and grand corruption are embedded because their research findings revealed evidence in the fear of repercussion among those that fail to recognise the social order; reciprocity, and solidarity.

Campaign against Petty and Big/Grand Corruption

The United Nations decree to which Namibia complied and the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) in Namibia is a good example of how countries may be trying to eradicate corruption of whatever nature. Unfortunately, the Anti-Corruption Commission in Namibia only focuses on big or grand corruption. However, due to power proximity, ultimate control and authority lie with the bureaucrats who may also ignore any form of petty corruption that is committed by their cronies. As a result, anti-corruption policies and practices such as whistle-blowers protection, which is fundamental to exposing corrupt practices of any nature are repressed (Nicaise 2019). Since researchers agree that petty corruption is exacerbated by human behaviour and their interaction with their environment culminating in irreparable costs in the long term. It is worth noting that if petty corruption is allowed to persist, it results in big or grand corruption. It is also necessary to take note of the fact that, when big or grand corruption is going on, petty corruption is also going on in the same organisation. If the effects of both petty corruption and big or grand corruption are summed together, the impact could be found to be devastating to the operations of any institution (Nicaise 2019; Camargo et al. 2017).

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is built upon the conceptual framework given above, where petty/quiet corruption is hidden, cannot be easily seen, and as apparent as big or grand corruption. It happens as is if nothing is happening but the effect of petty/quiet corruption is lethal and devastating in the long term, as illustrated in Figure1 (World Bank, 2010).

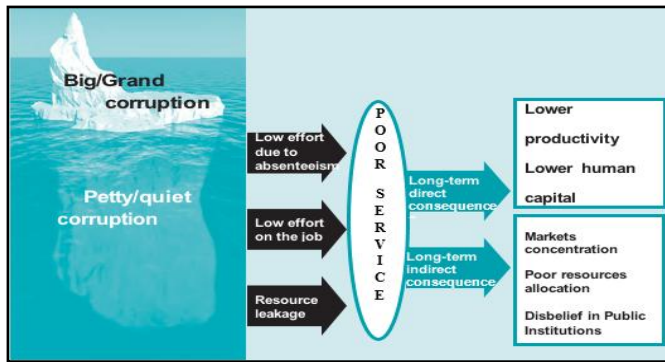


Figure 1: Functioning of petty/quiet corruption

Source: Adapted from World Bank (2010).

From the conceptual framework given above, big or grand and petty corruption is just the tip of the iceberg. Quiet corruption is unobservable departures from acceptable public servants when they are in attendance in their work stations are below the surface and more lethal in the long term (World Bank, 2010; Goodman, 2002).

The concept of quiet corruption is less visibly observed deviations in behaviour. The iceberg theory proffers and affords two additional revelations of the magnitude posed by petty or quiet corruption is invisible and affects business operations in the long run. The first revelation is that quiet corruption happens or takes place over a set of transactions and negatively impacts a large number of government services beneficiaries which include, healthcare – patient, teacher-pupil, doctor-patient, and student – lecturer relationships. In addition to the above, quiet corruption, combined with petty corruption has a long-term effect on households, farms, healthcare institutions, schools, and universities (institutions of higher learning). The widespread of petty and big corruption impacts on investment towards the attainment of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Madsen 2013; Goodman 2002; World Bank, 2010).

IV. HYPOTHESIS

H1. Petty corruption exerts a significant influence on the internal operations of universities Southern African countries.

V. METHODOLOGY

This section provides a comprehensive analysis of the research design and approach adopted to investigate the influence of petty corruption on operations of universities in selected Southern African countries. The target population and sampling strategy adopted in selecting participants for the study is presented in this section. The research instrument, data collection, and analysis procedures adopted in this study are outlined accordingly.

Research Design

A non-experimental research design was adopted for the study, following a quantitative approach through a cross-sectional survey design. A cross-sectional survey was

considered appropriate for the current study based on the need to gather information from academics' perspectives on the impact of petty corruption on operations of higher education institutions in Southern African countries. The respondents who participated in the online survey were academics affiliated to higher education institutions operating in five SADC countries such as Angola, Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe.

Participants

The target population of this study comprises of academic staff members working in selected higher education institutions operating in the participating SADC countries. The estimated population of staff members of the higher education institutions participating in the study was 2684. A stratified purposive sampling technique was adopted in recruiting participants from the participating higher education institutions in selected countries in line with the ethical guidelines in social science research. The sample size of 446 respondents was considered appropriate for this study according to Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table of sample size determination.

Measuring Instruments

A structured questionnaire was utilized as the research instrument to collect quantitative data for this study. The petty corruption scale was developed by the researchers to gather information regarding the forms of petty corruption in higher education. The scale was designed to collect information concerning the impact of petty and quiet corruption on business operations of the participating institutions in selected countries. The scale was developed to measure the elements of petty corruption and its impact on academic activities on a 27 itemised scale. A five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree) was adopted in this study. Open-ended questions were included in the questionnaire because of their usefulness in gathering additional information from respondents regarding other opinions on the presence of petty corruption in higher education institutions and it can be managed. The use of open-ended questions enables participants to provide in-depth information for content or thematic analysis by the researchers.

Data Collection Procedure and Ethical considerations

The online survey (Google form) was adopted in this study to ensure the anonymity of all respondents by providing a link to the questionnaire, in which anonymized data were obtained in an Excel format. This survey does not collect any information that discloses the identity nor identity of the respondent's workplace. The survey began with the introduction, as well as an informed consent form, emphasizing that participation was voluntary (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Respondents had the right to refuse to participate in this study and could withdraw from the study at any time. It was emphasized that the survey responses were confidential and anonymous, only aggregate information (no individual responses) would be published (Saunders et al., 2019). Based on the sampling techniques

adopted in this study, the link to complete the survey online was provided to respondents. Respondents were urged to forward the online survey link to their associates and colleagues, who might be interested in participating in the study. Four hundred and forty-six (446) responses were retrieved online, after three months of follow up and gentle reminders to participants regarding completion of the online survey (Sekaran and Bougie 2016; Creswell and Creswell 2018; Saunders et al. 2019).

Statistical Analysis

The data was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical tools. Descriptively, the data was summarized for easy description using descriptive statistics (mean scores and standard deviation) via Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 26. The effect of petty corruption on internal operations of participating in higher education institutions in SADC countries was assessed using a covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM). The choice of the type of SEM largely depends on whether the objective of the study was to build or test a theory. To assess the petty corruption on business operations of the institutions of higher learning, a partial least square structural equation modelling was adopted. The analytical software aided the estimation of the analysis was SPSS version 26.

VI. RESULTS

The results of the preliminary analysis conducted in this study to establish the psychometric properties of the research instrument are illustrated in Table 1. The validity of the research instrument used in examining the impact of petty corruption on operations of universities in Southern African countries is based on exploratory factor analysis (EFA) presented in Table 1. The EFA was conducted to examine the factorial structure of the scale by selecting a maximum likelihood option using an Oblique Promax Rotation method in SPSS. The descriptive statistics for each item loading is reported in Table 1, alongside with the Cronbach's alpha coefficients, eigenvalues, and variances explained by the extracted factors from the research instrument.

Table 1: Exploratory factor analysis and internal consistency of the instrument

| Items | Factor | | | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-------|--------|---|---|------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | | |
| B25 | .941 | | | 4.24 | .951 |
| B24 | .917 | | | 4.55 | .713 |
| B23 | .900 | | | 4.49 | .755 |
| B26 | .850 | | | 4.43 | .837 |
| B22 | .848 | | | 4.51 | .676 |

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------|--------|-------|------|-------|
| B27 | .761 | | | 4.59 | .696 |
| B15 | | .970 | | 4.27 | 1.127 |
| B14 | | .959 | | 4.36 | .995 |
| B11 | | .796 | | 4.52 | .795 |
| B20 | | .596 | | 3.92 | .894 |
| B5 | | | .969 | 3.74 | 1.206 |
| B4 | | | .966 | 3.70 | 1.148 |
| B13 | | | .620 | 3.94 | 1.230 |
| Cronbach's α | .939 | .877 | .846 | | |
| Eigenvalue | 6.589 | 2.446 | 1.518 | | |
| Variance (%) | 41.183 | 15.290 | 9.487 | | |

*KMO = 0.730; $X^2 = 6083.151$; DF = 120; $P < 0.001$; total variance explained = 65.961%.

As evident in Table 1, out of the 27 items subjected to EFA 14 items were either negative or cross-loaded and were discarded to clean up the pattern matrix. The remaining 13 items were structured into three factors. Factor 1 (Anti petty corruption), explained 41 percent of the total variance (66%) explained as illustrated in Table 1. The internal consistency of items 22 to 27 used to measure the effort towards discouraging malpractices relating to petty corruption is 0.939. This result implies that the scale was reliable based on the rule of thumb (Pallant 2011). Factor 2 (university operations), measures the extent to which petty corruption impacts on internal operations of the participating higher education institutions. The factor explained 15 percent of the total variance (66%), the internal consistency of the construct shows that the scale is reliable, judging from the Cronbach's alpha coefficient (.877). Lastly, factor 3 (petty corruption), which measures the malpractices resulting in petty corruption in higher education institutions. Factor 3, explained 9.5% of the total variance and a Cronbach's alpha coefficient .877. Therefore, the three factors extracted in this study are reliable judging from their Cronbach's alpha coefficients. Above all, the Petty Corruption Scale revealed an acceptable Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of adequacy, which was .73. Bartlett's test of Sphericity for the scale was significant at $P < 0.001$. According to the rule of thumb Kaiser (1970) declares that the KMO must be greater than or equal to .60 and significant p-value for acceptable EFA (Kaiser 1970). Items corresponding to each factor extracted in the EFA illustrated in Table 1 were computed into a variable for further analysis. A multiple regression analysis was conducted to meet the overall objective of this study, which was stated to examine the impact of petty corruption on operations of higher education institutions in Southern African countries. The result of multiple regression analysis is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Model examines the influence of petty corruption on business operations of HEIs

| Predictor | Model summary | | | ANOVA | | Coefficients | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|---------------------|---------|----|--------------|--------|-------------------|
| | R | R ² | R ² adj. | F | df | Beta | t-stat | p-value |
| Dependent variable: Operations | .602 ^a | .363 | .360 | 126.173 | 2 | - | - | .000 ^b |
| Observation | 446 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Intercept | - | - | - | - | - | - | 3.382 | .001 |
| Petty corruption | - | - | - | - | - | .230 | 5.985 | .000 |
| Anti-petty corruption | - | - | - | - | - | .523 | 13.63 | .000 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Anti-petty corruption, petty corruption.

b. Dependent Variable: University operations.

As presented in Table 2, there were two explanatory variables in the regression model predicting the variations in the internal operations of the participating institutions. The model summary shows that petty corruption and anti-petty corruption practices explained 36% (R^2 adj. = .360; $F = 126.173$; $p < .001$) of the variations in internal operations of the participating higher education institutions in the region. Statistically, anti-petty corruption and other awareness campaigns ($\beta = .523$; $t = 13.630$; $p < .001$) explains most of the variations in operations. This result implies that anti-petty corruption practices have a positive impact on the internal operations of institutions of higher learning. Hence, effort should be geared towards discouraging petty corruption, the same way grand corrupt practices are being discouraged. Judging from the statistical influence or level of significance, petty corruption is capable of exerting greater influence on business operations if not discouraged in the higher education system in Southern African region.

Conversely, petty corruption ($\beta = -.230$; $t = 5.985$; $p < .001$) exerts negative impact on internal operations of higher education institutions in Southern African region. The implication is that petty corruption malpractices such as lateness, absenteeism, and presentism have an adverse effect on the operations of higher education institutions. The results presented in Table 2 indicate that corrupt practices (petty or quiet corruption) have a significant influence on the operations of higher education institutions. These malpractices affect teaching and learning activities, as well as the quality of graduates. The empirical evidence reported in Table 2 confirms that petty corruption has a significant influence on the operations of higher education institutions in Southern African and SADC countries. The hypothesis of this study, which states that petty corruption exerts a significant influence on the internal operations of universities in Southern African countries, is therefore accepted.

VII. DISCUSSION

Results interpreted in the previous section showed that petty malpractices such as lateness, absenteeism, presentism, use of employer's stationaries, and time for personal projects negatively influence the operational efficiency of higher

education institutions operating in SADC countries. These petty malpractices negatively affect the quality of teaching and learning, student learning experience, and fairness in student assessments as measures of university operations through faculty members. This result corroborates Harrison-Cudjoe (2015) submission that petty corruption is manifested in the form of observable behaviours such as absenteeism and other hard to or note malpractices influencing business operations. The current study holds that either petty or grand corruption are malpractices that must be discouraged in the world of work, particularly in the higher education system. Petty corruption might have a cumulative impact on internal operations just like grand corruption. Therefore, observable and unobservable behaviours or malpractices affect the quality of service delivery (Harrison-Cudjoe 2015).

Furthermore, anti-petty corruption campaigns could be adopted as a means of discouraging malpractices such as lateness, absenteeism, presentism, use of employer's stationaries, and time for personal projects in higher education institutions. The empirical evidence reported in Table 2 showed that anti-petty corruption sensitisations are effective in reducing the impact of petty corruption on university operations in terms of teaching and learning. Anti-petty corruption sensitisations include awareness campaigns on the negative effects of petty corrupt practices on operations, discouraging unobservable behaviours, and setting up committees to prevent petty corruption. Others include setting sanctions for petty corruption and developing a mechanism like "whistleblowing" for reporting petty corruption. These actions will go a long way in enhancing the service delivery of faculty members in higher education institutions in SADC countries. The study corroborates Nicaise (2019), who positions that anti-corruption policies and practices such as whistle-blowers protection, which is key to exposing corrupt practices of any nature in the world of work. The conclusion reached on anti-petty corruption in this study supported the study conducted by Nguyen et al. (2016) on the ground that the solution to eradicating petty corruption lies in institutions' efforts to improve service delivery through policy development, reviews, and structure amendments.

Transparency and fairness in student assessments' procedures can put an end to academic-related petty corruption.

Limitations and Practical Implications

A considerable body of research has tried to understand grand or big corruption as a burning concept of research and practice. This study devoted to investigating petty corruption and its effect on universities' operations. However, like most studies, this study also has its limitations. The target population of this study was university lecturers, and the views of other university staff members were not captured in this study. The opinions of the support staff are equally important to the study because they are aware of what happens concerning petty corruption. Since petty or quiet corruption is becoming a burning issue and has a profound effect on universities' operations, it becomes vital that the views of other staff members, such as academic support staff and university executive members be explored further. Future studies need to focus more on a heterogeneous population, which could produce more descriptive and rigorous results.

Another limitation of this study is located within the methodology utilised in conducting the study. The authors used cross-sectional research as opposed to longitudinal research design, using a cross-sectional survey. This methodological limitation has implications for the generalisation of the findings. Hence, besides the useful insights that this study established about the effect of petty corruption on business operations, there is still a need to develop a wider and generalisable scale for measuring and understanding the effect of petty corruption on operations of institutions of higher learning.

The data collection instrument (the online questionnaire) restricted the response options available to respondents. It did not allow them to think or give other responses, as would be the case with interviews and focus groups, where participants can provide their own opinions, and researchers can ask follow-up questions. In this regard, future studies should consider a mixed-methods research design.

Finally, this study has practical implications for universities. Although it typically involved what would be generally considered as minor corruption activities, petty corruption has far-reaching effects, and its consequences are not petty, they must be taken seriously. It becomes apparent that the campaign against petty or quiet corruption in the higher education sector could be addressed by creating a learning environment that values integrity and transparency, proper governance, and accountable management.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This research was born in the wake of a commonly held perception that petty corruption is insignificant and not worth exploring because they are often viewed as harmless to an organisation, society, and nations at large. The findings of this study show that just like the widely reported grand corruption, petty corruption has a negative impact on the quality of

teaching and learning activities in higher education institutions in the Southern African countries. Malpractices such as lateness, absenteeism, presentism, use of office stationaries, and the official time for personal projects affect the operational efficiency of higher education institutions. In turn, these petty corruption malpractices affect the quality of teaching and learning, student learning experiences, and fairness in student assessments. An important discovery is that researchers overlooked this subject area for far too long under the guise of subject area inconsequence. In practice, the findings in this study have the effect of widening the anti-corruption campaign net by revealing silent breeding grounds of corruption underemphasised in past research. Thus, when creating awareness, management, and anti-graft bodies must not only generally sensitise institutional workers under the 'anti-corruption' banner. It is fundamental to modify the 'anti-petty corruption' banner as an inclusive way of discouraging petty corruption malpractices equally harmful to the public and private tertiary education institutions.

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