STRATEGIES FOR OVERCOMING ETHICAL CHALLENGES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN ANAMBRA STATE FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This study investigated the strategies for overcoming ethical challenges in the management of colleges of education in Anambra State for sustainable national development. Four research questions guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised all 470 academic staff in the two accredited public owned colleges of education in Anambra State, that is, Federal College of Education (Technical), Umunze, (298 academic staff) and Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe (172 academic staff). A sample size of 235 academic staff was selected at 50% using the proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The main instrument for data collection was a 50-item close-ended structured questionnaire titled: "Strategies for Overcoming Ethical Challenges in the Management COEs for Sustainable National Development Questionnaire (SOECMCOESNDQ)", developed by the researchers. The face and content validity of the instrument were ensured by giving out three drafted copies of questionnaire to two experts in Educational Management and Policy Department including one Measurement and Evaluation expert from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State. The reliability of the questionnaire was established through a pilot study conducted in one of the colleges of education in Enugu State that was not part of the study sampling 25 academic staff. After the pilot-test, the internal consistency of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's Alpha statistics, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.87, 0.82, 0.79 and 0.85 for the four clusters respectively; which were all added up and divided to give an overall internal consistency r-value of 0.83, indicating high reliability. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as the mean statistics rated at 2.50 and standard deviation statistics to answer the four research questions. Findings of the study revealed among others that the colleges of education in Anambra State faced significant ethical challenges that adversely affected their capacity to contribute to sustainable national development. However, the causes of these ethical challenges, likewise their consequences on achievement of sustainable nations development in Anambra State, including various practical strategies to overcome these ethical challenges confronting the management of these COEs were discovered in the study. From this findings, recommendations were proffered and among them included that management staff, administrators, teaching and non-teaching staff including students in colleges of education through government and the regulatory body like National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) financial support with the private sector contributions

should undergo mandatory regular training on ethical leadership and governance to help build their capacity towards managing institutions with integrity, transparency, and accountability in order to overcome these ethical challenges prevailing in the management of colleges of education in Anambra State for sustainable national development.
Keywords: *Strategies, Overcoming, Ethical, Challenges, Management, Sustainable, National, Development*

Introduction

Education is universally acknowledged as a fundamental tool for nation-building and sustainable national development (SND), impacting every facet of the society, including, its socio-economic, cultural, political, religious and environmental dimensions. Education is widely recognized as an instrument for social change vital for the promotion of a progressive and united Nigeria. Recognizing education as an 'instrument par excellence" for the social and economic transformation of the nation; the government right from inception has established various institutions and programmes to address the diverse needs of individuals within Nigerian society (Federal Republic of Nigeria - FRN, 2014). Hence, the Nigerian education system is structured accordingly into: Early

Childhood Care and Development Education (ECCDE) aged 0-6years, Primary/Basic Education aged 6-15years, Post-Basic Education of 3 years in Senior Secondary Schools and Technical Colleges, and Tertiary Education provided in Colleges of Education (COEs), Monotechnics, Polytechnics and the Universities (FRN, 2014). In particular, the colleges of education (COEs) which is the main focus of this study play a crucial role in preparing professional teachers who shape the future generation and contribute meaningfully to national transformation. According to Onuh, Egwu and Ozokwere (2024), the COEs as one of the teacher education institutions known for the preparation and production of teachers who provide educational services in the primary and junior secondary schools. They equally offer University degree courses for the undergraduate students to acquire University B.Ed. degrees and Professional Diploma in Education (PDE) programme for graduate students in different professions without educational background but wishes to update their knowledge and teaching competencies within the context of education, curriculum development, pedagogy and educational administration. The COEs are educational institutions that specializes in preparing the student-teachers for careers in teaching and educational leadership (Onuh, Egwu & Ozokwere, 2024).

The goals and objectives of the COEs have been outlined in the National Policy on Education by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2014), to promote greater functionality and support sustainable national development. However, achievement of these goals and objectives of the COEs, as well as, sustainable national development is largely dependent on effective management of these institutions. Management of the COEs refers to the process of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling institutional resources (human and material resources) to achieve specific education goals effectively and efficiently (Robbins & Coulter, 2022). According to Drucker (2007), management in education involves mobilizing people and resources toward the achievement of common educational objectives through structured decision-making and leadership. Management of education can be described as the harnessing and coordination of both human and material resources with the aim of achieving desired educational goals and objectives. It is a systematic arrangement and organization of educational resources in order to make them productive (Iloh & Ezugoh, 2024). It involves the process of working with and through people to achieve educational goals and objectives (Akpan, 2020 cited in Iloh & Ezugoh, 2024). Effective management of these institutions therefore, hinges significantly on adherence to ethical principles such as accountability, transparency, integrity and fairness. Ethics entail the systematic study of moral values and rules, guiding human behaviour in terms of what is right or wrong (MacKinnon & Fiala, 2022). According to Beauchamp and Childress (2019), ethics refers to the principles and frameworks that govern appropriate conduct in professional and societal life. Ethics in educational management refers to the principles and moral standards that govern administrators' conduct and decision-making in educational institutions. Ethical leadership is essential in fostering a school culture and ethical principles grounded in transparency, accountability and fairness (Adebayo & Olatunji, 2021). Ethical principles on the other hand, refers to the foundational standards of right and wrong that guide individuals' behaviour and decision-making in various contexts, particularly, in professional and moral situations. They include values such as honesty, integrity, fairness, respect for others, and responsibility. According to Beauchamp and Childress (2019), ethical principles are general normative guidelines that provide a framework for analyzing moral issues and guiding professional conduct, including respect for autonomy (that is, respecting a person's right to make their own decisions), non-maleficence (avoiding harm to others), beneficence (promoting the well-being of others), fidelity (keeping promises and maintaining trustworthiness), and justice (treating individuals equitably and distributing benefits fairly). However, being ethical means conforming to accepted standards of conduct or moral principles, especially in professional settings (Shaw, 2016). According to Velasquez, Andre, Shanks and Meyer (2015), ethical refers to actions or decisions that are morally right, fair, and justifiable within a social or organizational context. Unfortunately, ethical challenges have increasingly plagued the administration and management of tertiary institutions in Nigeria, especially, colleges of education, thereby, threatening the attainment of sustainable development goals (SDGs) in the education sector (Edeh, 2023; Obi & Udeh, 2022).

Ethical challenges thus emerge when institutional leaders deviate from accepted norms, resulting in practices such as favouritism, embezzlement, abuse of authority, bribery, and nepotism (Obi & Udeh, 2022). These challenges undermine trust, institutional effectiveness, and the overall quality of education. Ethical challenges refer to difficult situations where individuals must choose between conflicting moral principles, often in contexts of ambiguity or pressure (Cohen, 2018). According to Banks (2020), ethical challenges are situations that test an individual's or institution's ability to act in accordance with ethical standards when faced with conflicting interests or constraints. Ethical challenges in education management refer to situations where individuals or groups in leadership positions including their subordinates fail to act in accordance with ethical standards, resulting in actions such as misappropriation of funds, favouritism, abuse of power, lack of accountability, nepotism, bribery, corruption and non-transparent decision-making processes, among others (Okafor, 2021; Nwankwo, 2024). Okafor (2021) further asserted that unethical behaviours in tertiary institutions are often driven by political interference, weak institutional checks, and lack of leadership accountability. In colleges of education in Nigeria, these issues are compounded by underfunding, low morale among staff, and poor regulatory enforcement, making it difficult to promote a culture of ethical governance. Several other factors contribute to ethical lapses in the management of colleges of education in Nigeria. According to Edeh (2023), these include lack of ethical training, weak institutional policies, inadequate funding, and political patronage in administrative appointments. Furthermore, societal decline in moral values, combined with systemic corruption, has created environments where unethical behaviour thrives unchecked. Okolo and Ogbonnaya (2020) observed that in many colleges of education, administrative staff are often untrained in ethics and governance, resulting in poor decision-making and conflict of interest. In addition, a culture of silence among staff and students discourages whistleblowing and reporting of unethical practices therefore, having negative consequences on institution's management. The consequences of these ethical challenges in colleges of education are far-reaching. Mismanagement of resources leads to poor infrastructure, underpayment of staff, and lack of instructional materials, which directly affect teaching and learning outcomes. According to Usman and Ibrahim (2021), institutions suffering from poor ethical leadership experience high staff turnover, student unrest, and declining academic standards. Moreover, the erosion of ethical values at the management level often trickles down, influencing both staff and student behaviour. It becomes difficult to instill discipline or promote moral values in students when institutional leadership is compromised (Oyetunde & Adepoju, 2019). This situation threatens the long-term sustainability of education and national development. These unethical practices with their grieve consequences can hinder institutional performance, lower staff morale, erode public trust, and compromise the quality of teacher training programmes, therefore, requiring the deployment or implementation of effective practical strategies in order to overcome them.

Strategies are planned actions and decisions designed to achieve specific long-term objectives through efficient allocation of resources and organizational efforts (Porter, 1980). According to Johnson, Scholes and Whittington (2017), strategies refer to the direction and scope of an organization over the long term, which helps to achieve advantages in a changing environment through resource configuration. Specifically, in Anambra State, several colleges of education are reported to have experienced management-related ethical issues that challenge the institutions' credibility and overall contribution to sustainable national development (Nwankwo, 2024). Besides, sustainable national development (SND) entails development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, while ensuring social equity, economic growth, and environmental protection (World Commission on Environment and Development [WCED], 1987). According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2022), sustainable national development encompasses inclusive growth, responsible governance, and environmental stewardship, ensuring long-term prosperity and societal well-being. The sustainable national development is rooted in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which encompass, among other objectives: implementing quality education for all (SDG 4); promoting clean energy use (SDG 7); and strengthening institutions and reducing corruption (SDG 16). Sustainable national development (SND) further refers to the process of achieving growth that meets present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. It encompasses economic viability, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. The educational sector, especially teacher education, is central to this objective, as it equips individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to innovate, engage in productive activities, and uphold democratic and moral values (UNESCO, 2023). In discussing, the importance of ethical management in achieving sustainable development UNESCO further indicated that sustainable national development thus, involves economic progress, environmental protection, and social equity. Education, particularly teacher education, is a key driver in actualizing these goals. UNESCO (2023) emphasized that ethical leadership in educational institutions promotes equitable access to quality education and builds future citizens who are morally and socially responsible. Hence, the role of ethical governance in education is not merely administrative but developmental. Ethical lapses in managing colleges of education can hinder national development by producing underqualified teachers, misallocating resources, and eroding public confidence in the education system (Nwankwo, 2024; Okafor, 2021). These institutions must, therefore, align their leadership practices with the broader objectives of national sustainability through ethical and transparent management. Nevertheless, ethical lapses in educational leadership and governance must be addressed using effective practical strategies to align institutional goals with national development aspirations. The ethical management of colleges of education requires implementing practical and workable strategies which involves ensuring that administrators adhere strictly to professional codes of conduct and apply principles of good governance. Overcoming ethical challenges in the management of colleges of education requires deliberate and coordinated strategies that foster a culture of accountability, transparency, and responsible leadership. In the context of Anambra State, addressing these challenges is essential to enhance institutional effectiveness, ensure quality teacher education, and contribute to sustainable national development. Scholars and writers have indicated several practical strategies that can be utilized to overcome ethical challenges in the management of COEs. One of the most effective strategies is institutionalizing and promoting ethical leadership practices and governance at all administrative levels. Ethical leadership practices emphasize integrity, fairness, empathy, and moral responsibility. College administrators should model ethical behaviour and institutionalize codes of conduct to guide their decisions and actions. Leadership training programmes focusing on ethics and public service values should be made mandatory for all senior staff (Adebayo & Olatunji, 2021).

Another strategy is strengthening internal control and accountability mechanisms by developing robust internal control systems, including regular audits, performance appraisals, and compliance monitoring, which can minimize unethical practices such as mismanagement of funds or abuse of office. Transparency in financial transactions and procurement processes ensures that resources are judiciously managed. Establishing internal ethics committees or compliance units can further reinforce accountability (Okafor, 2021). Promoting stakeholder participation and inclusive decision-making is also one of the practical strategies. Involving staff, students, and other stakeholders in policy formulation and institutional decision-making can help prevent unethical practices. Participatory governance ensures transparency and promotes a sense of shared responsibility in the administration of colleges of education. Open channels of communication between leadership and the college community can reduce suspicion and promote mutual trust (Obi & Udeh, 2022). Enforcing anti-corruption policies and sanctions is also another practical strategy. Colleges of Education should adopt and implement zero-tolerance policies against unethical conduct, including corruption, favouritism, and nepotism. Institutions must work closely with regulatory agencies such as the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) to enforce disciplinary measures against unethical behaviour. Prompt sanctions for misconduct serve as deterrents and help restore institutional integrity (Nwankwo, 2024). Another practical strategy for overcoming ethical challenges in the management of colleges of education will involve embedding ethical education and values in curriculum and training. To promote long-term change, ethical education should be embedded into staff development programmes and leadership training workshops. Ethics courses or seminars for administrators, lecturers, and student leaders will help build awareness and shape ethical reasoning, moral judgment, and professional conduct (UNESCO, 2023). Enhancing transparency in recruitment and promotions is among the practical strategies for curbing these ethical challenges in the management of COEs. Clear and merit-based criteria for recruitment, promotions, and appointments can reduce favouritism and political interference. Adopting transparent procedures helps to uphold fairness and reinforce confidence in institutional leadership. This also ensures that qualified individuals are placed in positions of responsibility (Edeh, 2023). Leveraging technology for transparent administration is also part of the practical strategies, in the sense that, digital systems can help track financial transactions, academic records, human resource management, and procurement processes. The use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) reduces opportunities for manual manipulation and fraud. College management can adopt e-governance tools to foster transparency and accessibility of information (Adamu & Usman, 2022). Also, periodic training and capacity building on ethics is one of the essential practical strategies for overcoming unethical practices in the COEs. Continuous professional development is essential to build administrative capacity for ethical decision-making. Workshops, seminars and conferences focusing on ethics in educational management will help administrators stay updated on global standards and practices. Training should also address emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, and accountability (Adebayo & Olatunji, 2021). These strategies further include such practices as fostering open communication, ensuring participatory leadership, promoting equity, managing resources responsibly, and upholding institutional integrity (Adebayo & Olatunji, 2021; Adamu and Usman, 2022).

Without such practices, the potential of education to contribute to sustainable national development becomes severely constrained. Several studies provide empirical support for the implementation of these strategies. For instance, Adebayo and Olatunji (2021) found a strong correlation between ethical leadership and institutional performance in Nigerian higher education. Edeh (2023) observed that institutions that conducted regular ethical audits experienced fewer cases of mismanagement. Similarly, Adamu and Usman (2022) highlighted the role of digital platforms in reducing corruption in university admissions and payroll systems. Despite these findings from the previous studies highlighted above, there are still limited empirical evidence focusing specifically on colleges of education in Anambra State. Given this context, this study sought to identify and examine the ethical challenges confronting the management of colleges of education in Anambra State, explore their root causes, assess their effect on sustainable national development, and investigate practical strategies for addressing them. Tackling these issues is not only essential for institutional improvement but also for the broader goal of achieving Nigeria’s education-related sustainable national development targets. Furthermore, while several studies have examined corruption and leadership challenges in tertiary education (Adebayo & Olatunji, 2021; Obi & Udeh, 2022; Usman & Ibrahim, 2021), few have provided practical, contextspecific strategies tailored to the peculiar administrative and socio-political environment of colleges of education in Anambra State. Most empirical studies emphasize universities and general tertiary education, hence underscoring the need for focused research on the ethical challenges peculiar to the management of colleges of education within this context. The researchers are therefore motivated to conduct this present study investigating practical strategies for overcoming ethical challenges in the management of colleges of education in Anambra State for sustainable national development.

Statement of the Problem

The colleges of education (COEs) in Nigeria, particularly, those in Anambra State, are critical institutions
for preparing professional teachers who are expected to drive national transformation and sustainable national development. However, the effective functioning of these institutions is often hindered by ethical challenges in their management. Preliminary observations by the researchers showcase that issues such as favouritism, lack of transparency, financial mismanagement, poor accountability, nepotism and abuse of administrative power, among many others, have continued to plague many of these institutions affecting their credibility and overall contribution to sustainable national development. These unethical practices not only compromise the quality of teacher education but also erode public trust in the educational system and undermine the role of education in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Despite the existence of policies and codes of conduct meant to guide administrative behaviour, unethical practices persist, suggesting a failure in the implementation and enforcement of ethical standards. This situation presents a pressing need to explore and document effective strategies that can be adopted by education administrators, policymakers, and stakeholders to overcome these ethical issues. Without evidence-based strategies to promote ethical leadership, transparency and accountability, the vision of a sustainable and inclusive educational system remains unattainable. While existing literature acknowledges the presence of ethical issues in tertiary education administration, most studies are either general in scope or focus on universities, neglecting colleges of education as equally significant players in sustainable national development. There seems to be limited empirical research that specifically investigated the ethical management challenges facing colleges of education in Anambra State and offers practical strategies for resolving them within the framework of sustainable national development. This study sought to fill certain theoretical and knowledge gaps by focusing specifically on colleges of education in Anambra State, a region with unique administrative dynamics; identifying both the causes and consequences of ethical challenges in the management of these institutions; proposing realistic and actionable strategies to address these ethical issues; and linking ethical governance in education directly to the achievement of Nigeria’s sustainable national development objectives. The study further affirms the critical role of ethical management in educational institutions as a foundation for sustainable national development. Ethical challenges, though prevalent, are surmountable through intentional and practical strategies such as leadership training, accountability mechanisms, stakeholder engagement, and technology adoption, among others. However, a clear research gap exists in contextualizing these strategies within the administrative realities of colleges of education in Anambra State. This study sought to fill that gap and contribute towards practical and sustainable solutions for ethical governance in Nigerian teacher education institutions (that is, the COEs). Therefore, the problem this study addressed is the persistent ethical challenges in the management of colleges of education in Anambra State and the lack of well-articulated and context-relevant practical strategies to overcome them for the realization of sustainable national development.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine strategies for overcoming ethical challenges in the management of colleges of education in Anambra State for sustainable national development. Specifically, the objectives of the study aimed at:

1. Finding out the perceived ethical challenges prevailing in the management of colleges of education in Anambra State for sustainable national development.
2. Examining the causes of these ethical challenges in the management of colleges of education in Anambra State for sustainable national development.
3. Determining how these ethical challenges affect the achievement of sustainable national development in colleges of education in Anambra State.
4. Ascertain the various practical strategies that can be implemented to overcome these ethical challenges in the management of Colleges of Education in Anambra State for sustainable national development.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the perceived ethical challenges prevailing in the management of colleges of education in Anambra State for sustainable national development?
2. What are the causes of these ethical challenges affecting the management of colleges of education in Anambra State for sustainable national development?
3. How do these ethical challenges affect the achievement of sustainable national development in colleges of education in Anambra State?
4. What are the various practical strategies that could be implemented to overcome these ethical challenges in the management of colleges of education in Anambra State for sustainable national development?

Methods

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design was appropriate because it allowed the researchers to collect data from a representative sample of respondents (academic staff) in order to describe and analyze the current situation regarding ethical challenges in the management of colleges of education and the strategies for overcoming them. The design is particularly suitable for exploring opinions, perceptions and experiences of academic staff regarding ethical issues and institutional practices. The study was conducted in Anambra State, located in the southeastern region of Nigeria. Anambra State is known for its relatively high concentration of tertiary institutions, including public and private colleges of education, which serve as key centers for teacher education and training. The study focused specifically only on two selected public colleges of education (federal-owned and state-owned) within the State. The population of the study comprised all academic staff in the two accredited colleges of education in Anambra State. These include the public owned institutions, that is, Federal College of Education (Technical), Umunze, (298 academic staff) and Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe (172 academic staff). The estimated population is approximately 470 academic staff members, drawn from these two prominent colleges of education. A sample size of 235 academic staff was selected using the proportionate stratified random sampling technique to ensure fair representation across different categories of academic staff in the colleges. From each of the two colleges, 149 academic staff of FCE (T) Umunze and 86 academic staff of Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe, were randomly selected respectively, which includes only lecturers ranging from the Deans, department heads to other different academic ranks. The main instrument for data collection was a 50-item close-ended structured questionnaire titled: "Strategies for Overcoming Ethical Challenges in the Management COEs for Sustainable National Development Questionnaire (SOECMCOESNDQ)", developed by the researchers. The questionnaire was divided into four sections. Section A addressed the perceived ethical challenges prevailing in the management of colleges of education. Section B addressed the causes of these ethical challenges affecting the management of colleges of education. Section C addressed how these ethical challenges affected the achievement of sustainable national development in the COEs. Section D addressed the strategies for overcoming ethical challenges. The items in the questionnaire were measured on a 4-point rating scale ranging from: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. The face and content validity of the instrument were ensured by giving out three drafted copies of questionnaire to two experts in Educational Management and Policy Department including one Measurement and Evaluation expert from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State. Their suggestions and corrections were incorporated to improve the clarity and relevance of the instrument items before its final print out and distribution.

The reliability of the questionnaire was established through a pilot study conducted in one of the colleges of education in Enugu State that was not part of the study sampling 25 academic staff. After the pilot-test, the internal consistency of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's Alpha statistics, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.87, 0.82, 0.79 and 0.85 for the four clusters respectively; which were all added up and divided to give an overall internal consistency r-value of 0.83, indicating high reliability. The researchers personally administered the copies of the questionnaire to the respondents with the help of two research assistants who spoke to their colleagues about the essence of the study after much briefings in order to get their attention to fill the questionnaire. An on-the-spot method was adopted in distributing the questionnaire to the respondents using a physical, direct contact and hand-delivery process. A total of 235 questionnaires were distributed, and all the copies of the questionnaire were returned fully completed, resulting in a 100% response rate. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as the mean statistics and standard deviation statistics to answer the four research questions. A cut-off mean of 2.50 was used as the benchmark for decision-making. Mean scores rating at 2.50 and above were considered as agreement with the item, while scores which rated below 2.50 were regarded as disagreement.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the perceived ethical challenges prevailing in the management of colleges of education in Anambra State for sustainable national development?

Table 1: Mean Scores and SD of Academic Staff on the Perceived Ethical Challenges Prevailing in the Management of Colleges of Education in Anambra State for Sustainable National Development N = 235 Academic Staff

S/N	Please show your agreement concerning the perceived ethical challenges prevailing in the management of your college for sustainable national development using the rating scales provided	SA	A	D	SD	X	SD	Decision
1.	Favouritism prevails at times in staff recruitment and promotions	76	98	38	23	2.97	0.94	**Agree**
2	Abuse of power or office most times by administrators	61	83	51	40	2.70	1.03	**Agree**
3	Financial mismanagement, embezzlement or misappropriation of funds or resources found prevailing among staff members in the college	53	96	49	37	2.70	1.03	**Agree**
4	Favouritism prevails in appointment of several administrative positions or resource allocation	72	100	35	28	2.70	0.96	**Agree**
5	Diverting/misuse of resources for unrelated or unauthorized projects	67	84	45	39	2.76	1.04	**Agree**
6	Lack of transparency or bias prevails in decision making, allowing personal or organizational	81	102	25	27	3.01	0.95	**Agree**

	biases to influence research agendas, talent selection, or strategic priorities							
7	Data manipulation, falsification of results or suppression of negative results prevails among some individuals in certain matters	106	79	30	20	3.15	0.95	**Agree**
8	Most stakeholders are marginalized while taking important decisions	60	90	52	33	2.75	0.99	**Agree**
9	Lack of accountability prevails amidst certain staff in the college	58	82	49	46	2.65	1.06	**Agree**
10	There is injustice in distributing benefits fairly likewise treating individuals inequitably	72	91	40	32	2.86	1.00	**Agree**
11	Lateness to work likewise delay in executing official responsibilities found among staff	73	101	34	27	2.94	0.95	**Agree**
12	Absence from work without due official permission	76	89	39	31	2.89	1.00	**Agree**
13	Existence of bribery, corrupt practices or indiscipline among staff	54	105	48	28	2.79	0.93	**Agree**
14	Lack of respect for individual autonomy or right to make their own decisions in certain matters	63	88	44	40	2.74	1.03	**Agree**
15	Nepotism in staff development opportunities for certain staff	70	99	37	29	2.89	0.97	**Agree**
	Overall Mean Score & SD =					**2.85**	**1.00**	**Agree**

Analysis of data in Table 1 revealed that all the items from 1-15 were rated above the acceptable mean score of 2.50 by the respondents (academic staff) to show that they agreed with all the statements. None of the items were rated below the acceptable mean score of 2.50 by the respondents to show that they disagreed with any of the statements. The grand mean of 2.85 and standard deviation (SD) of 1.00 indicated closeness in the responses of the respondents showcasing the perceived ethical challenges prevailing in the management of colleges of education in Anambra State for sustainable national development.

Research Question 2: What are the causes of these ethical challenges affecting the management of colleges of education in Anambra State for sustainable national development?

Table 2: Mean Scores and SD of Academic Staff on the Causes of these Ethical Challenges affecting the Management of Colleges of Education in Anambra State for Sustainable National Development N = 235 Academic Staff

S/N	Please show your agreement concerning the causes of these ethical challenges affecting management of your college for sustainable national development using the rating scales provided	SA	A	D	SD	X	SD	Decision
16	Ethical guidelines which are not strictly enforced	90	112	21	12	3.19	0.80	**Agree**
17	Lack of ethical training contributing to unethical practices	64	89	47	35	2.77	1.01	**Agree**
18	Political/external interference affecting management decisions	102	79	36	18	3.13	0.94	**Agree**
19	Weak accountability mechanisms among administrators coupled with weak institutional policies or checks promoting unethical conduct	73	103	38	21	2.97	0.91	**Agree**
20	Chronic underfunding of colleges which has created conditions that foster unethical behaviours	60	114	42	19	2.91	0.87	**Agree**

	in the college environment, as staff and system struggle to operate under resource constraints							
21	Political considerations in the appointments of certain administrative positions in the college compromising standards by enabling placement unprofessional personnel in key roles	55	107	39	34	2.78	0.96	**Agree**
22	Diminished trust in leadership which has lowered staff morale, paving way for unethical conduct within the institution	74	98	35	28	2.93	0.97	**Agree**
23	Lack of leadership accountability undermining ethical standards and misconducts within the workforce	50	111	40	34	2.75	0.95	**Agree**
24	Poor regulatory enforcement for non-compliant, errant and negligent staff or violators	68	106	39	22	2.94	0.91	**Agree**
25	Societal decline in moral values combined with systemic corruption	88	69	46	32	2.91	1.05	**Agree**
26	Culture of silence among staff and students discourages whistleblowing and reporting of unethical practices	81	90	31	33	2.93	1.02	**Agree**
27	Delays and inequalities in the payment of staff honorarium or entitlement, contributing to unethical practices manifesting in bribery, favouritism, nepotism	95	101	10	29	3.11	0.96	**Agree**
	Overall Mean Score & SD =					**2.94**	**0.96**	**Agree**

Analysis of data in Table 2 revealed that all the items from 16-27 were rated above the acceptable mean score of 2.50 by the respondents (academic staff) to show that they agreed with all the statements. None of the items were rated below the acceptable mean score of 2.50 by the respondents to show that they disagreed with any of the statements. The grand mean of 2.94 and standard deviation (SD) of 0.96 indicated closeness in the responses of the respondents showcasing the causes of these ethical challenges affecting the management of colleges of education in Anambra State for sustainable national development.

Research Question 3: How do these ethical challenges affect the achievement of sustainable national development in colleges of education in Anambra State?

Table 3: Mean Scores and SD of Academic Staff on How these Ethical Challenges affect Sustainable National Development in Colleges of Education in Anambra State

N = 235 Academic Staff

S/N	Please show your agreement concerning how these ethical challenges affect the achievement of sustainable national development using the rating scales provided	SA	A	D	SD	X	SD	Decision
28	Ethical lapses like nepotism, bribery fosters unqualified appointments that reduces academic standards leading to poorly trained graduate teachers weakening the foundation for national growth	65	112	30	28	2.91	0.93	**Agree**
29	Ethical issues such as favouritism, lack of meritocracy and delay in entitlement results to	80	119	17	19	3.11	0.85	**Agree**

	brain drain or talent loss of skilled educators, therefore, undermining institutional capacity and country's human capital development							
30	Persistent unethical practices damage college reputation reducing public trust which discourages investments in education limiting sustainable development in colleges, essential for long-term advancement	71	98	39	27	2.91	0.96	**Agree**
31	Corruption or misallocation of research grants or academic opportunities hinder genuine innovation, limiting ability to generate homegrown solutions for socio-economic challenges	63	106	33	33	2.85	0.97	**Agree**
32	Unethical behaviour from staff or leadership normalizes corruption cultivates future professionals or leaders with compromised integrity, perpetuating a corrupt national culture	60	114	36	25	2.89	0.91	**Agree**
33	Misuse/embezzlement of funds including favouritism in procurement likewise unaccountable leadership leads to resource mismanagement drains limited educational resources, reducing the effectiveness and sustainability of government investment	80	131	10	14	3.18	0.77	**Agree**
34	Ethical lapses such as unfair treatment, delayed payment including lack of transparency demotivates staff morale, leading to low productivity, absenteeism and reduced educational outcomes	87	91	29	28	3.01	0.98	**Agree**
35	Ethical challenges prevents proper implementation education reforms, hampering strategic national goals including sustainable development goals on quality education provision	79	101	40	15	3.04	0.87	**Agree**
36	Unethical practices like nepotism and favouritism creates unequal opportunities which deepens social division and hinder inclusive growth necessary for sustainable development	93	107	22	13	3.19	0.82	**Agree**
37	Ignoring institutional rules sets precedent for impunity which obstructs good governance compromising the quality of teacher training programmes for sustainable development	105	103	11	16	3.26	0.83	**Agree**
	Overall Mean Score & SD =					**3.03**	**0.90**	**Agree**

Analysis of data in Table 3 revealed that all the items from 28-37 were rated above the acceptable mean score of 2.50 by the respondents (academic staff) to show that they agreed with all the statements. None of the items were rated below the acceptable mean score of 2.50 by the respondents to show that they disagreed with any of the statements. The grand mean of 3.03 and standard deviation (SD) of 0.90 indicated closeness in the responses of the respondents showcasing how these ethical challenges affected the achievement of sustainable national development in colleges of education in Anambra State.

Research Question 4: What are the various practical strategies that could be implemented to overcome these ethical challenges in the management of colleges of education in Anambra State for sustainable national development?

Table 4: Mean Scores and SD of Academic Staff on the various Practical Strategies that could be Implemented to Overcome these Ethical Challenges in the Management of Colleges of Education in Anambra State for Sustainable National Development
N = 235 Academic Staff

S/N	Please show your agreement concerning the various practical strategies to overcome ethical challenges in the management of your college for sustainable national development using the rating scales provided	SA	A	D	SD	X	SD	Decision
38	Encouraging administrators to model ethical behaviour and institutionalize codes of conduct to guide their decisions and actions	104	123	3	5	3.39	0.62	**Agree**
39	Organizing regular leadership training programmes focusing on ethics and public service values for all staff	85	125	15	10	3.21	0.74	**Agree**
40	Establishing internal ethics committees or compliance units to checkmate unethical practices in the college	103	115	11	6	3.34	0.69	**Agree**
41	Strengthening internal control and accountability mechanisms by developing robust internal control systems, with regular audits, performance appraisals, and compliance monitoring	86	117	29	3	3.22	0.70	**Agree**
42	Ensuring transparency in financial transactions including in procurement processes	75	129	23	8	3.15	0.73	**Agree**
43	Promoting active stakeholder participation and inclusive decision-making for all staff	108	103	17	7	3.33	0.74	**Agree**
44	Open channels of communication between leadership and the college community to reduce suspicion and promote mutual trust	52	122	33	28	2.84	0.90	**Agree**
45	Enforcing anti-corruption policies including sanctions for violators or errant staff to control unethical conducts	83	104	36	12	3.10	0.84	**Agree**
46	Working closely with regulatory agencies such as the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) to enforce disciplinary measures against unethical behaviour	58	116	35	26	2.88	0.91	**Agree**
47	Embedding ethical education into students' curriculum, staff development programmes and leadership training workshops	73	127	14	21	3.07	0.85	**Agree**
48	Enhancing transparency in recruitment, promotions and administrative appointments guided by merit-based criteria	88	110	28	9	3.18	0.78	**Agree**
49	Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to reduce opportunities for manual manipulation and fraud	102	100	10	23	3.20	0.91	**Agree**
50	Whistleblower protection should be implemented in colleges of education without victimization	81	123	18	13	3.16	0.79	**Agree**
51								**Agree**
	Overall Mean Score & SD =					**3.16**	**0.80**	**Agree**

Analysis of data in Table 4 revealed that all the items from 38-50 were rated above the acceptable mean score of 2.50 by the respondents (academic staff) to show that they agreed with all the statements. None of the items were rated below the acceptable mean score of 2.50 by the respondents to show that they disagreed with any of the statements. The grand mean of 3.16 and standard deviation (SD) of 0.80 indicated closeness in the responses of the respondents showcasing the various practical strategies that could be implemented to overcome these ethical challenges in the management of colleges of education in Anambra State for sustainable national development.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of this study revealed that the colleges of education in Anambra State faced significant ethical challenges that adversely affected their capacity to contribute to sustainable national development. However, the perceived ethical challenges prevailing in the management of the colleges of education in Anambra State, impacting negatively on sustainable national development included: favouritism prevailing at times in staff recruitment and promotions, abuse of power or office most times by administrators, financial mismanagement, embezzlement or misappropriation of funds or resources found prevailing among staff members in the college, favouritism prevailing in appointment of several administrative positions or resource allocation, diverting/misuse of resources for unrelated or unauthorized projects, lack of transparency or bias prevailing in decision making, allowing personal or organizational biases to influence research agendas, talent selection, or strategic priorities, data manipulation, falsification of results or suppression of negative results prevailing among some individuals in certain matters, stakeholders marginalization while taking important decisions, lack of accountability prevailing amidst certain staff in the college, injustice in distributing benefits fairly likewise treating individuals inequitably, lateness to work likewise delay in executing official responsibilities found among staff, absence from work without due official permission, existence of bribery, corrupt practices or indiscipline among staff, lack of respect for individual autonomy or right to make their own decisions in certain matters, and nepotism in staff development opportunities for certain staff. This present study finding is consistent with the findings of Okafor (2021) and Nwankwo (2024), who observed widespread unethical practices in tertiary institutions, including mismanagement and favouritism. Also, the present study finding corroborates and agrees with the findings of previous studies of Adebayo and Olatunji (2021), Obi and Udeh (2022) which reported corruption and leadership problems as the major ethical challenges found in tertiary education.

It was revealed through this finding, the causes of these ethical challenges affecting the management of colleges of education in Anambra State for sustainable national development. These included: ethical guidelines which are not strictly enforced, lack of ethical training contributing to unethical practices, political and external interference affecting management decisions, weak accountability mechanisms among administrators coupled with weak institutional policies or checks promoting unethical conduct, chronic underfunding of colleges which has created conditions that foster unethical behaviours in the college environment, as staff and system struggle to operate under resource constraints, political considerations in the appointments of certain administrative positions in the college compromising standards by enabling placement unprofessional personnel in key roles, diminished trust in leadership which has lowered staff morale, paving way for unethical conduct within the institution, lack of leadership accountability undermining ethical standards and misconducts within the workforce, poor regulatory enforcement for non-compliant, errant and negligent staff or violators, societal decline in moral values combined with systemic corruption, culture of silence among staff and students discouraging whistleblowing and reporting of unethical practices, and delays and inequalities in the payment of staff honorarium or entitlement, contributing to unethical practices manifesting in bribery, favouritism, and nepotism. The identified causes of these ethical challenges affecting the management of colleges of education in Anambra State such as lack of ethical training, political interference, and weak accountability systems also aligns with those reported in earlier studies by Obi and Udeh (2022), which found out that institutional failures often originate from inadequate leadership preparation and blurred administrative procedures.

Okafor (2021) study found out that unethical behaviours in tertiary institutions are often driven by political interference, weak institutional checks, and lack of leadership accountability. In colleges of education in Nigeria, these issues are compounded by underfunding, low morale among staff, and poor regulatory enforcement, making it difficult to promote a culture of ethical governance. Edeh (2023) study confirmed that those factors which contributed to ethical lapses in the management of colleges of education in Nigeria included lack of ethical training, weak institutional policies, inadequate funding, and political patronage in administrative appointments. Furthermore, societal decline in moral values, combined with systemic corruption, created environments where unethical behaviour thrives unchecked (Edeh, 2023). The present study also concurs and relates with the findings of Okolo and Ogbonnaya (2020) study which indicated that in many colleges of education, administrative staff were often untrained in ethics and governance, resulting in poor decision-making and conflict of interest. In addition, a culture of silence among staff and students discouraged whistleblowing and reporting of unethical practices, therefore, having negative consequences on the institution’s management.

Again, it was discovered through the finding of this study that these ethical challenges affected the achievement of sustainable national development in colleges of education in Anambra State in several ways and manner which included that: ethical lapses like nepotism, bribery fosters unqualified appointments that reduces academic standards leading to poorly trained graduate teachers weakening the foundation for national growth, ethical issues such as favouritism, lack of meritocracy and delay in entitlement results to brain drain or talent loss of skilled educators, therefore, undermining institutional capacity and country’s human capital development, persistent unethical practices damage college reputation reducing public trust which discourages investments in education limiting sustainable development in colleges, essential for long-term advancement, corruption or misallocation of research grants or academic opportunities hinder genuine innovation, limiting ability to generate homegrown solutions for socio-economic challenges, unethical behaviour from staff or leadership normalizes corruption cultivates future professionals or leaders with compromised integrity, perpetuating a corrupt national culture, misuse/embezzlement of funds including favouritism in procurement likewise unaccountable leadership leads to resource mismanagement drains limited educational resources, reducing the effectiveness and sustainability of government investment, ethical lapses such as unfair treatment, delayed payment including lack of transparency demotivates staff morale, leading to low productivity, absenteeism and reduced educational outcomes, ethical challenges prevents proper implementation education reforms, hampering strategic national goals including sustainable development goals on quality education provision, unethical practices like nepotism and favouritism creates unequal opportunities which deepens social division and hinder inclusive growth necessary for sustainable development, and ignoring institutional rules sets precedent for impunity which obstructs good governance compromising the quality of teacher training programmes for sustainable development. In terms of the consequences and implications of these ethical challenges affected the achievement of sustainable national development in colleges of education, the present finding corroborates those of Usman and Ibrahim (2021), which found out that unethical administrative practices led to reduced staff motivation, poor teacher output, and compromised student learning outcomes. These effects were detrimental to national development goals, particularly, in education and human capital development. Usman and Ibrahim (2021) study further confirmed that institutions suffering from poor ethical leadership experienced high staff turnover, student unrest, and declining academic standards. Moreover, the erosion of ethical values at the management level often trickles down, influencing both staff and student behaviour. The present study finding agrees and collaborates with the findings of Oyetunde and Adepoju (2019) study which indicated that it will become difficult to instill discipline or promote moral values in students when institutional leadership is compromised. Hence, the consequences of these ethical challenges in colleges of education are far-reaching. Mismanagement of resources leads to poor infrastructure, underpayment of staff, and lack of instructional materials, which directly affect teaching and learning outcomes. This situation threatens the long-term sustainability of education and national development. These unethical practices with their grieve consequences hindered institutional performance, lower staff morale, erode public trust, and compromise the quality of teacher training programmes, therefore, requiring the deployment or implementation of effective practical strategies in order to overcome them (Oyetunde & Adepoju, 2019).

Finally, it was discovered through this finding, the various practical strategies that could be implemented to overcome these ethical challenges in the management of colleges of education in Anambra State for sustainable national development and they included the following: encouraging administrators to model ethical behaviour and institutionalize codes of conduct to guide their decisions and actions, organizing regular leadership training programmes focusing on ethics and public service values for all staff, establishing internal ethics committees or compliance units to checkmate unethical practices in the college, strengthening internal control and accountability mechanisms by developing robust internal control systems, with regular audits, performance appraisals, and compliance monitoring, ensuring transparency in financial transactions including in procurement processes, promoting active stakeholder participation and inclusive decision-making for all staff, open channels of communication between leadership and the college community to reduce suspicion and promote mutual trust, enforcing anti-corruption policies including sanctions for violators or errant staff to control unethical conducts, working closely with regulatory agencies such as the independent corrupt practices commission (icpc) to enforce disciplinary measures against unethical behaviour, embedding ethical education into students' curriculum, staff development programmes and leadership training workshops, enhancing transparency in recruitment, promotions and administrative appointments guided by merit-based criteria, use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to reduce opportunities for manual manipulation and fraud, and whistleblower protection should be implemented in colleges of education. Regarding the above strategies for overcoming ethical challenges, the present study's finding is supported by Adebayo and Olatunji (2021) study which found out that ethical leadership training, participatory governance, and digital tools can significantly reduce unethical behaviour. The positive response towards e-governance and whistleblower protection also aligns with Adamu and Usman (2022) study which indicated increased transparency in institutions through technology adoption.

Conclusion

The study examined the strategies for overcoming ethical challenges confronting the management of colleges of education in Anambra State, likewise, identified the causes and consequences of these issues in pursuit of sustainable national development. Findings revealed that favouritism, financial mismanagement, lack of transparency, abuse of office, among others, were prevailing in these institutions. These unethical practices were rooted in weak accountability systems, political interference, inadequate ethical training, and a general decline in moral values, among others. The effects of such practices were far-reaching, including compromised educational quality, reduced staff morale, and diminished institutional credibility, among other factors that ultimately hindered sustainable national development goals. However, the study also discovered effective practical strategies for overcoming these challenges, including the institutionalization of ethical leadership, enforcement of anti-corruption measures, stakeholder engagement, and the integration of digital tools in governance. Implementing these strategies will not only improve institutional management but also reposition colleges of education to play their full role in Nigeria's drive toward sustainable national development

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were proffered:

1. Management staff, administrators, teaching and non-teaching staff including students in colleges of education through government and the regulatory body like National Commission for

Colleges of Education (NCCE) financial support with the private sector contributions should undergo mandatory regular training on ethical leadership and governance to help build their capacity towards managing institutions with integrity, transparency, and accountability in order to overcome these ethical challenges prevailing in the management of colleges of education in Anambra State for sustainable national development.

2. Colleges of education through their concerned bodies and institutional leaderships should establish independent ethics committees tasked with monitoring administrative conduct, handling complaints, and enforcing ethical codes or guidelines. These committees should have the authority to recommend sanctions and corrective measures in order to curb some of the remote causes of these ethical challenges affecting the management of colleges of education in Anambra State for sustainable national development.

3. Colleges of education should digitize key administrative processes such as procurement, payroll, and student admissions, to reduce human interference, minimize corruption, and enhance operational transparency in order to curb these ethical challenges which affected the achievement of sustainable national development in Anambra State.

4. NCCE in collaboration with institution's leadership should implement various practical strategies to overcome these ethical challenges in the management of colleges of education in Anambra State for sustainable national development by strengthening accountability mechanisms through regular institutionalized internal and external audits, performance reviews, and whistleblower protection policies, among others, in order to ensure prompt detection of unethical practices and encourage a culture of responsibility among all staff and management.

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