



YOUTH INTEGRITY SURVEY: NAMIBIA

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1 Introduction

Integrity education is crucial in the fight against corruption. Wherever it occurs, corruption can only be eradicated in the long term if the generations who are to inherit the future are well-informed regarding its manifestations and consequences. In order to strengthen the understanding amongst the youth of how personal integrity is crucial for countering corruption, the Namibia Institute for Democracy (NID) conducted a series of training courses for school learners within the scope of its Zero Tolerance for Corruption Campaign. In 2008 and 2009, the NID conducted 167 school workshops throughout the country, reaching more than 15 000 children. Furthermore, in addition to distributing anti-corruption training manuals¹ to teachers, the NID also disseminated integrity-related leaflets in local languages and social marketing tools such as posters, whistles and red cards.

Accompanied by the Director of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), Paulus Noa, the NID participated in the 13th International Anti-Corruption Conference, which was organised by Transparency International (TI) and took place in Athens, Greece in 2008.² There the focus fell on TI's Global Youth Integrity Promotion Programme, which has already achieved notable success in key countries in East Asia such as South Korea, Mongolia and India. The aim of the Programme is to raise awareness amongst future generations regarding integrity and civic responsibility, with a view to eradicating passive tolerance for corruption.³

Conducted in eight regions in Namibia, this Youth Integrity Survey examined existing values and attitudes towards integrity exhibited by young people. The target groups of this study were secondary school pupils studying in public and private institutions, mostly attending Grade 10. The research that was coordinated by the NID was linked to a series of anti-corruption training workshops for school children conducted between June and October 2010 throughout the country. For the purposes of this study, the NID designed a questionnaire to measure the attitudes of the youth regarding issues of ethics, integrity and corruption. Most of the indicators were adapted from those TI had designed for its Youth Integrity Index, but additional statements that are directly relevant to the local context were also formulated. The results of this survey shed light on young Namibians' attitudes towards corruption. The results should also inform the design of education and awareness programmes so that they meet the specific needs of the youth. The overall aim is to foster a strong sense of integrity and increased civic awareness amongst Namibia's younger generation.

¹ NID (2009). Stop corruption. A Namibian citizen's guide to anti-corruption. Windhoek: NID.

² The NID would like to thank International Weiterbildung und Entwicklung (InWEnt)/Capacity Building International, whose generous support made our participation possible.

³ Transparency International (2008). Global Youth Integrity Programme. Berlin: TI. p.1.

2 Target group and sample

The survey was linked to integrity-related training workshops offered at 26 participating public and private secondary schools; the questionnaires were completed by a sample of school children immediately following their participation in the workshops. At each school, between seven and 21 young Namibians were selected to participate in the survey; on average, each school provided ten completed questionnaires (see Figure 1 below).

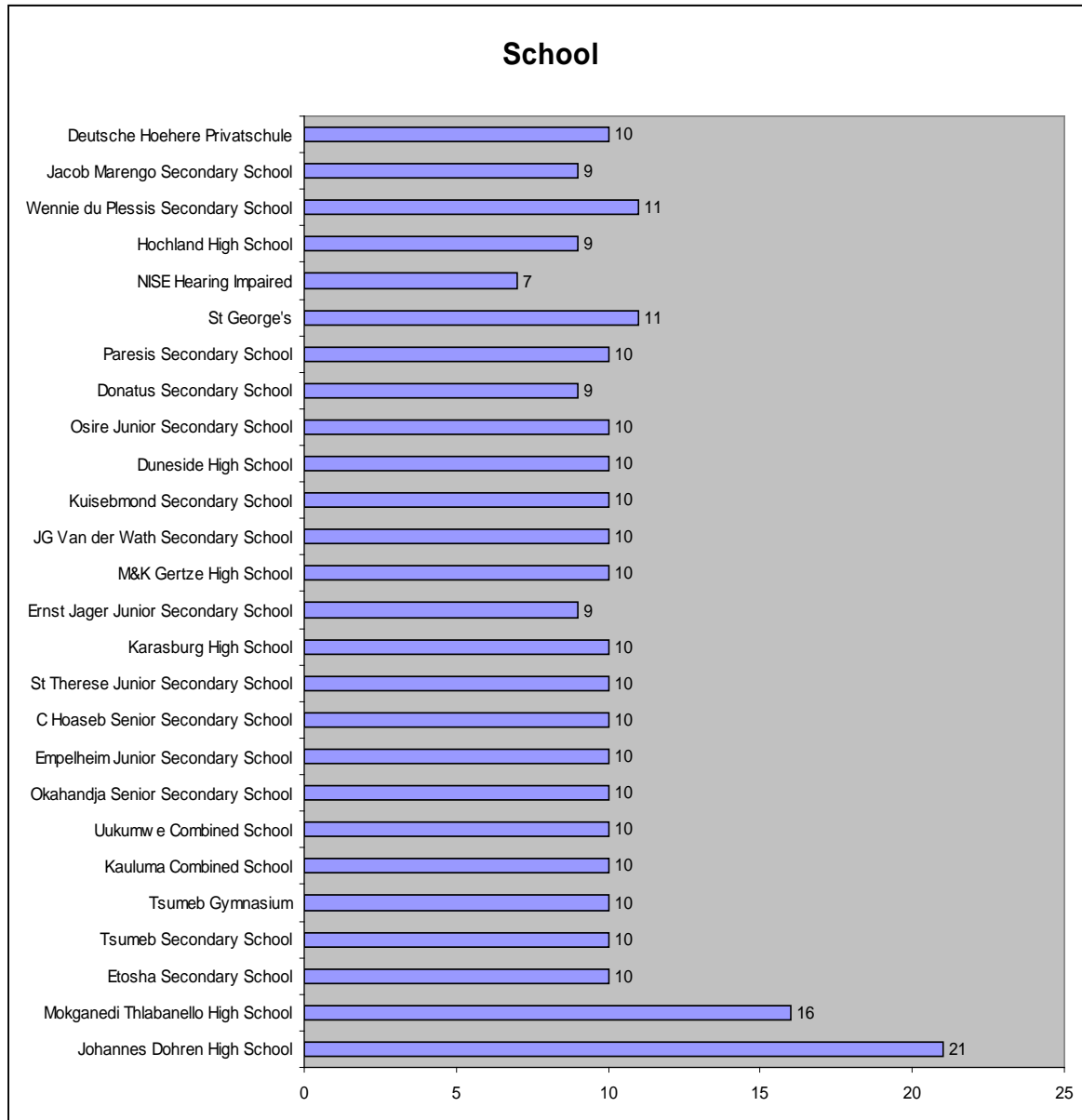


Figure 1 Number of completed questionnaires by schools

In order to obtain a more nationally representative sample, research localities were selected in both rural and urban settings, with previously well-researched areas being avoided. Figure 2 lists the eight regions that were included in the study with their share of questionnaires completed. Questionnaires were distributed in English and Afrikaans; although it would have been methodologically preferable to have made questionnaires available in all of Namibia’s languages, doing so (and subsequently processing them) would not have been financially or logistically realistic. It was felt, however, that making them available in English and Afrikaans would go a long way towards ensuring that the information obtained was reliable, and that respondents had been able to express themselves in a language in which they felt reasonably comfortable.

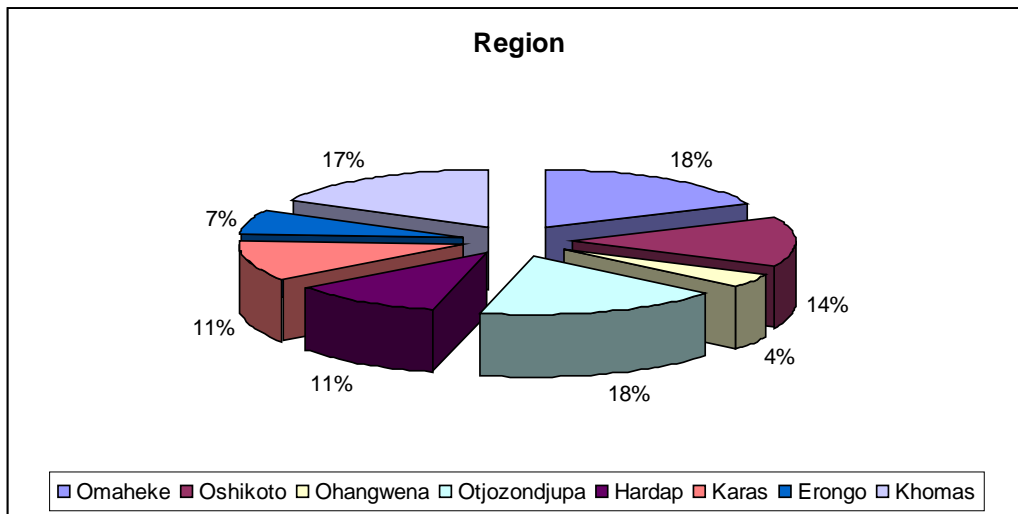


Figure 2 Percentages of respondents by regions

Although the overwhelming majority (89%) of respondents were attending Grade 10 (see Figure 3), the age cohort of the participating youth ranged from 14 to 22 years, with the greater part (88%) being between 15 and 18 years old (see Figure 4).

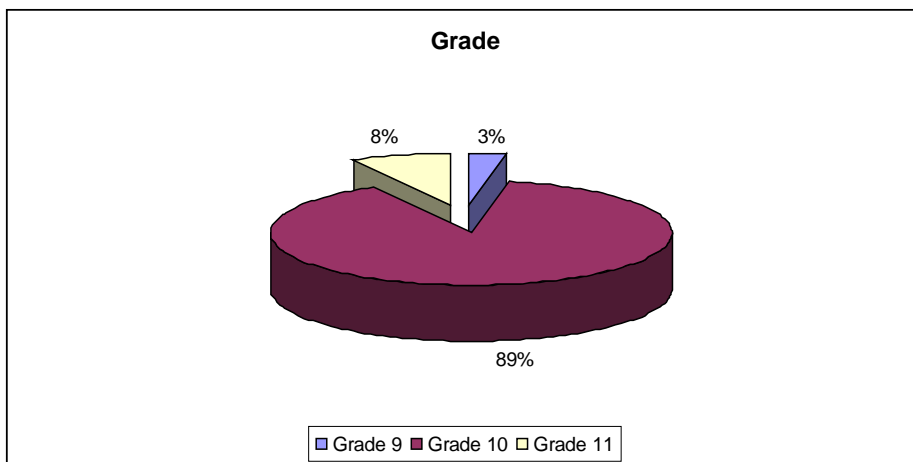


Figure 3 Percentages of respondents by school grades

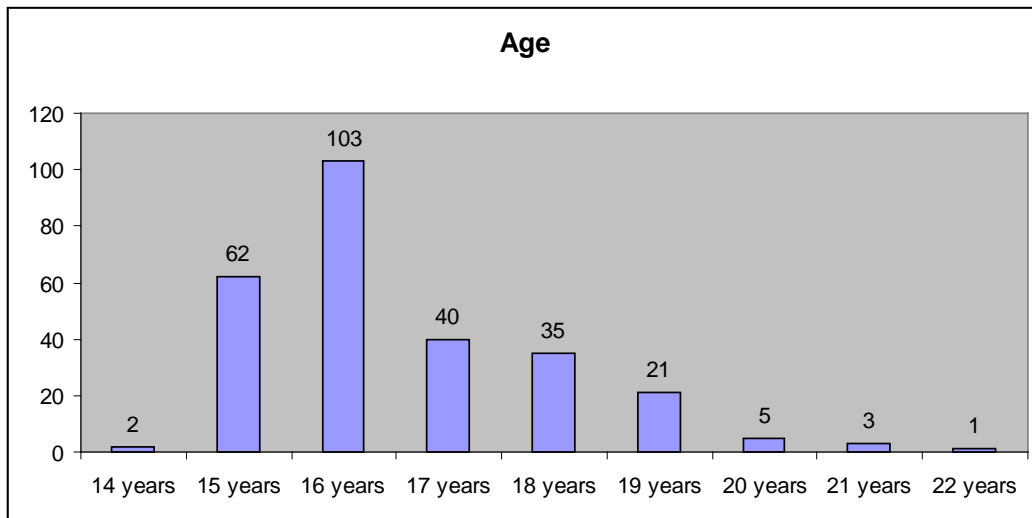


Figure 4 Percentages of respondents by ages

A total of 272 young Namibians (141 girls and 131 boys) were involved in the survey. Figure 5 shows that the highest percentage of respondents (27%) gave Oshiwambo as the language spoken at home, followed by Afrikaans (20%), Otjiherero (18%) and Khoekhoegowab (11%).

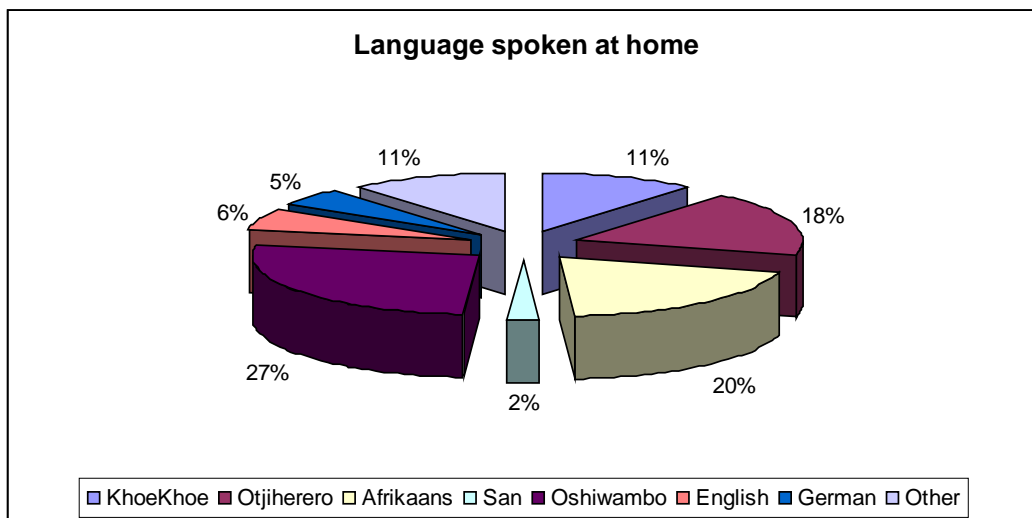


Figure 5 Percentages of respondents by home languages

Caution must be exercised, however, as the findings might be skewed by the fact that all respondents had participated in anti-corruption training workshops that the NID was offering at their respective schools immediately prior to their being asked to complete the questionnaires. Consequently, knowledge regarding the negative consequences of corruption would still have been fresh in the minds of the participating youths. Moreover, the respondents were chosen by their teachers, and were thus probably not

randomly selected: it is likely that there would have been a bias in favour of choosing learners who were the best academic performers or who had shown exemplary social behaviour in the past.

3 Awareness and knowledge regarding corruption

This survey not only assesses youth values and attitudes towards integrity, but also aims at raising awareness on the importance of both formal and informal anti-corruption education. As shown in Figure 6, formal integrity education for the youth is insufficient: 40% of young Namibians had never encountered any education focussed on anti-corruption measures in a school context. There is an urgent need for a review of the current education system, and for the development of educational materials that promote integrity and ethics within the school curriculum. Although the NID has been successfully conducting anti-corruption workshops for school children, additional efforts by the Ministry of Education focusing on integrity-related learning experiences are required.

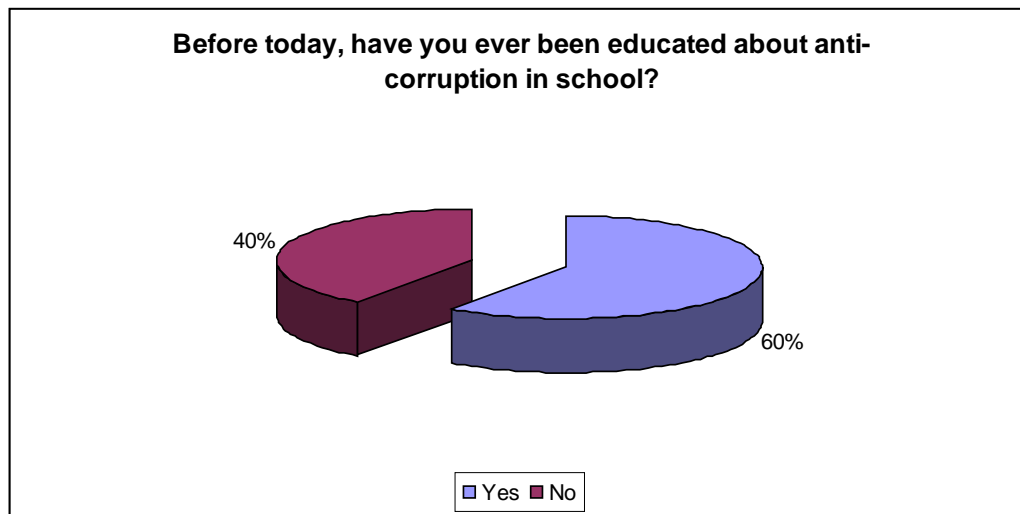


Figure 6 Prior school education regarding anti-corruption measures

The survey proceeded to assess which alternative sources of information young Namibians are using to learn more about corruption. Only 54% of respondents had ever discussed corruption with their parents, which suggests a need for greater parental awareness and knowledge of corruption and its societal consequences. Furthermore, the media play a central role in informing the public about corrupt activities and eradicating passive tolerance for corruption (see Figure 7). As watchdogs and whistleblowers, the independent media have an important role to play in the fight against corruption. The results of the survey show that radio and the print media are equally important in informing the public about corrupt activities. However, the fact that more than 30% of young Namibians had never heard about corruption, either through

newspaper coverage or radio programmes, demonstrates the urgent need for integrity-related education and awareness-raising efforts.

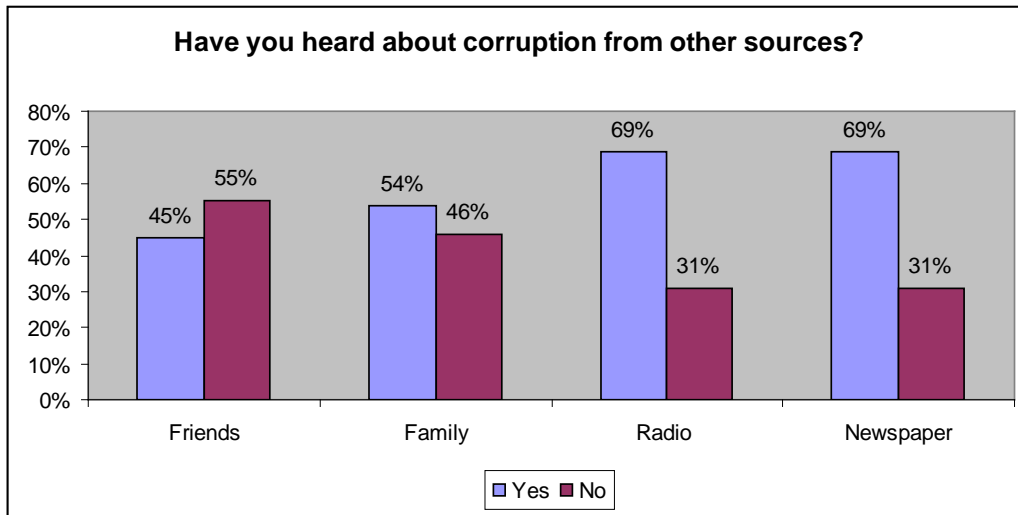


Figure 7 Sources of information regarding corruption

As the NID’s integrity-related workshops had been informing school children about anti-corruption legislation in Namibia, the survey assessed the respondents’ knowledge prior to their participation in the training course. Firstly, it assessed the extent to which the youth were acquainted with the Anti-Corruption Act (No. 8 of 2003). Secondly, it explored the youth’s knowledge regarding the ACC, which was inaugurated in 2006. The findings showed that most young Namibians (78%) were aware of the ACC, but that only 46% were aware of the Act in terms of which the ACC was established (Figure 8 and Figure 9).

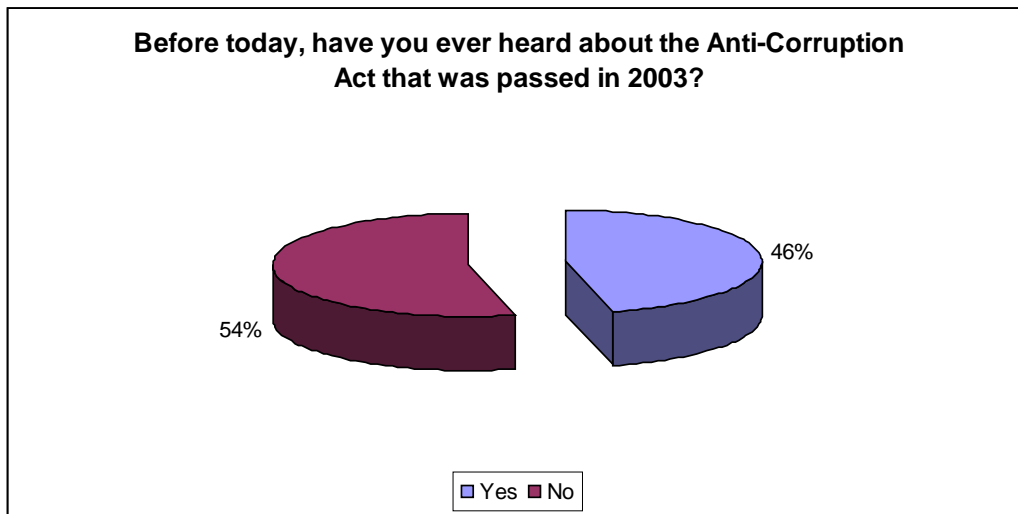


Figure 8 Knowledge of the Anti-Corruption Act

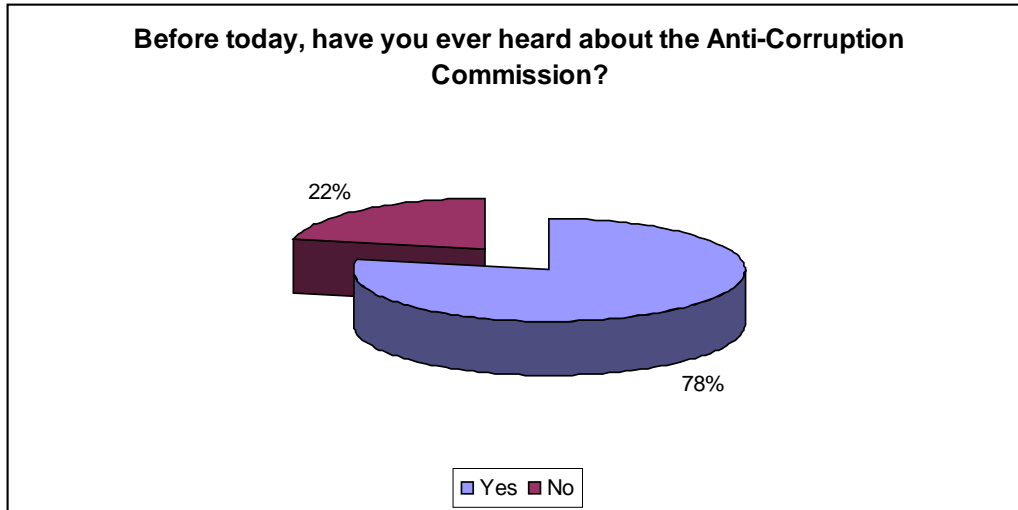


Figure 9 Knowledge of the ACC

Finally, the questionnaire included the open-ended question, “What is corruption?” This was intended to encourage learners to express their understanding of the term in their own words. For illustrative purposes, it is worth quoting some of the definitions that were put forward by young Namibians:

“Corruption is the abuse of power for personal use and the immoral and abusive acts of people for the purpose of creating severe damage to people and the economy.”
Salome (16), J.G. Van der Wath Secondary School

“Corruption is an activity that people with no morals and values do.”
Stimphet (16), Kuisebmond Secondary School

“Corruption is the abuse of power or a position. This favours some people and others are disadvantaged.”
Melissa (15), Deutsche Höhere Privatschule

“Corruption is the misuse of power or authority for your own personal gain.”
Ndinekela (16), Okahandja Senior Secondary School

“Corruption takes place when a person misuses property that does not belong to him or her, for example like when you steal money from an organisation you are working for.”
Lorencia (16), Cornelius Hoaseb Senior Secondary School

“Corruption is the abuse of power when you take something belonging to the community for your own benefit, in other words stealing valuable things from people that really need them.”
Alex (16), Ernst Jager Junior Secondary School

4 Moral belief system and behavioural characteristics

Apart from assessing the degree of integrity-related awareness and knowledge, this survey aimed at measuring the Namibian youth's perceptions and mindset regarding corruption and integrity. As this assessment aligns with TI's Youth Integrity Index as a tool, some of the indicators used were similar to the units of measurement TI introduced.⁴ As an itemised scale, indicators were designed to relate to TI's conception of youth integrity, which includes four main dimensions:

- a. *Morals and ethics*: This dimension relates to the status of moral and ethical standards among the youth.
- b. *Righteousness*: This dimension relates to the ability of adolescents to differentiate between what is right and what is wrong.
- c. *Compliance with the law*: This dimension relates to the degree to which the youth are able to comply with the legal framework set forth by society.
- d. *Intolerance to corruption*: This dimension relates to the ability to resist corrupt practices.

With these dimensions in mind, a questionnaire that adapted some of TI's indicators was developed so as to standardise results, but additional statements were also formulated to suit the local context. The youths were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements. Whereas TI that used a five-point scale to measure agreement and disagreement, responses in this survey were restricted to a two-point scale.

Firstly, the degree to which young people support the idea that primary school education, as an example of access to public services, should be based on personal relations between principals and parents was assessed. Figure 10 shows that although 86% of respondents felt that such relations should not play a role, 14% believed that school enrolment based on personal favours was not objectionable. One can therefore conclude that some of the youth regarded personal benefit as being more important than fairness and equality. This might be a consequence of their observing such practices being tolerated by persons that they might see as sources of moral authority, such as parents and principals. As TI states, "integrity, like corruption, is learned."⁵

⁴ Transparency International Korea (2008). Youth Integrity Index. Report of 2008 Pilot Surveys. Seoul: TI. p.13-16.

⁵ Transparency International (2008). Global Youth Integrity Programme. Berlin: TI. p.1.

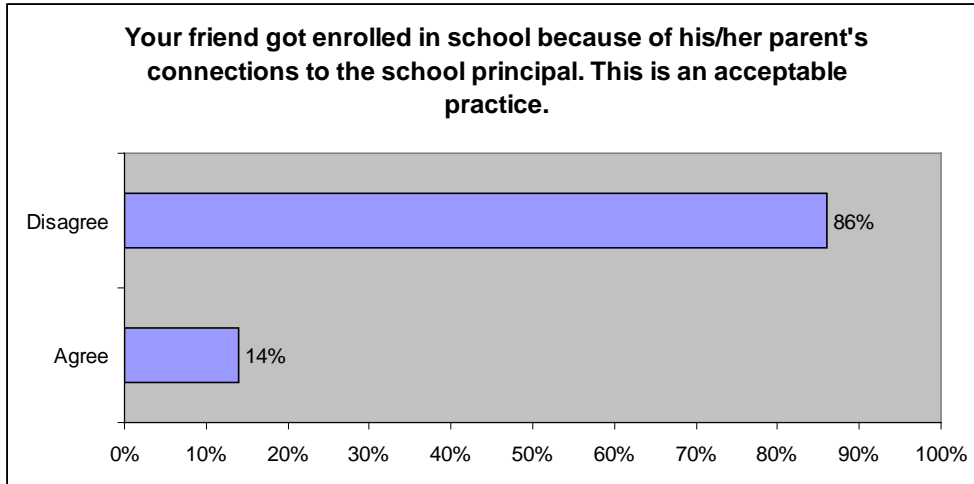


Figure 10 Corruption and school enrolment

Furthermore, the degree to which peer pressure might discourage the youth from reporting dishonest and unethical behaviour amongst classmates was evaluated. As shown in Figure 11, most learners would not refrain from reporting a friend who cheated in exams. However, 15% of respondents might regard this as a problematical situation requiring a delicate balancing act between their sense of duty, their loyalty towards classmates and their apprehension about being regarded as a tell-tale.

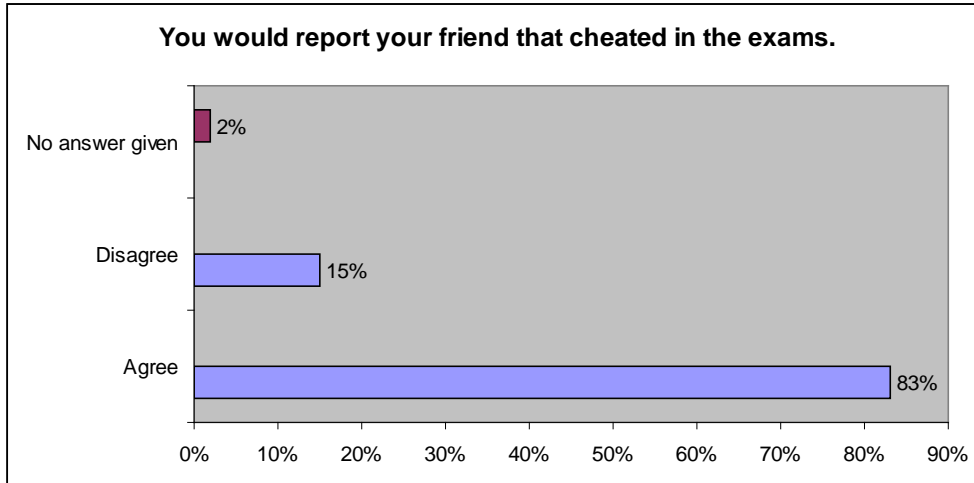


Figure 11 Corruption and cheating in exams

Similar results were obtained when young people were asked if they would be willing to report a teacher who frequently did not attend classes without an excuse for his/her absence, while still claiming a full monthly salary. As shown in Figure 12, 23% of respondents might hesitate to report a teacher, whose position they might feel commands respect. They might also be concerned about possible negative consequences the reporting might have with regard to the marks awarded to them by

this particular teacher. Nevertheless, the answers of almost three-quarters of pupils suggested that they would have sufficient moral courage to report the teacher.

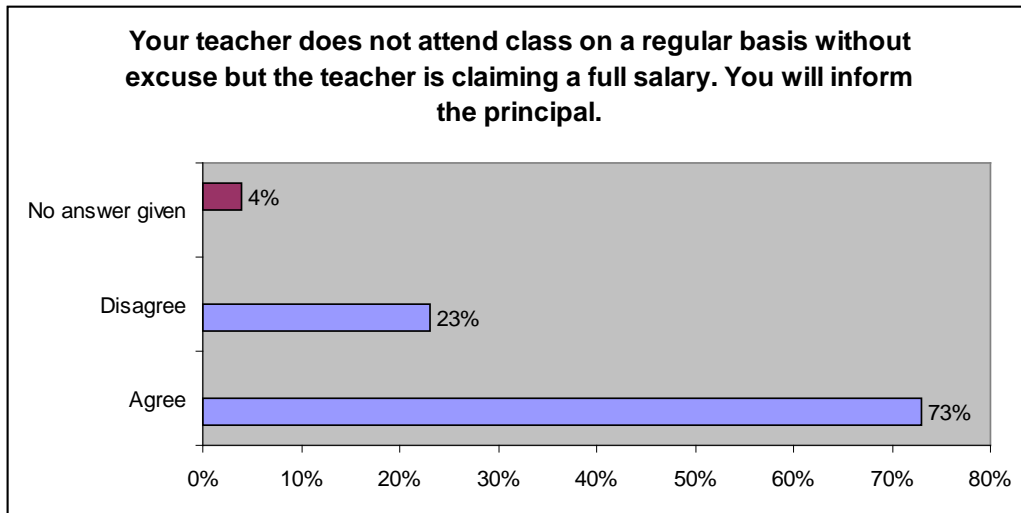


Figure 12 Corruption and reporting a non-performing teacher

Figure 13 below illustrates the extent to which school children would be willing to ask their parents to bribe the school principal where such an inducement would guarantee their promotion to the next grade, or their final graduation from school. While the overwhelming majority regarded bribery as unethical, one in every ten youths was prepared to accomplish promotion or graduation through their own or their parents' corrupt practices.

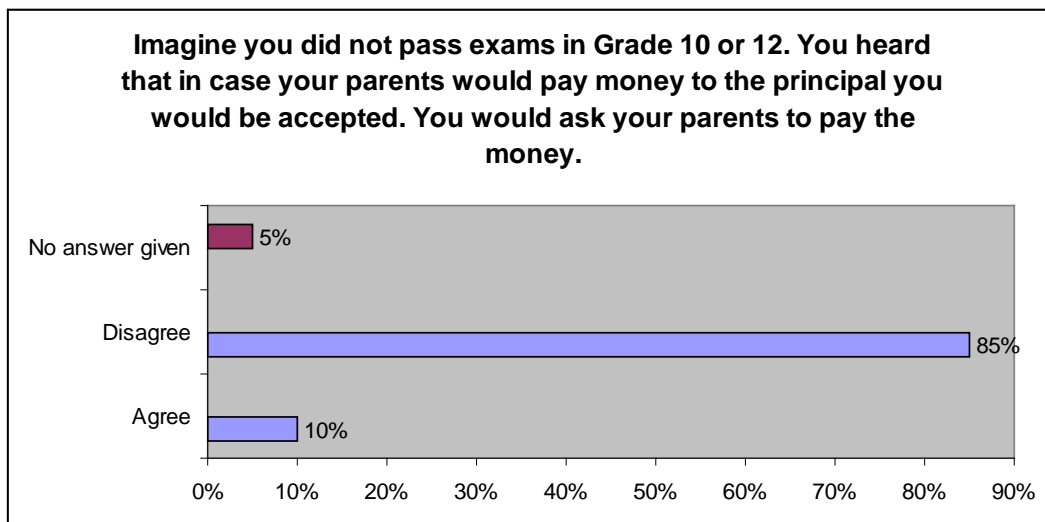


Figure 13 Corruption and promotion/graduation

The next question assessed whether young Namibians believed that nepotism and favouritism in the public service was an acceptable practice, or if they felt that all appointments should be merit-based. Although the results were similar to those

obtained regarding the bribing of school principals, the individual respondents who felt that such bribery was not acceptable did not in all cases oppose nepotism and favouritism. Interestingly, some learners who regarded bribery as objectionable considered nepotism and favouritism to be acceptable practices. Nevertheless, 82% of respondents were opposed to appointments in the public service based not on merit, but on family relations, as shown in Figure 14.

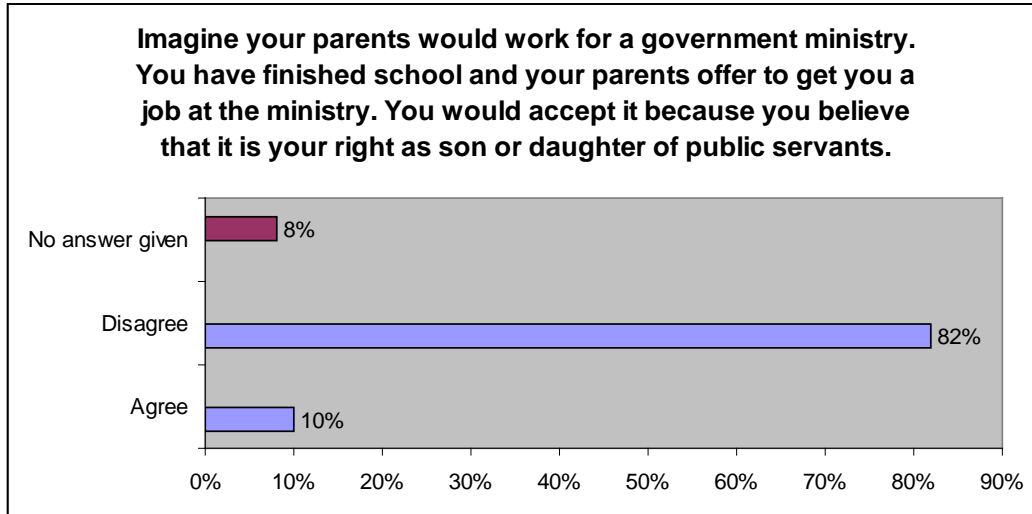


Figure 14 Corruption and nepotism/favouritism

Although the overwhelming majority of respondents insisted on corruption being a punishable offence, a minority group of school learners (8%) showed respect for people who would go to any length to enrich themselves. The rationale behind the given proposition was to explore the extent to which young Namibians had a high regard for offenders who might have escaped a disadvantaged background by involving themselves in corrupt practices. Most young people recognised the negative consequences of corruption, which primarily affects the poorest and most vulnerable groups in society (see Figure 15).

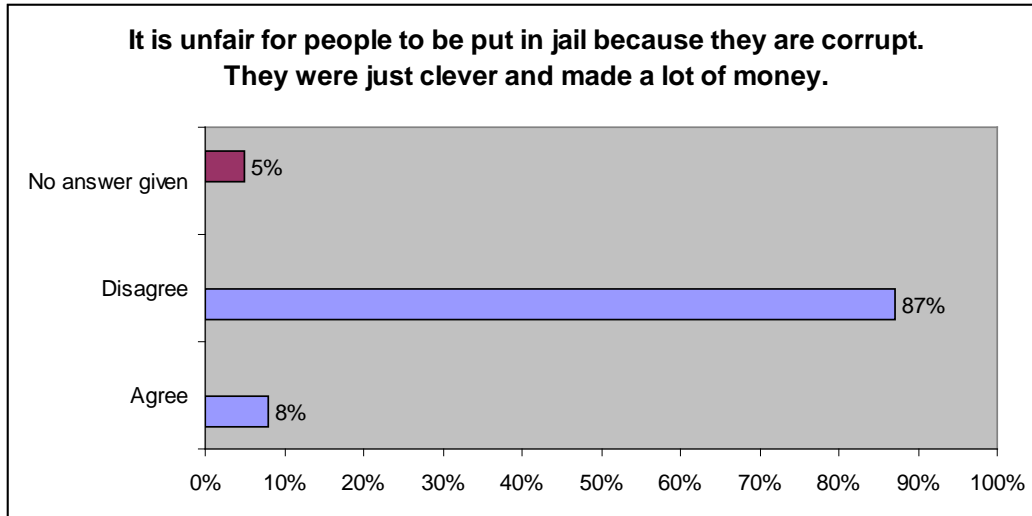


Figure 15 Corruption and criminal liability

To further contribute to an understanding of the youth’s ability to differentiate between what is right and what is wrong, the study investigated responses to a comparatively harmless wrongdoing which could not even be classified as illegal behaviour or an unlawful activity. As shown in Figure 16, 17% of respondents indicated that they did not regard jumping the queue to buy a ticket for a cinema show as being reprehensible.

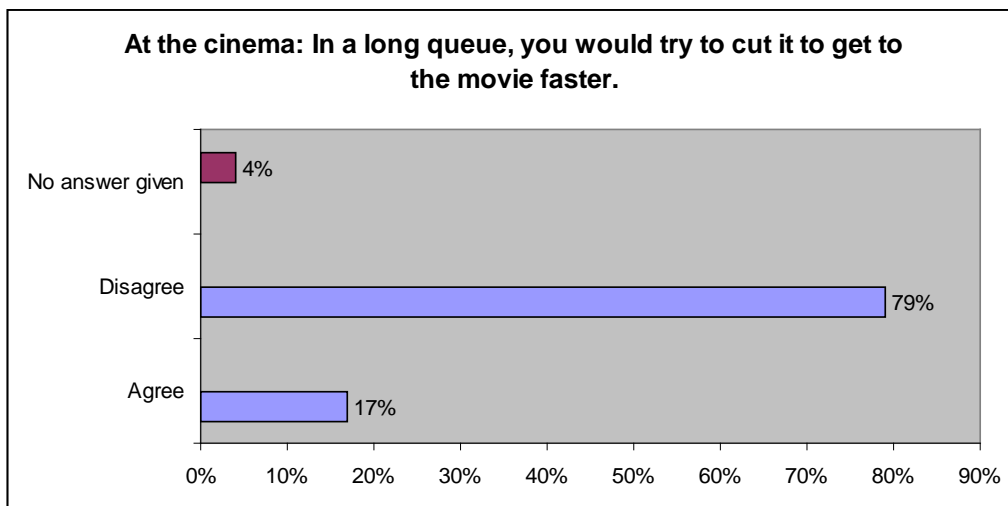


Figure 16 Corruption and minor wrongdoings

Finally, the survey assessed the general willingness of learners to commit any criminal offence, potentially including violent crimes such as grievous physical harm and murder. The proposition assumed that no imprisonment would ensue and that financial enrichment amounting to N\$1 000 000 would result from the commission of the crime. As shown in Figure 17, although the overwhelming majority of respondents were confident that they would not commit crimes of any nature, 4% of the youth indicated

that they would be prepared to commit any criminal offence for such a substantial financial amount of money.

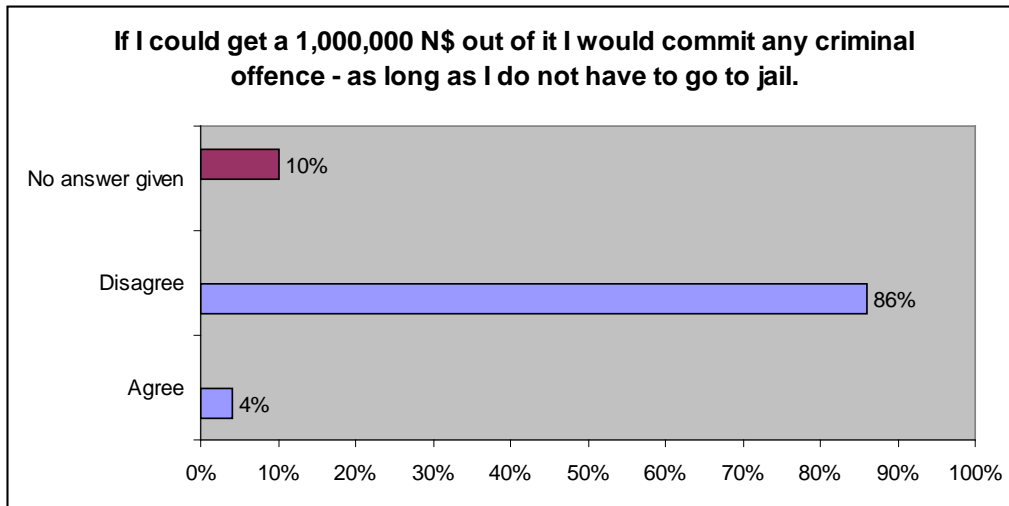


Figure 17 Corruption and financial enrichment

This study found that the overwhelming majority (on average more than 80%) of the respondents exhibited law-abiding attitudes and behaviour and an appreciation for ethical standards. However, while the overall situation might appear to be heartening, consideration should be given to the possibility that this was at least in part a consequence of the research methodology and the selection of the respondents. Some young Namibians might have responded in a manner that they regarded as being more acceptable to persons whom they felt deserved respect, such as teachers who were present when the survey was conducted. Although the general trend of the survey results are cause for some optimism, it is alarming that a minority demonstrated unethical attitudes, and that some even expressed a preparedness to become involved in criminal activities.

5 Conclusion and recommendations

The results obtained demonstrate that the overwhelming majority of young people in Namibia exhibit a sense of integrity and an understanding of ethical standards. However, a minority tolerate corrupt activities and lack ethical attitudes. Moreover, the fact that around 40% of respondents have never discussed corruption at school and that more than 30% have never heard about corruption from other information sources suggests an urgent need for integrity-related education that specifically targets the Namibian youth.

This report therefore proposes that joint efforts be made by the Ministry of Education, the ACC, civil society organisations and the media to ensure that sufficient attention is given to formal and informal integrity-related education for school learners.

Consideration might also be given to the recommendation that in addition to integrity-related radio programmes and newspaper features targeting the youth, online e-learning education materials on anti-corruption measures be utilised.

Finally, as also suggested by TI,⁶ awarding annual prizes to outstanding teachers and pupils who demonstrate exceptional integrity might prove to be effective.

⁶ Transparency International (2008). Global Youth Integrity Programme. Berlin: TI. p.2.

6 References

NID (2009). Stop corruption. A Namibian citizen's guide to anti-corruption. Windhoek: NID.

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