




Explaining and Designing a Framework for the Phenomenon of Educational Corruption with a Grounded Theory Approach in Universities

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The sentence "Corruption refers to behavior in which an individual acts outside the formal duties..." should cite Scott (2003) more precisely by including a direct quotation or clarifying the definition's context (e.g., legal, sociological).

You mention "corruption in education is more harmful to society than ordinary administrative corruption" but do not provide empirical justification. Please consider adding comparative data or international studies supporting this hierarchy of harm.

The study mentions using MAXQDA for coding, yet there is no visual example or appendix illustrating the open, axial, and selective coding process. Including a sample codebook or coding tree would strengthen methodological transparency.

The use of Lincoln and Guba's criteria is mentioned but not systematically applied. Please include a table or section explicitly mapping how each of their criteria (e.g., credibility, transferability) was addressed.

While demographic details are briefly presented, their influence on the findings is not discussed. Were there noticeable differences in responses by gender, academic rank, or years of experience?

Table 1 lists categories and codes, but lacks illustrative quotes from interviews. Consider integrating selected participant quotations to validate and enrich the thematic analysis.

The category “Freedom and Independence” includes broad ideas such as free speech and public disclosure. Clarify how these were evidenced in interview data—were they frequently mentioned or inferred by the researcher?

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the new document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The reference to “widespread corruption in academic institutions” and its effects on trust and illiteracy is impactful. Consider breaking this paragraph into two to improve readability and ensure each consequence is clearly elaborated.

The purpose statement introduces a new construct—“spiritual intelligence”—which is not discussed earlier. Please clarify the connection between spiritual intelligence and educational corruption in the introduction to avoid conceptual disjunction.

Please justify the sample size of 12 participants and provide a clearer rationale for why theoretical saturation was deemed achieved. A citation on sample adequacy in grounded theory would be helpful.

“Perception of injustice” is cited as a category, but without elaboration. Please discuss specific examples of how this was expressed by participants, especially regarding ethnic or religious disparities.

The visual model is informative, but its readability is limited due to dense text. Consider simplifying the labels or providing an annotated version with a narrative explanation of the interrelations.

The assertion that “the absence of meritocracy is fostered” would benefit from further empirical support. Were there direct participant quotes or coded themes that linked meritocracy explicitly to corruption?

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the new document.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.