

The Relationship between Whistle Blowing and Perceived Retaliation in Nigeria Federal Civil Service

Babatunde, Sodiq O., Abdul, Falilat A. (Ph.D.) & Yusuf, Ahmed D.

¹Department of Business Administration, Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria

²Department of Business Administration, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria

³Department of Business and Entrepreneurship, Kwara State University, Malete, Kwara State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

The act of retaliation has become a challenging scenario that has eaten deep into the public system as whistle blowers are often faced with repelling act from their victims. Considering the rate at which wrongdoings are being disclosed in the Nigeria Federal Civil Service. This study aims at clarifying and ascertaining the relationship between disclosure of wrongdoings in the fight against mismanagement of public funds and property on Nigeria Civil Service System. This study adopts a survey design to select a sample size of 384 from a population of 89511 federal civil servants in Nigeria out of 384 copies of questionnaire administered on the respondents, only 347 copies were returned for analysis. This study employs Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis to test the relationship between whistle blowing and perceived retaliation. Consequently, the study revealed that intended whistle blower perceives retaliation with numerous threats from the victim. Hence, the study concluded that disclosure of wrongdoing has significant relationship with perceived retaliation in Nigeria Federal Civil Service. It is recommended that whistle blower protection mechanism should be put in place to protect employees who intend to disclose wrongdoings in the system.

Keyword: Whistle blowing, Disclosure of Wrongdoings, Perceived Retaliation and Whistle blower

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1. INTRODUCTION

Whistle-blowing forms part of the internal control mechanism organizations adopt in attaining good corporate governance practices (Meng & Fook, 2011). Hence, disclosing wrongdoing in the civil service has become a thing of a new dimension in Nigeria. Recently, the public sector has been placed on their toes in the fight against corruption in the country by the current administration and this has led to astounding revelation of wrongdoing and mismanagement of public funds and property. However, some of the political big wings in the country are now fighting back from being the victim of the fight ranged against corruption to victor of corruption. Some cases of whistle blowing and retaliation can be traced to the advanced world countries such as the United States of America, United Kingdom, and Russia among others (Liyararachchi & Adler, 2010; Swiatek-Barylska, 2013). Aligning this study to the widely held retaliation cases around the world, were the likes of Cynthia Cooper against WorldCom in the U. S., Coleen Rowley of FBI and Sherron Watkins with Enron (Bowen, Call & Rajgopal, 2010; Shawver, 2011) not forgetting the tussle between Julian Assange, Editor-In-Chief of Wikileaks and the United States FBI and CIA.

This case involved the release of some classified documents among others (Brennan & Kelly, 2007). Bringing it down to the sub-Sahara Africa, were a Kenyan journalist John Githongo for reasons that the Kenyan Witness Protection Act (2006) does not address penalty for harassment of whistle blowers afterwards, the case of Munyakei who reported and testified against Goldenberg in court and was subsequently dismissed on the basis of Kenyan Officials Secret Act (2003) (Mawanga, 2014).

In the Nigerian context, retaliation is as old as the act to whistle blowing itself, where voice of misappropriations and mismanagement of public resources and interest were botched and manoeuvred by political big wings. Whistle blowers were silenced and victimized for disclosing wrongdoings in the system that ended up leading Nigeria into recession in 2016. To set the record straight, in 2014, a former Central Bank of Nigeria Governor, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi revealed the non-remittance of \$20bn (Twenty Billion U. S. Dollars) equivalent to (3.25 trillion Naira) to the government coffers by the State owned Oil Management Company, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) (Sahara Reporters, 2015). The former Central Bank Governor was however castigated and suspended from office which observers alleged was a direct retaliation from the administration of the Corporation and the government officials. Similarly, the election rigging scandal involving politicians such as; the Governor of Ekiti State, Mr Ayodele Fayose, the former Minister for State Defence, Mr Musiliu Obanikoro, Mr. Chris Uba, Mr. Iyiola Omisore, Mr. Jelili Adesiyun, the former Minister for Police Affairs, Honourable Abdulkareem, a Nigerian Army Officer, and Brigadier General Aliyu Momoh against the protocol officer attached to the Army General. Captain Sagir Koli (Sahara Reporters, 2015). When the protocol officer revealed the wrongdoing that led to the rigging of the Ekiti State election in 2014 by recording electronically the conversations between the perpetrators, and he was subsequently haunted by the government which conspire to rig the election, including the detention of his underage brother for number of days.

The act of retaliation has become a challenging or epidemic scenario that has eaten deep into the civil service system considering the cited cases above, nationally and internationally. Hence, the study focuses on the relationship between the disclosure of wrongdoings in the fight against mismanagement of public funds in Nigeria and the perceived retaliation by the victims of the disclosure on the whistle blower. Due to disclosure events, whistle blowers are often faced with numerous threats which range from loss of jobs and property, to lives and employments status and other victimization trends. Therefore, this study aimed at examining the relationship between the act of disclosing wrongdoing through whistle blowing and perceived retaliation by the whistle blower in the Nigerian Civil Service.

1.1 Research Question

Below is a research question formulated for the study;

- i. Is there any significant correlation between the act of disclosing wrongdoing (whistle blowing) and perceived retaliation by the whistle blower?

1.2 Research Hypothesis

- H₀: There is not significant correlation between the act of disclosing wrongdoing (whistle blowing) and perceived retaliation by the whistle blower
- H₁: There is significant correlation between the act of disclosing wrongdoing (whistle blowing) and perceived retaliation by the whistle blower

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study will be of huge significance to the government of Nigeria in the fight against corrupt through its recommendation and suggestions on how whistle blowers are protected in other advanced countries. In addition, this study will assist the Federal Civil Service in formulating policies of protecting employees who disclose wrongdoings and intended whistle blowers in the system. This study will add to the existing body of knowledge in the field of management and ethics particularly by assisting intending research scholars, students and regulatory bodies in building a framework in further studies and policy making.

2. FEDERAL CIVIL SERVICE

In Ezeani (2006) view, civil service is described as the administrative mechanism which enhances the execution of government's activities. In the same vein, Adamolekun (2002) opined that the term civil service is synonym to machinery making it a working system to support the government. To cap it all, the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria explained service as of the federation in a civil capacity as staff of the office of the President, the Vice President, ministry or department of the government of the federation assigned with the responsibility for any business of the Government of the Federation (FRN, 1999) as cited in (Eme & Ven, 2013).

2.1 The Concept of Whistle blowing and Perceived Retaliation

In literature, there has not been a general consensus on the definition for whistle blowing. Hence, authors and scholars give fitting descriptions of the term whistle blowing as according to their understanding, immediate event and regional concept among other factors. However, the term "whistle blowing" or the act to "whistle blow" has its origin back to blowing the whistle in order to stop an act that is seen not to be acceptable in the community or course of the game (Dasgupta & Kesharwani, 2010; Hoffman & McNulty, 2010). This was first contextualised into research term by a United State Civic Activist Ralph Nader in the early 1970's in order to change the notion of using some impolite words, such as snitch and gossip (Nader, Petkas & Blackwell, 1972) as cited in Taiwo (2015).

Putting it into context, Near and Miceli (1985, 1992) view, whistle blowing as the revelation by former or current employee of immoral and or illegal practices under the watch of their employers to a person or group of persons that may take corrective actions to stop the wrong doing. In the same context, Uys (2000) upholds that whistle blowing is the disclosure of identified wrongdoing in an organisation, to bodies that are in a position to take action. However, the aforementioned definitions only consider the internal effects of whistle blowing as contrary to Jubb's (1999) who emphasizes the external reporting mechanism to be effective as they do not perceive external whistle blowing as infringing the firm's confidence. In the same vein, Bowden and Vanya (2009) define whistle blowing as the exposure, by people within or from outside an organization that is against the public interest and that are not otherwise available.

Disclosing wrongdoings in an organization or public office is attached to the medium to which the whistle blower intends to disclose the wrongdoing, and this could be done internally or externally. Hence, Gokce (2013) asserts that the decision to whistle blow internally is largely determined by the blower. Besides, this is due to fear of retaliation (Liyarachchi & Adler, 2010; Mawanga, 2014). Bartuli, Djawadi and Fahr (2016) avow that honesty and humility factor scale is a strong predictor for whistle blowing. Kumar (2016) also opines that the retaliation perspective of whistle blowing scenario is connected to how the whistle blower perceive retaliation, and then that the act of showing truth to power need huge courage.

Whistle blowing is a dilemma situation but employee should be true to their own moral code and values. In addition, Harsanti, Ghozali and Chariri (2016) assert that formal retaliation weaken the relationship between whistle blowing intention and whistle blowing behaviour. Sampaio and Sobral (2013) also support the fact that whistle blowing tends to be affected in the event of fear of being attacked or being affected by the act of retaliation.

In order to give this study a theoretical backing, this study adopted the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) by Ajzen (1991) with propounded opinions resting on three essential philosophies which is self-regulatory and these are; (i) attitude towards the individual behaviour which is often determined by the certainty about the consequences of that said behaviour, (ii) subjective norm about the behaviour which is habitually determined by the normative beliefs, and (iii) the perceived behavioural control which is quite determined by the confidence that resources and opportunities are available to carry out the behaviour.

3. METHOD

This study seeks to explain the existing fact between the two identified construct by examining how retaliation arises in the event of whistle blowing in the Nigeria Civil Service. The study adopted a survey method in designing the work. In addition, sample of 384 was selected using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) Table of sample size from a population of 89511 of the Federal Civil Service staff strength as announced by Dr. Joe Abah, the Director General of Bureau of Public Civil Service in 2015. A close ended questionnaire was administered on the respondents in the Nigerian Civil Service in Federal Secretariat, Ilorin. The research instrument was validated using the content validity and the Cronbach's Alpha was employed in testing for the Reliability of the instrument. Lastly, all research ethical considerations were adhered so as to conform to general standard. The study employed the use of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS. 20).

Table 1 Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test

1.	Whistle blowing	.778
2.	Perceived Retaliation	.746

Source: SPSS Computation, 2018

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2: Distribution table for Demographic Information of Respondents

S/N	Factor	Factor Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Gender	Male	207	59.7
		Female	140	40.3
		Total	347	100.00
2.	Age	20-29	89	25.6
		30-39	90	25.9
		40-49	99	28.5
		50-59	69	19.9
		Total	347	100.00
3.	Marital Status	Single	69	19.9
		Married	268	77.2
		Separated	10	2.9
		Total	347	100.00
4.	Educational background	O' Level/SSCE	30	8.6
		OND/NCE	158	45.5
		HND/B.Sc.	149	42.9
		Postgraduate	10	2.9
		Total	347	100.00
5.	Years in service	Less than 5years	60	17.3
		5-10	80	23.1
		11-20	118	34.0
		21-30	79	22.8
		Above 30	10	2.9
		Total	347	100.00
6.	Employment status	Permanent	347	100.00
		Total	347	100.00

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2018

The table 4.1 highlights the focus of the demographic variables of this study. Demographic variables concerning gender, age, marital status, educational background, years in service and employment status of respondents were analyzed in the table. The table shows the gender frequency of the respondents in which 59.7% amounting to 207 of the respondents are males, while 140 of the respondents which are 40.3% are female employees of the Federal Civil Service of Nigeria. This implies that more male employees of the federal civil service are sampled in the research. Additionally, the age distribution of the respondents which indicates that 28.5% of the respondents fall between the ages of 40 and 49 years, 25.9% having 90 respondents in the age bracket of 30 to 39 years of ages, 89 respondents are between ages 20 and 29 amounting to 25.6% while respondents between 50 and 59 years got 19.9% making the total respondents of 69. This by implication means that employees between the ages of 40-49 dominate the sampled size in the study. Also, the marital status of the respondents which shows that 77.2% of the respondents amounting to 268 employees of the Federal civil service of Nigeria are married, 19.9% totalling to 69 employees are single while 2.9% summing up to 10 respondents are separated. Hence, this means that the highest numbers of the employees are married.

Furthermore, the educational background of the respondents where 158 respondents totalling to 45.5% hold either an OND or NCE certificate, 42.9% which totals to 149 respondents holds a first degree certificate (i.e. HND or BSc). Also, 30 employees which is 8.6% of the respondents are holders of O' level certificate while, 10 employees amounting to 2.9% have a postgraduate certificate. This connotes that the highest numbers of employees sampled are educated above the first degree educational level. In addition, the years spent in the civil service by the employees of the Nigerian Federal civil service. Hence, 118 employees amounting to 34% of the respondents have spent between 11 and 20 years, 23.1% amounting to 80 respondents have spent between the years of 5 and 10, 22.8% of the respondents amounting to 79 employees have spent between the years 21 and 30. Finally, 17.3% totalling to 60 respondents have less than 5years of experience in the service and 10 employees summing up to 2.9% have above 30 years experience in the service. This implies that majority of the employees sampled have spent between the years 11 and 20 in the service. Lastly, the distribution table above showed that all the sampled respondents are permanent employees of the Federal Civil Service. This indicates that all the employees sampled are permanent workers with the Federal Civil Service of Nigeria.

4.1 Test of Hypothesis

- H₀: There is no significant correlation between the act of disclosing wrongdoing and perceived retaliation by the whistle blower
- H₁: There is significant correlation between the act of disclosing wrongdoing and perceived retaliation by the whistle blower

Table 3: Correlation between (WB) Disclosure of Wrongdoings and Perceived Retaliation

		PR	DW
PR	Pearson Correlation	1	766**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.003
	N	347	347
DW	Pearson Correlation	766**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	
	N	347	347

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As shown in correlation table above, statistically, there is significant correlation between disclosure of wrongdoing and perceived retaliation by the whistle blower which was presented at 0.003 significant level which is less than the p value of 0.05. The relationship between disclosure of wrongdoing and the perceived retaliation was positive and this implies that as organisation in the Nigerian Civil Service gear up their fight against corruption with the adoption of whistle blowing policy, employees are likely to suffer retaliation from the victim of the disclosure of any wrongdoing which by implication negatively affects the disclosure of wrongdoing in the Civil Service System.

The null hypothesis which states that there is no significant correlation between the act of disclosing wrongdoing and perceived retaliation by the whistle blower is rejected. Consequently, the variables stated in this hypothesis were found to be statistically correlated. In the event of whistle blowing, the system is likely to suffer a reputational damage hence, strong holds and political figures tend to fight back by retaliating. Empirically, this is supported by the assertion of Near and Miceli (1986; 2008) and Mawanga (2014) who reveal that the seriousness of wrongdoing, whistle blower psychological power and management support to whistle blower predicts and significantly determines perceived retaliation by the whistle blower.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section combines the conclusion and recommendation of this study which discusses the conclusion made in the study and the recommendations presented in respect of the findings.

The study concludes that there is significant correlation between the act of disclosing wrongdoing and perceived retaliation by the whistle blower. A whistle blower tends to feel insecure when there is no law in place to protect such a person from retaliation. Relating this to events of retaliation in Nigeria, such as the cases of the former Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Governor Sanusi Lamido Sanusi and Captain Sagir Okoli of the Nigerian Army in 2014. This study statistically opines that retaliation happens and often affects the ability of prospective whistle blower to do so.

Since whistle blowers are likely to be exposed to retaliation from the victim in the event of disclosure, the Nigeria Civil Service should enhance the protection of whistle blower so as to increase the intent of exposing wrongdoing.

The introduction of whistle blower protection should be emulated from other countries and enacted into law in order to foster the act of wrongdoing disclosure and protection of prospective whistle blower. In essence, Nigeria government should adopt the act of protecting whistle blowers against retaliation just as it was done in countries like the United States of America (Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2000), Protected Disclosure Act, 2000, New Zealand and Australia in 2003 particularly (Meng & Fook, 2011).

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