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Abstract

In the last two and half decades, whistle blowing has been a practice that dominated contemporary philosophical discussion. It continues to provoke debate among academics because of its controversial nature. This study therefore examined the possible effects of whistle blowing practices on organizational performance in the public sector. Descriptive Survey research design was adopted in the study. Data for the study were gotten from both primary and secondary sources. A total of 700 questionnaires were administered using simple random technique. A total of 672 of the administered questionnaires were retrieved and found useful for data analysis. Three hypotheses were stated to guide the study. Simple frequency table, Pearson’s correlation coefficient and descriptive statistics were used for various analysis of the study. The result of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between whistle blowing practices in the public sector at r equals 0.363, n=672, p<0.01. The result of the study also revealed that there is a significant relationship between protection of whistle blowers and performance in the public sector at r equals 0.511, n=672, p<0.01. The result of the third hypothesis showed that there is a relationship between disclosure of unethical practices and the performance in the public sector at r equals 0.840, n=672, p<0.01. Findings from the study showed that respondents disagreed to the fact; that employees feel confident to report unethical practices within the organization to external bodies. The study recommended that public organizations should promote culture of whistle blowing that broadly needs to be supported and articulated throughout the organization. The study therefore concludes that whistle blowing should be encouraged and not discouraged in the context of the organization.

Keywords: Whistleblowing, practices, organizational performance and Nigerian public sector
1.0. INTRODUCTION

A worthwhile exposition of whistle blowing can be undertaken from the proper understanding of business ethics dichotomy. Ethics studies moral obligation involving the distinction between right and wrong. Business ethics is a culmination of attempts to extend moral dimensions to business practices. Business operations have to be grounded upon a moral foundation if its practices are to be reliable and predictable. Hence, business ethics aims at promoting ethical conduct in business practices. (Trevinno & Nelson 2007).

It must be noted that the government is heavily involved in the economy in that it owns parastatals and it also has significant claims in privately owned entities. These parastatals are also reeling from deep seated corruption and corporate malpractices. The government may not be fully sympathetic to the public because it may be afraid that publicly acknowledging and supporting whistle blowing can inspire those employed by the government itself to expose unethical business practices when they discover them in government owned business organization. Within the higher public sector landscape, there has to be a culture of good governance which support whistleblowing while protecting the whistleblower. Good governance is reflected in an organization culture where ethical practices are made real. (Larmer 2002).

Whistleblowing is a routine activity in majority of public sector agencies in African countries. The whistle blowers and the organization are inevitably opposed because competition between public or private sector organization to defend their interest and advance their power means that they habitually act unethically. If the organization discourage whistle blowing, co-workers are less likely to offer help for protection of whistleblowers (Mesmer & Viewesvaran 2005). De Maria (2005) argues that corruption in Africa has been routinized and Organizationalized to the extent that whistleblowing policies in Africa are predominantly addressing non-systematic corruption thereby rendering whistle blowing policies inefficacious. Corruption has become Organizational in most countries (Nigeria, Pakistan) that very few people in government, schools, business and society in general still have the moral standing to crack the moral whip against perpetrator of business malpractices in their midst.

As a result, it has become imperative to determine the extent to which higher public organizations are implementing and managing whistleblowing mechanisms in an attempt to curb unethical conduct. The awareness about the absence of a system that ensures whistleblowing so as to curb
corruption in its different manifestation may necessitate certain intervention and initiatives in the public sector organization. Zipparo (1999) delineates that there should be legislation to encourage public sector employee to report wrong doing.

In workplaces across the world, law, education, culture and practice gives a strong message that employees should turn a blind eye to wrongdoing and should not raise their concerns internally or externally. The consequences of this culture are that it discourages normal, decent people from questioning wrong doing that they come across in their jobs. It encourages employees to be guided exclusively by their own short-term interests and undermines any sense of mutual interest between the workforce, the organization and those it serves. De Maria (2006) argues that even though the use of whistleblower programmes is a central marker in any Organization, the take up rates are significantly low. The reality of whistleblowers would provide little justification for government or senior public sector managers to think ‘proactively’ about how to manage whistleblowing cases (Brown, Mazurski & Olsen2008).

Whistleblowers suffer in various ways including ostracism, harassment, punishment, punitive transfers, reprimands and dismissal. Bosses and top managers are responsible for many attacks of whistleblowers but coworkers often join in or do nothing often due to fear that they could be the next victim. Premeaux and Bedenan (2003) are of the view that employees hesitate to raise voice as this might lead to retaliation. Poverty and unemployment are rampant in these countries and whistleblowing can result in job loss (Vinten, 2000).

The public sector has been criticized for having high rates of corruption, which has almost become a norm. Matters such as bribery, corruption, issues ghost workers, recruitment of under qualified staff, Mismanagement of funds and absenteeism from work has become order of the day in the public sector. Often times, failure to bribe or comply with such terms can make the case may remain pending for years. In contrast, one can expect prompt service where there is bribery (Lee &Oh, 2007). Such delay result into poor quality of services rendered in turn would affect the overall performance of the organization.

Unless organizations foster a culture that declares and demonstrates that it is safe and to raise a genuine concern about wrongdoing, employees will assume that they face victimization, losing their Job or damaging their career. The consequence is that most employees will stay silent where
there is a threat—even a grave one, this silence can mean that those in charge of the organization place their trust on the people who operate them. This means that they deny themselves what can be the fail-safe opportunity to deal with a serious problem before it causes real damage.

1.1 Objective of the Study

The main objective of this is to examine the effects of whistleblowing practices on organizational performance in the public sector of Nigeria. Accordingly, the specific objectives are to:

1. Examine relationship between whistleblowing policies and practices in the public sector performance.
2. Examine the relationship between protections of whistleblowers and performance in the public sector.
3. Examine the relationship between disclosure of unethical practices and performance in the public sector.

1.2 Research Question

1. Is there a significant positive relationship between whistleblowing policies and practices in the public sector?
2. Is there a significant positive relationship between protections of whistleblowers and performance in the public sector?
3. Is there a relationship between the disclosure of unethical practices and student performance in the public sector?

1.3 Research Hypothesis

The following NULL Hypotheses are stated to guide the study

1. \( H_0 \): There will be no significant positive relationship between whistleblowing policies and practice in the public sector.

2. \( H_0 \): There will be no significant positive relationship between the protections of whistleblowers and performance in the public sector.
3. **Ho**: There will be no significant positive relationship between the disclosure of unethical practices and the performance in the public sector.

### 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

There have been several attempts to define whistleblowing, but certainly there is no generally accepted definition. The term whistleblower comes from the phrase ‘blow the whistle’ which indicates an activity that is illegal or foul. The United State Civic Activity Ralph Nader coined the phrase in the early 1970’s to avoid the negative connotations found in other words such as “informers” and “snitches” (Nader, Petkas and Blackwell 1972).

Uys (2000) asserted that whistleblowing is seen as the disclosure of information about perceived organizational wrongdoing, to parties that are in a position to take action, if this disclosure is in the public interest” Whistleblowing Is a behavior that is characterized not only by intent but also by action when employees are confronted with organizational wrongdoing.

#### 2.1.2 The Whistle Blower

A whistleblower is a person who tells the public or someone in authority about alleged dishonest or illegal activities occurring in a government department, a public or private organization or a company. The alleged misconduct may be classified in several ways; a violation of law, regulation and or a direct threat to the public interest such as fraud, health /safety violation and corruption (Hannigan 2006). (Miceli, et al 1991) describe whistleblowers as committed members of the organization who feel compelled to report wrongdoing by their own sense of moral behavior. However, this act is not always seen positively by organizations.

A Whistleblower is characterized as reluctant dissenters moved neither by altruistic nor selfish concerns, but rather by tide of events over which they feel they have little control. (Buckna & Kleiner 2001) refers to a whistleblower as a person who exposes falsehood and corruption although he or she is aware of the potential negative outcomes of this act, which may include loss of job. The whistle blowers are vulnerable not only to organizational reprisal but also to the chastisement at the hands of other organizational members, organizational members react and most likely show retaliation against whistle blower. Thus, whistleblowing is not a risk-free decision or initiative for
any individual as it can entail direct and undesired consequences for the person raising voice against some wrongdoing. Whistleblowers can be considered as ethical consistent employees who disclose in good faith unethical practices within the workplace, thereby expecting investigation of the disclosure.

### 2.1.3 Internal and External Whistle Blowing

Whistle blowing is generally classified into two types; internal and external whistle blowing (Miceli et al 1992). This classification was based on the channel to report to, that is the recipient receiving a report of wrongdoing in an organization. External whistleblowing uses external channel to report inadequate or illegal practices in an organization. The receivers of the information are anti-corruption or regulatory government agencies, mass media and other external parties to the organization. On the other hand, internal whistleblowing performs by using the reporting channels inside the organization, while whistleblowers typically have both internal and external reporting channels available to report organizational transgressions; research suggests that all whistleblowers initially attempt to report wrongdoing via internal channels before utilizing external channels. External whistleblowers tend to experience more extensive organizational retaliation than internal whistleblowers. External whistleblowing tends to cause greater damage to an employee’s co-workers and the employer than internal whistleblowing, as the latter can give the organization an opportunity to fix in appropriate practices (Miceli et al 2002). Whereas, internal whistleblowers may be surprised at the response to their reporting (Alford, 2001), the external whistleblowers know they are taking a major step which will not be well received by the organization.

### 2.2 Examples of Whistle Blowers

Dr. Yanyong was a classic media whistleblower, who went straight to the press. His public disclosure about the threat of Sars was undoubtedly justified by the gravity and imminence of the risk to human health, and by the cover-up of the fact. However, Yanyoung’s initial approach to Chinese and Hong Kong media was not picked up or covered but his letter found its way swiftly
to the international media which ran the story without qualifying or distancing himself from his media disclosure in anyway. Yangyoung also pursued his concerns openly with the Chinese authorities insisting that he should be held accountable for his actions.

In October 2006, the board of Cadbury Nigeria PLC notified the world, which includes its stockholders and regulatory bodies of the discovery of “ Overstatements” in her accounts. In relation to the scandal, Mr. Bunmi Oni, the managing director and Mr. Ayo Akadiri, the finance director, were relieved of their employment following suit, the council of Nigeria Stock Exchange barred the duo from running any public quoted company for life.

At World Com, Cynthia Cooper an internal auditor noted that some of the company’s capital expenditure should have been listed on the second quarter financial statements as expenses. When she mentioned this to both world com’s controller and its chief financial officer, she was told to stop what she was doing and to delay the audit until the third quarter (when expensing the transactions would not be noticed). Instead, Cooper informed the board of directors audit committee. Two weeks later, world com announced that it was reducing earnings by 3.9 billion, the largest reinstatement in history.

2.4 Empirical Studies Review

Sims and Keenan (1998) administered a questionnaire on a convenience sample of 248 adults senior staff enrolled in a college level, under graduate and or business class. They discovered that student with personal ideal values favourable towards whistleblowing were more likely to engage in external whistle-blowing. Similarly, Chiu (2003) posted and found a positive relationship between the judgements that whistleblowing was ethical and whistleblowing intention.

Chang (1998) evaluated the influence of the three components of the theory (attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavior control) on intention to behave unethical, using data from 181 Organization senior staff. He found out that theory of planned behavior was an effective theoretical framework in predicting intention for unethical behavior. The influence of attitude in explaining the intention of external whistleblowing is not as great as for internal whistleblowing, which explains why the widely observed disjunction between attitude and intentions is greater for external than for Internal whistle-blowing. One way to interpret this is think about the nature of
the decision to blow the whistle (Blenkinsopp and Edward 2008). ‘Whistle while they work” study found no clear connections between internal and external reporting paths and whistleblowers attitude to their organization as indicated by standard organizational citizenship behavior measure (Dworkin et al 2008).

Trevinno et al (1993) in their studies on peer reporting, also demonstrated that both the inclination to report a peer and the actual act of peer reporting, were positively associated with role responsibility.

Shelvin (2012) argues that stakeholders who play an important role in the effective running of an organization need to recognize the value that the organization brings to the economy and the wider society. Therefore, the interests of all stakeholders should not be jeopardized by improper management of whistle blowing practices.

Bond and Manyanya (2003) incited and excited debate on the moral justification of whistle blowing. Proponents of whistle blowing have advanced lines of argument to vindicate the contentions that whistle blowing is morally justifiable. Whistle blowers are morally justified to report immoral business practices if they have good reasons to think that they are potentially harmful to the health and well-being of the public. However, when freedom of speech is pitted against the obligation of loyalty and obedience, it gives to a serious moral conflict. The obligation to whistle blow is prima facie in some situation can overridden by other moral considerations (Martin and Schinzinger 2005). Alternatively, one may abide by the mandatory requirements expressed in codes of ethics martin (2002) and make whistle blowing a moral obligation. Likewise, to (De George 2006) the difference between possible and mandatory whistle blowing is independence of the employee.

A sample of 296 Korean police officers, the analysis showed that attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control all had significantly positive main effects on internal whistleblowing intentions but for external whistleblowing intentions only, subjective norm was significant (Conner 2003). When research is designed to capture the experiences of wider range of whistleblowers, managers and case handlers a more varied picture of whistleblowing is found in which the outcomes for both organizations and whistleblower is sometimes negative but often times positive (Miceli and Near 2002; Miceli et al 2009).
2.5 Gap in Literature

The issue of whistleblowing has been the interest of many Academia and management staff, whistleblowing has been from various perspectives. From literature it has been seen that the decision to blow the whistle either internally or externally depends on the reaction that will be taken by the organization (Dworkin and Bacus 1998). Important factors leading to the acts of whistleblowing were found to be perceived organizational disposition towards people raising the concern internally, and the perceived seriousness of the malpractice (Callahan and Dworkin 1994). Research on whistleblowing covers its psychological and social dimensions (Miceli and Near 1991) legal aspects (Miceli et al 1992), cultural aspects of the phenomena (Park et al 2005, Tavakoliet el 2003), conceptual delineations (jubb 1999), organizational responses to legislation (Near and Dworkin 1998) and analysis of the different moral arguments used for defending whistleblowing protection (Vandeckhove 2006). There is, however no consensus whether whistleblowing policies in organizations actually increase the individualization of work, allowing employees to behave in accordance with their conscience and in line with societal expectation(Berry 2004). However, few studies have explored whistleblowing intentions within the public environment and those that do, failed fully to incorporate both team-based and organizational support variable model. This research bridge the gap.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODS

The study was carried out in Nigeria, using descriptive survey research design. The target population are employees of selected local governments in Lagos & Ogun State. Lagos state was chosen beign highly populated & the industrial nerve centre of the country & Ogun state its counterpart being a civil service state especially Abeokuta South Local Government Area. A sample size of 700 employees formed the respondents for the study, out of over 2000 staffs that formed the population of the selected local government. Simple random sampling techniques were used to select the respondents whereby the employees were randomly selected. Questionnaires were used to collect data which were validated through cronbach’s alpha. The questions were closed ended on a five point Likert scale. Descriptive statistics and Correlations were used to analyze data.
The breakdown of the population size is given below

Alimosho Government Staffs = 728

Ojo Local Government Staffs = 490

Abeokuta South & North Staffs = 938

Total = 2,156

4.0 Data Exhibition

The relevant data for this study came from the primary and secondary sources. The presentation of the data is in table using frequency and simple percentages. The Pearson correlation coefficient will be used in testing hypothesis.

4.1 Test of Hypothesis

Hypothesis One

Objective 1: To examine the relationship between whistle blowing policies and practices in the public sector.

Research Question 1- Is there a significant positive relationship between whistle policies and practices in the public sector?

Hypothesis 1

H0: There will be no significant positive relationship between whistleblowing policies and practice in the public sector

H1: There will be a significant positive relationship between whistle blowing policies and practices in the public sector
The Correlation analysis showed the strength and direction of the linear relationship between Whistleblowing Policies and Practice in the public sector. From the table above, the relationship between Whistleblowing Policies and Practice in the public sector was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. There was a medium, positive correlation between the two variables, $r = 0.363$, $n = 672$, $p < 0.01$, thus whistle blowing policies has a significant positive relationship with practice in public sector. Therefore we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate.

**Interpretation of Results:** Findings from this research showed that organizational whistle blowing policies aim to identify channels and procedures so as to raise concern about organizational practices. It implies that whistle blowing policies has a significant positive relationship with practice in the public sector.

### 4.1.2 Test of Hypothesis Two

**Objective 2-** To examine the relationship between protections of whistle-blowers and performance in the public sector.

**Research Question 2-** Is there a significant positive relationship between protections of whistle-blowers and the performance in the public sector.
Hypothesis 2

**H0**: There will be no significant positive relationship between the protections of whistle-blowers and performance in the public sector.

**H1**: There will be a significant positive relationship between the protections of whistle-blowers and performance in the public sector.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>Protection of whistle blowers</th>
<th>Performance in public sector</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protection of whistle blowers</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation: 1</td>
<td>.511**</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
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<td>N</td>
<td>672</td>
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<tr>
<td>Performance in public sector</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation: .511**</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>672</td>
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</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field Survey, 2014

The Correlation analysis showed the strength and direction of the linear relationship between Protection of whistle blowers and performance in public sector. From the table above, the relationship between Protection of whistle blowers and performance in public sector was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. There was a medium, positive correlation between the two variables, \( r = 0.511, n = 672, p < 0.01 \), thus Protection of whistle blowers has a significant positive relationship with performance in public sector. Therefore we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate.

**Interpretation of Results**: Findings from this research showed that protections of whistle-blowers from retaliation have a significant positive relationship with performance in the public sector.
4.1.3 Test of Hypothesis Three

**Hypothesis 3**

**H0:** There will be no significant positive relationship between the disclosure of unethical practices and performance in the public sector.

**H1:** There will be a significant positive relationship between the disclosure of unethical practices and performance in the public sector.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Disclosure of unethical practices</th>
<th>Performance in public sector</th>
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<tr>
<td>Disclosure of unethical practices</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation 1.840**</td>
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<td>Sig. (2-tailed) .000</td>
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<td>N 672</td>
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<tr>
<td>Performance in public sector</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation .840**</td>
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<td>N 672</td>
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**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Correlation analysis showed the strength and direction of the linear relationship between Disclosure of unethical practices and performance in public sector. From the table above, the relationship between Disclosure of unethical practices and performance in public sector was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. There was a strong, positive correlation between the two variables, \( r = 0.840, n = 672, p < 0.01 \), thus Disclosure of unethical practices has a significant positive relationship with performance in public sector. Therefore we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate.

**Interpretation of Results:** Findings from this research showed that there is positive relationship between disclosure of unethical practices and performance in the public sector.
One of the main issues concerns the scale’s internal consistency. This refers to the degree to which the items that make up the scale ‘hang together’. One of the most commonly used indicators of internal consistency is Cronbach’s alpha coefficient. Ideally, the Cronbach alpha coefficient of a scale should be above 0.7 (DeVellis, 2003). For this analysis, Cronbach’s Alpha value shown in the Reliability Statistics table is 0.839, suggesting very good internal consistency reliability for the scale with this sample.

### 4.4 Discussion of Results

The results for hypothesis one suggest that there is a positive relationship between whistle-blowing policies and practices in the public sector. Organizational whistle blowing policies aims to identify channels and procedures so as to raise concerns about organizational practices. They also aim to identify how these practices are brought about by discretionary powers of the organization’s members. Whistle blowing policies aim to reiterate the notion of the ethical distance between in organizations and outcomes. Therefore, the null hypotheses which is no significant relationship between whistle blowing policies and practices in the public sector was rejected.

The result for hypotheses two suggests that the protection of whistle blowers has a significant positive relationship with performance in the public sector. The result of hypotheses two can be corroborated with work of (LEWIS and UYS 2007). Despite a divergence of responses to whistle blowers, protection for whistle blowers is generally based on the premise that organizational goals
should have priority over personal goals, therefore, requiring organization to compensate employees loyalty by according them some protection. Therefore the null hypotheses which state that there is no significant relationship between protection of whistle blowers and performance in the public sector was rejected.

The result for hypotheses shows that there is a positive relationship between disclosures of unethical practices performance in the public sector. The strength of protected disclosure lies in the protection of the whistle blowers, while regulating the conditions which pre-empt the necessity for making such disclosure of (LEWIS and UYS 2007). Whistleblowing must involve an intentional disclosure of information to which the whistleblower has privileged access. Uys (2000) assert that whistleblowing is seen as the disclosure of information about perceived organizational wrongdoing, to parties that are in a position to take action, if this disclosure is in the public interest. Therefore the null hypothesis which is there is no relationship between disclosure of unethical practices and performance in the public sector was rejected.

5.0 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study investigated the impacts of whistle blowing practices on organizational performance in the public sector, using selected Local Governments in Lagos & Ogun State as case study. The objectives of the study include determining how disclosure of unethical practices in an organization affects its performance. To examine the relationship between protections of whistle blowers and performance in the public sector. To examine the relationship whistle blowing policies and practices in the public sector. Furthermore the study has been able to achieve to a reasonable extents the objectives set out as the introductory chapter of this study. The hypothesis drawn were tested and verified to identify the different dimensions among the variable analyzed. The Study therefore concluded that whistle blowing practices should be encouraged and not discourage in public Organizations.
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