




EDUCATORS' PERCEIVED WHISTLEBLOWING STRATEGY EFFECTIVENESS IN TACKLING ECONOMIC FRAUD IN KWARA SOUTH SENATORIAL DISTRICT, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT. This study assessed the educators perceived effectiveness of the whistleblowing strategy in tackling economic fraud in Kwara South Senatorial District, Nigeria. Specifically, it examined how educators' attitudes towards the whistleblowing strategy were influenced by their educational qualifications. A descriptive survey was conducted with 300 public senior secondary school teachers in the district, selected through simple random sampling. Data were collected using a questionnaire titled "Effectiveness of whistleblowing strategy in tackling economic fraud in Kwara South Senatorial District" and analyzed using frequency, percentage, and Chi-Square techniques. The results revealed that 74.7% of educators had a negative perception of the effectiveness of the whistleblowing strategy in curbing economic fraud. Additionally, the study found no significant relationship between educational qualifications and attitudes towards the strategy. The study recommends that government agencies at all levels should ensure commitment to policy implementation, with all segments of the educational community prioritized to enhance their involvement and sense of belonging in the process.

Keywords: educators, effectiveness, whistleblowing, tackling, fraud

INTRODUCTION

Economic fraud is recognized globally as an undoubtedly albatross to socio-economic and political development of any nation. This is true, because developing countries' development is hampered by economic fraud. Nigeria and her sub regions are not spared by menace of economic fraud. Democratic process is weakened by the absence of transparency and accountability in governance (Dugger, 2019). Checks and balances are the hallmarks of good democracy. Uys (2000) opines that whistleblowing is a catalyst to disclose harmful and unethical practices to a superior authority for remedial action. The same opinion is shared by Bhal and Dadhich (2011) that whistleblowing is among mechanisms capable of preventing unethical practices in a given environment.

Generally, whistleblowing denotes an ethical action taken by a person to inform an abuse or wrongdoing in an organization with the aim of stopping the serious danger caused by the abuse (Miceli, et al, 2012). This implies that strategy of whistleblowing is to enhance, and improve internal management and efficiency of an organization

through revealing or preventing mistakes. Many may interpret whistleblowing as idea of being "nosy", or "busy body". However, intention of doing it will justify whether it is good or bad attempt. Whistleblowing can occur within or outside of an institution in the society such as family, religion, politics, offices, health etc. The major objectives of each of the institution using whistleblowing is for good governance with accountability, transparency, and people-friendly administration at all the levels. There is, however, considerable frustration and dissatisfaction amongst the people, especially the weaker sections of society, about the apathy, irresponsiveness and lack of accountability of public servants as well as transparency.

The perilous nature of economic frauds in Nigeria has triggered the assumptions that government securities, electoral bodies, and mass media should device an effective and efficient reporting mechanism for any information related to problems of economic fraud from an individual or corporate group to blow the whistle by way of tackling the frauds. Economic frauds are the greatest obstacle of governance and causing problems to democracy and

development in Nigeria today. Central government has expended lot of money on numerous programs and projects. Many of funds and resources for projects execution have been diverted for selfishness. Ogunkeye (2016) remarked that about \$15 billion was lost to fraudulent and corrupt practices in procuring security equipment during the previous administration in Nigeria. Taiwo (2015) opined that judicious use and prevention of public funds leakages would have addressed many of problems of socio-economic development of Nigeria. Near and Miceli (2008) also remarked that because of high level of economic frauds there is deeper dent in poverty and unemployment thus countrymen are robbed of their right to a decent life. Ogunkeye (2016) decried situation in which people are living in hunger amidst of plenty. For example, between 1960 and 2005 estimated sum of \$20 trillion was stolen from the treasury by public office holders and many taxes payers' money could not be accounted for.

Effectiveness of whistleblowing strategy is questionable when people could not speak out of any wrong doings in their domain for fear of being retaliated harassed, victimized and threatened (Premeaux and Bedenan, 2003). Dworkin et al (2008) also identified the challenges of whistleblowing to include, fear of retaliation, and lack of trust and reliability of reporting channels, lack of education and loss of confidence in government because of inability to protect whistleblowers. Transparency International (2015) opined that Nigeria government currently lack the capacity and ability to protect the citizens who risk their lives for the good of the country and that adversely affects the act of whistleblowing. Zipparo (1999) observed that there should be a legislation to defend and encourage whistleblowers in public and private sectors to report wrong doings.

Effectiveness and contribution of whistleblowing to stem the tide of economic cannot be quantified. Oyeade (2016) opined that it is very glaring that the culture of whistleblowing has been accepted and recognized universally as one of the tools to promote good governance and combat corruption. Despite the challenges of whistleblowing strategy in governance Transparency International (2015) still remarked that it is good strategy to openly brings out illegal practices that are undisclosed to public for successful prosecution of the wrongdoings. Apaza and Chang (2011) added that whistleblowing makes organizations more transparent and accountable. This submission portrays whistleblowing as good investment for public sanity. However, people opinion about practicing of whistleblowing is divergent, when it is conceived as positive in some quarters it is negative to some. While whistleblowing deters misconduct within institutions by increasing

the possibility of uncovering immoral, illegitimate and illegal practices and punishing its perpetrators it could be ill gotten idea to frame up or set up an innocent one into a trouble based on fallacy and untrue information.

Banisar (2011) made distinction between the terms “whistle blowers” and “informants” given the fact they are often used interchangeably. The terms have different motives and morals. Informants are regarded as operators of unethical activities based on coercion, avoid prosecution and receiving of remuneration. On the other hand, whistle blower does his or her action not for instant reward but for conviction that an illegal act has been perpetrated. Mesmer and Viewesvaran (2005) attributed opposition to the whistleblowers to lack of encouragement from the organization. They opined that whistle blowers' colleagues are less likely to protect them whenever they run into troubles. De Maria (2005) opined that whistle blowing strategy could inefficacious at the inter face of systemic nature of corruption in Africa. Taiwo (2015) observed that very few people in government, schools, business and society at large have courage to speak against the economic saboteurs around them. CLEEN Foundation (2013) added that 7 out of 10 Nigerians used to be afraid of being victimized. This situation often jeopardizes and elongates efforts and process of prosecution of offenders. It can be deduced that whistle blowing in its purest form supposed to be a noble and heroic act to prevent fraud and wrongdoing in strengthen bureaucracy's accountability and promoting transparency in economy but it is risk taking otherwise in corrupt endemic society. The life of whistleblower is at stake and could be shorten for his or her action of saying the truth. Davids, (2012) opined that basis for whistleblowing action is on the premise that the major challenge of Nigeria economy today is perpetration of economic frauds and how to fight it. Taiwo (2015) observed that every government office has necked deep into economic frauds, therefore the sincerity of government using whistleblowing may be weaken because of publicly acknowledging and supporting whistleblowing can inspire those employed by the government itself to expose unethical practices when they discover them in government.

From the foregoing it is a dilemma to see whistleblowing strategy running into troubles despite a lot of consequences it has on development of national economy. This thus motivates the researcher to examine the effectiveness of the whistleblowing strategy to tackle economic frauds in Kwara South Senatorial District using educational stakeholders' perspective.

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of the study were to:

1. examine effectiveness of whistleblowing strategy in tackling economic fraud in Kwara South senatorial district as perceived by educational stakeholders in Kwara State Nigeria.
2. examine the educational stakeholders' attitudes towards effectiveness of whistleblowing strategy in curbing economic fraud in Kwara South senatorial district based on their educational qualification.

Research Questions for this study were as follow

1. What is the effectiveness of whistleblowing strategy in curbing economic fraud in Kwara South Senatorial District as perceived by educational stakeholders in Kwara State, Nigeria?
2. What is the educational stakeholders' attitudes towards effectiveness of whistleblowing strategy in curbing economic fraud in Kwara South senatorial district based on their educational qualification

Research Hypothesis: The second research question was the corresponding hypothesis for this study and stated as follow

HO1: There is no significant influence of educational stakeholders' attitudes towards effectiveness of whistleblowing strategy in curbing economic fraud in Kwara South Senatorial District based on qualification.

METHOD

The research type for this study is the descriptive survey research type. The design is considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to identify the characteristic of the population objectively. The population of this study comprised of all the teachers in public secondary school in Kwara South Senatorial District. Three hundred (300) teachers were randomly selected from Senior Secondary Schools in Kwara Senatorial District. A researcher designed questionnaire titled "Effectiveness of whistleblowing strategy in curbing economic fraud in Kwara South senatorial district" was used to get the desired information from the teachers. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A consisted of items that addressed demographic information of the respondents while section B consisted of questions on attitudes towards effectiveness of whistleblowing strategy in curbing economic fraud with the response options; SA-Strongly Agree; A-Agree; SD-Strongly Disagree; D-Disagree. Face and content validity of the questionnaire were ascertained through correction from experts in measurement and test construction in department of Social Sciences Education University of Ilorin before its final administration on the

respondents. The instrument was found reliable after use of test re-test method of reliability at an interval of three weeks. The two sets of scores obtained were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Frequency, percentage and Chi-square were used to answer demographic data, research question and hypothesis respectively.

RESULT

Table 1. Distribution of the Educational Stakeholders by Educational Qualification

Educational Qualifications	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
NCE/OND	84	28.0
BSC/HND	177	59.0
Post Graduate Degree	39	13.0
Total	300	100.0

Table 1 showed the distribution of the educational stakeholders that participated in the study by educational qualification. It is shown that out of the 300 (100.0%) educational stakeholders sampled in this study, 84(28.0%) had NCE/OND, 177(59.0%) had BSC/HND while 39(13.0%) had postgraduate degree.

Answering of Research Question and testing of hypothesis

What is the effectiveness of whistleblowing strategy in curbing economic fraud in Kwara South Senatorial District?

In order to answer this research question and testing of research hypothesis, responses on 17 items on the questionnaire were scored such that a Strongly Agree responses were allotted 4, Agree responses 3, Disagree responses 2 and Strongly Disagree responses were allotted 1. In the scale, higher scores represent positive attitude and vice versa. Consequently, all negative worded items were reversed in scoring. The maximum and minimum obtainable scores were 68 and 17 respectively while the mean and SD of the observed scores were 38.75 and 5.12. Attitude scores of 17 through 42 were adjudged as Negative while scores of 43 through 68 were adjudged as Positive. This categorization was then subjected to a descriptive analysis of frequency and percentage. The result is presented in Table 2

Table 2: Educational Stakeholders Perception of Effectiveness of Whistleblowing Strategy in curbing Economic Fraud in Kwara South Senatorial District

Perception	Score Range	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Negative	17-42	224	74.7

Positive	43-68	76	25.3
Total		300	100.0

Result in Table 2 showed that out of 300(100.0%) of educational stakeholders that participated in the study 224 (74.7%) of the respondents' frequency score lies between 17-42. This implied a negative perception towards effectiveness of whistleblowing strategy in curbing economic fraud while 76 (25.3%) of the respondent scored 43-68 which implied positive perception. The result indicates the majority of the sampled educational stakeholders' negatively perceived effectiveness of whistleblowing strategy in curbing economic fraud in Kwara South Senatorial District.

Testing of Research Hypotheses

HO₁: There is no significant influence educational stakeholders' attitudes towards effectiveness of whistleblowing strategy in curbing economic fraud in Kwara South Senatorial District based on qualification.

Table 3: Chi-square Analysis of Educational Stakeholders' Attitudes towards Effectiveness of Whistleblowing Strategy in Curbing Economic Fraud in Kwara South Senatorial District based on qualification

Qualification n	Attitude		Total	χ^2	df	p	Decision
	Negative	Positive					
NCE/OND	64 (76.2%)	20 (23.8%)	84 (100.0)	.880	2	.644	Do Not Reject H ₀
BSC/HND	129 (72.9%)	48 (27.1%)	177 (100.0)				
Post graduates	31 (79.5%)	8 (20.5%)	39 (100.0)				
Total	224 (74.7%)	76 (25.3%)	300 (100.0)				

Result in Table 3 showed a Chi-square test result in which there exists no significant influence of educational qualification on educational stakeholders' attitudes towards effectiveness of whistleblowing strategy in curbing economic fraud in Kwara state, $\chi^2 (n = 300) = 0.880$, $df = 2$, $p = .644$. Since the p-value is greater than .05 thresholds, we therefore do not reject the stated null hypothesis. This implied no significant influence of educational qualification on educational stakeholders' attitudes towards effectiveness of whistleblowing strategy in curbing economic fraud in Kwara South Senatorial District.

DISCUSSION

The finding of the study revealed majority of the educational stakeholders negatively perceived effectiveness of whistleblowing strategy in curbing economic fraud in Kwara State. Federal Government of Nigeria designed whistleblowing strategy to expose corrupt elements in government and entire polity to get rid of economic fraudsters. However, this study result is quite surprising to be dissonance with the aims and objective behind adoption of whistleblowing strategy in curbing economic fraud by the federal government. The ideal thought is to record maximum support needed for the strategy to succeed. The negative perception to such policy or strategy needs to be justified. Despite the good intention of government in formulation of the transparency policies it appears its implementation of the policy derails from the initial commitment of the noble course. Economic recovery through the strategy looks weak and mirage to the populace because no positive direction from the initial plans in sight. In addition, most of the promises initially made by the Federal Government of Nigeria at inception of the strategy in terms of rewards for risked whistleblowers are not well redeemed. Besides, many indicted and convicted politicians for economic frauds are still being at the helm of governance affairs. These make nonsense of the strategy and loose positive attraction in the eye of the populace. It is therefore imperative to infer the deep root cause educational stakeholders' negative perception and attitudes towards effectiveness of whistleblowing strategy in curbing economic fraud. The situation has now degenerated wider populace lack of confidence anti corrupt policy of the government. In fact, the slogan of "change" as championed by the ruling political party is now losing many adherents. The educational stakeholders' negative perception and attitudes toward whistleblowing strategy effectiveness does not translate that the strategy itself is bad. It becomes irrelevant when implementation of it is not sincerely done. Effectiveness and non-effectiveness of any government policies in most cases is adjudged by people based on the satisfactory and un-satisfactory results respectively. A policy has support when good result is found and lost it either when good result is not found. The finding of the study is in line with Iham Maulana Saud (2016) that describes attitudes towards whistleblowing as the extent to which individuals have favourable or unfavourable evaluation of whistleblowing. Demaria (2005) also identified that public confidence in the effectiveness of disclosure in combating unethical behaviour and guarantees of freedom of expression as import prerequisites for effective whistleblowing. Finding of the study can be attributed to the people's perceived

lack of confidence in the effectiveness effective whistleblowing.

Finding of the study further revealed that there was no significant influence of educational qualification on educational stakeholders' attitudes towards government use of whistleblowing strategy in curbing economic fraud in Kwara State. This implies that educational qualification is not a significant determinant of attitudes towards government use of whistleblowing strategy in curbing economic fraud in Kwara State. In other words, the expression of attitudes towards government use of whistleblowing strategy in curbing economic fraud of educational stakeholders does not significantly vary according to their individual educational levels. This outcome can still be attributed to the fact that all the citizens irrespective of their educational background feel the impact of poor administration of the supposed whistleblowing strategy. As the whistleblowing strategy of the current administration, though with good intention, but its maladministration has eroded the expected benefits and all the citizens begin to see it as no tangible impact a policy.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that educational stakeholders' perception and attitude towards effectiveness of whistleblowing strategy in curbing economic fraud in Kwara South Senatorial Districts is negative. Nevertheless, educational qualifications of the educational stakeholders do not significantly influence their attitudes. Several reasons could be adduced for this in view of the fact that educational stakeholders with high or low qualification may still hold certain biases or attitude based on personal experience, values, and belief.

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