Gender: Precursor of Whistle Blowing Intentions and Reprisals

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ABSTRACT

Whistle blowing involves the exposure of unlawful, corrupt or prohibited practices within an organisation by organization members to those who have the capability to influence change it happens when employees disclose corporate misconduct in their organization, to those in authority. This study looked at gender as a precursor of perceptions of whistle blowing intentions, obstacles to whistle blowing and retaliations emanating from whistle blowing. The study explored possible gender differences in the three areas. A total of 480 respondents made up of 289 males and 191females from selected public sector organizations in Lagos, Nigeria were included in the study which was a survey employing self-administered questionnaires. The statistical tools employed include the simple percentage, the chi square, t- test and ANOVA. The results indicate that the respondents had a positive perception of whistle blowing. As for the gender differences in whistle blowing intentions, more men than women seemed dissuaded from blowing the whistle on misconducts, arising from the diverse societal and emotional dynamics. The result also corroborates gender differences in perception of obstacles to whistle blowing. However, the results indicated no significant influence of respondents' gender on whistle blowing reprisals.

Keywords: Gender, precursor, whistle blowing, intentions, reprisals

INTRODUCTION

Corruption has persisted as a foremost test to progress in many developing countries. Contemporary times have witnessed a proliferation of issues of misconducts by business managers. Sometimes the whistle is blown on them by organization members while at other times they choose to remain silent. Arising from these dishonourable practices are attendant personal and general corollaries like loss of investments and jobs in addition to imprisonment, death and organization collapse. According to the Corruption Perception Index (CPI), between 2001 and 2012, Nigeria constantly occupied appalling spots in the grading of most unethical countries globally. Transparency International (2015) ranks Nigeria in the 136th position out of 168 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). This implies a terribly high degree of corruption and misconducts in the country. Wrong doings affect all organization stakeholders and as Miceli and Near (2005) affirms, employees constitute the most operational ones with the capability to moderate incidences of misconducts and corrupt behaviour within the organisation especially through whistle blowing. Rehg, Miceli, Near & Van Scotter (2008) observes that whistle blowing is an action that involves revelation of unlawful and corrupt acts committed by members of an organization to people capable of ensuring that change is affected. Studies like Appelbaum et al. (2006) and Nayir and Herzing (2012), indicate that whistle blowing intentions constitute an intricate issue possibly founded on numerous individual, conditional, organizational and demographic elements like gender. This paper examines the demographic element of gender in whistle blowing. The findings are expected to contribute to knowledge in this area especially considering that prior research on the effects of gender on whistle blowing has been inconclusive. While research like Davidson (2009) indicate that females had reduced tendencies compared to males when it came to whistle blowing, others like Marley and West (2013) affirm that

gender has no substantial correlation with whistle blowing intentions. In contrast a 2011study by Yesuamy and Silos intimates that female workers exhibited marginally higher prospects of whistle blowing. This study examines possible gender disparities in whistle blowing intentions, obstacles and reprisals among workers in selected public sector organizations in Nigeria.

THEORETICAL APPROACH

Diverse whistle blowing structures tend to be instituted by diverse labour market models alongside their establishments, industrial relations and work organizations. Appelbaum and Schmitt (2009) notes that diverse labour market models have dissimilar methods of work design, human resource practices and collective representation. Berry (2004) distinguishes between market employment systems and inclusive employment systems both of which are different in a methodical manner in the magnitude of employees' participation in decision making, extending from powerfully entrenched involvement in all-encompassing systems to the elimination of labour from an important part in decision making in market systems.

Miceli et al. (2008) observes that research contends that influential organization members have greater prospects of exposing perceived misconducts compared to others and that they could have the impression that they have a responsibility to act; that they have the capability to make somebody to pay attention, and also that they are going to elude harmful results like reprisals. Giving employees broader duties helps to reinforce their obligation to report misconducts. Miceli et al. (2012) also opines that it could add to 'organizational justice', which stimulates internal whistle blowing. Formal procedures add to definite equalizing instruments that moderate the influence of individual power reserves and make the prospects of involvement more democratic and independent. Pfeffer & Salancik (1998) provide an instructive approach that encompasses individual power reserves.

Individual Power Reserves

Borum (1995) contends that power resources are either material or immaterial; nevertheless they need to be appreciated or perceived as vital for other participants or clusters in the system. The power resources controlled by diverse organization members decide their liberty of action, impact on work processes, chances of decision making, and the management's deliberate options. As Miceli et al. (2012) emphasizes, research indicates the propensity for whistle blowers to be more high-ranking, with higher remuneration and that workers with reduced stake are most often quiet eyewitnesses. Moreover, while more junior and part-time workers could have reduced losses in case of reprisals from whistle blowing, they are possibly less adept at making other influential people to act owing to inferior believability or observed significance to the organization, and they could be less concerned about whether the misconduct is rectified or not. Consequently, rank constitutes a pointer of individual power resources in addition to length of time at work, as part-time workers might be less loyal to the organization. Fapohunda (2012) observes that while Nigeria has paid very much highlight both in politics and commerce to gender parity in recent times, employment and the labour force remains quite gendered with women being segregated to and consequently being more represented mostly in service in industries. They are also more in the lower echelons of organizations. Consequently, if the position of Miceli et al. (2012) is correct females would be less likely to be whistle blowers because they do not have the required ranking, remuneration or stake to blow the whistle. Again, they mostly occupy more junior and part-time positions and therefore higher losses with regard to reprisals from whistle blowing. Moreover, they are possibly less influential in the organization because their inferior importance to the organization compared to men.

Gender is perceived both as an indicator of power and a demographic variable element. There have been mixed theoretical arguments on the part gender plays in whistle-blowing. Miceli et al. (2012) posits that gender appears to affect whistle blowing process, nonetheless in an unpredictable manner. This is probably because research results have varied. For instance, Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran (2005) reports that females that observed misconducts that were left unhandled were marginally but meaningfully more probable to whistle blow compared to men. Contrarily, Miethe (1999) established

that males had a greater tendency for whistle blowing while Miceli and Near (1992) submitted that males would manifest higher propensity to report misconduct than females since men might be in ranks with more probability for more grave crimes to be detected. However, the same Miceli alongside others in their 2012 research discovered women to be slightly more possible to act on witnessed misconduct. Whistle blowers often face reprisals as a result of their actions. Alford (2007) found that the prospects of reprisals escalate when a woman blows the whistle probably because of the relatively poorer reception of women having a voice in the organization.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualizing Whistle Blowing

Pfeffer & Salancik (1978) asserts that whistle blowing involves the revelation by organisation members of unlawful, corrupt or illegal practices within the purview of organization management to individuals or authorities that have the capability of acting on it. Miceli and Near (1992) designate whistle blowing as the revelation by organisation members of the illicit, corrupt or dishonest practices within the influence of their employers, to people, organisations or authorities that may possibly bring about a transformation. According to Omojola (2013) the several characterizations of whistle blowing seem to have three constant criteria namely: the exposure of organization misconducts to influential authorities; the inspiration which is the aspiration to avert avoidable damages and the act of a worker with confidential access to information.

Gender and Whistle Blowing

Rehg et al., (2008) contends that the social role theory in addition to gender expectancies and the hazards of whistle blowing, predicts that more men than women have the prospects of participating in whistle blowing arising from the fact that women are anticipated to be more submissive and less voiced than men, even in exposing or remonstrating corrupt acts. Adebayo (2005) affirms that it is assumed that women would display greater morals of care, demonstrate sophisticated moral manners and as a rule a reduced amount of leniency for, and positive disposal to misconducts compared to men. Rehg et al., (2008) further opines that female whistle blowers act in ways that are at variance with their characters as women. As earlier observed, results and findings of studies on gender disparities in whistle blowing are indecisive. For instance, Mesmer- Magnus and Viswesvaran (2005) suggests a somewhat higher tendency for female workers to blow the whistle but found that gender has no effect on intentions to whistle blow. Davidson (2009) and Zerema (2011) found no significant gender dissimilarities in male and female moral intentions. While for Lasova (2012) there were

greater levels of moral intentions in males than in females. Richardson (2014) indicates that gender has no significant effect on the prospect of blowing the whistle.

Omojuyigbe (2009) and Sloan (2011) assert that for the reason that males are inclined to be in higher ranking positions than females in organisations, females possess a reduced probability compared to males of participating in acts amounting to whistle blowing. Rehg, Marcia, Miceli, Near and Scotter (2008) reveal no significant association between gender and retaliation. The study found that male whistle blowers received contrary treatment as against the females contingent on their authority and influence in the organization, but then female whistle blowers got very similar dealings irrespective of the volume of organizational power possessed by them since their positions as females superseded their position either as influential or non-influential organization members. Beard (2007) submits that these findings align with previous results that female solicitors (who are considered a comparatively authoritative cluster) faced larger levels of social maltreatment than male counsellors. Conversely, females that testified of severe misconducts or misconducts that affected them openly had higher prospects of facing reprisals, while males did not. Yet again, some consider that female whistle blowers are acting in modes that are irregular with their positions. In whistle blowing on grave misconducts or advanced level offenders, the whistle blowing is even further in conflict with the suitable role for females, thus initiating their being perceived as deserving of reprisals.

METHODOLOGY

This study is a cross-sectional survey including 480 respondents from public sector organizations in Lagos, Nigeria. Six organizations were selected namely: Lagos State Hospitals Management Board, Lagos State Water Corporation, Lagos State Tourism Board, Lagos State Building Investment Company, Lagos State Assurance Company and Lagos State Traffic Management Authority. 289 of the respondents were males while the remaining 191were females. Data was obtained from both primary and secondary sources. The major measure employed was a questionnaire using items established from elements recognized by previous studies as reviewed in the literature. 13 of the questionnaires were excluded from the study because of significant errors in their completion. The statistical tools employed include the simple percentage, the chi square, t- test and ANOVA.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Gender and Whistle Blowing Intentions

Table 1 presents the results of the social and emotional dynamics affecting whistle blowing intentions and designate no significant gender disparities. The female employees were as dissuaded as the male employees by these dynamics of blowing the whistle. The results signify that owing to various societal and emotional dynamics, most of the employees were dissuaded from whistle blowing intentions. Both genders were similarly affected in their whistle blowing intentions by these social and psychological dynamics. The result is contrary to Alolo (2006) which suggests that women were projected to display advanced morals of care in addition to superior principled behaviours and Ogunniran (2010) which presumes that women usually display lower leniency for, and positive outlook for misconducts compared to men. It also negates the position of research like Rehg et al. (2008) and Gutek (1985)'s social role theory, which predicted that men would manifest greater whistle blowing intentions compared to women.

Table1. *Gender Disparities in Dissuasion from Whistle blowing Intentions*

	Gender	Yes	%	No	%	df	X^2	P
Believe that reporting cannot bring about desired change	Male	189	40.5	86	18.5	1	7.34	< .05
	Female	130	27.8	58	13.2			
Pressures connected to being an eyewitness	Male	177	37.8	103	22.2	1	5.32	< .05
		103	22.1	84	17.9			
Terror of exclusion	Male	179	38.4	96	20.5	1	5.19	< .05
	Female	163	34.9	25	10.5			
Seeming excessive power wielded by crooked officers	Male	156	33.4	92	19.6	1	6.32	< .05
	Female	124	26.5	63	13.5			
Dread of retaliation by perpetrators	Male	134	29.3	121	26.7	1	5.96	> .05
	Female	96	20.5	114	24.5			
Non confidence in organization top management and regulating agency's integrity	Male	165	32.3	112	21.9	1	1.53	> .05
	Female	132	25.8	102	20.0			
Perceived ineffectiveness of investigation processes	Male	138	28.3	139	26.7	1	.04	> .05
	Female	115	22.5	109	23.3			
Fear of being mixed up in the misconduct	Male	153	32.8	104	22.2	1	1.89	> .05
	Female	123	26.4	100	21.6			
Ineptness in the whistle blowing procedure	Male	198	42.4	82	17.5	1	7.60	< .05
	Female	156	33.5	78	15.8			
Perceived lack of protection for whistle blowers	Male	184	39.3	83	17.8	1	7.56	< .05
	Female	143	30.7	85	18.3			

As for the gender differences, more men than women seemed dissuaded from blowing the whistle on misconducts, arising from the diverse societal and emotional dynamics. Furthermore, there were significant disparities in the number of respondents who due to societal and emotional dynamics felt unenthusiastic about blowing the whistle on misconducts that they witnessed but the disparities were not gendered. (63.2%) of the respondents perceived that their blowing the whistle could not consequence in the required transformation. The calculated x^2 at 1 degree of freedom and p < .05 was = 7.34. Arising from the pressures and risks connected to being eyewitnesses 59.9% were

unenthusiastic about blowing the whistle. The calculated x^2 at 1 degree of freedom and $p < .05$ was = 5.32. An earlier study by Chassang &Miquel (2012) linked whistle blowing and certain threats, with the possibility of dissuading whistle blowing intentions. The terror of being excluded and shunned both by colleagues and superiors prevented 59.9% of the respondents from blowing the whistle. The calculated x^2 at 1 degree of freedom and $p < .05$ was = 5.19. Rehg et al. (2008) found that absence of support from colleagues and even the organization a significant dissuading factor in whistleblowing intentions. Irrespective of gender, without the necessary backing for prospective whistleblowers they eventually feel excluded and often stigmatized. This finding aligns with Cortina & Magley (2003) who report that workers never like being treated as strangers by their peers and so may be reconsider their whistleblowing intentions, particularly if misconducts are prevalent in the organization and those who report are left out. Another factor was the seeming excessive power wielded by the perpetrators of the misconducts witnessed, which barred 60% of the respondents from blowing the whistle. For this factor, the calculated x^2 was = 6.32 at 1 degree of freedom and $p < .05$. This was followed by the dread of retaliation by perpetrators owing to which 49.8% were unenthusiastic about blowing the whistle. Here, the calculated x^2 was = 6.32 at 1 degree of freedom and $p < .05$. Lack of confidence in the integrity of organization top management or anti-corruption organizations prohibited 58.2% of the respondents from blowing the whistle. The calculated x^2 at 1 degree of freedom and $p < .05$ was = 1.53. (50.8%) of the respondents perceived the ineffectiveness of the investigation processes and consequently were reluctant to blow the whistle. This affirms the findings of Rehg et al. (2008) that employees demonstrate greater motivation for whistle blowing with the perception that it would result in the anticipated transformation than when they perceive differently. Perceptions of the potential whistle blowers that their revelations would not consequence significant changes makes them remain silent and encourages the seemingly prevalent misconducts especially in the public service in Nigeria. For fear of being mixed up in the misconduct (59.3%) of the respondents were reluctant to blow the whistle. The calculated x^2 at 1 degree of freedom and $p < 1.89$ was however not significant at.04. (75.9%) of the respondents suggested that the perceived level of ineptness of the whistle blowing procedure discouraged them from blowing the whistle. The calculated x^2 at 1 degree of freedom and $p < .05$ was = 7.60. Finally, arising from perceived lack of protection for whistle blowers 70% of the respondents were hindered from blowing the whistle. The calculated x^2 at 1 degree of freedom and $p < .05$ was = 7.56.

Gender and Obstacles to Whistle blowing

Table 2 suggests that male respondents exhibited higher lack of confidence in organizational leadership than females [t (229) = 2.940. Their consideration of financial cost associated with whistle blowing as an obstacle was also greater (t (229) = 2.48). Besides, more male respondents perceived the absence of clear company policies and procedures on whistle blowing to constitute an obstacle [t (229) = 3.11]. On the contrary, the female respondents' perception of social humiliation and exclusion as a hindrance to whistle blowing was higher [t (229) = 1.32].

Table2. *T-test for Gender and Perception of Obstacles to Whistle blowing*

	Males		**Females**			
Lack of confidence in organization leadership	1.09	1.02	1.26	0.65	2.2	0.00
Social humiliation	1.08	1.01	1.93	1.25	2.2	0.00
Financial cost associated with whistle blowing	2.83	1.35	2.64	1.15	2.48	0.00
Inadequate protection for whistle blowers	1.08	1.01	1.25	0.64	2.2	0.00
Absence of clear company policies and procedures on whistle blowing	2.49	1.83	2.13	1.44	1.33	0.00

This result corroborates gender differences in perception of obstacles to whistleblowing. As earlier observed, both theoretical explanations and findings on gender and whistle-blowing have been varied and inconsistent. In terms of theoretical explanations, scholars like Rothschild & Miethe, (1999) argue that women possess a higher propensity for blowing the whistle on dubious or illicit activities compared to men since women, basically demonstrate a superior public obligation to voice in contradiction of misconducts. However, others like Miceli & Near (1984) contend that men will have

greater prospects than women of exposing activities of misconduct owing to the fact that whistle blowing is perceived as dangerous and women are susceptible to following popular outlooks(which may be against whistleblowing) more than men. In terms of research, while Miceli & Near (1999) Dworkin and Baucus (1998) and Goldman (2001) indicate a positive relationship between whistle-blowing and the male gender; those like Sims and Keenan (1998), Seifert (2006) and Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran (2005) describe a positive link between whistle-blowing and being female. Some others affirm a non-relationship between gender and whistle-blowing. This study as indicated by the result supports significant gender differences in the perception of obstacles to whistle blowing.

Gender and Whistle Blowing Reprisals

Reprisal is commonly accepted as the most vital dynamic in the decision to blow the whistle. Reprisal is very much existent and should be anticipated by the prospective whistle-blower. The possible private costs can be enormous for the whistle-blower and include being fired or forced to retire early; blacklisting and inability to obtain similar employment; persecution; fabricated accusations on the personality and actions of the whistle-blower; time and financial costs; destruction of personal belongings; liquidation; suicide; and divorce; employee exclusion, poor performance assessment, altered duties, and dismissal. Consequently, a typical employee will probably contemplate self-protection prior to any other contemplation. Dyck et al. (2007) notes that because of all these costs, it is no wonder that most employees remain silent rather it is a wonder that some talk at all. The ANOVA results did not indicate a significant central outcome of retaliation (Table 2: F < 1.0). The results indicated no significant influence of respondents' gender on whistle blowing reprisals. Tables 3 and 4 present the results of the ANOVA on gender and reprisals.

Table3. *ANOVA for Gender and Whistle blowing Reprisals*

		Weak (n =38)	Strong (n = 38)	Weak (n = 37)	Strong (n = 34)	Weak (n = 38)	Strong (n=34)
Gender: Male (n = 170)	14.96	13.00	14.00	16.00	16.43	14.50	15.80
Female (n = 159)	13.31	10.83	9.14	11.50	16.86	19.67	11.88
Retaliation: Weak retaliation (n = 104)	14.25						
Strong retaliation (n =145)	14.02						
		11.74		15.20		15.46	

Table4. *ANOVA for Gender and Whistle blowing Reprisals*

Source	Df	Mean Sq.	F	Sig.	Eta Sq.
Retaliation	1	1.06	0.06	0.812	0.001
Gender	1	53.04	2.83	0.096	0.035
Retaliation*Gender	1	25.66	1.37	0.245	0.017

The indication is that there are no significant gender disparities in the strength of reprisal for whistle blowing. This finding aligns with Near and Miceli (1986) which discovered no correlation between gender and whistle blowing retribution. Nevertheless, it also contrasts Bouville (2008) that arising from social anticipations and the dangers emanating from whistle blowing, women may blow the whistle less than men. In addition, it contradicts Rehg et al. (2008) which is not only of the view that women whistle blowers are acting contrary to their roles as women but also established that women underwent greater retribution than men subsequent to whistle blowing.

The foregoing implies that although whistle blowing is appropriate and constructive, it also comes with attendant consequences for all the organization stakeholders. Rehg et al. (2008) asserts that there is a significant link between whistleblowing and reprisals from perpetrators, which climaxes in stressed associations between whistle blowers and managers. They observe further that whistleblowing could also portend antagonistic consequences for the whistle blowers' admittance to work-connected profits. Near, Rehg, Van Scotter & Miceli (2004) also found that, aside from seeming vulnerability,

dread of persecution and other threats connected with whistleblowing can dissuade workers from blowing the whistle or decrease their enthusiasm to reveal consequent misconducts . Culbertson (2008) contends that despite the fact that very-principled workers could recognize whistleblowing as the correct way to go in the interest of others; many others deem it to be an action of disloyalty that defies organization powers and its arrangement in addition to generating hostilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The actual management of whistle blowing requires numerous circumstances. The starting point is that employees must have confidence in the organization leadership that their fears will be received earnestly and probed. Decker et al (2007) affirms that where employees report such concerns and then notice indifference by their organizations they are discouraged and a wrong signal is sent to others in similar situations. Also, there must be clear information to employees on proper steps to follow in sharing their moral concerns within the organization. Ponemon (1994) indicates that there is an important relationship between employees' awareness of correct internal networks and their prospects to whistle blow on observed misconducts. This study found a relationship between the presence and awareness of clear enterprise policies and procedures on whistle blowing and the willingness of the employees to blow the whistle. However, there were no significant gender differences in this regard.

Moreover, employees irrespective of gender must feel self-assured that there will be no personal retaliations for employing internal means to report seeming wrongdoing. Employees who consider that management will strike back for whistle blowing have a greater tendency to blow the whistle externally. Organizations must cultivate official whistle blowing procedures to generate the circumstances obligatory for the effective management of whistle blowing with the procedures offering typical parameters within which organizations react to the moral or principled concerns of their employees. Regulatory authorities in Nigeria must put in place laws to safeguard whistle-blowers since the current protection offered does not seem sufficient. Ethics education (where not yet available) must be introduced in institutions of higher learning and where it is at present included, it is essential to strengthen it.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that there are no significant gender disparities in the social and emotional dynamics of affecting whistle blowing intentions. The female employees were as dissuaded as the male employees by the dynamics from blowing the whistle. The results signify that owing to various societal and emotional dynamics, most of the employees were dissuaded from whistle blowing intentions. It also confirms gender differences in perception of obstacles to whistle blowing. Finally the indication is that there are no significant gender disparities in the strength of retribution for whistle blowing.

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