



WHISTLE-BLOWING POLICY AND ITS CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA: AN APPRAISAL OF FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY, ABUJA

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Abstract

Corruption has continued to attract the attention of every Nigerian and have witnessed series of government's initiatives to prevent its occurrences. The paper examined challenges associated with whistle-blowing policy introduced by the Federal Government of Nigeria as a measure to expose corrupt practices in public organizations in Nigeria. The population of the study was drawn from the three electoral wards in Abuja Municipal Area Council, particularly using voter's register of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for this study. Multistage sampling technique was used to get the sample size for the study. The semi-structured questionnaire and in-depth interview were designed to collect primary data for the study. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and content analysis for both quantitative and qualitative data respectively. Findings from the study reveals that the whistle-blowing policy is marred with challenges such as inadequate protection for whistle-blowers, lack of legal framework for the policy and lack of government commitment to reward whistleblower among others. Therefore, the paper recommends that legal framework should be enacted for the policy to protect and reward whistle-blowers. In addition, the government should educate the public on the need to expose corrupt leaders in any public organization in Nigeria.

Keywords: Corruption, Whistle-Blowing Policy, Challenges, Nigeria.

Introduction

The pervasiveness of corruption in Nigerian society led to the introduction of the Whistle-Blowing Policy in order to fight corruption. Corruption and its damaging effects on our society has also continued to dominate academic discourse and social debates but this has done little in obliterating the pernicious manifestations of the phenomenon. The euphoria which followed the introduction of the Whistle-Blowing Policy in December, 2016 by the Federal Government of Nigeria is an indication that the expectations of Nigerians, especially the working class and the poor masses towards the Policy in bringing about significant reduction in corruption is quite high (Samitani, 2013; Gabriel, 2107 & Wasiu, 2018).

The Whistle-Blowing Policy is not the first step taken by the government towards curbing corruption in Nigeria, but since the return of democratic governance in 1999, concerted efforts have been made by successive governments to tame the ravaging tides of corruption. Many

policies and institutions have come into existence all for the purpose of giving corruption the fight it deserves. For instance, the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission which were established in year 2000 and 2004 respectively; Freedom of Information Act, enacted in 2011; Money Laundering (Prohibition) Amendment Act in 2012; Code of Conduct Bureau established in 1979 and the Public Procurement Act in 2007 all were established to fight corruption. Even the recent introduction of the Integrated Personal Payroll Information System (IPPIS) which has further strained the industrial relationship between public universities' labour unions and the Federal Government was intended to checkmate corruption practices (Mohammed, 2013).

The Whistle-Blowing Policy is necessitated by the preponderance of corruption in which impinges on the dignity of the country in the international community. Successive leaders



across the nation seem to have corruption as their cardinal objectives and as a result have stolen a lot of funds while in public service. Indeed, some public office holders stashed their looted cash in their houses, buildings and farmsteads or bank accounts; such that the Whistle-Blowing Policy seeks to recover. Public office holders are helping to boost the economies of other nations when money is laundered and deposited in foreign nations and provides capital for development in those countries while good governance crumbles in Nigeria (Mike, 2017). Hence, to recover looted funds and elicit the co-operation of members of the public in keeping the rate of corruption low in Nigeria, the Whistle-Blowing Policy was introduced by the present government in December, 2016. It is known as the Federal Ministry of Finance Whistle-Blowing Policy. The policy is aimed at motivating individuals report to the government, cases of financial misappropriation and other information that is of interest to the government while the whistle-blowers receive a reward between 2.5% - 5% of the total amount of money recovered, depending on the amount of recovery made (Gabriel, 2017 & Wasiu, 2018).

Huge sums of money have been recovered since the formal introduction of the policy in Nigeria. For instance, in Kaduna, a staggering sum of \$9.8 million (about, ₦3, 000, 000, 000) belonging to Andrew Yakubu, former managing Director of Nigeria National Petroleum Co-operation (NNPC) was discovered, another humongous sum of \$43.4, 000, 000 (about ₦14, 000, 000, 000), hidden in apartment 7B at Osborne Towers, Ikoyi, Lagos was also uncovered. Other discoveries have also been made as a result of the policy (Enejeta, 2017). This laudable breakthrough notwithstanding, the policy is however not without challenges of grave concern that threatens to frustrate it just like other previous public policies in Nigeria.

Though, the policy, which comes with a package of reward for whistle-blowers had recorded some successes since its implementation, there is a need for scientific investigation on the challenges that are associated with the Policy. Therefore, the

imperative of empirical study to identify the challenges that confront it in order to get the Policy strengthened and ensure its sustainability. Also, these challenges and sundry issues raised if not empirically investigated are capable of constituting a setback to the whistle-blowing initiative which was introduced to caution against mismanagement of public funds. If the policy is allowed to fail again, it portends disastrous consequences for the country. It therefore becomes imperative to empirically and critically dissect the policy in order to note the success and challenges for optimal performance. This is important in order to salvage the nation from imminent collapse as a result of large scale corruption even in contemporary times.

Conceptual Review

Concept of Corruption and Whistle Blowing Policy

Corruption has been defined in several ways by scholars and various stakeholders alike. Morris (1991) perceived corruption as the dishonest or fraudulent activities by people in power typically involving bribery. He further sees corruption as the illegitimate use of power to benefit a private interest; it involves the embezzlement of public funds for personal gain and all other acts considered by law of a particular society as corruption. The definition is flawed for perceiving bribery as the only typical manifestation of corruption. Every act of corruption is typical but the typicality is relative to the society under consideration.

On his part Ogbeidi (2012) admitted that corruption lacks a comprehensive definition. He however conceptualized corruption as the abuse of public position or power for individual advantage. Corruption encompasses acts such as embezzlement, cronyism, bribery, extortion, influence peddling, fraud etc. (Ogbeidi, 2012). Corruption as a concept actually involves diverse unlawful behaviours that are difficult to capture in a single definition but that does not mean that it cannot be defined in a way that have wide acceptability.



But Tanzi (1998) in his opinion observed that while defining corruption is difficult, the consequences of corruption are not difficult to recognize. Expatriating further, Agbu (2003) cited in Mohammed, (2013) disclosed that public office can be abused for personal aggrandizement even if no bribery takes place through illicit patronage and nepotistic tendencies, theft of assets, or criminal diversion of state's resources. He went on to define corruption as any behaviour that violates an established norm with regards to public trust. It also means theft of public trust by an individual whether elected, selected, nominated or appointed and it is inconsequential whether the person holds office or not. Though it is obvious from his opinion that corruption can be perpetuated by anyone whether employed in government or not either as an accomplice or a beneficiary but those in government are the major culprits because without their co-operation, acts of corruption may be difficult.

Aluko (2009) cited in Iheuwa (2017) divulged that corruption has nine forms and these are fraud, embezzlement, favoritism, nepotism, political corruption (grand), bureaucratic corruption (petty), electoral corruption, bribery and kick-back. But it is misleading to refer to corruption carried out by civil servants as petty. Politicians cannot embezzle public funds without the willing co-operation of civil servants and they are usually given their own share of the loot. Similarly, corruption could occur in other forms not mentioned by Aluko e.g. employment scams, ignoring safety measures in the work place etc.

The World Bank (WB) and Transparency International (IT), a leading world anti-corruption watchdog, defined corruption as the abuse of public office for personal gain either for the benefit of the holder of the office or a third party. Though this definition is important for the study but the exclusion of private organizations is its major flaw. However, for the fact that the study is limited to corruption in public sector only, the definition is adopted in the study because of its comprehensiveness and relevance to the investigation. While many corrupt acts are perpetuated for the benefit of the individual, many

others also are carried-out for the benefit of a third party, usually acting on superior orders.

In conceptualizing whistle blowing policy, scholars have also put forward different definitions of whistle blowing. Though, their conceptualizations varies but not significant. There are similarities in terms used in conceptualizing whistle-blowing. The various definitions all points to reporting of a wrong doing for necessary action to be taken. It is worth stating that some scholars in the process of defining whistle-blowing opt for whistle blower instead.

To this end, Ogbu (2007) conceives whistle blowing as a moral obligation of all the members that are committed to the goals of an organization, community or state to report violations or acts of corruption that are likely to affect progress or the pursuit of a common good. Whistle-blowing is sometimes done in pursuit of personal commitment instead of that of the organization. Gillan (2003), stated that whistle blowers are persons who at their own danger and out of personal or public duty expose specific instances of wrong doing either in a private or public sector. The whistle-blower informs someone in authority or the public about a perceived dishonest or unlawful activities taking place in a public establishment, private organization or a firm. The alleged offence may be violation of law, fraud, health safety violation or corruption (Hannigan, 2006, Wim 2006, Taiwo 2015).

Uys cited in Taiwo (2015) on his part defined whistle-blowing as the disclosure of information regarding a suspected wrong doing to a higher authority in order for action to be taken if the disclosure is in the interest of members of the public. For Buckna and Kleiner cite in Taiwo (2015) a whistle blower is an individual who discloses to the public falsehood and corruption inspite of the individual being aware of the potential risk of such an action, which may involve loss of job. They noted further that whistle blowers are ethical driven employees who make disclosure with good intention about unethical activities in the workplace which ought to be investigated. Akinnaso (2016) viewed a whistle-



blower as a worker who reports certain wrong doing in pursuit of public interest. Therefore, whistle blowing is defined as the disclosure of alleged dishonest or illegal activities occurring in a government department, a public or a private organization or company. While the person who discloses the illegal activity or wrong doing is known as a whistle-blower (Ogbu, 2017, Onuegbulum, 2017, Kehinde and Osagie, 2017 and Taiwo, 2015).

Reviewing the various definitions provided, emphases were on report of wrong doing that affects the public. But the question that pops up is that at what point does wrong doing ceases to be personal and becomes a matter of public concern. Also, is a wrong doing to an individual not a matter of public interest since it involves a violation of regulations or laws collectively made by the public through their representatives in government? Whistle-blowing should rather be perceived as a disclosure of a wrong doing in an organization, society or any organized human setting irrespective of whether the wrong doing is meted-out to an individual or the public. Therefore in the light of the appraisal above the definition of Taiwo is adopted for the study.

Challenges of Whistle-Blowing Policy in Nigeria

Though the Whistle-Blowing Policy has recorded some noticeable success, the implementation of the policy is in no doubt marred with challenges that need to be surmounted in order to ensure the improved performance and the sustainability of the policy. Ogbu (207) and Wasiu (2018) both pointed out that it is a precarious decision to blow the whistle because it exposes the whistle-blower to harm and risks of all sorts. They also expressed concern that the policy may be used as a tool of personal vendetta or revenge because it is exclusively built on monetary motivation to potential whistle-blowers and not on moral obligation. The policy he argued that for this lack of moral motivation in the policy, the continuous support for and the sustainability of the policy is bleak. The concern of vendetta raised by Ogbu and Wasiu can be taken care of by law which will penalize frivolous and willfully misleading

whistle-blowing. Though, there are genuine concerns about weaknesses in the Policy, it is still better than not doing anything at all.

Bahal cited in Odah (2017) listed the challenges of whistle-blowing to include insufficient legal knowledge, lack of meaningful litigation, fear of reprisals, cultural and historical barriers and confidentiality regulations in the public service. Onuegbulam (2017) also intimated that whistle-blowing is beneficial to the society but exposes an individual to great risks such as death or harm to his/her family members, damage to reputation or profession, dismissal from work and negative labels from colleagues. Onuegbulam only focuses on the negative effects of whistle-blowing while the benefit to the individual and the entire society is ignored.

Using Survey descriptive research design and a sample size of 700 employees out of 2000 staff of two Local Governments and one Local Government in Lagos and Ogun State respectively, and using Parson's correlation, coefficient analysis, Taiwo (2015) found that whistle-blowers suffer in multiple ways such as punitive transfer, social exclusion, harassment, reprimands and dismissal from bosses and top management staff. Given the prevalence of poverty and unemployment in Nigeria, the fear of job loss, career damage and victimization could make people remain silent even if wrong doing is detected or observed. Taiwo though used adequate sample and parametric statistics in his analysis, the procedure and method of sampling are not disclosed. His deductions could only be generalized if probability sampling procedure is used in the selection of the sample.

Udo (2017) unfolded that the undue delay involved in the settlement of Ikoyi whistle-blower whose information led to the recovery of over ₦13,000,000,000 is one of the major challenge of the policy because it is an indication that the federal government is reneging on its part of the agreement and this will eventually erode public confidence on the policy which solely relies on the payment of reward as a driving force. Similarly, Ogundipe, 2017 reiterated that the



insincerity of the government to release the reward of the Ikoyi whistle-blowers except with intervention of the court is a formidable impediment to the continued success of the policy. Ogundipe also identified the corruption of security personnel as one of the major threat to the sustainability of the Whistle-Blowing Policy. He narrated that aside the Ikoyi whistle-blower and his two friends who accompanied him to EFCC office in Lagos to make the report about the hidden funds, the EFCC operators subsequently scaled-up the number of the informants to 9. It took the intervention of the lawyer of the whistle-blower to halt the fraud. The government later redeemed its image and the whistle-blower was paid. Sometimes, the delay may be due to official red-tapism rather than unwillingness to pay.

Lack of adequate protection for the whistle blowers has also come to the fore as one of the challenges militating against the success and sustainability of the policy. The policy statement states that where is established *prima facie* that a whistle-blower has suffered adverse treatment such as harassment, intimidation and victimisation and if proved by investigation, a disciplinary action shall be taken against the perpetrator in accordance with Public Service Rules (PSR) and other extant rules and restoration shall be made for any loss or harm suffered. But it has been argued that proactive and not reactive protection is better for whistle-blowers. Mr. Aaron Akase who exposed a ₦275,000,000 fraud in Police Service Commission (PSC) and two lecturers of University of Ilorin are some of the whistle-blowers who have experienced victimisation (Egbe, 2017). Many intending whistle-blowers may not be aware of the ill-treatment meted-out to the civil servants and hence may not get discouraged.

Theoretical Framework

The framework of analysis used in this study is the universal dignity theory. The universal dignity theory of whistle-blowing was propounded by Hoffman and McNulty (2010). The theory was formulated in response to De George (1986) position in his seminal publication on business ethics and whistle-blowing in organizations. He

being a stake-holder in business questioned the morality of whistle-blowing. His concerns were later articulated into ethical theory of whistle-blowing. In the theory he asserted that there are situations when external whistle-blowing by employees may be “morally prohibited” and “morally permitted” and morally required.

He postulated that external whistle-blowing in an organization is an expression of rebellion or insubordination to organization's principles and can only be justified by sound ethical concerns for it to be permissible. Therefore blowing the whistle when there is no evidence of any harm meant for the society or where false and fictitious information is reported out of mischief or vengeance is prohibited. The ambiguities of acts that are morally permissive and morally required in justification for whistle-blowing has been pinpointed by critics. Aside that, by setting the standard so high, De-George attempts to discourage whistle-blowing even in serious instances of misconduct. Again, his insistence on utilizing all internal mechanisms of internal reporting before external whistle-blowing could be embarked on or become morally permissive may predispose the whistle-blower to irrecoverable danger, especially in cases where the top-management of the organization sanctions the misconduct. This has been the typical scenario in Nigeria's public sector.

The universal dignity theory is very appropriate and so adopted for this study. It insists on premised on the tenet that humanity offer all human beings intrinsic worth or dignity, thus, the moral impetus to deny others their inherent dignity does not reside in any individual or group of individuals. Hence, universal dignity theory postulates that whistle-blowing is both permissible and it constitutes a duty to the extent that the act is the most effective means of demonstrating support for the inherent dignity of members of society. It is on the basis of this that universal dignity theory is considered as the most appropriate for the analysis of this study.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study is



survey. The choice of social survey is because it gives the researcher ample advantage in the collection of data from the population spread at ease and it is a distinctive means of getting systematic information of considerable magnitude. It is realistic and flexible. The population of this study comprises of 200,407 respondents in Abuja metropolis. The sample size of the research work is 507 persons selected using Watson (2001) statistical formula for sample size determination. The sampling technique used is multistage sampling. Questionnaire and in-depth interview were used in collecting primary data for the study from the sample size selected. The secondary data was collected from intensive review of literature in textbooks, journals, magazines, newspapers, bulletins, and other documents published and unpublished relevant to challenges of whistle blowing policy in Nigeria. The study makes use of descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage tables. Abuja Municipal Area Council is the study location, which comprise of districts such as Garki, Wuse, Maitama, Asokoro, Three Arms Zone, Central Area, Apo, Gudu, Jabi, Mabushi and Gwarimpa among others.

Results

This section presents, analyzes data and the findings in line with the research objective of the study.

Table 1: Respondents Opinion on Whether the Whistle-Blowing Policy has Challenges

Respondents Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Has challenges	461	91
Has no challenges	46	9
Total	507	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 1 unfolds that most of the Respondents (91) are of the opinion that the policy is marred with challenges. The Whistle-Blowing Policy has been assessed to be faced with many challenges which affect its successes as expected.

The interview conducted further affirmed that the policy has so many; one of the prominent

challenges identified by the interviewees is the non-enactment of law to buttress the policy in addition constitutional provisions of fundamental human rights and freedom of individuals. A respondent disclosed thus:

The point is, the major thing about the whistle-blowing thing is that it cannot be enforced and challenged by an aggrieved person due to lack of law backing it existence. For instance... even if government, say it is okay, what we have promised, we are not going to give up to that, we are even not going to give you anything, the court has decided, it is a policy, it is not a legal instrument. Perhaps, there is no greater challenge than that because it is a document that is based on trust and if the trust is displaced, then it is as empty as anything.

He also added that:

...the anti-corruption agencies had issue, the issue is the fact that we are guided by the law in our processes and being guided by the law, you have to be careful, when a whistle-blower bring an information, you are expected to process the information, because it is an information, you need to process it to see if it can be used as an intelligence information which an action can be taken. But you see, most times, the anti-graft agencies over-react on some issues which can be resolved within gentleman understanding. Come to think this, somebody gives useful information privately and you come to embarrass the person publicly....

Table 2: Age of Respondents and Challenges of Whistle-Blowing Policy

Challenges	Age of Respondents				
	18-25 years	26-35 years	36-45 years	46-above years	Total
Inadequate security	93 (41%)	47(42%)	31(42%)	36(39%)	207
Lack of government commitment to reward	72(31%)	37(33%)	17(23%)	24(26%)	150
Lack of legal backing	45(20%)	16(14%)	15(21%)	16(17%)	
Threat by organizations of whistle-blowers & corrupt persons	17(7%)	8(7%)	8(11%)	13(14%)	46
Others, specify	2(1%)	4(4%)	2(3%)	4(4%)	12
Total	229(100%)	112(100)	73(100%)	93(100%)	507

Source: Field Survey, 2021



Table 2 reveals that most of the respondents (42%) who identified inadequate security for whistle-blowers as the major challenge of the policy are within the age bracket of 26-35 and 36-45 years, for those who identified lack of government trust, most (33%) are also within the age bracket of 26-35 years, most (21%) who identified lack of legal back-up are within the age bracket of 35-46 years while most (14%) who saw threat by organization of whistle-blowers and corrupt persons fall within the age bracket of 45 years and above. The differences in opinions notwithstanding, the challenges of the Policy are numerous and the age of individuals to a large extent influences the understanding or perception of government policies and in this case, what constitutes the major challenge of the Whistle-Blowing Policy. Though, the unwillingness to report case lies on government's commitment to protect individuals giving the information.

Obviously, most respondents are concerned about their security in the hands of the anti-corruption agencies, else they be accused of giving them wrong information, misinformation, defamation etc.

The results of interview conducted with some civil/public servants captured the general position of the interviewees as reported below. As one of the police officers in Garki Area 11 aptly puts it:

When information is given, it is not in all cases that you are successful and it has even caused some embarrassment. A situation where information will be given, that certain money is moved into a certain place and we will go in there only to discover that the person that has even come to give us the information did not know of it, about the environment that he was talking about that money was being moved . . . and we have to apologize to some persons who we felt have been offended by the information brought to our knowledge, but still protect them in the long run. However, some people may not accept mere apology. In fact they will seek redress in court for whatever perceived wrong they have suffered by the action of the anti-corruption agencies.

One of the respondents also reiterated some of the challenges highlighted above and calls for immediate remedy. He said:

You know it is a policy now that is not backed by law, so the tendency for people not to want to give information is always there, because, the truth is that you have to think of yourself and your family security as paramount.

Implicit in the above is the problem of inadequate protection. As it appears now, many people are not satisfied with the security assurance of the government to whistle-blowers.

Table 3: Respondents Willingness to Blow the Whistle despite the Challenges

Willingness to Blow the Whistle	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Willing	250	51
Not willing	122	24
Undecided	125	25
Total	507	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Majority of the Respondents (51%) in table 3 are still willing to blow the whistle in spite of the challenges earlier identified. This willingness of the Respondents is not unconnected to the reward attached to whistle-blowing. Many respondents are still willing to take the risk because of the juicy reward involved.

In the interview conducted, most respondents affirmed that they are willing to blow the whistle not because of monetary reward that comes with the policy but to be a patriotic citizen. A civil servant in Garki Area 11 says:

It is an obligation to my fatherland, because we must be good to our country and to protect and promote the image of Nigeria in the eyes of others. If we failed to do it we will have worst tomorrow. It is my duty to keep exposing corrupt practices anywhere in Nigeria.



Table 4: Respondents' Opinion on Treatment Received by Whistle-blowers

Opinion of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Bad	205	40
Fair	259	51
Good	43	9
Total	507	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 4 divulges that 51% of the Respondents rate the treatment received by whistle-blowers as fair. Though, payment of reward to whistle-blowers was done but not after much delay. The non-prompt payment of the promised reward and the threat and pains suffered by some whistle-blowers before the government intervened in their plights may be responsible for the opinion of the Respondents.

Table 5: Sex of Respondents and Reasons for their Unfair Treatment

Reasons	Sex		
	Male	Female	Total
Late payment of reward	47(18%)	31(13%)	78(15%)
Maltreatment of whistle-blowers	29(11%)	52(22%)	81(16%)
Not willing to be protected	17(6%)	29(12%)	46(9%)
Others, specify	174(65%)	128(53%)	302(60%)
Total	267(100%)	240(100%)	507

Source: Field Survey, 2021

In table 5, majority of the Respondents (18%) were of the opinion that whistle-blowers were treated fairly due to late payment of reward are males, majority (22%) who link the bad treatment of whistle-blowers to their maltreatment are females, majority (12%) who are of the opinion that the unfair treatment of whistle-blowers is due to their inadequate protection are females while majority (65%) among the category of respondents who mentioned other unfair treatment are males. It can be said therefore that both male and female respondents hold different reasons for their position that whistle-blowers were treated unfairly. The data show very clearly that the people has different opinion on why whistleblowers are treated unfairly in Nigeria when compare to other countries of the world.

Table 6: Occupation of Respondents and Reasons for the Blame on Individuals Who Have Blown the Whistle

Reasons	Occupation				
	Civil/Public Servant	Trader/Business	Professional	Unemployed Person	Total
Risking their lives	10(4%)	8(9%)	7(14%)	9(7%)	34(7%)
Government is not sincere	5(3%)	3(3%)	8(3%)	5(3%)	21(4%)
The money was re-looted	6(3%)	4(4%)	8(7%)	9(7%)	27(5%)
Others, specify	188(90%)	75(83%)	27(85%)	135(85%)	425(84%)
Total	209(100%)	90(100%)	50(100%)	158(100%)	507

Source: Field Survey, 2021

As depicted in table 6 most of the Respondents (14%) who said the blame individuals who have blown the whistle because they risked their lives are professionals, those who blame them because the government is not sincere are 3% across the various occupations of respondents in the study, most (7%) of those who blame them because the money is re-looted here professionals and unemployed while most of the Respondents (90%) identified other reasons for the blame. This means that those who have blown the whistle vary across respondents vis-à-vis their occupations. This shows that, the concerns raised by respondents in the study need to be addressed in order to increase more participation of individuals in the Whistle-Blowing Policy.

Discussion

Findings from the study highlight various challenges confronting the Whistle-Blowing Policy in Nigeria. The challenges as identified in the study are inadequate protection for whistle-blowers, lack of government trust, lack of legal framework for the policy, threat by organization of whistle-blowers and the pervasive corruption in the system among others.

Inadequate protection for whistle-blowers is one of the major threats that undermine the sustainability of the Whistle-Blowing Policy. The activity of whistle-blowing portends dangers as targets of whistle-blowing will spare no effort to eliminate the whistle-blower if his/her identity is known. The absolute confidentiality of whistle-



blowers is not guaranteed as experienced so far has shown since the implementation of the policy. It was even reported that he was taken to the hospital due to the mental problem he developed as a result of delay in the payment of the promised reward. Besides, Nigeria security agencies, especially the Police, who are also part of the team of whistle-blowing, are being accused of revealing the identities of informants to criminals. The finding is in agreement with Onuegbulam (2017) who hinted in the literature that whistle-blowing is no doubt beneficial to the society, in eradicating corruption but it exposes individuals or the family members to risk of harm or death.

Similarly, finding from the study further reveals that the government in Nigeria does not have the trust of the citizens due to myriad of deceptions and broken promises in the past especially where money is involved. Even those that worked for the government such as contractors are being owed; civil servants and pensioners alike are also being owed despite the government's repeated promise of payment but to no avail. Some potential whistle-blowers may even be of the view that even if the reward is released, it may not get to them. Thus, some persons may choose not to even blow the whistle even if they have any information about hidden looted cash. The findings is in agreement with the opinion of Udo (2017) who unfolded that the undue delay that surrounded the payment of reward to the Ikoyi whistle-blower and whose disclosure led to the recovery of ₦13, 000, 000, 000 give the impression that the Federal Government is reneging on its promise and may erode public confidence which will eventually lead to the total collapse of the Policy because it relies on payment of reward solely. Similarly, Ogundipe (2017) also maintained that the insincerity of the government to prompt release of the reward of the Ikoyi whistle-blower except with the intervention of the court reinforces the existing distrust Nigerians harbors against the government. He therefore noted that the action of the government is a serious impediment to the continuous success of the policy.

Another challenge identified in the study is the absence of legal frame-work for the policy. The legal frame-work will ensure that whistle-blowers are protected from ill-treatment and can challenge non-payment of reward and make other claims. As it is now, whistle-blowers largely depend on the mercy of the government to be paid their rewards. Though, some may contemplate law suit like the case of Ikoyi whistle-blower, legal experts are of the view that it may not guarantee success all the time. This finding is vividly captured by Akinaso (2016) in the literature; he argued that the absence of legal framework for the policy is an impediment to the policy because the government can renege on its promise of compensation of reward at any time.

All organizations will be hard on any whistle-blower identified and will be subjected to all manner of ill-treatment and psychological trauma. In fact, he will suffer social exclusion and the working environment will be made hostile for him/her and may even be suspended or dismissed based on the alleged violation of oath of secrecy. Some could even be denied promotion and training or retraining opportunities.

Taiwo (2015) noted that whistle-blowers suffer in multiple ways such as punitive transfer, social exclusion, harassment and dismissal from work. And for fear of jobless, career damage and victimization, in any people will remain silent even if wrong-doing is detected or observed. The universal dignity theory propounded by Hoffman and McNulty their theory highlighted that human safety is most critical condition that determines the appropriateness or otherwise of whistle-blowing. They are of the view that if the safety of individuals is not guaranteed, the whistle should not be blown.

Conclusion/Recommendations

Based on the research findings, one can conclude that the major challenges associated with whistle blowing policy include lack of government commitment to protect the whistle blowers, absence of legislation backing whistle blowing policy in Nigeria. Therefore as a matter of urgency, the public disclosure bill before the



national Assembly should be passed into law without further delay. Again, a comprehensive security policy for whistle-blowers and prompt payment of reward will lead to a tremendous success of the policy. In the light of the findings noted in the research, the study recommended that:

- I. Legal framework should be enacted by the government to encourage the co-operation of all civil/public servants in the country to expose corrupt practices in their organizations and voluntarily participate in whistle-blowing.
- ii. Federal Government should provide adequate protection for whistle-blowers in order to promote effective whistle blowing in all public organizations in Nigeria. Self-preservation is the primary consideration of any individual before embarking on any action, as such if the need is not met; an individual is likely willing to refrain from such action. Hence, the protection of whistle-blowers should be one of the top priorities of the policy in order to encourage more disclosures.
- iii. Federal Government should be prompt in payment of reward promised to whistle-blowers is mouth-watering and capable of pushing more people to take the risk to blow the whistle.
- iv. The need for public education to sensitize the masses who have imbibed the erroneous notion that the theft of public funds is a normal activity should be considered an urgent national task
- v. Public education and enlightenment should be intensified to increase awareness on whistle-blowing policy. The emphasis should not be on reward alone as a motivating factor but patriotism should be incorporated into the campaign as well. If the public sees Whistle-Blowing Policy as a national or civic obligation, it will add momentum to the campaign against graft.

Both the conventional and the social media especially can be utilized by the National Orientation Agency (NOA) to carry out the enlightenment.

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