



WHISTLE-BLOWING POLICY AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR ANTI-CORRUPTION CAMPAIGN AMONGST CIVIL SERVANTS IN RIVERS STATE

Wokocha, Kelechi Da-kaladokubo¹
kelechiwokocha@yahoo.ca

Babalola, James Olatunde²
olababalola69@gmail.com

*Department of Business Education,
Faculty of Technical and Science Education,
Rivers State University,
Port Harcourt, Nigeria*

Abstract

The study investigated whistle-blowing policy as an instrument for anti-corruption campaign amongst civil servants in Rivers State. The research adopted a descriptive survey design. The population for the study was made up of 5174 core ministerial civil servants drawn from 26 ministries in Rivers State. A sample size of 370 respondents was derived via the application of the Taro Yamen's formula. Three research questions and three hypotheses were posed to guide the study. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Whistle-Blowing as an Instrument for Anti-Corruption Campaign Questionnaire" (WIACQ). The reliability of the research instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha method and a reliability coefficient of .82 was obtained. The instrument was validated by three experts from the department of business education and measurement and evaluation; all of Faculty of Technical and Science Education, Rivers State University. A total of 362 copies of the questionnaires only, were retrieved and analysed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions and t-test statistics for the hypothesis at .05 level of significance. The results obtained indicated a low extent of participation in whistle-blowing by civil servants in Rivers State and this is as a result of several constraints confronting the policy. Thus, the researchers recommended among others that government should create the enabling environment for whistle-blowers and this will possibly attract its benefits in the service.

Keywords: Whistle-blowing Policy, Anti-Corruption Campaign, Civil Servants

Introduction

The issue of corruption has remained a turbulent factor bedeviling the public and private sectors of our economy in this nation, Nigeria. It has eaten deep into our public institutions, causing grave challenges to the delivery of service as required. Okwoli (2004, as cited in Omodero & Okafor, 2016, p. 23) asserted that the Nigerian society is filled with stories of wrong practices such as stories of ghost workers on the pay roll of Ministries, Extra-ministerial Departments and Parastatals, frauds, embezzlements and setting ablaze of offices housing sensitive documents and that corruption are found everywhere in the country. Accordingly, Appah and Appiah (2010) maintained that cases of fraud is prevalent in the Nigerian public sector that every segment of the public service, could seem to be involved in one way or the other in some of these nasty acts. Corruption, according to International Monetary Fund is the abuse of authority or trust for private benefit and is a temptation indulged in not only by public officials but also by those in positions of trust or authority in private enterprises or non-profit organizations (Wolfe & Gurgun, 2000). Osimen,



Adenegan and Balogun (2013) opined that corruption is an effort made to secure wealth or power through illegal means for private benefit. They stressed further that corruption has coexisted with human society for a long time and remains one of the problems in many developing economies with devastating consequences. As recorded in Onuigbo and Eme (2015);

Transparency International defined corruption as involving behaviour on the part of officials in the public sector, whether politicians or civil servants, in which they improperly and unlawfully enrich themselves or those close to them, by the misuse of the public power entrusted to them” while the ICPC Act (2000) states that corruption includes bribery, fraud and other related offences. No doubt, the scope of corruption is elastic and includes: use of one’s office for pecuniary advantages, gratification, influence peddling, insincerity in advice with the aim of gaining advantage, less than a full day’s work for a full day’s pay, tardiness and slovenliness etc.

Corruption can therefore be viewed as unethical act perpetrated by public/private office holders for pecuniary or material benefits. However, relevant government structures and stakeholders have continued to make efforts in curbing this menace; these can be viewed as the anti-corruption campaign. This had led to the establishment of several anti-corruption agencies like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC). Most recently is the effort in promotion of the Whistle-blowing policy by the Federal Government in order to protect and compensate whistle-blowers as to minimize corruption in the system. The Federal Government had pledge to protect whistle-blowers and assured them of several benefits, amongst which is the reward of five per cent on any one billion recovered and two point five per cent on any amount over five billion (Gabriel, 2017).

Whistle-blowing is defined as disclosure of actions by members of an organization of illegal and immoral acts perpetrated by the organization and organization members to persons or organizations that may bring about a change (Boatright, 2003). Also, International Labour Organization (2005, as cited in Fasua&Osifo, 2017, p. 19) viewed whistle- blowing as the report by employees or former employees of illegal, irregular, dangerous or unethical practices by employers. Thus, whistle-blowing is the act of revealing unethical activities within an organization. The aim of the whistle-blower is to put a halt to the act of corruption or in the case where the act has already been perpetrated, it will help expose the perpetrator and in turn aid possible refund or serve as a bases for prosecution or dispense of justice. Whistle-blowing is widely accredited as one of the most powerful method to prevent and detect corruption and malpractices (Transparency International, 2009). According to Onakoya and Moses, (2016), whistle-blowing deters misconduct within institutions by increasing the possibility of uncovering immoral, illegitimate and illegal practices and punishing its perpetrators. However, the whistle-blowing policy in Nigeria as it’s been currently promoted by the Federal Government seem to have a dull feet within the states apparatus and this is not different in the case of Rivers State that has recorded several complaints of looted public funds from one administration to another. Hence, it was the intension of the



researchers to see the reactions of civil servants in Rivers State as regards the whistle-blowing policy.

Civil Service is the apparatus which government of the day utilizes for implementation of set goals and objectives. It is made up of government institutions ranging from Ministries, Departments and Agencies that execute government policies. According to Ikellionwu (2011), Civil Service is the instrument which government uses to regulate and manage all aspects of the society. She stressed further that the condition of a society is largely determined by the public service. Besides, it is from this government bureaucracy that all the other institutions obtain various types of approval, license and permits which are critical to their existence and operation. Thus, a civil servant is a civilian public sector employee working for a government department or agency (Okoroma, 2010). The civil servants are the driving force of government institutions who work with other political appointees for the achievement of the goals and objectives of the government. They keep records of government activities, whether financial or other wise and it is presumed that a successful fraud cannot be realistic without the assistance of a civil servant.

Statement of the Problem

The importance of the anti-corruption campaign in curbing corruption and ensuring effective service delivery amongst public institutions cannot be over emphasized. Whistle-blowing is a powerful tool to prevent and detect corruption and malpractices. It deters officers for engaging in corrupt activities and encourages accountability and transparency that eventually leads to better service delivery. However, very few persons have decided to blow the whistle despite the attractive pecuniary gain attached. The refusal to report wrongdoings that has been observed may be closely related with the fear of retaliation by the employers or persons being alleged for malpractices (Transparency International 2009, as cited in Razak, Noor & Zakaria, 2015, p. 35). Accordingly, Ogunbamila (2014, p. 146) while expressing concerns for the whistle-blowing policy;

Reported that whistleblowing was strongly connected with retaliation from culprits, which culminated in strained relationships between whistleblowers and supervisors and that whistle-blowing may also have adverse effects on the whistleblowers' access to work-related benefits (Rehg et al, 2008). He asserted that studies have demonstrated that, apart from perceived helplessness, fear of victimization and other risks associated with whistleblowing can discourage employees from engaging in whistleblowing or reduce whistleblowers' willingness to disclose subsequent corrupt acts (Chassang & Miquel, 2012; Near, Regh, Van Scotter & Miceli, 2004).

Taiwo (2015) maintained that whistle-blowers suffer in various ways including ostracism, harassment, punishment, punitive transfers, reprimands and dismissal. He stressed further that bosses and top managers are responsible for many attacks of whistle-blowers but coworkers often join in or do nothing often due to fear that they could be the next victim. Accordingly, Onakoya and Moses (2016) revealed that employees often stay silent, due to a number of reasons which may include the



fear of retaliation, apathy, lack of faith in the system, absence of incentive, lack of protection and support. However, the anti-corruption campaigns may not be successful without effective whistle-blowing (Oakley & White, 2006) and Ogunbamila (2014) revealed that no adequate research effort has investigated the extent to which employees engage in whistle-blowing in Nigeria. Thus, the researchers investigated the whistle-blowing policy as an anti-corruption instrument amongst civil servants in Rivers State.

Purpose of the Study

The objective of the study was to investigate the whistle-blowing policy as an anti-corruption instrument amongst civil servants in Rivers State.

Specifically, the study sought to;

1. Determine the extent of participation in whistle-blowing by civil servants in Rivers State.
2. Determine the constraints of participating in whistle-blowing by civil servants in Rivers State.
3. Determine the benefits of participating in whistle-blowing by civil servants in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study;

1. What is the extent of participation in whistle-blowing by civil servants in Rivers State?
2. What are the constraints of participating in whistle-blowing by civil servants in Rivers State?
3. What are the benefits of participating in whistle-blowing by civil servants in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in mean ratings of male and female civil servants on extent of participation in whistle-blowing in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant difference in mean ratings of male and female civil servants on constraints of participating in whistle-blowing in Rivers State.
3. There is no significant difference in mean ratings of male and female civil servants on benefits of participating in whistle-blowing in Rivers State.

Method

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study was 5174 core ministerial civil servants drawn from 26 ministries; Agriculture, Budget and Economic Planning, Chieftaincy and Community Affairs, Commerce and industry, Culture and Tourism, Education, Energy and Natural Resources, Employment Generation and Empowerment, Environment, Finance, health, Housing, Information and Communication, Justice, lands and Survey, Local Government Affairs, Power, Social Welfare and Rehabilitation, Special Duties, Sports, Transport, Urban Development, Water Resources and Rural Development, Women Affairs, Works and Youth Development. The Taro Yamen's formula was used to derive a sample size of 370 respondents that was used for the study. The instrument used was a



structured questionnaire titled “Whistle-Blowing as Instrument for Anti-Corruption Campaign Questionnaire” (WIACQ). The instrument provided response to the three research questions, using 20 Items weighted with a 4-point rating scale of “Very High Extent” (VHE) – 4 points, “High Extent” (HE) – 3 points, “Low Extent” (LE) – 2 points, “Very Low Extent” (VLE)– 1 point for items 1-5 and strongly agree (SA), agree (A), Disagree (DS), strongly Disagree (SD) for items 6-20. To establish the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was subjected to face validity by two experts from the Department of Business Education and one from Measurement and Evaluation all of Faculty of Technical and Science Education in Rivers State University. To ensure the consistency of the instrument the Cronbach Alpha method was used to establish a reliability coefficient of .82. The researchers administered the questionnaires personally to the respondents. A total of 362 questionnaires only were retrieved and used for the study. Data analysis was done using the mean and standard deviation to analyze the research questions while t-test statistics was used to test the hypothesis. The mean was obtained by the summation of all responses as assigned to a rating scale in an item divided by the total number of responses: $4+3+2+1/4 = 2.50$. The mean score of 2.50 and above was accepted, while those below 2.50 were rejected.

Results

Research Question 1

What is the extent of participation in whistle-blowing by civil servants in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean Rating on Extent of Participation in Whistle-blowing by Civil Servants in Rivers State

S/N	Statements	Male(177)		Female (185)		Total Res.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remarks
		\bar{X}	STD	\bar{X}	STD				
1.	I report contract inflations and other managerial fraud in my department.	1.59	0.94	1.57	1.00	572	1.58	0.97	VLE
2.	I report absentee staff that collects salary without performing duty.	1.53	0.91	1.48	0.92	547	1.51	0.92	VLE
3.	I report officers that request and collect kick-backs to perform their duty.	1.43	0.81	1.46	0.86	525	1.45	0.84	VLE
4.	I raise alarm and turn down gratifications from corrupt clients.	1.50	0.91	1.49	0.86	543	1.50	0.89	VLE
5.	I report cases of fund diversion.	1.45	0.86	1.42	0.82	521	1.44	0.84	VLE
Total Mean/SD		7.50	4.43	7.42	4.46		7.48	4.46	
Grand Mean/SD		1.50	0.89	1.48	0.89		1.50	0.89	VLE

Source: Research Data, 2017.

The data presented in table 1 shows the responses of the respondents in the various mean scores of 1.58, 1.51, 1.45, 1.50 and 1.44 which implies a low extent to



reporting contract inflation and managerial fraud, payment to absentee staff, collection of kickbacks, corrupt clients as well as issues on diversion of funds. The table also revealed a grand mean of 1.50 and a grand standard deviation of 0.89 which indicated that there is a low extent of participation in whistle-blowing by civil servants in Rivers State.

Research Question 2

What are the constraints of participating in whistle-blowing by civil servants in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean Rating on Constraints of Participating in Whistle-blowing by Civil Servants in Rivers State

S/N	Statements	Male (177)		Female (185)		Total Res.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remarks
		\bar{X}	STD	\bar{X}	STD				
6.	Fear of being attack hinders participation.	3.54	0.84	3.51	0.86	1278	3.53	0.85	SA
7.	Perceived lack of integrity in the government anti-corruption campaign is a major setback.	3.57	0.83	3.55	0.83	1289	3.56	0.83	SA
8.	Absence of legal framework backing up the anti-corruption campaign at the state level.	3.68	0.67	3.65	0.66	1329	3.67	0.67	SA
9.	Stress associated with being a witness.	3.60	0.80	3.57	0.80	1300	3.59	0.80	SA
10.	Lack of confidence on our law enforcement agencies and judicial system.	3.51	0.95	3.45	0.95	1260	3.48	0.95	SA
11.	Fear of corrupt officers who are perceived as being too powerful.	3.47	0.95	3.42	1.00	1249	3.45	0.98	
12.	Fear of being exposed.	3.46	0.97	3.43	1.00	1249	3.45	0.99	
Total Mean/SD		24.83	6.01	24.58	6.10		24.73	6.07	
Grand Mean/SD		3.55	0.86	3.51	0.87		3.53	0.87	SA

Source: Research Data, 2017.

The data presented in table 2 shows the responses of the respondents in the various mean scores of 3.53, 3.56, 3.67, 3.59, 3.48, 3.45 and 3.45 which implies that the respondents agreed that the fear of being attacked, perceived lack of integrity of the campaign, absence of legal framework, stress of being a witness, lack of confidence on law enforcement agencies and judicial system, fear of powerful officer as well as fear of being exposed are major setbacks to participation in whistle-blowing. The table also revealed a grand mean of 3.53 and a grand standard deviation of 0.87 which indicated that the respondents strongly agreed that the above stated setbacks are major constraints of participating in whistle-blowing by civil servants in Rivers State.

Research Question 3



What are the benefits of participating in whistle-blowing by civil servants in Rivers State?

Table 3: Mean Rating on Benefits of Participating in Whistle-blowing by Civil Servants in Rivers State

S/N	Statements	Male (177)		Female (185)		Total Res.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remarks
		\bar{X}	STD	\bar{X}	STD				
13.	Helps in preventing fraudulent activities.	3.55	0.82	3.49	0.92	1274	3.52	0.87	SA
14.	Helps in termination of fraudulent activities.	3.60	0.80	3.43	1.00	1274	3.52	0.90	SA
15.	Helps in recovery of looted public funds and properties.	3.50	0.94	3.42	1.00	1253	3.46	0.97	SA
16.	Helps in preservation of state properties and improved service delivery.	3.68	0.67	3.65	0.66	1329	3.67	0.67	SA
17.	Helps to build positive public perception towards government agencies.	3.54	0.84	3.51	0.86	1278	3.53	0.85	SA
18.	Helps to promote public good and safer society.	3.51	0.95	3.45	1.00	1260	3.48	0.98	SA
19.	Helps to ensure accountability and transparency in governance.	3.57	0.83	3.55	0.83	1289	3.56	0.83	SA
20	Helps to promote work organizational ethics	3.60	0.80	3.57	0.80	1300	3.59	0.80	SA
Total Mean/SD		28.55	6.65	28.07	7.07		28.33	6.87	
Grand Mean/SD		3.57	0.83	3.51	0.88		3.54	0.86	SA

Source: Research Data, 2017.

The data presented in table 3 shows the responses of the respondents in the various mean scores of 3.52, 3.52, 3.46, 3.67, 3.53, 3.48, 3.56 and 3.59, which implies that the respondents agreed that whistle-blowing helps in fraud prevention, fraud termination, recovery of looted funds, preserves state properties and improve service delivery, builds positive public perception towards government, promotes public good and safer society, ensures accountability and transparency and promotes organisational ethics. The table also revealed a grand mean of 3.54 and a grand standard deviation of 0.86 which indicated that the respondents strongly agreed that the above stated factors are major benefits of participating in whistle-blowing by civil servants in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in mean ratings of male and female civil servants on extent of participation in whistle-blowing in Rivers State.



Table 4:t-test Result on Extent of Participation in Whistle-blowing in Rivers State

Respondents	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	t- Cal Value	t- Crit Value	L/Sig	Decision
Male	1.50	0.89	360	0.21	1.97	0.05	Accepted
Female	1.48	0.89					

Source: Research Data, 2017.

Table 4 above revealed a t-calculated value of 0.21 which is less than the standard t-critical value of 1.97; thus, the null hypothesis was accepted. The result therefore was that there is no significant difference in mean ratings of male and female civil servants on extent of participation in whistle-blowing in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in mean ratings of male and female civil servants on constraints of participating in whistle-blowing in Rivers State.

Table 5:t-test Result on Constraints of Participating in Whistle-blowing in Rivers State

Respondents	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	t- Cal Value	t- Crit Value	L/Sig	Decision
Male	3.55	0.86	360	0.44	1.97	0.05	Accepted
Female	3.51	0.87					

Source: Research Data, 2017.

Table 5 above revealed a t-calculated value of 0.44 which is less than the standard t-critical value of 1.97; thus, the null hypothesis was accepted. The result therefore was that there is no significant difference in mean ratings of male and female civil servants on constraints of participating in whistle-blowing in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference in mean ratings of male and female civil servants on benefits of participating in whistle-blowing in Rivers State.

Table 6:t-test Result on Benefitsof Participating in Whistle-blowing in Rivers State

Respondents	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	t- Cal Value	t- Crit Value	L/Sig	Decision
Male	3.57	0.83	360	0.67	1.97	0.05	Accepted
Female	3.51	0.88					

Source: Research Data, 2017.



Table 6 above revealed a t-calculated value of 0.67 which is less than the standard t-critical value of 1.97; thus, the null hypothesis was accepted. The result therefore was that there is no significant difference in mean ratings of male and female civil servants on benefits of participating in whistle-blowing in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

One of the findings of this study was that the participation in whistle-blowing by civil servants in Rivers State is not encouraging. The study revealed that both male and female civil servants find it difficult to report corrupt activities; be it contract inflation or other managerial fraud, payment to absentee staff, collection of kickbacks, corrupt clients as well as issues on diversion of funds. Thus, the state records a low extent of participation in whistle-blowing by civil servants. This finding is in agreement with Transparency International (2009, as cited in Razak *et al.*, 2015, p. 35) who acknowledge refusal of employees to report wrongdoings and observed that it may be closely related with the fear of retaliation by the employers or persons being alleged for malpractices. The finding is also in agreement with Onakoya and Moses (2016) who revealed that employees often stay silent and that it is as a result of fear of retaliation, apathy; lack of faith in the system, absence of incentive, lack of protection and support. Hence, the low participation in whistle-blowing by civil servant in Rivers State is not far from the challenges associated with the policy.

The findings also revealed that fear of being attacked, perceived lack of integrity of the campaign, absence of legal framework, stress of being a witness, lack of confidence on law enforcement agencies and judicial system, fear of powerful officers involved as well as fear of being exposed are major setbacks to participation in whistle-blowing. This finding is in agreement with *Rehg et al.*, (2008, as cited in Ogunbamila, 2014, p. 146) who discovered that whistleblowing was strongly connected with retaliation from culprits that culminated in strained relationships between whistleblowers and supervisors and that whistle-blowing may also have adverse effects on the whistle-blowers' access to work-related benefits. It is also in agreement with Taiwo (2015) who maintained that whistle-blowers suffer in various ways including ostracism, harassment, punishment, punitive transfers, reprimands and dismissal. These constraints obviously affect the extent to which civil servants participate in whistle-blowing; while they fear to secure their lives, on the other hand they tend to protect their jobs.

The findings revealed that whistle-blowing as an anti-corruption instrument attracts several benefits; ranging from fraud prevention, fraud termination, recovery of looted funds, preservation of state properties and improved service delivery, building of positive public perception towards government, promoting public good and safer society, ensuring accountability and transparency as well as promotion of organisational ethics. This finding aligns with the assertion of Transparency International (2009), that whistle-blowing is one of the most powerful methods to prevent and detect corruption and malpractices. It also agreed with Onakoya and Moses, (2016) who revealed that whistle-blowing deters misconduct within institutions by increasing the possibility of uncovering immoral, illegitimate and



illegal practices and punishing its perpetrators. Thus, the implementation of the whistle-blowing policy will attract good governance and better service delivery.

Conclusion

Whistle-blowing is no doubt a relevant instrument for the anti-corruption campaign that attracts several benefits but it remains an inactive policy at the state level as civil servants find it worrisome to participate fully. Whistleblowing is strongly connected or associated with retaliation from culprits and results to strained relationship between whistleblowers and their superiors (culprits) in service; leading to harassment, punishment, punitive transfers, reprimands or dismissal of whistleblowers from service. Thus, lack of faith, fear of retaliation, apathy, lack of incentive, lack of adequate protection cum poor legal framework, stress of being a witness, fear of turning the case against the whistleblower and lack of confidence in law enforcement agencies are major factors hindering the participation of Rivers State civil servants in whistle-blowing. These constraints associated with the practice of the whistle-blowing policy causes a major setback in participation by civil servants in Rivers State and demands urgent attention if corruption must be nipped on board.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made;

1. Government at the state level should encourage participation in the whistle-blowing policy by creating a conducive and safe atmosphere for whistleblowers.
2. The necessary legal backings should be given to the whistle-blowing policy at the state level to encourage full participation.
3. State government should emulate the federal government by rolling out policy that will stipulate payment of certain per cent of recovered loot to whistleblowers.



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