



Personality Dynamics and Whistle-Blowing among Selected Ministries of Public Sector in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the nexus between personality dynamics and whistle-blowing among selected public ministries in Nigeria. The study was hinged on theory of planned behaviour developed by Ajzen Fishbein which holds that human behaviour is guided by three considerations: *behavioural-beliefs normative-beliefs* and *control-beliefs*. In order to carry out the study, questionnaires were administered to one hundred and ninety-three (193) employees of three (3) public ministries Delta State, Nigeria. Three (3) personality dynamics (openness to experience, conscientiousness, and extroversion) were employed and data obtained in the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values), post-estimation statistics (variance inflation factor) and inferential statistics (Lawley correlation). Lawley correlation result indicated that the three (3) personality dynamics significantly affect whistle-blowing among the selected public sector ministries. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that public sector authorities should gear efforts towards integrating within the internal disclosure policies via code of ethics, the value of honest reporting, willingness to support whistle-blowing as well as devising mechanisms to silence and/or punish whistle-blowers via retaliatory actions.

Keywords: Personality dynamics; Whistle-blowing; Openness to Experience; Extroversion; Conscientiousness; Public sector

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the years, there has been notable growth in industrialization in Nigeria and the rest of the world. Growth in industrialization has brought about the widespread of democratic system, increased prosperity, wealth and diversification of local economies (Okoro & Egberi, 2019; and Egberi & Ajiri, 2017). On the other hand, it created remarkable degree of fraud, corruption and environmental destruction among organizations, whether public or private (Egberi & Osio, 2019; and Okoye, Okoro & Salubi, 2017). Thus, to inhibit the fraud, corruption and environmental destruction pervasiveness, international, national organizations and stakeholders have paid a beam-light on these social vices via whistle-blowing mechanism (Buckna & Kleiner, 2021).

Fasua and Osifo (2017) see whistle-blowing as a framework or mechanism for disclosing illegal and unethical practices in an organization to relevant or constituted authorities for corrective actions. Berry (2014) described whistle-blowing as a means of reporting wrong -doings or raising concern about incidents that occurred in the past, present or perceived to occur in a future time. Lavena (2016) maintained that whistle-blowers are inexorably opposed due to the habitual unethical acts and conflicts of interests between them and the organization, coupled with the lack of protections for whistle-blowers. More so, unethical acts may affect not only the organization but market performances such as capital market, stock prices and their likes (Okoro, 2016; and Okoro, 2014)

Madu-Chimau, Egbunike and Okoro (2020) opined that fraud or fraudulent practices has become a commonplace to an extent that the whistle-blowing mechanisms are largely ignoring systematic fraud, thus making whistle-blowing policies futile in both private and public sectors. In the Nigerian context, fraud has become organized such that very few people in government, businesses and the society still have moral standing to fracture the moral whip against perpetrators of fraud (Egbunike & Okoro, 2017; and Sunday, 2015). The lack of success in activities of whistle-blowing according to Onakoya, Adebisi and Chinonye (2016), have been blamed on various problems whistle-blower encounter in the aspects of ostracism, harassment, chastisement, castigatory transfer, reprimand, dismissal, etc.

The Nigerian public sector (government ministries and parastatals) has been disparaged for having towering rates of fraudulent activities which has become a normal way of life (Egberi, 2015). Fraudulent activities according to Brennan and Kelly (2017) include bribery and corruption, ghost-workers, mismanagement of public funds, absenteeism among others. Thus, people who tend to engage in whistle-blowing activities most at times, end up being victimized, stagnated, demoted, or in extreme cases, sacked (Indriasih, 2016). Consequent upon this, whistle-blowing activities in the public sector have been undermined, due to the fact that whistle-blowers feel insecure to raise their voices when they construe any fraudulent activities.

Owing to the above contentions, it is very vital that people (whistle-blowers) speak up in the face of wrong-doing and not just being a voiceless onlooker. Prior studies had shown that the personality attributes of the whistle-blowers tend to influence whistle-blowing activities (Purnima, 2014; Rohana, Arisb,

Mardziyaha, Zainanb & MdAminb, 2015; and Dworkin & Baucus, 2018). Fundamental among the personality traits/dynamics include but not limited to openness to experience, conscientiousness and extroversion (Casematis & Wortley, 2013; and Miceli, Near, Rehg & Van-Scotter, 2012). In this study, three (3) personality dynamics as they influence whistle-blowing activities in the Nigerian public sector was x-rayed. Against this backdrop, it has become imperative to examine the effect of personality dynamics on whistle-blowing in the Nigerian public sector.

2. THEORETICAL LITERATURE

A predominant definition of whistle-blowing is the disclosing of certain forms of wrong-doing by organization members of the illegal or illegitimate practices under the control of employers to persons/organizations that may be able to effect corrective measures (Tan & Ong, 2011). Whistle-blowing according to Liyanarachchi and Newdick (2009), is raising concerns about incidents that occurred or may likely occur in an organized setting and the cover up of such incidents. Practically, whistle-blowers have a sense of moral standard, which passionately drive them in making decisions on whether to blow the whistle or not (Zhang, Chiu & Wei, 2009).

Despite the intents of whistle-blowers to protect public good, they are at times perceived negatively and glimpsed as disloyal or disgruntled employees. Thus, whistle-blowers tend to disclose observed wrongdoings, which in his/her judgment is considered illegitimate or illegal. According to De-Maria (2005), whistle-blowing behavior can be internally or externally disclosed while the whistle-blower can choose to report formally or informally, and to be anonymous or identified personality. While internal whistle-blowing refers to disclosing wrongdoings outside the regular chain of command (e.g. confidential hotlines), external whistle-blowing entails disclosing wrongdoing to people outside the organization (Casematis & Wortley, 2013; and Miceli et al, 2012).

According to Miceli, et al (2021), most external whistle-blowers blow the whistle internally first, with less detrimental effects to the organization. External whistle-blowing is seen as the most effective means for disclosing wrong-doings than the internal whistle-blowing due to the fact that it sparks up investigation or remedial actions by the organization (Onakoya, et al 2016). Thus, the choice of internal or external mechanisms will prompt diverse results in the form of threats and reactions to the whistle-blower, the organization and the society at large.

The study was hinged on the theory of planned behaviour (TPBH) which was developed by Ajzen Fishbein (Ajzen, 1991 as cited in Chiezey Onu, 2013). The TPBH explains that human behaviour is guided by three (3) forms of considerations – *behavioural-beliefs* (i.e. beliefs about the probable outcomes of behaviour and evaluations of the outcomes); *normative-beliefs* (beliefs about normative expectation of others and motivation to conform with the expectations); and *control-beliefs* (beliefs about presence of dynamics that may ease or impede performance of behaviour and perceived power of the factors) (Ajzen, 1991 as cited in Egberi & Egberi, 2020).

The underlying axiom of TPBH is that intent is the immediate determinant of behaviour, even though empirical researches have revealed a weak relationship between intent to act and actual behavioural performance; TPBH however suffices for our study on personality dynamics and whistle-blowing and it has been used by prior studies. Based on the TPB, whistle-blowing behaviour will be influenced by employees' personality like openness to experience, conscientiousness, and extroversion towards whistle-blowing behaviour or attitude.

Personality is formed by diverse dynamics such as beliefs, social norms, sensitivity to the environment, background, etc (Egberi & Egberi, 2020). These dynamics of personality influence people and others in forming a whistle-blowing intention. TPBH is limited in explaining fully the whistle-blowing decision-making process as it absolutely ignores impact of institutional structure and environmental dynamics in an organisation.

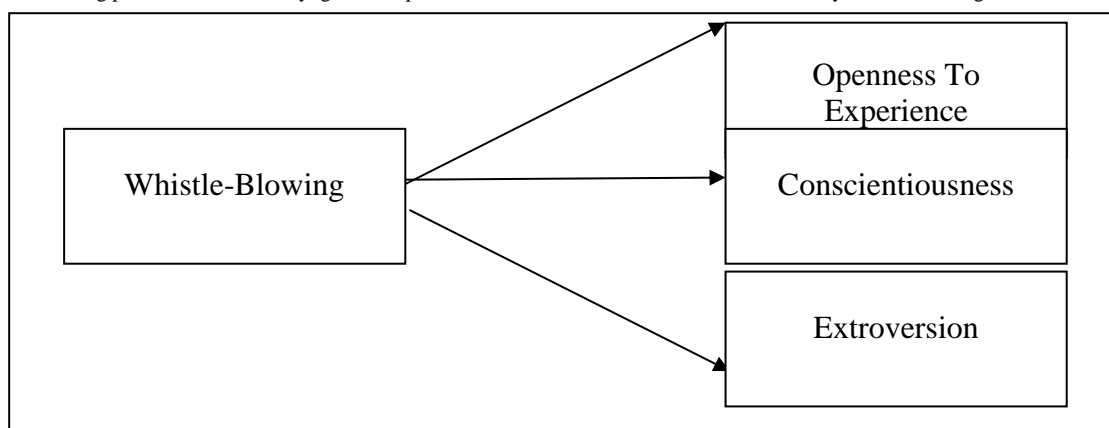


Figure 1: Theoretical Model of the Study

Conceptualized by the Researcher (2023)

Figure 1 showed the theoretical relationship between personality dynamics (openness to experience, conscientiousness and extroversion) and whistle-blowing as groundwork for estimating for the study's empirical model.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed the descriptive survey method and the study population comprised of three (3) ministries in Delta State (Ministry of Finance, Mineral Resources and Trade and Commerce). The study population comprised of the three hundred and seventy-three (373) employees in the ministries in Delta State of Nigeria. The study sample was arrived at by applying the Taro-Yamane sample size determination formula.

Using the Taro-Yamane sample size determination formula, a sample size of one hundred and ninety-three (193) was obtained. The data collection method was the questionnaire, which was administered on employees of the three (3) selected ministries in Delta State of Nigeria. The questionnaire was designed on 5-point-rating scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree and disagree.

The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient method was used in establishing the reliability of the research instrument. A pilot-test of thirty (30) respondents who do not form part of the study were administered the questionnaire. Data obtained were analyzed to ascertain the level of internal consistency of the instrument. The instrument yielded Cronbach Alpha of 0.84(personality dynamics) and 0.80(whistle-blowing). Thus, the researcher sees the instrument as suitable for the study, since Cronbach Alpha coefficients exceeded 0.5 as suggested by Cronbach.

Data obtained were analysed using descriptive (mean, standard deviation, minimum value and maximum value), post-estimation (variance inflation factor) and inferential (Lawley correlation) statistical techniques. The dependent variable is whistle-blowing (consisting of internal and external reporting whistle-blowing practices) and the independent variable is personality dynamics(openness to experience, conscientiousness, and extroversion). The statistical analysis was done via the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 25.0).

4. RESULTS

Table 1: Descriptive Results for Personality Dynamics and Whistle-Blowing

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min. Value	Max. Value
Whistle-blowing	3.3013	0.3019	1	5
Openness to Experience	3.8835	0.1600	1	5
Conscientiousness	3.9259	0.2625	1	5
Extroversion	3.8611	0.2464	1	5

Source: Field Work, 2023

Table 1 showed the descriptive results for personality dynamics (openness to experience, conscientiousness and extroversion) and whistle-blowing among the selected ministries in Nigeria. The descriptive result revealed that the personality dynamics and whistle-blowing scored above 2.5 cut off point of the mean. This indicates that all the items on personality dynamics are fundamental metrics for assessing whistle-blowing among employees of the selected ministries in Nigeria. The above result is supported by the low standard deviation values. Thus, to an extent, personality dynamics can predict whistle-blowing in Nigeria.

Table 2: Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for Personality Dynamics and Whistle-Blowing

Parameters	VIF	1/VIF
Openness to Experience	1.01	0.9900
Extroversion	1.03	0.9708
Conscientiousness	1.23	0.8130
Mean VIF	1.09	

Source: Field Work, 2023

Table 2 showed the VIF result for the independent variables (personality dynamics such as openness to experience, extroversion and conscientiousness) among the employees of the selected ministries in Delta State, Nigeria. The mean VIF is = 1.09 and is not greater than accepted mean VIF of 10, suggesting the absence of multicollinearity problem among the pairs of independent variables of the study. VIF value above 10 as observed by Gujarati (2003) cited in Okoro and Ekwueme (2021) is considered good. Thus, the dataset is exceptionally reliable for conducting inferential statistics (Lawley correlation).

Table 3: Lawley Correlation Result for Openness to Experience and Whistle-Blowing

Parameters	Chi-Value	Prob.
Openness to Experience	112.07	0.0000
Test that correlation matrix is compound symmetric (all correlation equal)		

Source: Field Work, 2023

Table 3 reports the Lawley correlation result for openness to experience and whistle-blowing. Based on the above result, the Lawley statistics ($\chi^2=112.07 > Prob.=0.0000$), there is evidence suggesting that there is a significant relationship between openness to experience and whistle-blowing practices among the employees of the selected ministries in Delta State, Nigeria.

Table 4: Lawley Correlation Result for Conscientiousness and Whistle-Blowing

Parameters	Chi-Value	Prob.
Conscientiousness	142.08	0.0000
Test that correlation matrix is compound symmetric (all correlation equal)		

Source: Field Work, 2023

Table 4 reports the Lawley correlation result for conscientiousness and whistle-blowing. Based on the above result, the Lawley statistics ($\chi^2=142.08$, Prob.= 0.0000), there is evidence indicating that there is a significant relationship between conscientiousness and whistle-blowing practices among the employees of the selected ministries in Delta State, Nigeria.

Table 5: Lawley Correlation Result for Extroversion and Whistle-Blowing

Parameters	Chi-Value	Prob.
Extroversion	146.01	0.0000
Test that correlation matrix is compound symmetric (all correlation equal)		

Source: Field Work, 2023

Table 5 showed the Lawley correlation result for extroversion and whistle-blowing. On the basis of the above result, the Lawley statistics ($\chi^2=146.01$, Prob.= 0.0000), there is evidence establishing that there is a significant relationship between extroversion and whistle-blowing practices among the employees of the selected ministries in Delta State, Nigeria.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Notably there are numerous personality dynamics which may have the tendency to influence whistle-blowing activities; however, this study focused on three (3) dimensions such as extroversion, openness to experience and conscientiousness. Consequently, this paper examined the relationship between personality dynamics and whistle-blowing activities among employees of some selected ministries in Delta State of Nigeria.

Data obtained in the field survey were analyzed using descriptive, post-estimation and inferential statistical tools. More specifically, the Lawley results showed that all the personality dynamics had significant relationship with whistle-blowing activities among the employees of the selected ministries in Delta State, Nigeria. Based on the findings, it was recommended that public sector authorities should gear efforts towards integrating within the internal disclosure policies via code of ethics, the value of honest reporting, willingness to support whistle-blowing as well as devising mechanisms to silence and/or punish whistle-blowers via retaliatory actions. Finally, authorities in the public sector should shroud whistle-blowing processes in secrecy due to confidentiality and anonymity of control.

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