

Interpersonal and Informational Justices as Correlates of the Whistle-Blowers' Intentions in Nigeria



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ABSTRACT: This study examined whether interpersonal and informational justices are correlates of whistle-blowers' intentions among selected local government areas in Delta State, Nigeria. In this study, two dimensions of organizational justice (interpersonal and informational justices) were used. In order to carry out the study, questionnaires were administered to employees in six local government areas and data obtained were analyzed via descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. On the basis of the analysis, it was found that while there is a significant relationship between interpersonal distributive justice and whistle-blowers' intentions, an insignificant relationship was found between informational justices and whistle-blowers' intentions. Thus, only interpersonal justice serve as a correlate of the whistle-blowers' intentions. The study recommended the integration of internal disclosures via code of ethics and honesty reporting to support whistle-blowers as well as in silencing and/or punishing the whistle-blowers via retaliatory measures put in place by management of public sector.

KEYWORDS: Interpersonal justice; Informational justice; Whistle-blower intention; Code of ethics; Honesty reporting

JEL Classifications: M12; M19

1. INTRODUCTION

The spread of corruption among public officers in the country and the urgent need to curb the devilish act brought about the approval of whistle blowing policy in Nigeria, December 2016, due to the recession in the country. The aim was the right to expose any illegal activity or wrong doings among top public officials. However, employees are faced with the problem of becoming a target of the culprit. Government has not come out with cogent policies that would protect the whistle blower. Similarly, Verschoor (2005) opined that 44 percent of employees who become aware of individual or corporate wrong doing do not report or disclose their observations to anyone. The main reasons why employees decide not to speak against corporate wrong doing are likely of remedial action and concern that their objections will not be kept private.

To blow the whistle is not an easy task, it needs courage, moral evaluation and one has to put the interest of the public ahead of his own interest. Despite this, many praise whistleblowers for heroic and noble deeds; many also condemn them as malcontent and trouble makers for exposing wrongdoing of their colleagues and management. Till date evidence has shown that many whistle blowers have suffered negative consequences including loss of employment, threats of revenge and isolation (Tan & Ong, 2011). Organizational Justice refers to employee perceptions of fairness in the workplace or how employees view fairness in place of employment.

According to Greenberg (1987) referred to organization justice as employee's perception of their organization behaviours, decisions and actions and how these influences the employee's own attitudes and behaviours at work. Organizational Justice has been seen as an important variable that plays a major role in improving the performance of employees in organization, because different studies have shown, if employees are not treated fairly it result in reduced output from the employees as a natural response to the unfair treatment. However, these studies were done in institutions of higher learning, government agencies, Department and parastatals. Meanwhile such studies have not been done in Local Government Areas, hence this study.

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2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Interpersonal Justice

Interpersonal justice reflects the degree to which people are treated with politeness, dignity, and respect by authorities. The experience of interpersonal justice can alter reactions to decision outcomes, because sensitivity can make people feel better about an unfavorable outcome. Interpersonal treatment includes interpersonal communication, truthfulness, respect, propriety of questions, and justification, and honesty, courtesy, timely feedback, and respect for rights (Colquitt et al., 2006).

Interpersonal justice entails the manner in which managers conduct their interpersonal dealings with employees, the degree to which managers treat employees with dignity as opposed to abuse or disrespect. To treat people justly is to deal with them fairly and equitably. Adams (1965) distinguished between distributive and procedural justice. People will feel that they have been treated justly in this respect if they believe that rewards have been distributed in accordance with their contributions, that they receive what was promised to them and that they get what they need.

2.2 Informational Justice

Informational justice is the act of communicating relevant reasons for the procedures used in appraising, and the rationale of the distribution of rewards to employee in the organization (Greenberg, 1993). This justice has been identified to have a strong effect on the emotional attachment of the employee and the organization (Arif & Junaidah, 2011). In return, affects organizational outcome behaviours such as organizational commitment, influenced by the environment of the organization. Organization environment such as the superiors' character plays an important role (Masterson, Bryne & Mao, 2005) and there is no argument on the distinct importance of this construct on the justice perception of the employee towards performance appraisal (Ambrose, 2002).

Informational justice is second new type of justice which focuses on explanations provided to people that convey information about why procedures were applied in a certain way or why outcomes were distributed in a certain manner in other words informational justice refers to the truthfulness and justification of information provided to employees. The appraisal that information is inadequate or untrue leads to the perceptions of injustice. Informational justice is thought to consist of factors that enhance individual perceptions of efficacy of explanations provided by the organizational agents.

2.3 Whistle-Blowing Intentions

Apparently, whistle blowing stems from moral motives of preventing unnecessary harm to others (Syed & Mohd, 2009), an agent who blows the whistle or is called as a whistleblower should use the proper internal channel and procedure to disclose any wrongdoing before public disclosure. Since whistle blowing stems from moral motives of preventing wrongdoing, the development of a sound ethical culture and moral sense of duty could be key levers to foster organizational members to report wrongdoing (Zakaria, 2015). Huang, Lo and Wu (2013) asserted that employees have higher intentions of whistle blowing when the Organization displays a more positive ethical climate underpinned by intense law and rules, relatively strong company profit or efficiency, or independence.

The whistleblower has evidence that would persuade reasonable people to perceive serious danger than can result from the violation. It is expected that those who have intention to blow the whistle have evaluated what is morally right or wrong of their decision and the interest of stakeholders involved (Syed & Mohd, 2009). In other words, the whistle blowing intentions aroused after one form of ethical judgment. Hunt and Vitell (1996) described and explained how people arrive at ethical judgment. Hunt and Vitell (1996) then expounded their earlier theory by incorporating the normative ethical theory namely teleology and deontology as evaluation for ethical judgment. These two evaluations are believed to have a significant impact towards ethical judgment.

The perception of trust, safety, justice, and ethic in working environment are considered to be important variables affecting whistle blowing intention which is still a complex decision-making process and a dilemma for employees involved in sounding the alarm on the wrongdoings and malpractices. This is substantiated by Seifert, Stammerjohan and Martin (2014) when emphasizing that trust to supervisor and to organization are key factors that mediate the relationship between organizational justice and the likelihood of whistle blowing. Accordingly, Seifert, Sweeney, Joireman and Thornton (2010) argued that the organizational justice increases the likelihood of whistle blowing.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed quasi-experimental design to obtain research data on the correlates between whistle-blowers' intentions, interpersonal and informational justices in six (6) selected local government areas in the three (3) senatorial districts in Delta State, Nigeria. Due to the large population of the area of study, two hundred and fifty (250) employees were used and questionnaire

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was the main instrument of data collection designed on five point scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree and undecided.

Data obtained were analyzed using simple regression statistical technique. As observed by several authors (such as Okoro & Egberi, 2020; Okoro & Ekwueme, 2020; Odiri, 2020; Okoro & Egberi, 2019; Okoro & Egbunike, 2017; Odiri, 2016; Odiri, 2015; Odiri, 2014; and Okoro & Kigho, 2013), simple regression estimation tool is vital in evaluating the individual correlate between the dependent and the independent variables of a study. In view of the above, the following simple regression models were estimated:

$$WB_i = \alpha_0 + \beta_3 IJ_i + \mu_{it}$$

$$WB_i = \alpha_0 + \beta_4 IFJ_i + \mu_{it}$$

WB_i = Whistle-Blowing intentions; IJ = Interpersonal Justice; IFJ = Informational Justice; U_t =Error term; α, β = Regression coefficients

4. RESULTS

Table 1: Analysis of Questions on Interpersonal Justice

S/N	Question Items	N	Mean	SD	Decision
1	He/She treats me in a polite manner	250	3.20	0.87	Valid
2	He/She treats me with dignity.	250	3.02	0.98	Valid
3	He/She treats me with respect	250	2.77	0.92	Valid
4	He/She refrains from improper remarks or comments.	250	2.97	0.88	Valid
Grand Mean & Standard Deviation			2.99	0.91	VALID

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 1 captured the extent to which interpersonal justice is utilized among the selected LGAs in Delta State. The result showed that all the four (4) items scored above 2.50 cut-off point of the mean, indicating that all the items on interpersonal justice are used in arriving at employees pay and other work-related outcomes among the selected LGAs in Delta State. In addition, the grand mean of 2.99 and standard deviation of 0.91 further supports the above result. Consequently, to a large extent, interpersonal justice is utilized in determining pay and other work outcomes among the selected LGAs in Delta State.

Table 2: Analysis of Questions on Informational Justice

S/N	Question Items	N	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Information is tailored to specific needs	250	3.33	0.91	Valid
2	Procedures used to make decision about complaint are thoroughly explained	250	3.14	0.92	Valid
3	Explanations regarding the procedures used to make decision about complaint are reasonable	250	2.88	0.96	Valid
4	Information are communicated in details/timely	250	3.09	0.92	Valid
Grand Mean & Standard Deviation			3.11	0.93	VALID

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 2 captured the extent to which informational justice is utilized among the selected LGAs in Delta State. The result showed that all the four (4) items scored above 2.50 cut-off point of the mean, indicating that all the items on informational justice are used in arriving at employees pay and other work-related outcomes among the selected LGAs in Delta State. In addition, the grand mean of 3.11 and standard deviation of 0.93 further supports the above result. Consequently, to a large extent, informational justice is utilized in determining pay and other work outcomes among the randomly selected LGAs in Delta State.

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Table 3: Blowing Intentions (WBI) and Interpersonal Justice (IJ)

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs = 250		
Model	168.556461	1	168.556461	F(1, 248) =	36.35	
Residual	1149.84347	248	4.63646559	Prob > F =	0.0000	
Total	1318.39993	249	5.29477883	R-squared =	0.1278	
				Adj R-squared =	0.1243	
				Root MSE =	2.1532	

wb	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
ij	-3.34106	.5541216	-6.03	0.000	-4.432444	-2.249675
_cons	27.17649	2.14324	12.68	0.000	22.95522	31.39776

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 3 showed the regression result between whistle-blowing intentions (WBI) and Interpersonal justice (IJ) among the selected LGAs in Delta State. From the table, it was found that R^2 is 0.1278 which suggests 12.78% explanatory ability of the estimation for the systematic variation in the dependent variable (whistle-blowing intention: WBI). The evaluation of slope coefficients of explanatory variables revealed the existence of negative relationship between whistle-blowing intentions ($t=12.68$) and interpersonal justice ($t=-6.03$). This implies that interpersonal justice negatively influences whistle-blowing intentions.

Table 4: Blowing Intentions (WBI) and Informational Justice (IFJ)

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs = 250		
Model	9.33518251	1	9.33518251	F(1, 248) =	1.77	
Residual	1309.06475	248	5.27848688	Prob > F =	0.1848	
Total	1318.39993	249	5.29477883	R-squared =	0.0071	
				Adj R-squared =	0.0031	
				Root MSE =	2.2975	

wb	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
ifj	.8765431	.6591232	1.33	0.185	-.4216499	2.174736
_cons	10.92284	2.52862	4.32	0.000	5.942531	15.90315

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 4 showed the regression result between informational justice (IFJ) and whistle-blowing intentions (WBI) among the selected LGAs in Delta State. From the table, it was found that R^2 is 0.0071 which suggests 0.71% explanatory ability of the estimation for the systematic variation in the dependent variable (whistle-blowing intentions: WBI). The evaluation of slope coefficients of explanatory variables revealed the existence of positive relationship between whistle-blowing intentions ($t=4.32$) and informational justice ($t=1.33$). This implies that informational justice positively influences whistle-blowing intention.

The result revealed that whistle-blowing intentions is significantly affected by interpersonal justice (IJ), indicating that there is significant relationship between whistle-blowing intention and interpersonal justice. This finding is in agreement with prior studies conducted by Hansen, Byrne & Kiersch (2013). On the other hand, it was found that whistle-blowing intentions is not significantly affected by informational justice (IFJ), indicating that there is no significant relationship between whistle-blowing intention and informational justice. This result agrees with prior studies conducted by Lavena (2016), and Tyler (2003)

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined whether interpersonal and informational justices are correlates of whistle-blowers' intentions in selected local government areas in Delta State, Nigeria. The significance of this study lies on the fact that it was targeted at encouraging

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employees to provide useful information that entails violation of government financial regulations, bribe, mismanagement, malpractice, harassment, fraud and theft of public assets. On the basis of the analysis, it was found that while there is a significant relationship between interpersonal distributive justice and whistle-blowers' intentions, an insignificant relationship was found between informational justices and whistle-blowers' intentions. Thus, only interpersonal justice serve as a correlate of the whistle-blowers' intentions.

The study recommended the integration of internal disclosures via code of ethics and honesty reporting to support whistle-blowers as well as in silencing and/or punishing the whistle-blowers via retaliatory measures put in place by management of public sector. This study contributes to knowledge by filling the lacuna in the management literature on interpersonal and informational justice as correlates of whistle-blowers' intentions in the Nigerian context.

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