The Policy of Whistleblowing in Nigeria: An Islamic Perspective

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ABSTRACT

One of the most direct methods of exposing corruption in corporate or public institutions is whistleblowing. Quite a number of countries, including Nigeria, have introduced a whistleblowing policy. Among its provisions is to deter corrupt behaviours and guide formal investigations into them. However, Nigeria still lags far behind in this respect, perhaps out of structural inertia in dealing with corruption cases. In this article, the author argues that Nigeria can benefit from the institutional, educational and spiritual framework embedded in whistleblowing in Islam through ‘amr bi-l-ma’ruf wa-nahy ‘an al-munkar i.e., enjoining good and forbidding wrong. The article, through historical and descriptive approaches, explains the policy of whistleblowing from the Islamic perspective, hence, clarifying some Muslims misconceptions. This study, therefore, presents Islamic principles on the whistleblowing policy and explains some pivotal approaches to addressing whistleblowing policy in Nigeria.

KEYWORDS
Bribery, Corruption, Federal, Government, Islam, Muslims

1. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has long been confronted with the issue of corruption which has eluded the nation of great resources that would have been used for developing infrastructure and the improvement of the living standard of the people. As part of the solution to the issue of corruption, the whistleblowing policy has been approved by the Nigerian Government as a method to reduce the menace of corruption in the country. According to Mrs. Kemi Adeosun, the Nigerian Federal Minister of finance, the basic objective of the whistleblowing policy is to facilitate the fight for the eradication of financial crimes and corruption, through the exposure of such financial crimes and to provide rewards to the whistleblowers. Consequently, the policy offers protection to whistleblowers which covers them from harassment or intimidation by their employers or bosses. The benefit of the policy as expected will increase transparency and accountability in the management of public funds and it will help in the recovery of the public fund for the deployment of infrastructural development. This will enhance a corruption-free society and the attraction of foreign investors (Akinnaso, 2016).
The whistleblowing policy was instituted to facilitate the disclosure of information regarding the violation of financial regulations, misappropriation of public funds and assets, stealing the theft of public funds, financial malpractice, and scams. Consequently, an online portal was created to enhance the disclosure of information regarding misappropriation of public funds and assets, financial malpractice, fraud, theft, violation of financial regulations all in the public interest (Samad, Khalid, & Kayadibi, 2015).

It is important to note at this point that Islam encourages whistleblowing. The link between Islam and whistleblowing policy can be seen in the following assertion:

Islam promotes ‘‘amr bi-l-ma’rūf wa-naḥy ‘an al-munkar’’ or ‘enjoining good and forbidding wrong’ as the underlying basis of human social, political and economic interactions and core precursor in maximizing human welfare. However, in the business realm today, individuals tend to operate under the rational (i.e. maximizing welfare) mode, only that the welfare maximized is his alone. To curb this tendency, whistle-blowing provisions have been introduced by more and more institutions as one possible mechanism to deter wrongdoings or corrupt behaviour and guide formal investigations of wrongdoings in corporate or public institutions. Whistle-blowing has an undeniable value within the framework of ‘‘amr bi-l-ma’rūf wa-naḥy ‘an al-munkar’’ in institutional governance, alongside other educational and spiritual enhancement efforts. Many of the problems in private and public institutions in Muslim countries can be prevented if people had acted on their suspicions and prompted the authorities to intervene. (Samad et al., 2015, p. 1)

From the above assertion, it is clear that the concept of whistleblowing can be found in Islam. It can also be deduced that the Islamic outlook on whistleblowing can contribute significantly to a nation anti-corruption crusade through institutional, educational and spiritual based strategies.

Since it has been observed that Nigeria has not recorded a great deal of success with the whistleblowing policy (Fola Adeyemo, 2015; Folashade Adeyemo, 2018; Etalong & Williams, 2016; Onuegbulam, 2017; Sule, 2009), it’s against this backdrop that this paper examines the position of Islam on the whistleblowing policy. It also looks into the Nigerian whistleblowing policy and its procedure, thereafter, assesses Nigerian Government policy on whistleblowing through the bird-eye view of Islam.

2. WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY IN NIGERIA

The state of the nation remains dormant and under develop today because there have been several cases of mismanagement of funds in Nigeria. Corrupt individuals and sycophants take advantage of the poor interaction and illiteracy of the people to steal, inflate, and cheat the generality of people to expand their gains and profit in business. This has automatically created and imposed a great burden on the citizens by the increment of tax, duties and also to reduce the quality and quantity of goods and services rendered in the society (Akinnaso, 2016).

Many of the citizens take the responsibility to report any case of injustice, corruption, theft and misconducts, this is because fraud and injustice are hard to detect and also these set of people are the representative of the Government at the grassroots. Lawmakers make an unending struggle to turn citizens to uncover and deter illegal schemes as early as the 7th century (Akinnaso, 2016). The modern whistleblower law in Nigeria aims to reward individuals a portion of successfully recovered stolen money.

There have been several cases of whistleblowing in Nigeria as far back as 2006. Many organizations have witnessed series of cases involving whistleblowing in high-value companies. For instance, Cadbury Nigeria PLC in October 2006 discovered overstatements in its accounts, which according to the company spanned many years and was to the tune of between N13 billion and N15
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