What Motivates Whistle Blowers? Wisdom vs. Stupidity- Two Faces of the Same Coin

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Abstract: Whistleblowing act is identified in both positive and negative sense. But how the same act seen in different senses which are completely opposite in nature. This question makes one to go in search of the literature which supports the statement. Yes, exactly the statement proves to be true after learning from reading the literature. The two faces of the same coin, the two phases of the same issue. But one issue cannot be seen in two different senses, which creates confusion in the minds of the people who wants to understand the concept. Whether whistleblowing is for good or bad? If so, to whom? Therefore there is a need to know the reasons and effects of whistle blowing. However, after knowing the effects, the purpose of this paper is to prove the whistleblowing concept as a single positive aspect, avoiding negative connotations or negative stigma attached to the concept and thereby removing the duality roles attached to the concept. Encouraging good and wisdom practices and discouraging the bad and stupidity practices is the ultimate objective of the concept. The principles based on wisdom as the core issue of the model is suggested to be includable in WBPPPP -Whistle Blower Policy Procedure Protection and Principles model which is suggested in the previous article.

Keywords: whistle blowing, wisdom, stupidity, whistle blowing principles, WBPPPP model

I. Introduction

Whistleblowing act is identified in both positive and negative sense. But how the same act seen in different senses which are completely opposite in nature. This question makes one to go in search of the literature which supports the statement. Yes, exactly the statement proves to be true after learning from reading the literature. The two faces of the same coin, the two phases of the same issue. But one issue cannot be seen in two different senses, which creates confusion in the minds of the people who wants to understand the concept. Whether whistleblowing is for good or bad? If so, to whom? Therefore there is a need to know the reasons and effects of whistle blowing. However, after knowing the effects, the purpose of this paper is to prove the whistleblowing concept as a single positive aspect, avoiding negative connotations or negative stigma attached to the concept and thereby removing the duality roles attached to the concept. Encouraging good and wisdom practices and discouraging the bad and stupidity practices is the ultimate objective of the concept.

II. Objectives

1. To understand the positive and negative aspects of whistle blowing.
2. To know the factors motivating whistle blowing.
3. To understand the need for whistle blowing principles.
4. To suggest the model for framing whistle blowing principles.

III. Research Methodology

The study is the combination of conceptual and empirical nature. The study includes the mixed model approach. The mixed model approach is the combination of descriptive and exploratory approach in research. The literature review and conceptual understanding of the terminologies helps in understanding the positive and negative aspects of whistleblowing and model development respectively. The study used primary data collected by scheduled interview method from 340 employees approximately working in Karnataka state public enterprises to know what motivate employees for whistleblowing. Nearly 18 Karnataka State Public Enterprises were visited for data collection. The sample of 340 employees includes only those employees who were not willing to blow the whistle. The question was targeted to those employees who remain silent after observing wrongdoing in their organization. The four situations were identified to know what can make them to report such incidents. The 5-point Likert Scale was used to measure the data, where 5 stands for Strongly Agree, 4 for Agree, 3 for Neutral, 2 for Disagree and 1 for Strongly Disagree. For the purpose of analyzing the data the study has used descriptive analysis such as mean and standard deviation, one sample t test for comparing means and frequency and percentage analysis for analyzing the data.
IV. Aspects of Whistle Blowing - Positive and Negative

A. Positive Aspects
The whistle blowing act has some positive aspects. These positive aspects reflect the benefits, advantages, significance, importance and good side of whistle blowing. The following factors explain about the positive aspects of whistle blowing.

1. Whistle blowing is an anti-corruption tool
   It minimizes fraud and misconduct can be corrected.

2. It ensures effective system of internal control
   Whistle blowing can play an essential role as a preventive and detective control, if the organization explicitly incorporates reporting mechanisms that disclose incidents of wrongdoing into its internal control structure (Poneman 1994).

3. It is a good corporate governance practice
   The organization promotes transparent structure and effective, clear communication among all levels of employees. This can protect organizational clients. Organizations contain many stakeholders such as share holders, directors, managers, employees, vendors; consumers. Each of these groups has a vested interest in the health and long term success of the corporation. Each group seeks to secure its own success through the activity of the corporation. Each group seeks to do this in a fair and equitable way. The only stakeholders that really know what is happening within a corporation are the employees. So it is in the hands of the employees to protect the interest of various stakeholders. Whistle blowing gives all stakeholders, but most importantly employees, the opportunity to keep the corporation ethical and also to keep fellow employees honest. The end of the evil practices in the organization is possible by the effective whistle blowing. If no one questions the bad behavior, it will continue and as a result cause even more damage to the organization itself and public.

   On other side by encouraging a whistle blowing culture within the organization, the organization promotes transparent structure and effective clear communication. More importantly whistle blowing can protect the organization clients.

4. It is a risk management strategy (Ross Bentley)
   It’s better to hear the wrongful act at its initial stage, so the solution could be found at the earliest in preventing further damage to the organization in long run.

5. It may result in change in public policy (as in case of Jeffry Wigand -Brown and Williamson Tobacco Corporation).

B. Negative Aspects
The act of whistle blowing even has some negative aspects. These negative aspects reflect drawbacks, disadvantages, harms and bad/ugly side of whistle blowing. The following factors explain about the negative aspects of whistle blowing.

1. Employees take advantage of whistle blowing for personal benefit.
   The employee with greed can misuse the whistle blowing mechanism for personal benefit. The benefit may include personal grudge, power, position, and money (as in case Douglas Durand)

2. Lack of support for whistle blowing.
   If the entire organization does not have positive attitude towards whistle blowing, then employees may fear speaking up (Jennifer Loftus). The lack of organization support for internal whistle blowing may result in external whistle blowing, causing serious damage to goodwill of the organization.

3. Stress, termination and mistrust
   Whistle blowing causes stress, termination and mistrust on part of the employees. These results are retaliatory acts by their employers. The employers may retaliate against their employees for blowing the whistle causing them heightened stress and discomfort in job. In most cases the employers terminate their employees for the act of whistle blowing. It develops mistrust on employees about their organization (Cee Donohue). The added stress by whistle blowing act can cause several health problems and fractures in relationship (Gerald Hanks). Ruined careers, stress-related illness, and even broken marriages are the impact of whistle blowing (Vicki D Lachman 2008)

4. Disrupt the team spirit
   Whistle blowing makes people suspicious of one another, which may disrupt the team spirit and cooperation within the companies. This affects the operations of company in long run. Whistle blowers suffer from emotional self-accusation (Nicole Zhang). After knowing both positive and negative aspects of whistle blowing, one can say that positive outweighs negatives, if negatives treated effectively. Whistle blowing benefits, if there is clear procedures, actively and effectively maintained, reduce not only harassment and reliability liability but also the likelihood of punitive damages (Janet Near, Terry Morehead Dworkin, and Marcia Miceli)
C. Data Analysis and Interpretation

### Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>situation willing to report: provided protection</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>1.307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>against retaliation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>situation willing to report: provided the act is</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>1.306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rewarded / awarded</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>situation willing to report-keeping the act</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>1.317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confidential/anonymity is maintained</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>situation willing to report- institutionalization of</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>1.140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whistle blowing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2: One-Sample Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>situation willing to report- provided protection</td>
<td>9.435</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.676</td>
<td>.53 to .82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>against retaliation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>situation willing to report- provided the act is</td>
<td>-6.344</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-.457</td>
<td>-.60 to -.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rewarded / awarded</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>situation willing to report-keeping the act</td>
<td>6.039</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.433</td>
<td>.29 to .57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confidential/anonymity is maintained</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>situation willing to report- institutionalization</td>
<td>4.970</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.315</td>
<td>.19 to .44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of whistle blowing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3: Frequency analysis for situations willing to blow the whistle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Situation 1</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>333</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary data

V. Findings

1. The situation 1 i.e., willingness to blow the whistle- provided protection against retaliation has been identified with highest mean value (3.68 refer table:1) among the given situations.
2. The situation 2 i.e, situation willing to report- provided the act is rewarded / awarded is been identified with lowest mean value (2.54 refer table:1) among the given situations.
3. The study found there is significant difference in agreeability of willingness to blow the whistle depending upon the situations based on one sample t test, where the significant values are less than p value 0.05(refer table:2).
4. Majority (64.5% refer table: 3) of the respondents agree they are willing to report the observed wrongdoing in their organization, provided they have been protected from employer retaliation.
5. 44.2% (refer table: 3) of the respondents disagree, they are willing to report provided their act is rewarded and awarded.
6. 54.6% (refer table: 3) of the respondents agree, they are willing to report the observed wrongdoing in their organization, provided their identity is kept confidential and anonymity is maintained.

7. 42.9% (refer table: 3) of the respondents are neutral about their decision of willingness to report wrongdoing in case where whistle blowing is institutionalised.

VI. Whistle Blowing Principles

The whistle blowing principles serve as guidance for formulating new and improving existing whistleblower legislation. The whistle blowing principles help and ensure that whistleblowers are afforded proper protection and disclosure opportunities. The whistle blowing principles should be adopted to an individual country’s political, social and cultural contexts and to its existing legal frameworks. The principles for whistle blowing are developed by taking into lessons learned from existing laws and their implementation in practice from whistleblowers experts, government officials, academia, research institutes and NGO’s from all regions. The principles are updated and refined as experiences with legislation and practices continue.

The international principles for whistleblower legislation are developed for effective and efficient Whistle blowing protection legislation by Transparency international.

WIN Whistle blowing International Network, an NGO for Whistle Blowing as given the statement of principles for Whistle blowing.

VII. Suggestion

Figure 1: Wisdom vs. Stupidity of Whistle Blowing

After knowing the positive and negative aspects of whistle blowing, those aspects could be identified with certain special qualities that exist within the person blowing the whistle. The positive qualities which reflects the wisdom in all serves as positive aspect of whistle blowing and the negative qualities which reflects lack of wisdom or stupidity nature serves as negative aspect of whistle blowing. The wisdom is defined as the quality of having experience, knowledge, and good judgment. Like light removes the dark, the light of knowledge removes the stupidity in dark. The stupidity nature which is been reflected by absurdity, Idiocy, non-sense, ignorance, silly which can be overcome by wisdom nature which is been reflected by knowledge, intelligence, discretion, sense, learning, erudition, discernment, sagacity and prudence.

The negative aspects can be overcome by identifying the positives. Conversion is needed, which even can be learnt. The system which is build on the foundation of wisdom as a part of organization culture can truly accept whistle blowing in positive sense than with negative sense.

VIII. Conceptual Understanding of Terminologies

Wisdom: the quality of having experience, knowledge, and good judgment
Knowledge: knowledge is a familiarity, awareness or understanding of someone or something. Acquaintance with facts, truths or principles.
Intelligence: the ability to perceive and retain knowledge or information. The ability to learn or understand things or to deal with new or difficult situations. Ability to apply knowledge.
Discretion: the freedom to decide what should be done in a particular situation; freedom of judgment or choice; the right to choose what should be done in a particular situation.
Sense: a sense is a physiological capacity of organisms that provides data for perception; a perception; a perception or feeling that is produced by a stimulus.
Learning: the act of acquiring new, or modifying and reinforcing, existing knowledge, behavior, skills, values or preferences and may involve synthesizes different types of information; the acquisition of knowledge or skills through study, experience, or being taught.
Erudition: erudition is the depth, polish and breadth that education confers; deep, extensive learning.
Discernment: is the ability to obtain sharp perceptions or to judge well; the ability to see and understand people, things, or situations clearly and intelligently.
Sagacity: having or showing an ability to understand difficult ideas and situations and to make good decisions.
Prudence: careful good judgment that allows someone to avoid danger or risks; Exercising good judgment or common sense.
Stupidity: lack of intelligence, understanding
Absurdity: a thing that is extremely unreasonable.
Idiocy: something that is extremely stupid or foolish, an idiotic action or statement.

Non-sense: words or ideas that are foolish or untrue; is a communication via speech writing, or any other symbolic system that lacks coherent meaning.

Ignorance: is a state of being uninformed; lack of knowledge, understanding or education.

Silly: weak-minded; having or exhibiting a lack of good judgment or common sense.

The whistle blowing practice must be guided by wisdom approach than stupidity approach, to achieve this, the policy, procedure and protection factors which can be considered in whistleblowing legislation, as suggested WBPPP model in previous article can be expanded with incorporations of additional P factor which stands for Principles based on Wisdom. So the effectiveness of the model is increased. Finally the complete model has been framed in which it gives birth to WPPPPP model or 4 P factors model for whistle blowing.

Figure 2: WBPPPPP Model-Whistle Blower Policy Procedure Protection Principles Model (Renewed by expansion)

The WBPPPPP model is an effective combination of policy, procedure, principles and protection factors includable in the whistle blower protection law.

IX. Conclusion

The model hereby suggested is complete in all aspects for framing effective whistle blowing legislation. The principles as a core issue includable in all other factors. The policy, procedure and protection factor must be based on principles, and where those principles are based on the quality of wisdom. The quality of wisdom is achieved by continuous learning which gains knowledge and application of the knowledge in working environment for better living. The further scope of the study includes identifying the principles based on wisdom qualities to be includable in the legislation to make it strong.

References

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