

THE MORAL QUANDARY IN NIGERIA'S WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY: HOW NOT TO ENTHRONE AN ETHICS OF RESPONSIBILITY

By

Christopher O. Akpan

Department of Philosophy
University of Calabar, Nigeria

Abstract

This paper interrogates the thesis that the whistleblowing policy is a valuable anti-corruption tool that also enthrones an ethics of responsibility. Its major aim is to expose some ethical challenges that trail the act of whistleblowing *vis-a-vis* the intriguing issues of responsibility and reward. Using a combination of content analysis and evaluative methods, This paper posits that rewarding a blower with a certain 'cut' of the recovered loot could encourage ethical egoism. This work contend that ethics of responsibility detests selfish interest, which underlies egoism. Thus, it develop a thesis that, since whistleblowing ought to be done in good faith, supposedly by a responsible and public-spirited agent, it should not attract a reward of financial cut. As a result this paper appeals to a traditional African moral maxim which says: *'a person who eats the stolen food of a thief is a thief,'* to show that such a reward is morally problematic. Indeed, it smacks of moral hypocrisy and runs counter to enthroneing the virtue of responsibility, and of curbing corruption which the policy was originally intended. This paper recommends that a reward of National Honour christened Nigerian Integrity and Patriotism Personified (NIPP) and job employment/promotion could be awarded to relevant whistleblowers.

Keywords: Whistle-blowing; Responsibility and Reward; Corruption; Moral Hypocrisy; Ethical Egoism

Introduction

Pervasive corruption constitutes the bane of development in Africa, particularly Nigeria; and many other developing nations of the world. The word corruption like many sociological words is not amenable to one definition. Transparency International as quoted by Casmir, *et al* (2014) defines corruption as "the misuse of entrusted power for private gains or the use of public office for private gain" (p.218). But it is clear that when it is related to development of a society the term easily leads to the inference on financial misappropriation, bribery, money laundering, extortion, and the like. The fulcrum for which we arrive at such inference is the lack of, or destruction of moral integrity, honesty, loyalty; in short impairment of virtue and moral principles that guide an organization or society. Thus, we can safely say that financial crime in any society is primarily traced to lack of, or dearth of moral integrity and the irresponsible attitude of the people in the society. A society where there is moral bankruptcy, and where public funds are diverted into private and selfish ends cannot develop to the extent expected of it. Neither can a society whose citizens lack a sense of responsibility, financial and social accountability develop economically. The above typifies the kind of corruption that has stultified developments in many African countries and which has particularly warranted the whistleblowing policy in many parts of the world.

To curb the menace of corruption, Nigeria like many African nations have set in machinery some anti-corruption policies, one of which is the whistleblowing policy. Mathewson (2012) correctly avers that this policy is popularly seen as a valuable tool in curbing corruption in many states and organizations that it has been introduced. Michael Akampa (2017) agrees to the fact that the whistleblowing tool in many African states is necessitated by the mass demonstration against corrupt practices, for example, as witnessed in Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Rwanda, Cameroun, Ghana, and many other places, where the people are asking government to be accountable. He makes the important point that “whistle-blowing has a crucial role in fighting corruption and ensuring ethical business behavior.” Makinde (2018) notes that corruption has been identified as the major cause of underdevelopment and the challenge facing socio-economic growth of Nigeria both in the public and private sectors. He agrees that the introduction of whistleblowing is to make every Nigerian a detective of a sort and to be financially responsible and accountable. From this standpoint, it is not out of place to infer that the policy wherever it is introduced is to first and foremost inculcate an ethics of responsibility in the individuals (both the leaders and the led) that make up the society.

There is no doubt that the whistleblowing tool has been very successful in the discovery of looted funds as we have seen in Nigeria; and in instilling fear and enhancing ethical behavior (Akampa 2017; Egbe 2017). It has also helped in projecting good corporate governance in Nigeria as Onyejiana & Bayode-ojo argue (2021). But of major concern to us in this work are the ethical challenges that surround the policy with regard to the system of reward. The specific concern of this work therefore is to examine whether there is any moral justification in rewarding a whistleblower (who is supposed to be a responsible citizen and who is supposed to blow the whistle in good faith) with a certain cut or percentage of the loot which his/her information helped to recover. Our work is a departure from the position of some scholars like Bullison (2017), Egbe (2017), Makinde (2018), who all argue with regard to the issue of reward, that there is nothing wrong in rewarding whistleblowers with financial incentives in so far as their information would lead to actual recovery. I agree with them and the like of Onyejiana & Bayode-ojo (2021), that whistleblowing promotes the concept of good governance in various sectors in the Nigerian society, and that whistleblowers should be celebrated for their bravery, and rewarded for disclosing financial scandals. However, I contend against financial rewards to whistleblowers. Hence, this work rather toes the line of Davis (2012) who argues against financial rewards as inducement. He says such could be seen as an incentive given to expectedly good people who are duty bound to do good.

It is important to note here that the scope of this paper centres on financial corruption and that the context or universe of our discourse is the African situation where references will be made mostly to Nigerian whistleblowing policy. The work is not a statistical analysis of corruption or acts of whistleblowing but is focused on the conceptual analysis and evaluation of the ethical concerns raised by the policy and, of course, the activity of whistleblowing. In this regard, the work looks at the notion and dynamics of whistleblowing as a policy for fighting corruption. I shall give an overview of the whistleblowing policy in Nigeria and then comment on the intrigues involved in the policy and activity of whistleblowing. I shall give an overview of the notion of ethics of responsibility and then explore the thesis that rewarding whistleblowers with certain percentages or cut of the recovered loot could encourage ethical egoism and would as well amount to moral hypocrisy.

The Notion and Dynamics of Whistleblowing as an Anti-corruption Mechanism

The expression 'whistle-blowing' is a sort of metaphor that depicts one signaling out or making open information that was initially hidden, or not intended for the public. 'Whistle-blowing' has been defined in many ways according to usage, and according to users. For example, sports referees who use whistle to alert the athletes and the public of foul play or violation of rules during games are sometimes referred to as whistle-blowers, and their acts, whistle-blowing. Also, law-enforcement agents or officials and paramilitary groups are known to use whistle-blowing as an act of alerting people of danger or breaking of rules. Generally, when one blows a whistle to alert people or the public on a possible threat to his/her life as in the case of armed robbery, or such related attacks, such a person could loosely be regarded as a whistle-blower.

Technically, it is essentially a device or a tool used in confidentially reporting information that could have been hidden to the public. Hence, it is sometimes called "confidential reporting" (Nottinghamshire county council). Yomchinda, *et al.* (2022) from the organizational optics define whistleblowing "as the disclosure by organization members of illegal, immoral, or illegitimate practices under the control of their employers, to persons, or organizations that may be able to affect actionp" (309). Generally, whistleblowing is an action by an agent (a social agent for that matter) to rip open any purported illegal, hidden and unethical behavior to the attention of other people, especially to people in authority. In our contemporary usage, and in the context of disclosing financial crimes and other related activities, it does not involve the blowing of physical whistle as sports referees do. It rather requires anyone with information about financial misappropriation or looting of public funds, to disclose the information to an authority, for example, the Federal Ministry of Finance or Economic and Financial Crimes Commission as in the case of Nigeria. Such a disclosure is done confidentially and voluntarily by phone calls, e-mail, or a secure online portal, where the status of such report could be ascertained. In Nigeria, the channels for information disclosure are:

Phone: 09098067946;

Email: whistle@finance.gov.ng

Web: <http://whistle.finance.gov.ng> (Bullison, 2017).

Robert Egbe (2017) notes that the crux of such report may include: "mismanagement or misappropriation of public funds and assets (e.g. property, vehicles), financial malpractices or fraud, collection/soliciting for bribes and corruption, diversion of revenue, fraudulent and unapproved payment, splitting of contract and procurement fraud (kick-backs and cover-invoicing, etc)" (thenationonline.net/whistle-blowing-loot-recovery-). In this regard, the Federal Ministry of Finance regards a whistle-blower as "a person who voluntarily discloses to the Federal Government of Nigeria, through the Federal Ministry of Finance, a possible misconduct or violation that has occurred, is ongoing, or is about to occur with specific concerns which are in the public interest (<http://lawpodi.com/7-things-know-nigeria-whistle-blower-policy>).

An Overview of the Nigerian Whistleblowing Policy as a Tool for Fighting Corruption

The whistleblowing policy was generally given impetus in the West African sub-region after a workshop organized by the UN office on Drugs and Crime in partnership with the Liberian Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC) and the Network of National Anti-Corruption Institutions in West African Nations (NACIWA). The workshop attended by representatives of

West African States, including Nigeria, and hosted in Liberia made some significant resolutions which encouraged all Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) of the need to stem corruption through the whistleblowing policy. In this regard, West African States were encouraged to make adequate legal and procedural provisions for the policy to thrive if corruption must be dealt with in the sub- region (Monrovia Statement, 2016)

With the motivation derived from the above organized workshop, Nigeria's whistleblowing policy was introduced by the Federal Government through the Federal Ministry of Finance, as an anti-corruption tool, and was approved by the Federal Executive Council in December 2016. The salient and main objective of the policy is to help Government recover looted funds that it had no knowledge of, and by so doing raise the cash base of the nation's treasury, while the latent objective is to make government officials and the citizenry to be responsible and accountable. Other objectives are: to improve the level of public confidence in public entities; to enhance transparency and accountability in the management of public funds; to improve Nigeria's open government ranking and ease of doing business indicators (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2016). The policy could be understood and appreciated from its three basic segments as follows:

Motive and the Information Required: Here the policy states that the:

whistleblowing programme is designed to encourage anyone with information about a violation of financial regulations, mismanagement of public funds and assets, financial malpractice, fraud and theft to report same to the Federal Ministry of Finance (onlineportal-whistle@finance.gov.ng; <http://whistle.finance.gov.ng>; or call +2349098067946, *Federal Republic of Nigeria* 2016, p. 3).

In this regard, the Federal Ministry of Finance regards a whistleblower as "a person who voluntarily discloses to the Federal Government of Nigeria, through the Federal Ministry of Finance, a possible misconduct or violation that has occurred, is ongoing, or is about to occur with specific concerns which are in the public interest.

The type of information expected to be submitted by whistleblowers include information on violation of government financial regulations, mismanagement/misappropriation of public funds, stolen funds, concealed public funds, theft, collection/soliciting bribes (kick-backs), splitting of contracts, violation of public procurement procedures, under-reporting of revenues, conversion of public funds for private use, fraudulent and unapproved payment, diversion of revenues, etc. Beyond the above, it should be noted that the information from whistleblowers must be such that government has not already obtained or could not have otherwise had from any other publicly available source. The whistleblower must believe in his/her information and it must be true stating specific facts such as where the crime occurred, the date(s) and those involved. This is to enable the government through its investigating agents to do proper investigation. Any false information could lead to the prosecution of the whistleblower (Federal Republic of Nigeria 2016, p. 3-4)

Protection of Whistleblowers: The policy clearly states that "any stakeholder who whistleblows in public spirit and in good faith shall be protected, regardless of whether or not the issue raised is upheld against any party" (p.3). Any whistleblower whose information has led to genuine discovery but suffered some attacks or adverse treatment

from anybody is however free to file a formal complaint to an independent body of inquiry that shall be set to look at such complaints.

Reward for Whistleblowers: To encourage citizens to key in and help government to succeed in stemming the rate of corruption in public spheres, a potential whistleblower is entitled to a reward of between 2.5% to 5% cut of the looted money that his/her information could help in recovering. To qualify for such reward, the policy emphasizes that the whistleblower must provide government with information it does not already have, and could not otherwise obtain from any other public source available to the government. Also, the recovery must actually be on account of the information leaked by the whistleblower. To assure the blower of his/her safety and protection in addition to the expected financial reward when the loot is recovered, the policy makes provision for covering the identity of the blower to the fullest extent within the limitation of the law. And if the blower wishes to be known, the policy assures full protection of such person as well (Federal Republic of Nigeria 2016, p. 2-4)

Some Critical Comments on Relevant Features of the Whistleblowing Policy

A critical look at the composition and demand of the policy brings to the fore certain fundamental features, namely, voluntariness and good faith; distinctiveness and fruitfulness of information as the determinant of reward; protection of the whistleblower.

Voluntariness and Good Faith: The whistleblower who discloses information leading to recovery of looted money must do so voluntarily and in good faith. This means that he/she undertakes to whistleblow based on his/her freewill; not under compulsion but out of his/her conviction. Also doing it in 'good faith' demands that he/she does it out of honest intention; not out of maliciousness, vindictiveness or vengefulness. Morse (2014) emphasizes that usually whistleblowers act out of a feeling of fairness or ethics. "Blowing the whistle is distinct from a grievance or personal complaint, which is a dispute about an employee's own position" (p.3). The implication is that whistleblowers must show some high moral standard when they undertake to engage in the act of whistleblowing. Unfortunately, in Nigeria, according to Alaribe (2017), many people are suspecting that government and some vengeful people are using this policy to fight their opponents, while corrupt officers and their allies in the society are protected from whistleblowing. It is also pertinent to point out that some whistleblowers might only engage in whistleblowing maliciously or vengefully as pay back against the suspects. In this sense, Daniel Bullison (2017) quoting an anonymous commentator, claims that "whistleblowers are the relatives, staff of the blowee, who did not feel any blow when the blowee was blowing cash around. The implication here is that whistleblowing may after all harbor some moral intrigues and such would curiously raise questions about the genuine intention of some blowers. If this is the case, the essence and the good intention of the policy would seem defeated; and as it were, the masses could be forced to lose faith in the policy as it does not seem to make the stakeholders anymore responsible.

Distinctiveness and Fruitfulness of Information as the Determinant of Reward: The qualification or criteria for reward is that information disclosed must be such that government does not already have and could not otherwise obtain from any other publicly available source to government. In addition, the actual recovery must be on account of that

information. The first part of the condition is, of course, relevant; otherwise smart blowers could easily poke and hack information just to make a case for their reward. But at the same time the condition would not likely motivate many people. However, there are some questions that could be raised on the second part of this condition; that is' the condition that the information must lead to the actual recovery of looted money. The salient question here is, what happens if the suspect refuses to voluntarily hand over, and the government eventually recovers the loot through litigation? What happens to the whistleblower? Ought he/she not be entitled to any reward? It is imperative that genuine effort should be rewarded just as achievement should also be rewarded. It would be wrong not to reward a whistleblower whose effort led to the knowledge that there is a looted fund somewhere. The refusal of the suspect to hand over the loot voluntarily could not be said to be the fault of the whistleblower. So, if government eventually recovers the money through litigation, for example, it should not preclude the whistleblower from being rewarded; for after all, without his/her information, government might not have had an idea about the looted money.

Protection of the Whistleblower: The policy assures the whistleblower of anonymity and confidentiality. This is an interesting aspect of the policy because the identity of a whistleblower, if exposed, could lead to reprisal from the accused. But considering the way this particular conditionality is couched, it seems that government would only step in after the damage would have probably been done or the whistleblower had been attacked. This is why many scholars like Taylor (2015) and Berg (2020) argue that whistleblowing is not an appealing activity and is not for the faint-hearted person as it might lead to the suspect's suffering, just as the blower may also suffer some danger through some kind of reprisal attacks. Government therefore needs to device a means of protecting the whistleblower who wishes to disclose information right from the first day through the course of the investigation rather than wait till there is any reprisal attack from suspects. This is why the Nigerian Government should live up to the billing of the Monrovia Statement that new legislation should be made and adopted to make the policy work in the sub-region. Makinde (2018), Francis (2019), Onyejiana & Bayode-ojo (2021) all have decried the fact that in Nigeria, the policy lacks proper legal framework, notwithstanding its usefulness in helping the country to save so many billions of Naira since its introduction. It is believed that Nigeria and other African States who have not yet put up strong and adequate legal framework and backing to the policy should toe the line of the US in making legislation that can adequately protect the whistleblower. *The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia* (2013) notes that the US Federal Legislation in 1978 barred any form of reprisals and discriminatory treatment against whistleblowers. This can strengthen the position of well-meaning whistleblowers, if replicated in Nigeria.

Looted Cut to Whistle-blowers: Whither the Ethics of Responsibility in the Reward?

It is important to re-state here that the major focus and paradigm of this work is the Nigerian situation. Here and as in some other African states, whistle-blowing is basically set up as an anti-corruption tool because corruption has become endemic in the society. Fundamentally therefore, the policy is aimed at making the entire citizenry responsible and financially accountable. To encourage people to blow the whistle, financial reward of between 2.5% to 5% cut of the recovered loot is promised to the whistleblower whose information leads directly to the actual recovery of such loot. Actually, this financial

entitlement or reward looks appealing on face value. It is also important to state that naturally a responsible worker deserves a reward. However, a critical look at the operation of this policy and the intent of blowers would reveal some moral challenges, especially considered from the point of view that the Nigerian government is trying to enthrone and encourage an ethics of responsibility: This, ofcourse might also be true of other African government. The reason for this submission is that a background understanding of the policy shows that it latently aims at making the citizenry accountable - socially and individually.

Ethics of responsibility is characterized as that caring attitude or conduct that social agents ought to adopt with respect to the well-being of the other people in the society, as well as the general well-being of the society. In ethics of responsibility, the society's welfare or wellbeing comes first, and the individual's right is secondary. Thus, it is the responsibility of the individual in the society to care for the well-being of others. This does not however preclude the rights of the individual. Gyekye (1996) notes that it is important to give priority to responsibility over individual rights because a person by nature is "a social being oriented toward others in a community of persons" (p.63). The above is encapsulated in the traditional communal idea that 'I am because we are.' Ogude in an interview with Paulson (2020) says that this maxim underlies the philosophy of Ubuntu. Paulson quotes him as stating that Ubuntu is a communitarian ethos which "imposes a sense of moral obligation regarding your responsibility for others before you think of yourself." This means that one's sense of self should be shaped by one's relationship with others in the society. In this sense also, Unah (2006) asserts that the ontological meaning of society is "being with others." The implication of the above narrative is that community or social life is the foundation for the ethics of responsibility. It is therefore very understandable that the reason for which the policy is put in place is to safeguard the public interest; not individual interest as such. Hence, the policy stresses that any information on misconduct or violation or misappropriation that impacts negatively on the citizenry and the common good of the state should be disclosed through whistle-blowing.

The Quandary on the System of Reward for Whistleblowing

The issue here is, if the whistleblowing policy is put in place for public good why then do some people hustle for the sake of the reward they are going to make rather than the public good? One is therefore prompted to wonder if it is not possible that there could be some responsible people who naturally would blow the whistle or in any other way possible, lead to recovery of lost or stolen monies based solely on goodwill: That is without expecting any reward in the form of a cut from the recovered money. Ofcourse, one believes there are many such people. Mikairo & Eteghe (2015) reported of a casual worker; an airport cleaner, Miss Josephine Agwu who returned Twelve Million Naira that was forgotten by a passenger, Mr Obinna Samuel in one of the toilets. It is reported that the lady just returned the money and walked away without asking for a 'cut' or reward from the owner. The management of the unit she worked for honoured her and doubled her salary while the airport management promised her automatic employment. The report has it that, that was the fourth time the lady had picked up and returned huge amount of money forgotten or lost by passengers. Also, a Nigerian Doctoral student in the University of Tsukuba, Japan, Mr. Ikenna Nweke is also said to have returned a huge sum of money and rejected a reward from the owner of the money when he was given a 'cut' from it. The then President of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, commended him for such an altruistic act and wished that other citizens should

borrow a leaf from such altruistic behaviour and shun what he called “the microwaved, get-rich-quick tendencies that bring both individual and collective shame” (Ogunmade, 2020)

Arguably, the examples given above might not be considered as cases of whistleblowing on looted money. But I think they are apt enough to show that there are people who can act solely out of goodwill. Now, if this is obtainable, why then would any responsible agent, deserving of the tag, be motivated by financial reward from a certain cut of what his/her information helped to recover? The question is important because if one is said to be a responsible person, having the common good of his/her society at heart, and also given the fact that his/her disclosure is in good faith; that is, based on genuine intention or goodwill - not out of ulterior motive or pecuniary reasons, then it would smack of hypocrisy for such a person to eye or even accept a ‘cut’ from the loot he/she helped to recover through his/her disclosure. As Davis (2012) would put, this would be analogous to a samaritan doing good because he knows he will be paid for his trouble: and if this happens, such a person cannot be said to be a good samaritan.

It is expedient to clearly assert again that we are not totally against reward of whistle-blowers as such. We agree with the like of Jones (2016), a Pennsylvanian district judge who is quoted to have said that, “What gets measured gets done, what gets measured and fed back gets done well, and what gets rewarded gets repeated.” In this vein, rewarding whistle-blowers would certainly motivate citizens to be more responsive and responsible to their environments toward their own good and the common good of the society. But the question begging for answer is, what moral justification could anybody appeal to, for rewarding with or being rewarded from a certain cut or percentage of what one helped to recover? Going by the hustles of self-indulgence, materialistic greed - to use the word of Amin (2019) and intrigues witnessed in Nigeria for example, it would not be out of place to point to ‘ethical egoism’ as the salient answer.

The Problematic in Ethical Egoism as a Justification for Rewarding Whistleblowing with Looted Cuts

Ethical egoism is the theory that an action is right if it maximizes one’s own self-interest. Rachels & Rachels (2012) define ethical egoism as a theory which “holds that our duty is to do what is best for ourselves. Other people matter only in so far as they can benefit us.” In the same vein Deigh (2010) sees ethical egoism as a theory which holds that the highest good for any person is his/her own happiness. Given this egoistic principle, it would mean that the right action consists in watching out for and furthering one’s happiness, while wrong action consists in neglecting what can bring one’s happiness. It is generally and correctly noted that the thought that usually inspires ethical egoism is that “applying intelligence and forethought to the aim of achieving happiness shows that the best way to realize this aim is to live one’s life by such standards” (Deigh, 2010, p.26). But living by such standard, as the theory is grounded, leaves much to be desired when in relation to social existence. After all, intelligence and forethought may not always lead to moral ends. Akpan (2011) argues that armed robbers, oil bunkers, suicide bombers and the like are naturally intelligent people who apply their intelligence and forethought to achieve their aims and indeed, their happiness. But we cannot say that their actions are ethical, though as humans they are morally responsible beings; and as Okeke & Akpan (2012) correctly note, moral consciousness is the fundamental distinguishing factor between humans and other beings. The implication of the egoistic principle in the context of this work; that is, with regard to rewarding whistle-blowers is that the blowers would first and foremost consider what they

would gain; the amount of money that would accrue to them - should they make any disclosure. With this in mind, their duty to the society becomes saturated with self-interest and not based on genuine intention or goodwill. This invariably defeats the requirement of good faith: and one could then infer that the motive for disclosure was, after all, for pecuniary reason.

To buttress this point further, we can reflect on a case where some whistle-blowers agitated for their reward after alleging that they have been surcharged by the Federal Government of Nigeria. According to Ikechukwu Nnochiri (2017), three whistle-blowers namely Abdulmin Musa, Mr. Stephen Sunday and Mr. Bala Usman, claiming to be the genuine whistleblowers that disclosed information which led to the recovery of Thirteen Billion Naira at Ikoyi, Lagos, had dragged the Federal Government to court for attempting to pay the five percent whistleblowing entitlement (reward) to other persons. A critical look at this agitation could reveal that the whistleblowers' intention was self-interest at first; considering the gain of about six hundred and fifty million Naira (₦650,000,000), being 5% of the Thirteen Billion Naira loot! This kind of motive puts to question the ethics of responsibility and reward system that federal and state or regional government seems to be enthrone through the whistleblowing policy. From our understanding of ethics of responsibility, it is pertinent to point out that it is diametrically opposed to ethical egoism which the federal and regional and state governments by their system of reward seems to encourage. An ethics of responsibility does not look at selfish interest: It looks at the common good. Therefore, it goes without saying that promoting self-interest above the common good is not entirely rational no matter how 'rational' the explanation as regards the cause of the action would appear to be" (Akpan 2011, p.8). In view of this, there is need for Government to rethink the system of rewarding whistleblowers if government really wants her citizens to be morally and socially accountable.

One could argue that the Federal Government of Nigeria, for example and as other governments in the world, had good intention for making the provision in the policy to reward whistleblowers with a certain cut of the recovered money. But a more critical look at this will reveal the moral intrigues involved. The question we reiterate here is, how morally right would it be if a certain cut of recovered money that was stolen is shared with the person who gave information for the recovery? At this point, we can draw an analogy from a traditional Efik/Ibibio (a sister tribe in Nigeria) maxim which says: '*adia mkpo ino, edi ino*' (a person who eats a stolen food of a thief is a thief). This is a traditional moral maxim which needs no proof for justification. It is morally debasing for one to share in the food of a thief knowing quite well that it was stolen. In the same vein, one who eyes a cut from recovered loot simply because he/she disclosed information that led to that recovery should see the moral intrigues involved in such reward. Indeed, financial entitlements from looted money to the relevant whistleblower, in my own view, would make the blower a moral hypocrite. We see moral hypocrisy as the act of pretending to do what is seen as good and praiseworthy by others, whereas there is an ulterior motive behind such action. In the words of Davis (2012) who argues against financial rewards for whistle blowers, such reward would be "analogous to promising the Samaritan to help the injured... and in so far as the Samaritan helps, because he will be paid for his trouble, he cannot be a good Samaritan" (p. 270). It is obvious that majority of whistle-blowers, do not blow it with genuine intention for the common good, rather they do it based on their selfish interests which anchor on the expected reward. Indeed, such are bad Samaritans! It is also pertinent to point out that

some whistleblowers might only engage in whistleblowing maliciously or vengefully as pay back against the suspects. In this sense, Bullison (2017) quoting an anonymous commentator, claims that “whistleblowers are the relatives, staff of the blowee, who did not feel any blow when the blowee was blowing cash around.” The implication here is that whistle-blowing may after all harbor some moral intrigues and such curiously raise questions about the genuine intention of some blowers.

Conclusion

The work set out to contend with the system of reward attached to the whistleblowing policy as an anti-corruption tool. I quite agree that whistleblowing is indeed a valuable means of fighting corruption. But I contend here that rewarding whistleblowers with 2.5% to 5% cut of the loot that their information helps to recover amounts to moral hypocrisy: It is tantamount to sharing in the food of a thief that one has just apprehended for stealing the said food. My position is that such a system of reward in an ethics of responsibility that the government seems to be enthroning through the whistle-blowing policy, could encourage ethical egoism. The reason is that would-be whistleblowers would always be motivated by the cut they would get after such recovery are made; not necessarily by the genuine intention for the common good.

I would rather conclude that if the government wants to enthrone an ethics of responsibility through the mechanism of whistleblowing, then they need to re-think the reward system in the policy. I therefore recommend that a National Honour christened **Nigerian Integrity and Patriotism Personified** (NIPP) that would be internationally recognised be awarded to relevant whistleblowers. In addition, government may also consider job promotion or employment to such persons as the case may be. This is important, if a whistleblower has to be recognised nationally and internationally as a responsible social agent who discloses information out of goodwill (genuine intention), and in good faith for the public good. This is why one believes that to be less egoistic and more altruistic is better and just, even when it does not seem to immediately profit a person. Yet arguably, such disposition at a long run is in one's overall good in an extended scale; and as Pojman (2005) asserts, if generally engaged in by others will likely reverberate through the whole gamut of the society and produce the most overall societal wellness, and saliently inculcate ethics of responsibility in the citizenry.

References

- Akampa, M. (2017, Feb 15), Whistle-blowing and fighting corruption in Africa. <https://whistleb.com/whistleblowing-and-fighting-corruption-in-Africa/a>
- Akpan, C. (2011). Ambivalence of human existential situation: a veritable Index of rational explanation. *American Journal of Social and Management Sciences*, 2 (1), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.5251/ajsms.2011.2.1.1.10>
- Alaribe, U. (2017, May 8). Ohanaeze youth to FG: don't use whistle-blowing to victimize opposition. *Online Nigeria: community portal of Nigeria*. [news2onlinenigeria.com/news/general/616994-ohanaeze-youths-to-fg-don't-use-whistleblowing-policy-to-victimize-oppositions/html](https://news2onlinenigeria.com/news/general/616994-ohanaeze-youths-to-fg-don-t-use-whistleblowing-policy-to-victimize-oppositions/html)
- Amin, A. (2019, October 18). Progress at the expense of moral bankruptcy. *The daily star*. www.islamicity.org/16877/progress-at-the-xspense-of-moral-bankruptcy/
- Berg, K. (2020). The ethics of whistleblowing. *Journal of Media Ethics*. (35) 1, 60-64. www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/23736992.2020.1702671.

- Bullissson, D. (2017, April 18). Whistle-blowing in Nigeria. <https://www.dailytrust.com.ngnews/laws/whistle-blowing-in-Nigeria/194017.html>.
- Casmir, A. et al, (2014). Public sector and corruption in Nigeria: an ethical and institutional framework of analysis. *Open Journal of Philosophy* (4), 216-224. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/ojpp.2014.43029>.
- Davis, M. (2012). "Rewarding Whistleblowers: A Conceptual Problem. *The International Journal of Applied Philosophy*. (26)2, 269-277. Doi:10.5840/ijap20126220.
- Deigh, J. (2010). *An Introduction to Ethics*. Cambridge University Press
- Egbe, R. (2017, Feb 28). Whistle-blowing and loot recovery. www.thenationlineng.net
- Ethical Advocate* (2016), 25. Reward ethical conduct. <https://www.ethicaladvocate.com/reward-ethical-conduct/>
- Federal Republic of Nigeria: Federal ministry of finance whistle-blowing portal. (2016). 7 things to know about Nigeria's whistle blower policy. <http://www.lawpad.com/7-things-know-nigeria-whistle-blower-policy>
- Francis, N. (2019, November 21). Nigeria: Government saves N594bn from whistleblowing policy. *All Africa.com*. <https://allafrica.com/stories/201911220105.html>
- Frost, N. (2011, Sept.5) Ethical issues in whistle-blowing. *The Jama Network*. jama-network.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/17/6097.
- Gabriel, C. (2017, April 5). Whistle-blowing as panacea for corruption. www.vanguardngr.com/2017/04/whistle-blowing-panacea-corruption/
- Gyekye, K. (1996). *African cultural values: an introduction*. Sankofa Publishing Company.
- Mathewson, K. (2012, Jan. 22). What's ethical about whistle-blowing? www.crrwire.com/blog/posts/280-what-s-ethical-about-whistleblowing.
- Mikairo, L. & Etegehe, D. (2015, March 7). At last shower of blessing on airport cleaner who returned lost 12 Million Naira. www.vanguardngr.com/2015/03/at-last-shower-of-blessings-on-airport-cleaner-who-returned-lost-N12-million/
- Monrovia Statement on Whistle-blower and Witness Protection in West Africa (2016). [www.Monrovia_Statement_on_Whistle-Blower_and_Witness_Protection_EN-21-09-2016\(1\).pdf](http://www.Monrovia_Statement_on_Whistle-Blower_and_Witness_Protection_EN-21-09-2016(1).pdf)
- Nnochiri, I. (2017, Nov. 27). N13bn Ikoyi loot: 3 whistleblowers drag FG to Court over 5% Commission. www.vanguardngr.com/2017/11/n13bn-ikoyi-loot-3-whistleblowers-drag-fg-court-5-commission/
- Nottinghamshire County Council (ND). Whistleblowing policy (confidential reporting). www.nothinghamshire.gov.uk/jobs-and-working/working-for-us/whistleblowing-policy
- Ogunmade, O. (2020, July 5). Buhari commends Nigerian who returned money, rejected compensation in Japan. www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2020/07/05/buhari-commends-nigerian-who-returned-money-rejected-compensation-in-japan/
- Okeke, J. & Akpan C. (2012). An inquiry into the moral question of xenotransplantation. *Online Journal of Health Ethics*, (8)1, 1-13.
- Omeregbe J. (1993). *Ethics: a systematic and historical study*. Joja Education Research.
- Onyejiana, B. & Bayode-ojo, E. (2021). Whistleblowing: an approach towards good corporate governance in Nigeria. *mondaq*. www.mondaq.com/nigeria/whistleblowing/1084028/whistleblowing-an-approach-towards-good-corporate-governance-in-nigeria

- Paulson, Steve. (2020). I am because we are: the African philosophy of ubuntu. *Interview with James Ogude*. 22 June, 2019. www.ttbook.org/interview/i-am-because-we-are-african-philosophy-ubuntu
- Pojman, L. P. (2005). *How should we live? An introduction to ethics*. Wadsworth.
- Rachels J. & Rachels S. (2012). *The elements of moral philosophy*. 7th ed. MC Graw Hill.
- Taylor, K. (2015). The ethics of whistleblowing. *Philosophy Talk*. <https://www.philosophytalk.org/blog/ethics-whistleblowing>.
- The Columbia electronic encyclopedia* (2013). Colombia University Press. www.cc.columbia.edu/cu/cup
- Unah, J. (Ed) (2006). *Philosophy, society and anthropology*. Fadec Publishers.
- Yomchinda, N. et al. (2022). For the greater good: the sociodemographic characteristics of the whistleblowers, the hotline channel administration and whistleblowing intention. *Humanities, Arts and Social Studies*. (33) 2, 307-315. <https://2002.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/hass>.