

Chapter 4

Whistleblowing Policy Against Corruption: The Case of Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Growing corruption in Nigeria is a cause of concern for everyone. In order to strengthen the fight against corruption, the government is determined to nip the hydra-headed monster in the bud. In this regard, two anti-corruption agencies have been established and the introduction of a whistleblowing policy has been introduced. Initially, the citizens embraced the policy by blowing the whistle on fraud, bribery, looted public funds/assets, financial misconduct, and other forms of gratification/theft. This yielded fruitful results as stolen public funds and assets that run into billions were recovered. However, rather than intensify their initial zeal to exposé corruption, the citizens' desire to blow the whistle began to wane amidst large-scale corruption. Against this backdrop, this chapter proffers solutions and recommends ways for the government to get Nigerians to actively continue with the whistleblowing policy.

INTRODUCTION

Corruption is a global phenomenon. No region is immune from it. Most countries of the world are plagued by the hydra-headed monster. Everywhere around the globe, it is common knowledge that corruption stifles economic growth and undermines development as resources meant for the progress of a nation are stolen by a privileged few. It is for this reason, that concerned citizens in most climes often move against all known forms of corrupt practices and various strategies are deployed to combat the scourge. Though a global problem, its negative effects are more felt in underdeveloped societies.

Nigeria is a developing country endowed with abundant human and natural resources but real development has eluded the nation owing to endemic corruption and a lack of purposeful leadership. It is sad to note that almost all aspects of the nation's life are afflicted by corruption. Corruption is said to

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-5007-9.ch004

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be responsible for the high level of poverty in the country and Africa at large. As a result of large-scale corruption, the economy of Nigeria has over the years witnessed stunted growth; various sectors are underfunded and neglected with citizens at the receiving end (Oluikpe, 2018; Babalola, 2019).

The regime of President Muhammadu Buhari came into power with a commitment to fight corruption to a standstill having realized the enormous threats it poses to the nation's survival. During his pre-election campaign in London, the president had said "*There will be no confusion as to where I stand on corruption*", adding that "*the corrupt will not be appointed into my administration*". In one forum after another, he was always quick to point out his administration's determination to rid Nigeria of cancerous corruption and impunity in public office. How far he has been able to achieve this is a matter of conjecture.

The president's assumption of office was followed by the launch of a vigorous anti-graft campaign with an alarm that "*if we do not kill corruption, corruption will kill Nigeria*". The fear of corruption became so obvious that the "*body language*"¹ of the president assumed a warning signal to those engaged in graft. Apart from launching some strategies to tackle corruption, the Buhari's administration came up with an innovative whistleblowing policy, which was unveiled on December 21, 2016, by Mrs. Kemi Adeosun, a former minister of finance. The whistleblowing policy was one of the creative additions to the fight against corruption by the federal government.

This chapter, therefore, examines the whistleblowing policy and corruption in Nigeria. The objectives of the chapter are:

- To highlight the benefits of the whistleblowing policy to Nigeria.
- To show why Nigerians are no longer blowing the whistle.
- To stress the need for government to legalize the whistleblowing policy.

BACKGROUND

Overview of Corruption

Corruption is a complex phenomenon. As a result, it is difficult to conceptualize. Evidence has shown that it is indeed a daunting and challenging endeavor (Derin, 2007; Ajibewa, 2006, Faloore, 2010, Igbuzor, 2008). Andvig *et al.* (2001) posit that "*corruption is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon with multiple causes and effects, as it takes on various forms and functions in different contexts*". In fact, one of the major problems in conceptualizing corruption is that while it is difficult for it to go away easily, it has the capacity to take new forms (Andrig & Fjeldstad, 2001; Girling & Staff, 1997).

The difficulty of defining corruption is first a function of its being a secret and clandestine activity and secondly because it has many manifestations, dimensions, and forms. That is why Johnson argues that studying corruption is a tricky business. According to him, definitions are controversial, and solid evidence is often elusive. Descriptive accounts may be clouded by self-serving equivocations. Equally subtle is the question of the significance of a corrupt act-not by its consequences but also by its meaning as perceived by citizens and officials alike (Ogundiya, 2009). Nevertheless, Tanzi (1998) has argued that while it may not be easy to define corruption, the crisis associated with corruption is not difficult to recognize.

The word corruption is originally from the Latin verb "*rumpere*" which means to break (Abdul-Ismaail, n.d). Following this, corruption means the breaking of a certain code of conduct for the personal benefit

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