



RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHICAL VALUES AND WHISTLEBLOWING INTENTIONS AMONG EMPLOYEES IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA

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Abstract

Even though whistleblowing in Kenyan public universities is rare, some surveys have illustrated instances of whistleblowing from both members of the public and administrators. The purpose of this study was to determine how ethical values influence whistleblowing intentions among employees in public Universities in Kenya. The study was anchored on the Prosocial Behaviour Theory. The study adopted a positivist research philosophy and used a correlational research design. The study objective was to determine the effects of ethical values on whistleblowing intentions among employees in public universities. The target population was employees from public universities in Kenya and a total of 395 who filled the questionnaire were randomly selected. The study found that a one-unit increase in ethical values was associated with an increase in whistleblowing intentions by 0.22 ($\beta = 0.22$, $p\text{-value} = 0.003$) The study offers useful insight into policy and practice surrounding ethical conduct in public universities. The study recommends formulating policies and directing practices that enhance ethical values and

behavior among employees by ensuring organizational commitment and support. Moreover, this research gives fundamental insights into ethical values as a factor impacting the intentions behind blowing the whistle so that public institutional leaders can create solutions to seal the current loopholes.

Keywords: Ethics, Ethical Values, Whistleblowing Intentions, Universities, Employees, academic institutions, higher education

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Whistleblowing entails reporting actual or suspected wrongdoing to the organization's management or authorities outside the organization with the intention to abate such actions. This is the most potent method for cultivating an ethically healthy workplace culture as this may help in stopping unlawful activities or careless behavior that might hurt others. Some of the elements have a detrimental impact on whistleblower's intentions, while others impact positively on revealing wrongdoing. According to Culiberg & Mihelič, 2017, whistleblowing entails drawing the attention of the public to perceived wrongdoing, unethical conduct, and misconduct. Among the unethical conduct and misconducts or wrongdoing may include corruption, fraud, health and safety violation, bullying, cover-ups and discrimination, or abuse of public office among others. Whistleblowing may be either internal or external.

According to Saud (2016) whistleblowing is the act of revealing violations to parties within the organization, external agencies, and/or the general public. Typically, whistleblower disclosure takes place confidentially.

Corporate values, the ethical atmosphere, organizational leadership, all have a direct impact on the ethical culture and moral code of an organization and thus impacts on whistleblowing intentions (Gacheru, 2016, Cho & Song, 2015, Taylor & Curtis 2018) these issues are instrumental for the delivery of quality services and effective management of public institutions. The most ethical firms have workers with stronger intents to report wrongdoing (Ahmad *et al.*, 2014). Leaders may be linked to whistleblower intents because they are in charge of overseeing organizational governance, guaranteeing compliance, and fostering an atmosphere free from bullying so that employees do not fear retaliation (D'Cruz and Bjorkelo, 2016) (Bjorkelo *et al.*, 2020).

Furthermore, if people believe that coming forward may hurt their company, they will be less motivated to do so (Hwang *et al.*, 2014). The nature of the offense, the frequency, kind, and degree of wrongdoing (Richardson *et al.*, 2017), as well as its severity (Lyndon *et al.*, 2012) all

significantly trigger the urge to blow the whistle. However, research on general ethics suggests that females may be more ethical than males and more motivated to denounce crime because they have a stronger sense of justice, equality, and compassion (Bossuyt & Kenhove, 2018; Nisar *et al.*, 2019; Piquero *et al.*, 2013).

Whistleblowing plays a paramount role in organizations by exposing behaviors that are not ethical before they become actual problems. This is a very powerful tool in reinforcing corporate governance, improving internal organizational culture, ethics, and reducing corruption. Intensive research has been undertaken on the need of whistleblowing in organizations within the public sector as a tool to improve good public resource management and monitoring. However, limited and inconclusive studies on whistleblowing as a means of reducing unethical practices in Kenyan public universities exists. Universities are especially key given their role in training and research. The dismissal of whistleblower Spencer Sankale of Maasai Mara University in the “Mara Heist” on 17th June 2020 just six days before World Whistleblower Day elicited mixed reactions regarding whistleblowing in Kenya. The whistleblowing case that saw the Vice-Chancellor and other officials face charges of misappropriation of funds in 2020 discouraged several individuals from reporting corruption cases and reprisal acts.

General Objective

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between ethical values and whistleblowing intentions among employees in public universities.

Research Hypothesis

The study sought to test the following null hypothesis arising from the objectives:

H₀₁: There is no statistically significant relationship between ethical values and whistle-blowing intentions among employees in public universities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The normatively acceptable conduct that leader’s model and encourage in followers through two-way communication, positive reinforcement, and decision-making is known as ethical leadership (Brown *et al.*, 2005). According to the social learning approach, ethical leaders can influence their followers’ ethical conduct through serving as role models (Brown *et al.*, 2005). A moral manager and a moral person are the two elements that make up ethical leadership, in their opinion. An ethical leader is viewed as trustworthy, acting fairly, being honest, and acting ethically in the moral person component (Mayer *et al.*, 2012). In the moral manager component, moral conduct encourages moral conduct by their managerial activities,

such as rewarding moral conduct and enforcing moral conduct penalties and utilizing communication (Brown *et al.*, 2016).

Three characteristics of an ethical leader are conceptualized by Brown *et al.* (2016). An ethical leader, first and foremost, acts ethically. Second, the followers view such a leader as an example. Third, an ethical leader not only models ethics for their followers but also models ethics for themselves. Thus, it may be said that ethical leadership is a moral action taken by a leader that affects the conduct of followers. Employees' ethical behavior is significantly influenced by ethical leadership (Brown *et al.*, 2016). The moral conduct of leaders will serve as an example for their staff. People frequently judge their own ethical behavior by contrasting it with that of others, then adjust it as necessary (Liu and Ren, 2017). Employees will therefore evaluate and modify their ethical standards in light of those of their bosses. According to Avey *et al.* (2011), ethical leadership is favorably correlated with pro-social activity but negatively correlated with unethical behavior (Avey *et al.*, 2011). Less unethical behavior will be practiced the more highly ethical leadership is regarded by the workforce, and vice versa.

According to Brown *et al.* (2016), ethical leadership consists of both a moral manager and a moral person. As a moral person, a leader may serve as an excellent role model because of their ethical behavior, fairness, honesty, and reliability (Mayer *et al.*, 2012). As a result, followers are more likely to recognize and conform to their leader's ethics. If the leader is morally upright, then the followers will want to emulate that behavior. Because whistleblowing is an ethical behavior, followers of an ethical leader are more inclined to engage in it. An ethical manager upholds moral conduct and deters immoral behavior by their managerial decisions, such as rewarding moral behavior, punishing immoral behavior, and communicating (Brown *et al.*, 2016). As a result, an ethical leader fosters ethical behavior in their followers and creates an ethical climate within the workforce. The staff will believe that hiding wrongdoings would be immoral. As a result, an ethical leader will promote whistleblower purpose and raise workers' awareness of ethical behavior in the moral manager component.

Because the leader is seen as a moral individual and manager, who supports ethical behavior, and because subordinates can easily approach him or her to report any wrongdoings or unethical behavior they have observed, the subordinates are more likely to blow the whistle both internally and externally. The explanation for this is that employees will feel encouraged for all moral actions they take, whether they are taken within or outside the company. Sachdeva, & Chaudhary, (2022) assert that whistleblowing is a key instrument for unveiling wrongdoing. In their study to explore the whys and wherefores of undertaking the act of whistleblowing by Indian women nurses found out that morality, responsibility to the employer, peers, and management support that action will be taken against the wrongdoer motivated whistleblowing

while job loss together with the fear of harassment from peers and supervisors was a key hindrance to whistleblowing. The study concluded that affirmative action on pieces of training should be upheld and protection together with assurance of job security to anonymous whistleblowers is the key to encouraging reporting of wrong doing.

In the corporate sector, there have been a number of financial catastrophes in the past. Accountants frequently have a role in the demise of a firm, which breeds mistrust and damages their reputation as professionals of the accounting profession (Suryanto & Thalassinou, 2017). For instance, the scandals involving Enron, WorldCom, and Tyco are well-known. As a result, a code of ethics and rules known as the Sarbanes-Oxley Act (2002) in the USA were developed to control accountant performance and stop unethical activities (Copeland, 2015).

Accounting professionals continue to be under suspicion in several ethical scandals despite all of these rules and standards. It demonstrates that laws and rules are only inanimate norms. As a result, the standards should be lived by the individuals who utilize them, and an individual's personal traits are the most crucial factor in determining ethical conduct.

One of many types of ethical activity is whistleblowing (Suryanto & Thalassinou, 2017). Whistleblowing is considered a pro-social activity, meaning it has many positive social effects, according to Dozier and Miceli (1985). According to Near and Miceli (1985), whistleblowing is the act of organization members (current or former) informing individuals or groups that may be able to take action about unlawful, immoral, or improper acts that are under the authority of their employers. Overall, because it lessens unethical behavior inside an organization, whistleblowing is viewed as a behavior that benefits many individuals.

The need of ethical leadership is discovered given that unethical activity happens in companies (Brown and Trevino, 2016). Brown *et al.* (2016) defined ethical leadership as the way a leader's subordinates evaluate their ethical actions. To accomplish the goals of the firm, ethical leaders appreciate, demand, and encourage their workforce to act morally. They also educate their workforce on how to spot unethical activity and uphold high ethical standards (Mayer *et al.*, 2012). In a prior investigation, Liu and Ren (2017) looked at the connection between whistleblowing and moral leadership. The study's findings indicate that ethical leadership is positively correlated with auditor readiness to blow the whistle, with higher perceived ethicality of leaders being associated with greater auditor desire to do so.

Additionally, affective commitment appears to have an impact on workers' willingness to report misconduct (Alleyne, 2016). Alleyne studied how organizational commitment affected an accountant's propensity to report fraud. The findings show that while outward whistleblowing intention reduces with a high degree of organizational commitment, internal whistleblowing intention rises. In a prior investigation, Liu and Ren (2017) looked at the connection between

whistleblowing and moral leadership. Su'un, Hajering, & Muslim, (2020) examined the effect of professional commitment and locus of control on the intensity of conducting whistleblowing through ethical sensitivity by using primary data collected by use of questionnaires and employed partial least squares to test the hypothesis. The study results found that professional commitment and locus of control had a positive relationship and a significant effect on ethical sensitivity. The study concluded that professional commitment and ethical sensitivity have a positive relationship with the intensity of whistleblowing.

The greatest approach to gauge whistleblowing, according to Ajzen (1987), is to look at the motivation behind real activity. The purpose of this study is to examine if whistleblowing activity actually emerges from the goal. Additionally, Alleyne (2016) has looked at the connection between organizational commitment and whistleblower intention. The term "ethical climate" refers to a collection of normative climates that represent organizational behaviors with moral repercussions (Cullen *et al.*, 2003). An ethical environment, which serves as a normative organizational framework, can offer employees in public sector behavioral guidelines or ethical reasoning when they are faced with ethical dilemmas while providing public services (Victor and Cullen, 1988; Brown and Trevio, 2006). Victor and Cullen (1988) created taxonomy of the ethical atmosphere that influences how people form moral judgments. They offered egoism, kindness, and principle as the three elements of an ethical atmosphere based on works in ethical philosophy. Employees are more inclined to encourage improved organizational performance when they believe their workplace has an ethical climate (Mayer *et al.*, 2012).

Puni, Agyemang, & Asamoah (2016) found that while job status and religiosity have a minor impact on whistleblowing intents in an organization, other characteristics have a higher impact. It was established that whistleblowing does not currently have a high status in the Ghanaian context due to the perception of a lack of whistleblowers and the whistleblower's fear of harassment and punishment, including job loss.

In South Africa, many good citizens are willing to create awareness and alert the relevant bodies about any unethical act related to corruption going on, they are afraid to fall victims as they can be attacked by those involved (Soni, Maroun & Padia, 2015). In South Africa, Fatoki (2013) conducted a study on internal whistleblowing intentions of accounting employees and, recommended that if the government creates a protective environment where the whistleblowers can be guaranteed of protection once they come up and raise corruption related issues, the rate at which whistleblowers can assist bodies carrying out corruption investigation can go up thus creating a corruption free country.

Suryanto and Thalassinou, (2017) did a study involving Accountants, auditors, and finance staff from various companies in Indonesia were selected to fill-in a web-based survey.

From 775 questionnaires distributed, 203 were received and only 161 were properly completed. The response rate was 26.2%, and 79.3% of the response rate was used as the respondents. From the findings of the study, ethical leadership showed an insignificant correlation ($r = 0.056$, $p = 0.331$) toward external whistleblowing intention. This indicates that ethical leadership does not influence accountants' intention to blow the whistle externally. On the other hand, ethical leadership is a good predictor for internal whistleblowing intention (WBI-I) because it shows a positive significant correlation ($r = 0.421$, $p < 0.001$). Moreover, affective commitment has a negative significant correlation $r = -0.314$, $p < 0.001$ to external whistleblowing intention but a positive significant correlation ($r = 0.172$, $p < 0.093$) to internal whistleblowing intention. This can be concluded that affective commitment can influence both external and internal whistleblowing intention. As for the relationship between external whistleblowing intention and internal whistleblowing intention to actual whistleblowing, the table shows that external whistleblowing intention has a negative significance correlation ($r = -0.159$, $p = 0.015$) to whistleblowing, which means that external whistleblowing intention negatively influences whistleblowing. If external whistleblowing exists, whistleblowing may not happen. Meanwhile, internal whistleblowing intention to whistleblowing has a positive significance correlation ($r = 0.491$, $p < 0.001$).

The ethical atmosphere, according to Victor and Cullen (1988), is "workers' shared conceptions of what constitutes morally appropriate behavior and how ethical difficulties should be addressed" (pp. 51–52). According to this definition, ethical behavior adheres to moral principles that are generally shared by the community and the law (Kish-Gephart *et al.*, 2010). Institutional and behavioral systems are likewise impacted by these norms (Forsyth *et al.*, 2012). Employees' intentions to disclose frauds have a big influence on the ethical atmosphere when it comes to whistleblowing (Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran, 2005; Kaptein, 2011). Additionally, it is vital to ensure effective whistleblowing (Near and Miceli, 1985; Gao *et al.*, 2015).

Ethical climates may impact opinions regarding the propriety of whistleblowing, consequently influencing the actions of both whistleblowers and those receiving the information, in particular when witnesses of wrongdoing are faced with ethical issues (Near and Miceli, 1985; Victor and Cullen, 1988). This is why Victor and Cullen believe that an ethical atmosphere should strengthen moral thinking based on laws or regulations as well as compassion for others (1988). According to the present study, these elements serve as contextual signals that encourage favorable interpretations. Reframing a whistleblower's goal to focus on an organization's protection and support of moral activity like whistleblowing.

Using a student sample, Brown *et al.* (2016) explored two scenarios involving returning extra merchandise accidentally shipped to their company that they received and the second scenario explored whether they would return an envelope containing \$100 cash that they found

at a football game to the rightful owner (Brown, 2010). In both scenarios, the results indicated a positive relationship for empathy and a negative relationship for selfism suggesting that individuals with higher rates of empathy are more likely to engage in ethical decision-making whereas individuals with higher rates of selfism would be less likely to engage in ethical decision-making. This study provides an important contribution to existing literature by extending this prior study to whistleblowing intentions.

In Kenya, research by Mawanga (2014) found a strong correlation between the status of the perpetrator the degree of the violation, and the perceived retribution against whistleblowers in sub-Saharan African public organizations. The management's backing, the status of the perpetrator, and the whistleblowers' perception of the importance of the wrongdoing are all linked to the psychological power of the whistleblower and job switching among them. According to a hierarchical regression, perceived retribution was predicted by the severity of the wrongdoing, the whistleblower's psychological strength, and management support for the whistleblower.

Theoretical Framework

To explain the relationship between ethical issues and whistleblowing intentions prosocial behavior theory was reviewed. The proponents of the theory are Brief and Motowidlo (1986). This theory views whistleblowing as a kind of beneficial social activity since it takes into account whistleblowers' egoistic and altruistic motivations for exposing organizational wrongdoing (Miceli, Near, and Dworkin, 2008; Ceva & Bocchiola, 2019)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a correlational research design. In addition to testing the hypothesis, the design also used correlation analysis and multiple linear regression as inferential statistics (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2011). The study targeted the 31,373 employees in public universities comprising both teaching and non-teaching staff out of which 395 respondents were picked using proportionate sampling. The study employed a simple random procedure to identify the respondents who took part in the study. The study made use of primary data collected using questionnaires whose validity and reliability were ensured. The questionnaire had a set of both open ended and closed ended questions to help the researcher to gather information or rather data to be used to determine the relationship between ethical values and whistleblowing intentions among employees in public universities. The questionnaires were shared through Google forms to the respondents and a few were dropped and picked after filling. According to Testa & Simonson (2017, the use of questionnaires is considered

appropriate as it may help enhance data through the respondents' perspective. R Statistical software was used to clean and analyze the data obtained (version 4.3.2). Multiple regression analysis was used to examine the connection between a dependent variable and the independent variables (Hair, 2014). The link between the variables as well as their relative strengths were shown by the multiple linear regression model. Tables and bar graphs from the descriptive and inferential statistics were used to display the results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents responses from university employees concerning their ethical values and behaviors and seeks to test the hypothesis that there is no statistically significant relationship between ethical values and whistleblowing intentions among employees in public universities. The table provides insights into their ethical commitment and attitudes towards various aspects of ethics in the workplace. The tool that was used to measure ethical commitment of employees showed excellent internal consistency with alpha Cronchba's value being at 0.95. From the analysis, a significant majority of respondents (98.4%) either agreed or strongly agreed that they conducted their personal lives in an ethical manner. This indicates a high level of personal ethical integrity among university employees. A notable 92.4% of employees agreed or strongly agreed that success is not solely defined by results but also by the ethical means through which it is achieved. This suggests a strong belief in the importance of ethical conduct in the pursuit of success. In addition, a substantial majority (87.1%) agreed or strongly agreed that they would listen to what others have to say. This demonstrates a willingness to consider diverse perspectives, a vital aspect of ethical decision-making. A significant proportion (82.1%) agreed that they take action when individuals violate ethical principles. This reflects a commitment to upholding ethical standards and accountability.

Nearly all respondents (98.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that they make fair and balanced decisions. This reaffirms the commitment for impartiality and equity in decision-making processes. Furthermore, a substantial majority (84.6%) agreed or strongly agreed that they discussed business ethics or values with others. This indicates a culture of open dialogue and ethics awareness.

The majority (97.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that they set an example of how to do things the right way, emphasizing the importance of ethical leadership. A significant proportion (95.6%) agreed that, when making decisions, they always ask "what is the right thing to do?" This reflects a values-driven approach to decision-making. While many employees (92.4%) agreed or strongly agreed that people in their department recognized moral dilemmas, some indicated a neutral stance, suggesting room for improvement in ethical sensitivity. A substantial

proportion (62.9%) agreed or strongly agreed that people in their department are sensitive to ethical problems. However, a significant number expressed neutrality, indicating potential variability in ethical awareness.

The statement "People around here do not pay attention to ethical issues" received mixed responses, with 32.4% agreeing or strongly agreeing, and 30.5% expressing neutrality, suggesting areas within the university where ethics may need more attention.

Table 1: Ethical values among university employees

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean (SD)
I Conducts my personal life in an ethical manner.	30.5%	67.9%	0.3%	0.9%	0.3%	4.33 (0.636)
Success is not just defined by results but also the way it is obtained.	28.9%	64.2%	2.2%	4.1%	0.6%	4.25 (0.757)
I listen to what employees have to say.	9.4%	77.7%	8.8%	4.1%	0%	4.01 (0.632)
I discipline employees who violate ethical standards.	0%	82.1%	16%	1.6%	0.3%	3.78 (0.506)
I make fair and balanced decision.	21.1%	77.4%	1.6%	0%	0%	4.26 (0.490)
I discuss business ethics or values with employees.	7.2%	77.4%	11.6%	3.8%	0%	3.96 (0.639)
I set an example of how to do things the right way in terms of ethics.	16.7%	80.8%	2.5%	0%	0%	4.19 (0.595)
When making decisions, I ask "what is the right thing to do?"	19.2%	76.4%	4.1%	0.3%	0%	4.19 (0.633)
People around here are aware of ethical issues	0%	52.8%	39.6%	7.2%	0.3%	3.44 (0.709)
People in my department recognize a moral dilemma right away	0%	53.8%	37.1%	9.1%	0%	3.48 (0.712)
People around here, do not pay attention to ethical issues	0%	32.4%	30.5%	34.3%	2.8%	2.89 (0.654)

There is strong alignment between personal and professional ethics among university employees. A vast majority of respondents (98.4%) indicated that they conduct their personal lives ethically, and 92.4% emphasized that success should be attained through ethical means. This alignment signifies a consistent commitment to ethical principles that transcends the boundaries of the workplace and has significant implications for the university's ethical culture. When employees maintain ethical standards in their personal lives, they are more likely to exhibit ethical behavior within the organization. This consistency fosters an environment of trust, integrity, and shared values, essential for building an ethical organizational culture. The results also highlight the importance of ethical decision-making and leadership. A significant majority of employees (87.1%) reported that they listen to others, demonstrating a willingness to consider

diverse perspectives—an essential component of ethical decision-making. Additionally, 82.1% expressed a commitment to taking action against ethical violations, emphasizing the significance of ethical leadership.

These findings show similarity with other findings from previous studies where individuals who decide to blow the whistle typically do so because they believe that exposing unethical or illegal behavior is the right thing to do, even if it involves personal and professional risks (Su'un, Hajering, & Muslim, 2020). Individuals who prioritize honesty, integrity, and a commitment to ethical standards are more likely to blow the whistle when they encounter wrongdoing (Kang, 2023; Nicholls et al., 2021). This study also found that while a majority of employees (92.4%) agreed that people in their department recognize moral dilemmas, some expressed neutrality, suggesting that there may be room for improvement in enhancing ethical sensitivity within certain departments or areas of the university. Previous studies show that an ethical organizational culture that values transparency, accountability, and open communication is more likely to encourage whistleblowing (Vian, Agnew, & McInnes, 2022). Support from colleagues who share similar ethical values can be a significant motivator for whistleblowers. Conversely, a culture of silence or peer pressure to conform to unethical behavior may discourage whistleblowing.

Inferential statistics

Correlational analysis

Table 2 presents the result of the Correlational analysis among the chosen research variables.

Table 2: Correlational analysis

		Altruism	Ethical values	Attitude	Organizational support
Altruism	Pearson Correlation	1	0.303***	0.435**	0.176***
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	363	363	363	363
Ethical values			1	0.429***	0.305***
				.000	.000
			363	363	363
Attitude				1	0.256***
					.000
				363	363
Organizational support					1
					363

Test of Hypothesis

H₀: *There is no statistically significant relationship between ethical values and whistle blowing intentions among employees in public universities.*

The above hypothesis was tested using linear regression and the result is as summarized in Table 3 and the model is as shown below:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + e$$

Where: Y = whistle blowing intentions; β_0 =y-intercept (constant); β_1 =Beta coefficient; X_1 =Ethical values and ϵ = Error term

Table 3: Relationship between whistle blowing intentions and ethical values

<i>Predictors</i>	<i>Estimates</i>	<i>std. Error</i>	<i>Confidence Interval</i>	<i>p-value</i>
(Intercept)	5.98	2.86	0.36 – 11.60	0.037
Ethical values	0.22	0.07	0.07 – 0.36	0.003
R^2 / R^2 adjusted			0.28 / 0.25	

The intercept term suggests that when all predictors are zero, the average whistleblowing intent is 5.98. The predictor "Ethical Values" demonstrates a positive coefficient ($\beta = 0.22$, p-value = 0.003), indicating that individuals with higher ethical values tend to have greater whistleblowing intent. This relationship is statistically significant implying that ethical values play a notable role in determining whistleblowing intent. The model's coefficient of determination statistics indicate that the predictors explain 28% variance in whistleblowing intent ($R^2 = 0.28$).

The fitted model was therefore:

$$Y = 5.98 + 0.22X_1 + e$$

The analysis thus provides enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a statistically significant relationship between ethical values and whistleblowing intentions among employees in public universities.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The Kenyan government has set corruption laws aimed at governing public servants' behavior. Kenyan public universities are part of the scope of these anticorruption regulations focused on strategically placing the entities in good hands. Members of the public and government officials are on record whistleblowing on many occasions, including the recent

Masai Mara University corruption scandal. In many cases, administrators in the Kenya public sector prefer to go anonymous when sharing such critical information to avoid the repercussions. Accountability entities such as the Ethics and Anticorruption Commission (EACC), the government Ombudsman, and the Commission for Administrative Justice (CAJ) show that Kenya lacks robust whistleblowing mechanisms.

In many cases, a lack of knowledge of the processes limits most of the potential whistleblowers from coming forward with their information. 21.7% of the victims were found to be afraid of victimization, while approximately 20.9% did not report it because of potential inaction by the government agency. For instance, the EACC said that 5.3% of the corruption experiences in the country were reported officially to the government, while 94% were not reported. In many cases, the whistleblowing culture in Kenya focuses on junior and mid-level officers, overlooking the role that senior managers and administrators play in such unethical conduct.

For this reason, seniority exempts some members of government entities from facing the law despite their participation in corrupt behavior. The government has benefited in recovering missing government funds from the acts of whistleblowers. Moreover, it has helped to pinpoint irregular public procurement and other illegal purchases of disposable public property. Organizations have administrative cultures focusing on collectivism and kinship structures that initiate corrupt activities in the procurement process. Employees in Kenya fear coming forward with the information, such as David Munyake, who lost his job at the Central Bank of Kenya and became destitute after exposing the infamous Goldenberg scandal. This study reported that the Kenyan bribery index was 87% in 2019 and 92% in 2021.

Conclusions

This study explored the possibility that there was no statistical significance in the link between ethical values and whistleblowing intentions among employees in public universities. From this evaluation, a notable majority of respondents agreed and strongly agreed that personal actions and principles matter when making professional decisions. Therefore, ethical integrity is high among most Kenyan university employees. The study then illustrated that ethical conduct is imperative for organizations' positive success and that considering diverse perspectives is critical to ethical decision-making. A significant proportion of the respondents agreed that they would act when they saw someone violating ethical principles. In this case, most university employees committed to uphold ethical standards and accountability in the institutions. The study emphasized the role of ethical leadership when making decisions that would drive value in the organization. In this case, most of the university employees made fair

and balanced decisions. They also indicated that they discussed these values with their colleagues. For this reason, ethical values showed a positive and significant link with whistleblowing intentions. The results showed that people with strong ethical values have a higher tendency to whistle blow. There was no statistical significance between ethical values and whistleblowing intentions in employees of public universities in Kenya. This study concludes therefore that

Recommendations

From the study results, it is evident that those who are ethically upright are willing and ready to whistle blow should there be need without any coercion or external motivation as they take reporting wrongdoing as a moral duty. This means any eminent losses that may be incurred due to loss of assets necessitated by wrongdoings are likely to be countered thus saving corporation resources. It is recommended therefore that universities should continue to promote ethical values as part of their broader ethical initiatives and even put in place mechanisms to identify and reward members of staff who are ethical. Further, towards gradually achieving a more ethical workforce it is recommended that there is need put stringent measures geared towards employing ethical members from a pool of applicants. Proper background checks should be done for those joining the respective universities. There is also a need to continually put in place mechanisms that weeds out unethical employees through proper policy formulation and top leadership being role models. These institutions require a robust culture where transparency and integrity foster public belief in their systems. The research prioritizes ethical values and employee attitudes as a way of boosting a healthier and responsible working environment.

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