

Perceived Retaliation Against Internal Whistleblowers: Evidence From Public Institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Abstract

The study uses power relations theory to investigate existence of perceived retaliation against internal whistleblowers in Sub-Saharan Africa using evidence from employees in public institutions of Kenya. Focus was on the way perceived retaliation is related to seriousness of wrongdoing, whistleblower psychological power and management support to whistleblowers. The research design was quantitative, exploratory and analytical using cross-sectional data. Respondents were selected using simple random sampling and requested to complete a self-administered questionnaire. Findings were that perceived retaliation against whistleblowers exists and it was positively correlated to position of a wrongdoer and seriousness of wrongdoing. Whistleblower psychological power and changing jobs among whistleblowers were associated with management support, position of a wrongdoer and perceived seriousness of wrongdoing by whistle blowers. Position of a wrongdoer and seriousness of wrongdoing were associated with management support to whistleblowers. A hierarchical regression revealed that seriousness of wrongdoing, whistleblower psychological power and management support to whistleblower predicted perceived retaliation. These findings suggest participative compliance programmes, organisational ethical cultures and management support to reduce perceived retaliation against

whistleblowers as discussed in the policy and managerial implications.

Keywords:

Perceived retaliation, Management Support to Whistleblowers, Whistleblower Psychological Power, Seriousness of Wrongdoing, Public Institutions

Introduction

There is a wealth of knowledge on whistle blowing and the role of whistleblowers in contributing to correct previous wrongs, increasing safety and well-being in organisations, supporting codes of ethics, reducing waste and mismanagement, improving employee morale, maintaining good will and avoiding institutional litigations (Terry Morehead & Melissa 1998 and Liyanarachchi & Newdick, 2009). That is why (Jackson, Peters, Andrew, Edenborough, Halcomb, Luck, Salamonsen & Wilkes, 2010) refer to whistleblowers as advocates of the public. Despite this contribution, whistleblowers experience different forms of retaliation (Liyanarachchi, & Newdick, 2009; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005 and Bjørkelo, Ryberg, Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2008).

Retaliation against whistleblowers has been investigated by a number of scholars like Paul & Townsend (1996), McDonald & Ahern (2002), Paul & Townsend (1996), Rehg, Miceli, Near & Van Scotter (2004), Bjørkelo et al (2008), Firas & Brian (2001), Near, Dworkin & Miceli (1993) using different theories to explain its causes. In this study the power relations theory consisting of seriousness of wrongdoing, whistleblower psychological power and management support to whistleblower is used to investigate perceived retaliation against internal whistleblowers. Evidence is from Sub-Saharan Africa with focus on public institutions in Kenya. The study is a partial response to concerns by Bose & Nabin

(2004) on absence of enough knowledge on retaliation against whistleblowers in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Anecdotal evidence on retaliation against whistleblowers in Kenya exists. One such evidence is by Transparency International-Kenya of August 2006 who assert that provision of whistle blowing laws alone can not lead to reporting wrongdoing but only when people are confident about the protections guaranteed by existing legislations. Their view is illustrated by a case of Munyakei who reported the Goldenberg scandal and testified to a commission of inquiry when he was already out of employment and completely rejected because the employer used the Official Secrets Act (2003) to dismiss him; and another case of a journalist John Githongo who, just before blowing a whistle against highly placed Kenya officials associated with the Series for Alternative Research in East Africa (SAREAT) had to flee the country because the Witness Protection Act (2006) is silent on penalty for those who harass witnesses or whistleblowers.

Public institutions operate on the Principal-Agent model (Rose-Ackerman, 1999) and in Kenya the institutions have whistle blowing policies most of which are integrated in other policies like the Anti Corruption and Economic Crimes Act (2003) and Witness Protection Act (2006). Unfortunately, other policies like the Public Procurement and Disposal Act (2005) are silent on penalties for individuals who retaliate against whistleblowers and informers while the Official Secrets Act (2003) prescribes loyalty of employees to their employers paraphrased that you cannot bite the fingers that feed you. Kenya is also a signatory to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (2005) and the African Union Convention for Prevention and Combating Corruption (2006). These contradictions and or gaps in existing policies are likely to make employees in these institutions retaliate against whistleblowers.

Literature Review

Available literature gives evidence of a number of experiences whistleblowers suffer. One case is of Jeffery Wigand who in 1996 revealed that Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corp. management knew the addictive effect of tobacco and he was dismissed by the employer using the policy of violating the oath of secrecy. Wilmot (2000) in a study of the nursing profession and whistle blowing found existence of retaliation against whistleblowers trying to achieve a good outcome rather than fulfil a duty. Another evidence is by (Bjørkelo et al, 2008) who found that an internal whistleblower in a Norwegian health institution who was forced into external whistle blowing was dismissed and lost a judicial case of unjust dismissal despite a simultaneous independent external investigation report confirmed the whistleblower claim. Level of whistle blowing differs from country to country because Ab Ghani, Galbreath & Evans (2011) in a comparative study on whistle blowing found that employees in United States corporations are more courageous than their Asian counterparts.

Many employees in public institutions witness illegal or unlawful acts and are aware that when they blow the whistle their acts could possibly be disregarded; appropriately addressed or lead to retaliation. Actions of whistleblowers have been explained by Ethical Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), Moral or Duty theory (Davis, 1996), Power Relations Theory of Near, Dworkin & Miceli (1993) and used in studies by (Lachman, 2008) and Ponnu, Naidu & Zamri, (2008) among other scholars to explain possible retaliation against a whistleblower.

Retaliation against whistleblowers could be in many forms. Rehg et al (2004) summarise the forms to include spotlighting whistleblowers by trying to attack their credibility or competence; threatening them into silence or termination of service; isolating or humiliating them; setting them up for failure; driving them into psychological isolation; denying them access to institutional resources; prosecuting them; eliminating their jobs or paralysing their careers. This is because according to (McDonald & Ahern, 2002), whistleblowers can ruin a whole institution depending on the nature of the wrongdoing. Surprisingly most whistle blowers according to Bjørkelo et al (2008) could report wrongdoing again showing that management that engages in repeated wrongdoing is not likely to hire employees who are potential whistleblowers.

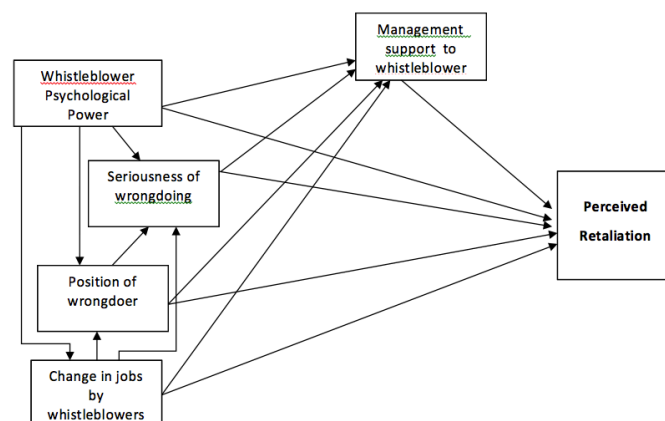
Whistleblowers who are weak may suffer retaliation because of powerful wrongdoers, weak recipient of the wrongdoing or management thinking that institutional survival is through continued wrongdoing (Near & Miceli, 1996) and this is in agreement with Rehg, et al (2008) when they assert that whistleblowers are not likely to suffer retaliation when they have greater power; when they have resource dependence or have minority influence although (Near & Miceli, 1996) found that whistleblowers at managerial level are more likely to suffer retaliation because their concerns relate to strategic decisions as compared to low-level managers who normally report wrongdoing of personal nature.

Actions of whistleblowers affect staff at different management levels differently. Rehg, et al, (2004) state that superiors may perceive such acts as questioning their ability, integrity and conduct; colleagues may perceive the actions as being disloyal to the company while owners may look at it as an effort to destroy institutional image and stability and conclude that it is difficult to predict outcomes of whistle blowing across institutions. However, Rehg, et al, (2004) add that prosperous organisations

are less likely to retaliate against whistleblowers because they can even offer to investigate a wrongdoing as opposed to less prosperous organisations that may take whistle blowing more as a threat or sometimes as an action outside the responsibility of whistleblowers. Retaliation against whistleblowers can be an organisational practice as confirmed by Bolsin, Faunce & Oakley (2005) that medical employees protect each other against wrongdoing. As a way out, Paul & Townsend (1996) assert that legalistic responses like protection of whistleblowers by institutions are more effective in reducing retaliation and these should be developed through building trust, cooperation and educational programmes among employees.

According to Grant (2002), nature of a wrongdoing is of material or ethical perspective and its seriousness depends on prevailing circumstances like when employees may perceive theft of an employers' property being more important than a management fraud. At the same time, seriousness of wrongdoing could be judged depending on lack of substantial evidence by the whistleblowers and can result into retaliation (Woodrow, 1997) although overwhelming evidence on wrongdoing could have the same effect because (Rehg et al, 2008) aver that when the wrongdoing is serious, its discontinuation might harm the institution and reporting it to outside media would hold the institution accountable. Rehg et al (2008) qualify serious wrongdoing to be one that is entrenched or of long-term nature, has high materiality or is perceived to harm multiple constituencies. Using this literature, a conceptual framework for the study was formulated as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of Retaliation against whistleblowers



According to the model, perceived retaliation against whistleblowers is related to whistleblower psychological power, seriousness of wrongdoing, position of a wrongdoer, change in jobs by whistleblowers and management support to whistleblower. At the same time whistleblower psychological power is likely to relate to seriousness of wrongdoing, position of wrongdoer and management support to whistleblower. Furthermore, change in jobs by whistleblowers is likely to relate to position of wrongdoer and seriousness of wrongdoing, while seriousness of wrongdoing is associated with position of wrongdoer. Using the literature and the conceptual framework the following hypotheses were formulated.

Hypothesis 1. There is perceived retaliation against whistleblowers in public institutions of Kenya.

Hypothesis 2. Whistleblower psychological power is positively related to perceived retaliation against whistleblowers.

Hypothesis 3. Perceived retaliation against whistleblowers is associ-

ated with Position wrongdoers.

Hypothesis 4. Perceived retaliation against whistleblowers is associated with Seriousness of wrongdoing.

Hypothesis 5. Perceived retaliation against whistleblowers is inversely related to Management support to whistleblowers.

Hypothesis 6. Change in jobs by whistleblowers is associated with perceived retaliation against whistleblowers.

Hypothesis 7. Whistleblower psychological power is associated with Management support to whistleblower.

Hypothesis 8. Change in jobs by whistleblowers is inversely related to Management support to whistleblowers.

Hypothesis 9. Seriousness of wrongdoing is associated with Management support to whistleblower.

Hypothesis 10. Position of wrongdoers have a relationship with Management support to whistleblowers.

Hypothesis 11. Change in jobs by whistleblowers is associated with Position of wrongdoer.

Hypothesis 12. Whistleblower psychological power is related to Seriousness of wrongdoing.

Hypothesis 13. Position of wrongdoer is associated with seriousness of wrongdoing.

Hypothesis 14. Whistleblower psychological power is positively related to position wrongdoers.

Hypothesis 15. Change in jobs by whistleblowers is positively related to seriousness of wrongdoing.

Hypothesis 16. Change in jobs by whistleblowers is associated with whistleblower psychological power.

Methods and Materials

The study was exploratory, quantitative, analytical and used cross-sectional data. From a population of 663,400 employees in public service of Kenya (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics- Statistical Abstracts of 2011), a sample of 450 randomly selected respondents participated in providing data on the study by completing a self administered questionnaires. Data collection tools were pretested for validity and reliability in which redundant and unclear items were adjusted appropriately as suggested by Hurmerinta-Peltomaki & Nummela (1998). The final questionnaires were accompanied with a letter explaining the purpose of the study, requesting the respondents to cooperate in the exercise and assuring them of confidentiality of their responses. Collected data was cleaned and coded before being captured in SPSS for data analysis. Data analysis included generating summaries of the control variables and a bivariate correlation analysis of all variables. Hierarchical regression analysis of perceived retaliation was carried out generating different models. In each model, predictors of perceived retaliation were identified; level of multicollinearity of each variable introduced and level of significance of all variables examined; and the overall contribution of the variables in predicting perceived retaliation revealed.

tion revealed.

Study variables

Measurements of perceived retaliation, whistleblowers psychological power, management support to whistleblowers and seriousness of wrongdoing were adapted from (Ajzen, 1991; Near & Miceli, 1996; TerryMorehead & Melissa, 1998 and Paul & Townsend, 1996) and measured on a 5 point Likert scale ranked as: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Uncertain (3), Agree (4), Strongly Agree (5). Constructs of all the four variables as shown in Table 1 exceeded the minimum acceptable Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.70 as recommended by Nunnally (1978) and their constructs were identified through factor analysis are shown in Appendix 1.

Table 1 Study variables

Variable	Items	Cronbach Alpha
1. seriousness of wrongdoing	5	0,742
2. management support to whistleblowers	6	0,848
3. whistleblowers psychological power	5	0,792
4. perceived retaliation	4	0,764
5. position of wrongdoer	1	a five categorical scale
6. change of jobs by whistleblower	1	a 5 Likert Scale

Analysis and Results

Of the 450 questionnaires distributed those returned and were found usable were 286 giving a response rate of 64%. Personal characteristics of respondents as adapted from Near & Miceli (1996) according to the usable questionnaires were analysed as follows:

a. Gender of respondents: included 66.7% male and as 33.3% female.

b. Age range of respondents: with 39.1% (up to 29 years), 41.3% (30 years - 39 years), 13.7% (40 - 49 years) and 5.9% (50 years and above).

c. Education level of respondents: with 24.5% holding at most a diploma, 66.5% holding a degree and 18.9% holding at least a second degree.

d. Position of Respondents in the institution: included 4.6% Chief Executives or Directors, 7.5% Top Managers, 19.9% Supervisors, 31.0% Middle Managers and 37% Lower Level officers.

e. Period of service of respondents: had 10.7% with at most one year, 49.0% (2 years - 4 years), 23.4% (5 years - 7 years), 9.6% (8 years – 10 years) and 7.3% (with over 10 years).

Analysis revealed that wrongdoers included 14.5% below the position of the respondent, 22.6% at same level as respondents, 24.9% as immediate supervisors of respondents, 29.1% in top management positions and 5.9% as outside contactors or vendors. The study revealed that whistleblowers had hardly changed jobs in the previous five years at the time of conducting the study as revealed by (mean =2.860 and SD =1.0186) using a Likert scale of; (1) decreased a lot, (2) decreased somewhat, (3) about the same, (4) increased somewhat, (5) increased a lot. On a 5 point Likert point scale of: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Uncertain (3), Agree (4), Strongly Agree (5); management support to whistleblowers (mean = 2.77, S.D = .807) does not exist; whistleblower psychological power (mean

= 3.24, S.D = .893) was low and there was evidence of serious wrongdoing (mean = 3.12, S.D = .828). The analysis reveals also that perceived retaliation (mean = 2.99, S.D = .969) exists and this supports H1. Bivariate correlation of the control and study variables is shown in Table 1.

According to Table 1, analysis of the control variables and study variables revealed that there was a significant and negative correlation between period of service of the respondents and seriousness of wrongdoing ($r = -0.126, p < 0.05$), Position held by respondent was significant and positively correlated to seriousness of wrongdoing ($r = .178, p < 0.01$) and Change in jobs by whistleblowers was significant and positively correlated to education level of respondents ($r = 0.128, p < 0.05$).

Position of wrongdoer was significant and positively correlated to perceived retaliation ($r = 0.173, p < 0.01$) supporting H3. Seriousness of wrongdoing was significant and positively correlated to perceived retaliation against whistleblowers ($r = 0.464, p < 0.01$) supporting H4. Change in jobs by whistleblowers was significant and negatively correlated to management support to whistleblowers ($r = -0.111, p < 0.05$) in agreement with H8. Seriousness of wrongdoing was significant and negatively correlated to management support to whistleblowers ($r = -0.406, p < 0.01$) supporting H9. Position of wrongdoer was significant and negatively correlated to management support to whistleblowers ($r = -0.130, p < 0.05$) supporting H10. Position of

wrongdoer was significant and positively correlated to change in jobs by whistleblowers ($r = 0.136, p < 0.01$) and this supports H11. Seriousness of wrongdoing was significant and positively correlated to whistleblower psychological power ($r = 0.448, p < 0.01$) agreeing with H12. Position of wrongdoer was significant and positively correlated to whistleblower psychological power of ($r = 0.111, p < 0.05$) and this is in agreement with H14. Wrongdoing was significant and positively correlated to change in jobs by whistleblowers ($r = 0.129, p < 0.01$) supporting H15. The analysis reveals that hypotheses H2, H5, H6, H7, H13 and H16 could not be accepted.

Regression analysis:

There was an attempt to predict perceived retaliation using a hierarchical regression with the control and study variables and the key aspects of the findings are as summarised in Table 2.

Table 2 shows that except in Model 1, the F-statistics Change in all the models was more than 2 and the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) were less than 5 (Haan, 2002) showing that from Model 2, the aggregate effect of the independent variables significantly predicted perceived retaliation and multicollinearity was not significant in their prediction coefficients.

According to Table 2, the Adjusted R squared in Model 1 and Model 2 was less than zero and the corresponding R

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Period of Service of respondent (1)	1										
Position of respondent (2)	-.333**	1									
Education level of respondent (3)	0.112	-.303**	1								
Gender of Respondent (4)	-.187**	.206**	-0.103	1							
Age range of respondent (5)	.516**	-.416**	.178**	-.221**	1						
Position of wrongdoer (6)	0.021	0.031	0.036	-0.023	0.028	1					
Changing jobs among whistleblowers (7)	-0.077	0.004	.128*	-0.062	-0.072	.136**	1				
Seriousness of Wrongdoing (8)	-.126*	.178**	-0.061	0.024	-0.011	0.050	.129**	1			
Whistleblower Psychological power (9)	-0.028	0.022	0.006	0.083	-0.056	.111*	0.050	.448**	1		
Management support to whistleblower (10)	0.048	-0.044	0.090	-0.051	0.030	-.130**	-.111*	-.406**	-.596**	1	
Perceived retaliation against whistleblower (11)	0.022	0.010	-0.037	0.031	0.050	.173**	0.061	.464**	.596**	-.578**	1

* Correlation is significant at 0.05 level ** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level

Table 1: Bivariate correlations of control and study variables

	1	2	3	Model 4	Collinearity 5	6	VIF
Constant	2.958**	2.771**	3.102**	1.823**		2.683**	
Control variables							
Position of wrongdoer	-	?	?	0.128**	?	?	1.017
Changing jobs by whistleblower	-	-	?	?	?	?	1.029
Wrongdoing	-	-	-	0.411**	0.233**	0.186**	1.074
Whistleblower Psychological power	-	-	-	-	0.457**	0.226**	1.165
Management response to Whistleblower	-	-	-	-	-	-0.452**	1.531
R	0.104	0.164	0.201	0.398	0.575	0.669	
R squared	0.011	0.027	0.040	0.158	0.331	0.447	
Adjusted R Squared	-0.015	-0.003	0.005	0.123	0.299	0.418	
R squared Change	0.011	0.016	0.013	0.118	0.172	0.116	
F Statistics change	0.426	3.157	2.685	26.624	48.603	39.603	
Significance F change	0.830	0.077	0.103	0.000	0.000	0.000	

** . Regression significant at 0.01 level *. Regression is significant at 0.05 level

Table 2: Hierarchical Regression with perceived retaliation as dependent variable

squared values are close to Zero. The control variables alone in Model 1 and even when position of wrongdoer is introduced in Model 2 the model variables do not predict perceived retaliation against whistleblowers. From Model 3, the values of Adjusted R squared progressively increase showing that the variables introduced at each stage contribute to the prediction rather than being by chance.

In Model 3 when changing jobs by whistleblower was introduced prediction of perceived retaliation was 0.5% with F-Statistics change of 2.685 and it was by the constant only whose value increased to (Constant $\beta = 3.102$, $p < 0.01$). In Model 4, when seriousness of wrongdoing was introduced, prediction was 12.3% with F-Statistics Change of 26.624 and it was contributed by the constant that reduced to (constant $\beta = 1.823$, $p < 0.01$), position of the wrongdoer ($\beta = 0.128$, $p < 0.01$) and seriousness of wrongdoing ($\beta = 0.411$, $p < 0.01$). In Model 5 whistleblower psychological power was introduced and prediction increased to 29.9% with F-Statistics Change of 48.603 and it was contributed by seriousness of wrongdoing decreasing to ($\beta = 0.233$, $p < 0.01$) and whistleblower psychological power ($\beta = 0.457$, $p < 0.01$). In Model 6 management support to whistleblowers was introduced and prediction increased further to 41.8% with F-Statistics Change of 39.603 and contributed by constant increasing from zero to ($\beta = 2.683$, $p < 0.01$), seriousness of wrongdoing reducing further to ($\beta = 0.186$, $p < 0.01$), whistleblower psychological power reducing to ($\beta = 0.226$, $p < 0.01$) and management support to whistleblower ($\beta = -0.452$, $p < 0.01$). Thus perceived retaliation is predicted by seriousness of wrongdoing, whistleblower psychological power and management support to whistleblower at a level of about 42%.

Discussion

The study reveals that wrongdoers are at all levels of management since 63% of the respondents are in management or supervisory level and almost 85% of the wrongdoers are above the level of the respondents. This could be partly explained by lack of management support to whistleblowers. Lack of management support to whistleblowers is likely to encourage institutional protectionism of wrongdoers by the employees. Despite wrongdoers being across all management levels, whistleblowers hardly change jobs more than expected because employees in public institutions of Kenya are hired by the public Service Commission according to the Agency Theory. Consequently, perceived retaliation against such whistleblowers is likely to be in forms like psychological segregation, name calling and others as asserted by Rehg et al (2004).

Employees exposed to wrongdoing in the public institutions are majorly a young generation with over 80% being not more than 39 years. This gives another dimension of threat to combat wrongdoing in public service since majority of the employees are likely to remain in service for at least another 20 years. Furthermore, majority of respondents; about 75%; hold at least a degree and these are the ones likely to take up high positions in future and with this expected trend, there is a likelihood of increase in seriousness of wrongdoing in future.

A correlation between length of service of respondents and seriousness of wrongdoing demonstrates that as employees stay longer in service they are likely to get evidence of serious wrongdoing. This is because employees who stay longer in employment come to learn of unethical acts and wrong acts of materialistic nature. Ability to easily identify evidence of unethical acts of materialistic wrongdoing by employees who stay for long could also be attributed to these employees understanding the

rules and regulations more as they stay longer in employment. Another likely contribution is that when employees stay long in employment, then protectionism of wrongdoers develops in the institutions. Considering seriousness of wrongdoing, it is likely to increase with position of wrongdoer because highly positioned wrongdoers are the ones that have more access to organisational resources or can influence unethical decisions that are serious in nature and this is consistent with (Rehg et al, 2008).

A direct correlation between seriousness of wrongdoing and changing jobs by whistleblowers could be explained that repeated wrongdoing and wrongdoing that affect multiple constituencies are likely to make whistleblowers seek change of employment or even management to initiate the change in jobs for the whistleblower. That is why changing jobs by whistleblowers was also correlated to position of wrongdoer and after all highly positioned wrongdoers are likely to have special skills that the institution have to protect or wrongdoers could have acted in the interest of the institution as found by (Schwartz, Dunfee & Kline, 2005). In case of voluntary change of jobs, that is why educated whistleblowers can easily change jobs as reconfirmed by the study.

Whistleblowers with high psychological power like; knowing their legal protection, knowing who to report to, knowing that it is their responsibility to report any wrongdoing and knowing that earlier whistleblowers did not have any bad experience; are likely to report serious wrongdoing or wrongdoing by highly positioned employees. For example such whistleblowers know entitlements of employees in high position and can recognise abuse of office.

When management supports whistleblowers there is less chance for wrongdoers to be in high positions and the likely wrongdoers are those in low positions with less influence in initiating unethical acts or wrong acts of great materialistic nature. Strong management support to whistleblowers also discourages the whistleblowers from changing jobs since the support from management is recognition of their knowledge about rules and regulations governing the institution and an indirect reward for their efforts.

Perceived retaliation is correlated to seriousness of wrongdoing indicating that serious wrongdoing is likely to cause retaliation against a whistleblower. Serious wrongdoing can be a public health and safety concern or wrongdoing intended to make institutions achieve set goals unethically. Serious wrongdoing demands provision of enough evidence which may not easily be attained according to the way public institutions work in a hierarchical or network arrangement. The ethical theory of (Davis, 2003) found that quality of evidence by whistleblowers was positively related to whistle blowing and implicitly likely to lead to retaliation.

In the hierarchical regression analysis, consistent with (Firas & Brian, 2001) the study reveals that personal attributes like age, gender and education do not predict perceived retaliation against a whistleblower as shown in Model 1. In Model 2, inclusion of position of wrongdoer alone cannot predict perceived retaliation because perception requires an observer. In Model 3 when change in jobs by whistleblowers is introduced there is prediction of perceived retaliation which is linked to a whistleblower changing jobs. In Model 4, when a wrongdoing is introduced perceived retaliation against a whistleblower increases because of presence of a high position wrongdoer and serious wrongdoing. A wrongdoer in high position involved in serious wrongdoing is more likely to influence retaliation as an approach of protecting themselves or the institution. On the

other hand, colleagues of the whistleblower may also take retaliations in form of name calling because they feel that the whistleblower is not grateful to the institution as discussed by Rehg et al (2004).

In Model 5 when whistleblower psychological power is introduced perceived retaliation against the whistleblower increases further. This is because a powerful whistleblower can opt to make external whistle blowing which may ruin the whole organisation as asserted by (McDonald & Ahern, 2002) particularly when there is enough evidence or the wrongdoing affects the public in general like when if the institution distributes expired drugs. Such whistleblowers may know their legal protection, know who to report to and also know that whistle blowing is every ones responsibility. In Model 6, introduction of management support to whistleblowers reduces perceived retaliation. Management support to whistleblowers could be in form of trust the whistleblower has in the persons that receive the information, taking appropriate actions on the reports and keeping the report secret. This model also shows that the study variables that predict retaliation are the seriousness of wrongdoing, whistleblower psychological power and lack of management support to whistleblowers.

Conclusion

This study gives strong evidence of existence of perceived retaliation against internal whistleblowers in public institutions of Sub-Saharan Africa using evidence among employees of Kenya public service and it is directly related to the seriousness of the wrongdoing and position of wrongdoer. There is also evidence that changing jobs by whistleblowers is associated with high positions of wrongdoers, serious wrongdoing or lack of management support to whistleblowers. Whistleblower psychological power is associated with position of wrongdoer, seriousness of wrongdoing and management support to whistleblower. The study reveals that predictors of perceived retaliation against whistleblowers are seriousness of wrongdoing, whistleblower psychological power and management support to whistleblow-

er and their combined prediction is about 42%.

Policy and Management Implications

Existence of perceived retaliation against internal whistleblowers in public institutions has both policy and management implications because the perceptions are a product of observations, experiences or working environment of the employees. At policy level, Kenya should set up a policy for employee sensitisation about whistle blowing and effective protection of whistleblowers against real and perceived retaliation against them and this should be supported with clear policies on disciplining individuals who retaliate against whistleblowers. Simultaneously, alternative policies should be set up to line management to reduce unilateral control on information which would increase employee loyalty to their institutions rather than their superiors. Kenya could also set up media programmes about the benefits of protecting whistleblowers and incorporating whistleblower protection in risk management policies.

At managerial level, interventions to reducing perceived retaliation against whistleblowers should start with top management support because (Bolsin et al, 2005) say good ethical behaviour is most effectively learnt from superiors. Management should also organise regular workshops on protection of whistleblowers and develop ways of recognising contribution of whistleblowers in performance management programmes.

Limitations and future research

As a way of improving on future related studies, larger sample sizes could reduce sampling and non sampling and longitudinal studies could give more reliable results on the causal effects of perceived retaliation. The study used power relations theory of retaliation but justice and resource theories could enrich the concept of perceived retaliation among public institutions. Furthermore sector evidence case studies are likely to present interesting unique evidence of perceived retaliation against whistleblowers, while surveys could give an insight on its prevalence.

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APPENDIX 1: CONSTRUCTS OF STUDY VARIABLES

Seriousness of Wrongdoing measures:

- a. I dealt with the matter myself informally
- b. It wasn't important enough to report
- c. Someone else had already reported it
- d. I dealt with the matter formally as part of my role
- e. I didn't have enough evidence to report it

Management response to whistleblower dimensions were:

- a. I didn't think the organisation would protect me
- b. I didn't trust the person I had to report to
- c. I was afraid my co-workers would take action against me
- d. I didn't think that anything would be done about it.
- e. I was afraid the wrongdoer would take action against me
- f. I didn't think my identity would be kept secret

Whistleblower psychological power dimensions:

- a. Other people advised me not to report it
- b. I didn't know my legal protection if I reported it
- c. I didn't know who to report it to
- d. I didn't think it was my responsibility to report it
- e. I was aware of others' bad experiences reporting wrongdoing

Perceived Retaliation measures:

- a. I would not have the support of my family
- b. I didn't want to embarrass the organization
- c. I had a previous bad personal experience
- d. I was afraid the organisation would take action against me

Position of wrongdoer measures were collected using a nominal scale:

- a) employees below me
- b) employees at my level
- c) my immediate supervisors
- d) high level manager
- e) Outside contractor or vendor

Change in jobs by whistleblowers measures in a period of last 5 years using an ordinal scale:

- a. decreased a lot
- b. decreased somewhat
- c. about the same
- d. increased somewhat
- e. increased a lot