



Public Opinion and the Formulation of Whistleblowing Policy of the Muhammadu Buhari Administration: Lesson for Future Implementation in Nigeria

Peter Odion Irabor¹, Paul Akere Irabor², Lateef Shobowale³, Christiana Charity Okon⁴

Abstract: Public opinion should be at the forefront of policy creation and implementation since it is essential to the legitimacy of government policies. The Nigerian public's perception on corruption served as the foundation for the Muhammadu Buhari administration's whistleblowing policy, which was implemented as a weapon in the war against corruption. This study determined whether there is a relationship between public opinion and the whistleblowing policy of the Muhammadu Buhari administration and also identified ways that public support and opinion can be explored to strengthen Nigeria's whistleblowing policy. The study drew data from primary source gotten through the administration of questionnaire on local government workers. The study findings demonstrate that there is no relationship between public opinion and the formulation of the Muhammadu Buhari administration's whistleblowing policy, that the policy was not developed in response to public perceptions on corruption, and that Nigerians lack confidence in the policy's ability to significantly

¹ Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Adeleke University, Ede, Nigeria, Address: Loogun-Ogberin Road, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria, Corresponding author: peteriraborodion12@gmail.com.

² Department of Political Science, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Nigeria, Address: P.M. 2002, Ago-Iwoye 23437, Ogun State, Nigeria, E-mail: paul.irabor@oouagoiwoye.edu.ng.

³ Department of Economics, Adeleke University, Ede, Nigeria, Address: Loogun-Ogberin Road, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria, E-mail: shobowalelateef@gmail.com.

⁴ Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Adeleke University, Ede, Nigeria, Address: Loogun-Ogberin Road, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria, E-mail: okon.christiana@adelekeuniversity.edu.ng.



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reduce corruption. Additionally, the study findings demonstrate that public enlightenment will improve public involvement in the implementation of the policy, that media awareness and sensitization will contribute to the policy efficiency, and that civil society advocacy and support will further promote the policy efficacy. The study concluded that public opinion could have a positive impact on the whistleblowing policy if media awareness and civil society advocacy increased public involvement in the policy's implementation.

Keywords: Public Opinion; Whistleblowing; Corruption; Muhammadu Buhari Administration

1. Introduction

One of the many networks of factors that frequently affects the decision process is public opinion. This is predicated on the idea that deliberative democracy is based on citizens expressing their thoughts in public and exchanging arguments and viewpoints (Tocqueville, 1835/1984; Verba & Nie, 1972). Providing a means of routinely connecting public opinion and public policy is one of representative democracy's main purposes. Consequently, the connection between public opinion and public policy is a crucial aspect of the study of political conduct. According to Erikson et al. (1993) the question of popular control is at the heart of almost all public opinion research. This is predicated on the idea that distinct patterns in public opinion regarding, for example, crime, corruption, environmental protection, welfare reform, or business regulation are frequently considered in the political discourse of democracies. This presumption is also fundamental to democratic political theory, which gauges the legitimacy of the government by how well it responds to popular opinion.

In Nigeria, public opinion of citizens on the issue of corruption has gained numerous wide attentions since the introduction of democracy in 1999, leading to successive government intervention on policies to be put in place to curb corruption. For example, on December 12, 2002, Olusegun Obasanjo's administration established the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) to combat financial crimes and money laundering. For Jonathan administration, it created the Government Integrated Financial Management and Information System (GIFMIS), an electronic financial management platform that includes the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) and the Treasury Single Account (TSA). For instance, as of December 31, 2014, the government had saved over \$1.25 billion thanks to the removal of 62,893 ghost workers from the system via the IPPIS platform (Enakirerhi & Temile, 2017). Whistleblowing was one of the major policies used by Muhammadu Buhari administration to curb corruption in Nigeria.

According to Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (2018), Nigeria, which is placed 136th out of 176 countries worldwide, has had multiple corruption scandals that have damaged her reputation internationally. According to a Price Waterhouse Coopers (2024) report, corruption in Nigeria could cost the nation up to 37% of its GDP by 2030 if it is not handled immediately. Every governmental administration since independence has attempted to reduce the possibility of corruption by creating a number of anti-corruption policies for this and numerous other reasons. Following his inauguration in May 2015, President Muhammadu Buhari declared that he was fighting corruption in all its manifestations in Nigeria. The Buhari administration developed a whistleblowing policy in an effort to engage the people in the fight against corruption. The Federal Ministry of Finance assisted the Federal Government of Nigeria in implementing this policy, which was introduced on December 21, 2016 (Federal Ministry of Finance, 2016).

The whistleblowing policy of the Buhari administration is an anti-corruption policy that encourages citizens to inform the proper authorities, who then forward the information to the Ministry of Finance, about any fraud, bribery, embezzled money, or other corruption or theft they may be aware of. The program guarantees a 2.5% to 5% payment from the money recovered by the Nigerian government to the whistleblower who offers any accurate information or tip regarding any bribe or stolen monies (Akinyemi, 2017). The federal government has introduced safeguards to shield whistleblowers from harassment and intimidation in an effort to further encourage citizens to disclose such horrific acts that are covered by the policy. The Whistleblower Protection Act, which is facilitated by the Federal Ministry of Finance, provides legal protection to individuals who voluntarily disclose financial misconduct, bribery, fraud, embezzled government property, and other forms of corruption (Tukur, 2016).

Public opinion should be at the forefront of policy creation and implementation since it is essential to the legitimacy of government policies. The general sentiment of the populace toward political policy is shaped by public opinion, which is the collective preferences and viewpoints on issues. Opinions are frequently shaped by a people's views and culture, and as there is rarely a single, universal viewpoint held by the public, there are also differences in the demographics of the public. Therefore, it can be claimed that the Muhammadu Buhari administration's whistleblowing policy, which is a tool in the battle against corruption, is based on the Nigerian public's generally harsh and unyielding views on corruption. The public's perception of corruption in Nigeria is well-known, and given how much it may obstruct the process

of good governance, no genuinely democratic administration should treat it lightly (Ijewereme, 2015). Perhaps this is why Nigerians were drawn to Buhari's 2015 presidential manifesto, which pledged to steadfastly combat corruption if elected.

As an anti-corruption measure, whistleblowing policy have been adopted by a growing number of nations worldwide for many years. But in Africa, the policy doesn't appear to have advanced all that much. According to Ogbu (2017), the primary cause of this is the self-centeredness of potential whistleblowers who are more concerned with the financial package than with fighting corruption. He also believes that the culture of whistleblowing has been stifled by autocratic rulers and the predominance of non-democratic systems throughout Africa. Nonetheless, South Africa's Protected Disclosures Act (PDA) of 2000, which ensures the security of potential whistleblowers, has made whistleblowing policy flourish there (Landman, 2001). The whistleblowing policy might be seen as a lighthouse in the Buhari campaign against corruption. Although it can be argued that whistleblowing has achieved significant success, with over 5,000 cases of misappropriation documented since the policy's inception and over N50 billion in looted funds recovered, it is not without its drawbacks, including the possibility of retaliation from those whose scheme to embezzle public funds was exposed and the dissemination of false information against prominent individuals for political purposes (Akinyemi, 2017).

Prior research has assessed the whistleblower policy's implementation, praised its successes, and pointed out its drawbacks (Ogbu, 2017; Adeyemo, 2015; Dorasamy, 2013; De Maria, 2005). However, this study aims to close the information gap by establishing a connection between the public views of the whistleblowing policy of the Muhammadu Buhari's administration. Therefore, the objective of this study is to determine whether there is a relationship between public opinion and the whistleblowing policy of the Muhammadu Buhari administration and also identified ways that public support and opinion can be explored to strengthen Nigeria's whistleblowing policy. This study is important because it informs legislators, bureaucrats, and policymakers about the best course of action for developing and implementing whistleblowing policies. It also offers details on how Nigerian public perceptions of corruption are influenced by whistleblower laws. There are eight sections in this study. After the introduction, conceptual clarifications of public opinion and whistleblowing will be the next section before the assessment of whistleblowing policy of the Muhammadu Buhari administration is reviewed. The methodology is covered in the next section which is followed by the relationship between public opinion and the whistleblowing policy of the Muhammadu Buhari

administration, identified ways that public support and opinion can be explored to strengthen Nigeria's whistleblowing policy, and a conclusion.

2. Conceptual Clarifications

2.1. Public Opinion

Although the idea of public opinion first appeared during the Enlightenment, the terms "public" and "opinion" have much earlier histories and, each, have a very diverse range of meanings that influence how they are used today (Wlezien & Soroka, 2016). The word "public," derived from the Latin *publicus*, which means "the people," had multiple connotations. In the sense of representing or belonging to the entire population, the term "public" alludes to the common interest and benefit. A number of significant historical trends, including the rise of the upper class, the development of literacy, and the printing press's ability to disseminate literature, contributed to the widespread usage of the compound notion of public opinion (Smith, 1996). Public opinion was first used to describe the standards, conduct, traditions, and etiquette of the newly formed aristocratic class. However, by the end of the 20th century, it was being employed in a more political context, frequently in place of and in addition to related terms like "public conscience" and "common will" (Burstein, 2003, 6). Because of its ambiguity, it is challenging to articulate public opinion in clear words because it is a concept that is the subject of intense scholarly dispute. Bryce (2005) defined public opinion as:

"... a jumble of disparate ideas, opinions, fantasies, biases, and goals. It is vague, jumbled, and inconsistent from day to day and week to week. However, in the middle of all of this diversity and ambiguity, every matter that gains significance is put through a process of consolidation and clarification until a collection of disparate viewpoints, all of which are shared and supported by groups of individuals, arise and take on definitive shape." (Bryce, 2005, p. 17).

Public opinion, according to Key (1976), is any collection of viewpoints on certain political topics that are held and/or voiced by people and organizations outside of the government. According to Smith (1996), public opinion can also be defined as the widely held beliefs of individuals or groups of individuals regarding particular topics, policy issues, and political figures or the governing process. In general, it shows people's thoughts or opinions on political topics of local, state, national, and

worldwide significance. It represents the entirety of private or individual perspectives on political phenomena or policy outputs of the government (Akindele et al., 2000). Public opinion, according to Breznau (2013), is an opinion that the general public accepts—not by mistake, but with full awareness that it forms a connection of solidarity among those who share it.

Both the sentiments and wants as well as the actual opinions that are held by the majority of a population are referred to as public opinion. Not every individual's opinion is the same as the public's; in fact, often the majority of people's opinions do not constitute the public opinion. Essentially, public opinion is a perception of the capable part of the population rather than the opinion of the entire population. It comprises people who are educated enough to think logically and then articulate their opinions in an objective way, as well as clever enough to be aware of public issues (Johari, 2005). According to Aliyu et al. (2018), public opinion is the sum of the individual opinions, attitudes, and beliefs that a sizable fraction of a community has regarding a certain subject. According to Lowi et al. (2004), public opinion is the culmination of a group's members' political orientations, beliefs, values, and attitudes on the topics, figures, and events that are currently affecting their political environment.

In summary, a substantial fraction of a community's individual ideas, attitudes, and beliefs regarding a certain subject are collectively referred to as public opinion (Aliyu et al., 2018). Stated differently, the collective political orientations, views, values, and attitudes that members of a group hold and express toward current problems, actors, and events in their political environment constitute public opinion (Lowi et al., 2004).

2.2. Whistleblowing

For the purpose of radiating malfeasance and/or wrongdoing that could otherwise endanger an organization, its members, or society at large, whistleblowing has been widely recognized as a tool for organizational control and a means of combating corruption. The phenomena is old and has a long history, even though the term is a relatively new addition to the lexicon of public and corporate affairs. Ralph Nader, an American political activist, is credited with coining the term in the early 1970s to restrict the use of other derogatory connotations that were prevalent in the literature at the time, such as informers and snitches, and to describe the reporting of crime and wrongdoing in organizations (Tudu & Pathak, 2014). The phrase

“whistleblowing” was traditionally used to describe the act of an officer (usually from the police force) informing the public and his fellow officers about illegal activity (Dorasamy, 2017). Whistleblowing, according to Figg (2000), is the act of an employee or contractor disclosing information that allegedly reveals deliberate wrongdoing by one or more people inside a company. He maintained that whistleblowing is a crucial source of essential information that administrative processes do not provide to the public or the government, making it a useful instrument for enhancing accountability and transparency.

The most popular definition of whistleblowing comes from Near & Miceli (1996), who stated that it is the act of former or current employees of an organization informing individuals or groups that have the power to act about unlawful, immoral, or illegitimate practices that are controlled by their employers. The act of whistleblowing essentially refers to circumstances in which the informant notifies an individual or organization that has the power to alter the practice. Another definition of whistleblowing is an individual act of conscience that divulges critical facts regarding the public’s welfare (Nader et al., 1972). Transparency International (2013) defined whistleblowing as:

“the dissemination or revealing of misconduct, which includes but not limited to criminal conduct, corruption, miscarriages of justice, violations of legal obligations, specific threats to public health, safety, or the environment, abuse of authority, unauthorized use of public funds or property, gross waste or mismanagement, conflicts of interest, and acts to cover up any of these.” (Transparency International, 2013, p. 4).

According to Gillan (2003), whistleblowing is the act of people (typically employees) who reveal wrongdoing, whether it be in the public or private sector, because they feel a sense of personal or public responsibility. Alford (2001) states that in the act of whistleblowing, an insider, former employee, or former employee of an organization (such as a business or government agency) discloses the wrongdoings and crimes of that institution in compliance with a perceived ethical or legal requirement. Whistleblowing, according to Word (2003), is the word used to describe when a member of an organization expresses concerns about the behavior of another member of the same organization or, more often, about the organization’s own operations. Another definition of whistleblowing is when someone, such as an employee, management, director, depositor, service provider, creditor, or other stakeholder, informs the proper authorities of any unethical activity or dishonesty occurring within an organization (Nadler & Schulman, 2016).

Jubb (1999) defined whistleblowing as the act of any member of an institution or organization's staff disclosing to the proper authorities information about any kind of dishonesty or unethical behavior. Before raising the alarm, the misconduct must be seen and assessed as either or both illegal and unethical, according to Sims and Keenan (1998). When the dubious or improper practice is stopped as a result of the whistleblowing and within a fair amount of time, it is considered effective whistleblowing (Near & Miceli, 1995). When the disclosed misconduct is corrected or terminated and the whistleblower obtains recognition, protection, and support from management or others, the act of whistleblowing can also be considered effective (de Maria, 2005). As a result, whistleblowing has been defined as a process that encompasses a variety of activities, including the identification of wrongdoing, an ethical assessment of the wrongdoing, the decision to disclose the information or not, and a response to the disclosure.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Assessment of Whistleblowing Policy of the Muhammadu Buhari Administration

The implementation of a whistleblowing policy by the Buhari administration is not unprecedented in Nigerian history. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) released a document in 2012 called "Code of Corporate Governance for Banks and Discount House and Guidelines for Whistleblowing in the Nigerian Banking Industry" for banks and other financial institutions in Nigeria with the goal of advancing and maintaining sound corporate governance practices and maintaining public trust. Employees and stakeholders were given the opportunity to report activities that could be construed as fraud, illegal activity, or failure to comply with bank-related instructions (Adeyemo, 2015). The rules also stipulate that banks and other financial organizations' boards of directors must establish a whistleblower policy in order to protect the whistleblower's confidentiality.

Since taking office on May 29, 2015, President Muhammadu Buhari's administration has gained notoriety for its anti-corruption initiatives. The Federal Executive Council, which is led by President Muhammadu Buhari, authorized the whistleblowing policy in December 2016 to support the administration's anti-graft campaign. The purpose of the whistleblowing policy was to encourage anyone with knowledge of financial regulation violations, asset and money mismanagement, financial malpractice, fraud, or theft to come forward. Together with the Attorney-

General of the Federation and the Minister of Justice, the Federal Ministry of Finance implemented the whistleblowing policy. The goals of the whistleblowing policy are to raise awareness of financial or financial-related crimes, aid in the fight against corruption and financial crimes, boost public trust in government agencies, increase accountability and transparency in the administration of public funds, raise Nigeria's open government ranking and ease of doing business metrics, and recover public funds that could be used to pay for the country's infrastructure deficit (Federal Ministry of Finance, 2016).

The policy's main objective, according to former Finance Minister Mrs. Kemi Adeosun, is to aid in the fight against corruption and financial crimes by promoting financial crime awareness and compensating whistleblowers (Tukur, 2016). Whistleblowers are protected against harassment and intimidation by their employers and managers in order to encourage such revelation. Within the bounds of the law, confidentiality will be preserved to the greatest degree feasible. If the whistleblower chooses not to reveal their identity, their identity will not be recorded, and if they do reveal their name, it will only be done in situations when it is lawfully needed. The Federal Ministry of Finance (2016) further declared that:

“A further investigation will be conducted, disciplinary action will be taken against the offender in accordance with the public service rules and other existing regulations, and the whistleblower will be compensated for any losses incurred if it is proven that there is a prima facie case that they have been subjected to adverse treatment (harassment, intimidation, or victimization) for providing the Ministry with useful information.” (Federal Ministry of Finance, 2016, p. 4).

A person who voluntarily informs the Federal Government of Nigeria, via the Federal Ministry of Finance, about potential misbehavior or violations that have happened, are happening, or are likely to happen with particular concerns that are in the public interest is known as a whistleblower. The amount recovered may range from 2.5% to 5.0% for a whistleblower who gives the government information that immediately results in the voluntary return of embezzled or hidden public monies or assets (Adetayo, 2016). The whistleblower must give the government information that it does not currently have and could not have obtained from any other publicly available source in order to be eligible for the reward. Additionally, the actual recovery must be due to the information that the whistleblower provided (Federal Ministry of Finance, 2016). Following the receipt of such information. Examples of

information that can be submitted according to the Federal Ministry of Finance include:

1. Breaking the government's financial rules for instance, disregarding the Public Procurement Act, the Financial Regulations Act, and other current statutes;
2. The misappropriation or mismanagement of public cash and assets, such as vehicles and properties;
3. Fraud or financial malpractice;
4. Obtaining or requesting bribes v. corruption;
5. Theft;
6. Revenue diversion;
7. Using money for private purposes;
8. Making unauthorized and fraudulent payments;
9. The division of contracts;
10. Fraud in procurement (kickbacks, excessive billing, etc.);
11. Noncompliance with public procurement protocols.

Information submitted in accordance with the whistleblowing policy can be done anonymously via phone, mail, or the Federal Ministry of Finance's web portal. In order for the accusations to be looked into, the whistleblower is asked to provide as much particular information as possible about the facts, including what happened, who was involved, and the dates of occurrence. The whistleblower's reasonable opinion that the material is accurate is also sufficient, though. Once such information has been received, a thorough review will be conducted to assess its sufficiency and credibility. If the report contains false or misleading information, it will be forwarded to enforcement agents for investigation and potential prosecution (Federal Ministry of Finance, 2016). For instance, when law enforcement officials raided the homes of former Vice President Namadi Sambo and former Deputy Senate President Ike Ekweremadu after receiving false information, a phony whistleblower was arrested and charged with providing false information against them; however, no money stash was discovered in their possession (Akinyemi, 2017).

According to the former Finance Minister, as of July 2017, almost 5,000 reports have been submitted, including over 365 actionable tips from well-known public officials

(The Guardian Newspaper, 2017). The breakdown shows that 144 of the actionable tips address revenue diversion and misappropriation, 60 address fraudulent employment, ghost workers, and embezzlement of cash meant for employee emolument, 56 address Treasury Single Account (TSA) regulations, and 49 address contract inflation and violations of the Procurement Act. Furthermore, 22 deal with the incomplete projects for which funds have been made accessible, and 34 deal with the non-remittance of pension and National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) deductions. Among the recovered looted funds is the cash amount of \$9,772,800 and £74,000 found on the 3rd of February 2017 from a Kaduna building owned by Mr. Andrew Yakubu, the former CEO of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) (Daniel, 2017a). Three whistleblowers who informed the Attorney General of the Federation and the Minister of Justice with actionable information enabled the recovery of the funds from Yakubu (Soniya & Ajimotokan, 2016). Furthermore, after receiving an intelligence tip, the EFCC on the 13th of March 2017, seized five huge black of 150 kg bags containing N49 million that had not been declared at the Kaduna airport (The Cable, 2017).

Additionally, the EFCC discovered €547,730, £21,090, and N5,648,500 in a Bureau De Change (BDC) office located in Lagos' Balogun Market (Daniel, 2017b). Likewise, on the 7th of April 2017, about N448,850,000 in N500 and N1000 denominations was discovered in multiple bags at an old Bureau De Change building in Victoria Island, Lagos's LEGICO Shopping Plaza (The Guardian, 2017). More so, on the 10th of April 2017, a quantity of N250 million and other foreign currency were found in a Bureau De Change in Lagos' Balogun Market neighborhood (Momodu, 2016). Along with recovering the stolen money, the EFCC found a staggering amount of \$38,000,000, N23,000,000, and £27,000 in an apartment in Osborne Towers, Ikoyi, Lagos, on Wednesday, April 12, 2017 (Gabriel, 2017). According to former Minister of Information and Culture Alhaji Lai Mohammed, the Nigerian government has recovered about N47.565 billion and N8 billion in looted cash, totaling N55.565 billion in looted funds, while the biggest sum, \$136,676,600.51, was recovered from a commercial bank account using a false account name (Gabriel, 2017; Ejukonemu, 2017).

It must be stated that relying on information provided by a concerned whistleblower necessitated the discovery of these funds. In fulfilling its obligation, the government has disbursed the payment of N375.8 Million to those who blow the whistle, particularly for recovered assets that the Attorney General of the Federation had deemed to be litigation-free (Akinyemi, 2017). But corruption under Buhari's

leadership was unsolvable. Concerns such as the politicization of the fight against corruption and the unwillingness to look into corrupt activities loyal to the president have cast doubt on the fight. Adams Oshiomole, Buhari's previous party chairman, for instance, has urged opposition party defectors to join the ruling party in order to have their crimes pardoned (Business Day, 2021). By the time Buhari was elected to a second term in 2019, Nigeria had fallen to 146 in corruption perception index, and by 2020, it was put at 149 (Transparency International, 2020). Furthermore, from 32% in 2016 to 38% in 2019, the proportion of people who paid bribes to expedite procedures rose (Tade, 2021). As the policy gradually lose momentum, as people are concerned about their safety due to providing information, the draft whistleblower bill for 2022 was further reviewed and approved by the government. The draft contains a clause to guarantee compliance with the Evidence Act and the efficacy of the whistleblowing policy's continuation (Angbulu, 2022).

In summary, while the Muhammadu Buhari administration's whistleblowing policy has produced certain successes, such as the recovery of embezzled money, the blocking of treasury leaks via the TSA, and the imprisonment of certain dishonest politicians, issues like shielding the prosecution of persons loyal to people in government, the selected prosecution of offenders, and lack of legislation to protect the whistleblowers are some of the challenges of the whistleblowing policy (Makinde, 2018; Akinyemi, 2017). Nigeria doesn't have any laws specifically addressing whistleblowing because the National Assembly hasn't passed a measure protecting whistleblowers. As a result, whistleblowers may be subject to retaliation, harassment, and intimidation for disclosing wrongdoing or misconduct within a company or government agency. Following eight years of legislative setbacks, Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration contemplated reintroducing the Whistleblowers Bill to the National Assembly for enactment. In keeping with the government's renewed hope program, Finance Minister Mr. Wale Edun claims that the main reason the law is being re-presented is to promote the administration's zero tolerance policy for corruption (Isa, 2024). For future implementation, this study takes lessons from Muhammadu Buhari's whistleblowing policy.

3.2. Study Area and Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative research design where a representative proportion of the whole study was drawn. The study area which was carried out in Osun state, is one of the six states in Southwest Nigeria. Osun state was purposively selected

because it is the researcher's area of resident where key respondents are easily accessible. Osun state is made up of 30 local governments and 3 senatorial districts. Each of the senatorial district has 10 local governments, totalling 30 local governments. Using simple random sampling technique, 1 local government was selected from each of the senatorial districts, making a total of 3 local governments. The selected local governments include Osogbo Local Government Council, Irewole Local Government Council and Obokun Local Government Council.

This study relied on primary source of data which was gotten through questionnaire administration. With the use of simple random sampling technique, 66 staff were selected from each of the 3 local government councils who form key respondents, making a total of 198 respondents. Table 1 below present the distribution of the respondents.

Table 1. Distribution of the Selected Respondents

Local Government Councils	No of Questionnaire	Returned Questionnaire
Osogbo	66	66
Irewole	66	63
Obokun	66	63
Total	198	192

(Source: Field Survey, December 2023)

While questionnaire administered in Osogbo Local Government Council was duly filled and returned, questionnaire administered in Irewole and Obokun Local Government Councils respectively were not completely returned, with 63 questionnaire each available for the two-local government. Based on this, the total questionnaire which was initially 198 was later reduced to 192. The selection of the respondents was based on the adequate knowledge of whistleblowing policy of the Muhammadu Buhari administration. Data collected was analysed using simple percentage.

The first objective of the study determined whether there is a relationship between public opinion and the whistleblowing policy of the Muhammadu Buhari administration, with scales ranging from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D) and Undecided (U). The second objective identified

ways public support and opinion can be explored to strengthen Nigeria’s whistleblowing policy, with scales ranging from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D) and Undecided (U). The two tables below (table 2 and 3) represented the data collected and presented through simple percentage. The total number of samples gathered was 192 which represented 100%.

3.3. Data Presentation and Results

Table 2. The Relationship between Public Opinion and the Whistleblowing Policy of the Muhammadu Buhari Administration

S/N	Variables	SA Freq.	%	A Freq.	%	SD Freq.	%	D Freq.	%	U Freq.	%	Total Freq.	%
1	The public’s impression of corruption prompted the creation of the whistleblower policy.	19	9.9	33	17.2	71	37.0	69	35.9	-	-	192	100
2	The Nigerian people are hopeful about the whistleblower policy and thinks it can greatly reduce corruption.	37	19.3	39	20.3	55	28.6	61	31.8	-	-	192	100
3	The whistleblowing policy has made revealing corrupt practices easier and less taxing	34	17.7	45	23.4	56	29.2	59	30.7	-	-	192	100
4	The policy has helped to reduce political corruption in Nigeria	69	35.9	68	35.4	32	16.7	22	11.5	1	0.5	192	100
5	The nation’s economic downturn has been lessened thanks to the policy	19	9.9	33	17.2	72	37.5	68	35.4	-	-	192	100
6	The policy has contributed to improving the public’s perception of the Buhari administration’s fight against corruption	25	13.0	28	14.6	63	32.8	76	39.6	-	-	192	100
7	Instead of focusing on all types of corruption, the whistleblowing strategy primarily targets political corruption	68	35.4	78	40.6	20	10.4	21	10.3	5	2.6	192	100
8	The Buhari administration’s whistleblowing strategy is selective and mostly targets the opposition.	67	34.9	65	33.9	33	17.2	24	12.5	3	1.6	192	100

Source: Field Survey, December 2023

The relationship between public opinion and the whistleblowing policy of the Muhammadu Buhari administration is in Table 2. According to the table’s results, 9.9% and 17.2% of respondents strongly agreed and agreed, respectively, that the whistleblowing policy was created in response to the public’s perception of

corruption, while 37% and 35.9% of respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed, respectively. It can be inferred that the majority of respondents believe that the public's opinion of corruption did not influence the creation of the whistleblowing policy.

In order to ascertain whether the public is optimistic about whistleblowing policy and their capacity to significantly reduce corruption, 19.3% and 20.3% of respondents strongly agreed and agreed, respectively, that the public is optimistic about whistleblowing policies and believes they can significantly reduce corruption, while 28.6% and 31.8% of respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed, respectively. The findings showed that most respondents have a positive outlook on the whistleblower policy and think it may greatly reduce corruption.

The study also looked at how much corrupt practices have been made simpler and less difficult by the whistleblowing policy. According to the table, 17.7% of respondents strongly agreed and 23.4% agreed that the whistleblowing policy has made it easier and less difficult to expose corrupt practices. In contrast, 29.2% and 30.7% of respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed, respectively, that the scheme has done so. According to the analysis, a greater percentage of respondents stated that the whistleblowing policy has not made it simpler or less difficult to expose corrupt behaviour.

It was also looked into how much Nigeria's political corruption has decreased as a result of the whistleblowing policy. The findings showed that, while 0.5% of respondents were apathetic about the matter, 35.9% and 35.4% of respondents strongly agreed and agreed, respectively, that the whistleblowing policy has contributed to the decrease of political corruption in Nigeria, while 16.7% and 11.5% of respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed, respectively. According to the table, the majority of respondents said that Nigeria's political corruption had decreased as a result of the whistleblowing policy.

The table also displays the outcome of how much the policy has contributed to easing the nation's economic downturn. While 37.5% and 35.4% of respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed, respectively, that the policy has contributed to reducing the nation's economic depression, 9.9% and 17.2% of respondents strongly agreed and agreed, respectively. According to the results, the majority of respondents said that the policy had not assisted in easing the nation's economic downturn.

Subsequent investigation reveals that 13% and 14.6% of respondents strongly agreed and agreed, respectively, that the policy has contributed to a better public image of

the Buhari administration's fight against corruption, while 32.8% and 39.6% of respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed, respectively. According to the data in the table, a greater percentage of respondents stated that the policy has not improved public awareness of the Buhari administration's fight against corruption.

The extent to which the whistleblowing policy aims to combat corruption in all its manifestations was also disclosed in the table. According to the findings, 10.4% and 10.3% of respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed, respectively, that the whistleblowing policy primarily targets political corruption rather than all forms of corruption, while 35.4% and 40.6% of respondents strongly agreed and agreed, respectively, that this is the case. 2.6% of respondents had no opinion. It can be inferred that the majority of respondents believed that political corruption, rather than corruption in general, was the primary aim of the whistleblowing policy.

Finally, the degree to which the whistleblowing policy is impartial and fair was also investigated. According to the results, while 1.6% of respondents were unsure about the matter, 34.9% and 33.9% of respondents strongly agreed and agreed, respectively, that the whistleblowing policy is selective and primarily targeted at the opposition, while 17.2% and 12.5% of respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed, respectively. The findings indicate that a greater percentage of respondents believe the whistleblowing policy is biased and primarily targets the opposition.

Table 3. Ways Public Support and Opinion can be Explored to Strengthen Nigeria’s Whistleblowing Policy

S/N	Variables	SA Freq.	%	A Freq.	%	SD Freq.	%	D Freq.	%	U Freq.	%	Total Freq.	%
1	Enlightenment of the public will increase their involvement in the whistleblowing policy’s implementation	73	38.0	77	40.1	11	5.7	20	10.4	11	5.7	192	100
2	Merit awards and social recognition will encourage the members of the public to blow the whistle	67	34.9	72	37.5	33	17.2	12	6.3	8	0.4	192	100
3	Enhanced media awareness and sensitization will contribute to the policy’s increased efficacy	81	42.2	76	39.6	13	6.8	22	11.5	-	-	192	100
4	The effectiveness of the whistleblowing policy will be improved by public education and awareness	72	37.5	78	40.6	24	12.5	18	9.4	-	-	192	100
5	Support and advocacy from civil society will increase the whistleblowing policy’s efficacy	69	36.0	71	37.0	20	10.4	24	12.5	8	4.2	192	100
6	Public opinion can be employed in assessing and restructuring the policy for continuous implementation	70	36.5	77	40.1	26	13.5	21	10.9	-	-	192	100

Source: Field Survey, December 2023

Table 3 outlined the methods in which public support and opinion might be further investigated to strengthen Nigeria’s anti-corruption whistleblowing strategy. The findings reveal that 38.0% and 40.1% of respondents strongly agreed and agreed, respectively, that public education will increase public participation in the implementation of the whistleblowing policy, while 5.7% and 10.4% of respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed, respectively, with this statement. Additionally, 5.7% of respondents expressed no opinion on the matter. According to the results, the majority of respondents believed that public education would increase public involvement in the whistleblowing policy’s execution.

It was evaluated to what degree social recognition and merit prizes can incentivize the public to come forward with information. The table indicated that 34.9% and 37.5% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed, respectively, that social recognition and merit awards will encourage people to come forward with information, while 17.2% and 6.3% of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed, respectively. 0.4% of those surveyed were unsure about the matter. According to the table, the majority of respondents believed that social recognition and achievement prizes would motivate the public to come forward with information.

It was also looked at how important it is for the media to raise awareness and sensitize people to the policy in order to boost its efficacy. The table's results showed that 42.2% and 39.6% of respondents strongly agreed and agreed, respectively, that greater media awareness and sensitization will contribute to the policy's increased effectiveness, while 6.8% and 11.5% of respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed, respectively, that the policy's effectiveness will be enhanced by these measures. The data in the table indicates that a greater percentage of respondents agreed that these measures will increase the policy's effectiveness.

The results indicate that 37.5% and 40.6% of respondents strongly agreed and agreed, respectively, that public education and awareness of the whistleblowing policy will increase its effectiveness, whereas 12.5% and 9.4% of respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed, respectively. According to the analysis, the majority of respondents believed that raising public knowledge and educating people about the whistleblowing policy would increase its effectiveness.

Additionally, the function of civil society organizations in advancing the efficacy of the whistleblowing policy was examined. According to the table, 36.0% and 37.0% of respondents strongly agreed and agreed, respectively, that civil society advocacy and support will increase the efficacy of the whistleblowing policy, while 10.4% and 12.5% of respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed, respectively, with this statement. Additionally, 4.2% of respondents did not make a decision regarding the matter. The findings indicate that the majority of respondents believed that the effectiveness of the whistleblowing policy would be enhanced by civil society support and lobbying.

Last but not least, the table's results showed that, while 13.5% and 10.9% of respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed, respectively, that public opinion could be used to evaluate and restructure policies for ongoing implementation, 36.5% and 40.1% of respondents strongly agreed and agreed, respectively. According to the data in the table, a greater percentage of respondents believed that public opinion might be used to evaluate and restructure the policy for ongoing implementation.

4. Discussion of Findings

The objectives earlier stated in this study were analyzed and tested with the data collected from the field through questionnaires administered on key respondents. Having analyzed objectives of the study, it is imperative to discuss the findings

further. Findings from the study shows that there is no relationship between public opinion and the Muhammadu Buhari administration's whistleblowing policy. The analysis' findings (see table 2) demonstrate that the whistleblowing policy was not developed in response to the public's perception of corruption (72.9%). According to scholars such as Aliyu et al. (2018), public opinion is the sum of the individual opinions, attitudes, and beliefs about a given topic that are expressed by a significant portion of a community; as a result, people's opinions on political issues of local, state, national, and international interest are crucial in the creation and execution of public policy (Akindele et al., 2000).

Additionally, it was discovered that Nigerians lack confidence in the whistleblowing policy's ability to significantly reduce corruption (60.4%), and that though, the policy has helped to reduce political corruption (71.3%), it has not helped to alleviate economic depression in the country (72.9%). This might be attributed to the poor participation of the public in the creation and execution of public policy. Corruption in Nigeria is endemic. Ogbeidi (2012) states that the largest obstacle to the country's political and economic advancement has been corruption. Because the policy primarily targets political corruption rather than all forms of corruption, the results indicated that there was little expectation that the strategy would improve the nation's economic downturn (76%), while the policy is selective and primarily targets the opposition (68.8%). High-ranking corrupt officials who are members of the same party rarely end up in jail, and the authority tendency to pick and choose who to investigate (Tade, 2021). This selective application of the rule of law can be attributed to reason why the Nigerian populace does not believe that the whistleblowing policy will considerably reduce corruption.

Furthermore, results from the quantitative data shows the ways public support and opinion can be explored to strengthen Nigeria's whistleblowing policy (see table 3). According to the results, public awareness will increase public participation in the implementation of the whistleblowing policy (78.1%). One of the most important aspects of a democratic society is citizen participation in the political process. In other words, political involvement is the foundation of democratic representation. According to Gillin (2008), the availability of opportunities for participation is reliant on information availability and favorable political attitudes toward the political system, both of which have an impact on the formulation of public policy and, eventually, the durability of the democratic system of governance.

Furthermore, the results indicate that greater media awareness and sensitization will contribute to the policy's enhanced efficacy (81.8%). Dahida and Maidoki (2013)

corroborated that the media is a medium which guarantee direct and free access between the politicians and the electorates. Public policy is made for the advantage of the people, and citizens use the media to express requests. Result from the analysis also show that civil society advocacy and support will promote the effectiveness of the whistleblowing policy (76.6%). In support of this, Bryce (2005) maintained that public opinion provides that the concerns raised by the people who belong to civil society advocacy and support with the reports made by the government should be in public-spirit and in good faith. Lastly, the result shows that public opinion can be employed in assessing and restructuring the policy for continuous implementation (76.6%). This view was corroborated by Scheufele and Eveland (1999) who claimed that perceptions of public opinion affect people's desire to participate in different political activities beyond the public expression of opinions. Put another way, the idea of majority views may not only affect how people communicate and share ideas with one another, but it may also prevent people from participating in democracy on an individual basis.

5. Conclusion

This study determined whether there is a relationship between public opinion and the whistleblowing policy of the Muhammadu Buhari administration and also identified ways that public support and opinion can be explored to strengthen Nigeria's whistleblowing policy. The study findings demonstrate that there is no relationship between public opinion and the creation of the Muhammadu Buhari administration's whistleblowing policy, that the policy was not developed in response to public perceptions of corruption, and that Nigerians lack confidence in the policy's ability to significantly reduce corruption. Furthermore, because the strategy primarily targets political corruption rather than all types of corruption, it has not assisted in easing the nation's economic downturn.

Additionally, the study findings demonstrate that public enlightenment will improve public involvement in the implementation of the policy, that media awareness and sensitization will contribute to the policy efficiency, and that civil society advocacy and support will further promote the policy efficacy. The study concluded that public opinion could have a positive impact on the whistleblowing policy if media awareness and civil society advocacy increased public involvement in the policy's implementation. In essence, access to information and favorable political attitudes toward the political system are fundamentally necessary for the availability of

participation opportunities. These factors also affect the formulation of public policy and, eventually, the durability of the democratic system of governance.

The study findings have led to the following suggestions. Collectively, the public's views if not rational, are at least comprehensible. Therefore, public opinion about the whistleblowing policy must therefore be one that the general public agrees with, not just by chance, but fully aware that this opinion forms a union between the public and the government. It must be acknowledged that this is the general consensus, that it has spread widely, and that the government is willing to stand up for it.

Popular participation in public policy is a key factor for making government more responsive and accountable. The people should be incorporated in policy formulation and implementation of the whistleblowing policy. This will help to assess, analyze and design quality policy within the context of national development. Thus, participation, it is assumed, will lead to more citizens' commitment in the policy.

Finally, in representative democracies, the relationship between public opinion and policy is particularly significant. There should be an interest in government responsiveness to public opinion. Also, there should be an interest in public responsiveness to government policy itself. Effective representation therefore hinges on public responsiveness to what government does. This suggests that democracy works rather well, at least in certain policy domains.

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