

## **INFORMATION AWARENESS AND ACCESSIBILITY AS TOOLS FOR WHISTLE-BLOWERS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION AMONG CIVIL SERVANTS IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Corruption has become an epidemic disease in Nigeria, and the whistle-blowing policy has received attention. However, the high rate of corruption persists. The study investigated information awareness and accessibility as tools for whistle-blowers in the fight against corruption among civil-servants in Kwara State, Nigeria. The population of the study was 6,650 across the 16 ministries. The research was conducted on a sample of 377 civil-servants utilising a questionnaire and adopting a descriptive survey design. The statistical analysis used for the study is frequency count and percentages. Based on the collected data, the respondents have a high level of awareness of the whistle-blowing policy. Also, the study revealed that civil service rules, newspaper reports, family and friends, as well as broadcast media, were sources of information available to them. Respondents indicated that inadequate information accessibility hindered the fight against corruption. However, many respondents revealed that a whistle-blowing policy, if not made a law, may not stand the test of time. Among factors that deter many whistleblowers from revealing corrupt practices are fear of reprisals and lack of continuity in government policy. The study established that whistle-blowing policy would gain impact through effective awareness-raising and adequate access to information by citizens. Therefore, the study recommended that there must be careful structuring and institutionalisation of*

*the whistle blowing policy to develop and enhance the capabilities of civil-servants to ensure effective functioning in the fight against corruption.*

**Keywords:** Access, Awareness, Corruption, Information, Whistle-blowing, Nigeria

### **Introduction**

All over the world, corruption has an effect on socioeconomic development, and it is a major obstruction to growth and development, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria. In all sectors in Nigeria, corruption has become an endemic issue. Ifejika (2018) reported that corruption, both in the public and private sectors, is unarguably a hindrance to the socio-economic development of nations across the world. The occurrence of corruption creates uneven sharing of socio-economic resources, deteriorates efforts at reducing poverty incidence and repudiates the susceptible groups in society's access to public opportunities and privileges. Lawal and Victor (2012) opined that corruption is a barrier to national development and a hindrance to effective governance in Nigeria. In Nigeria of today, corruption poses the greatest threat to every metric and the most heinous form of human exploitation. Corruption has negative impacts, such as preventing the poor from benefiting from the nation's wealth. It is also denying many poor and vulnerable individuals access to education and other essential services they need to live a normal life (Ifejika, 2018). Corruption has eaten deep into Nigeria's socio-political and economic fabric. As attested by former Vice-President Professor Yemi Osinbajo in 2016, the nation reportedly lost about \$15 billion to fraudulent practices in security equipment procurement during the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan.

The situation did not improve significantly in subsequent years. Under the administration of former President Muhammadu Buhari, for instance, the Accountant-General of the Federation was accused of diverting over ₦80 billion, despite being the custodian of the nation's treasury. Numerous other cases of financial misconduct involving civil servants, often in collaboration with political actors, further underscore the systemic nature of corruption in the country. These persistent irregularities highlight the urgent need for stronger institutional reforms, enhanced accountability mechanisms, and a renewed national commitment to transparency and good governance. The repercussions of corruption on any economy, regardless of its strength or buoyancy, are grave and disastrous (Adetula & Amupitan, 2018). In Nigeria, corruption has spread to all the economic sectors, including education. Admission fraud, grade trading, and all forms of exam misconduct in educational institutions are additional manifestations of corruption in Nigeria, as frequently reported in national newspapers and social media. Moreover, judicial and law enforcement perversion of justice, and outrageous crimes like defrauding the economy of foreign exchange, hoarding and smuggling, and over-invoicing of goods, among others, are also manifestations of corruption (Salihu & Gholami, 2018).

Surprisingly, the fight against corruption has been the lauded agenda of every government since Nigeria gained independence in 1960 (Adebayo, 2014). Several efforts are put in place to curb this menace of all types of degenerate practices, yet the rate of corruption among the citizenry is increasing. According to Salihu (2019), a few strategies, like discovery, preventive and remedial measures, have been set up to

address all types of degenerate practices. The Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), and the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) have been established as a result of some of the policies to combat corruption in the country, all to no avail. A new policy was introduced, tagged the whistle-blowing policy, which allows citizens of the country to act as a watchdog for corrupt practices in the country. Anya and Iwanger (2019) acknowledged that the Buhari administration's introduction of the whistle-blowing policy was a courageous move in the right direction. This policy could be described as an anti-corruption tool that is widely used worldwide to identify corrupt practices. In some nations, its adoption has resulted in improved governance, increased transparency, and promoted healthy government (Fadda *et al.*, 2018).

According to Okwuokei (2024), whistle-blowing includes the exposure of unlawful, improper or ill-conceived rehearses with the conviction that bad behaviour will be limited on the off chance that they are not exposed. Whistle-blowing is raising worries or alerts about any offence or bad behaviour inside an association or an autonomous design related to it. Anya and Iwanger (2019) defined it as the fight against corruption that involves not only government agencies but also individuals who are on the scene of the incident. This seems to be working, and the government has implemented a mechanism for fighting corruption. According to Odhiambo (2022), a whistle-blowing policy gives citizens a way to help the government fight corruption by acting as informants or whistle-blowers to bring any wrongdoing in their offices, workplaces, or organisations to light in the interest of the public. A whistle-blower is an informant who educates the general population or the authority regarding deceptive or criminal operations happening in an administrative division, a public or confidential association or an organisation. A whistle-blowing policy or mechanism cannot be carried out in a way that is both effective and efficient without access to information, which is typically thought of as power.

Information is a useful tool that every modern society needs to achieve certain goals and objectives. Citizens can use information to make decisions because of its awareness and accessibility. This suggests that a well-informed populace will have the necessary information regarding the fight against corruption. Access to information and awareness are crucial for making well-informed decisions and fighting corruption. It is impossible to understate the significance of information awareness and accessibility in the fight against corruption. According to Transparency International (2018) and Coleman (2013), people's corrupt actions can be concealed behind a mask of concealment in areas where information is not freely available, preventing citizens from realising their fundamental rights. In the fight against corruption, having access to information is an essential tool. No (2017) and Jones (2021) reiterated that access to information makes it possible to identify and expose corrupt practices while also increasing accountability and transparency. Buckley (2018) and Widyawati *et al.* (2023) affirmed that data mindfulness and openness have been decreed to assume a fundamental part in advancing straightforwardness and fighting debasement. Data empowers the general society to take part in the examination of government activities; to have a say in how anti-corruption policies and laws are made and how they are enforced (Adetula & Amupitan, 2018).

Access to information also empowers people in general to take part in the examination of

government exercises, and makes it possible to find and expose corrupt practices. As a crucial component of the fight against corruption, civil society organisations in developing nations are calling for increased transparency (Adamu *et al.*, 2015). According to the UNCAC Civil Society Coalition (2015), national awareness and access to information laws enable citizens, civil society organisations, and other relevant stakeholders to demand information regarding the decisions made by the government regarding their financial and non-financial activities. Several studies (Awhefeada, 2023; Anya & Iwanger, 2019; Ifejika, 2018) investigated corruption practices, but few examined the impact of whistle-blowing policy. Therefore, this study investigated information awareness and accessibility as tools for whistle-blowers in the fight against corruption among civil-servants in Kwara State, Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Corruption remains a major impediment to national development, undermining governance, economic progress, and public trust in many countries, including Nigeria. In response to the growing concern over widespread financial malpractice, the Federal Government of Nigeria introduced the whistle-blowing policy in 2016 through the Federal Ministry of Finance. The policy was designed to encourage citizens to report corrupt practices by offering financial incentives for credible information (Anya & Iwanger, 2019). Although the initiative initially recorded notable successes, its effectiveness gradually declined. Emerging reports point to low public engagement with the policy, largely due to inadequate awareness, limited access to accurate information, and poor understanding of how the whistle-blowing mechanism operates.

Existing studies (Bolarinwa *et al.*, 2023; Ahmadu, 2021; Anya & Iwanger, 2019) have mainly focused on evaluating the policy's performance, implementation challenges, and its implications for anti-corruption efforts. However, a critical gap remains in understanding the level of information awareness, the accessibility of reliable sources of anti-corruption information, and how these factors influence civil servants' ability or willingness to act as whistle-blowers. Given that effective whistle-blowing relies fundamentally on informed citizens who have access to relevant, trusted, and actionable information, this gap is significant. Therefore, this study investigates information awareness and accessibility as essential tools for whistle-blowers in the fight against corruption among civil-servants in Kwara State, Nigeria.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to examine how information awareness and accessibility serve as critical tools for enhancing whistle-blowing efforts in the fight against corruption among civil-servants in Kwara State, Nigeria, while the specific objectives were to:

1. identify the sources of information available to civil-servant in the fight against corruption in Kwara State;
2. determine the level of awareness of the whistle-blowing policy among civil-servants in Kwara State;
3. examine the perception of civil-servants toward the whistle-blowing policy; and
4. identify the challenges facing the implementation of the whistle-blowing policy in Kwara State.

### Review of Related Literature

Whistle-blowing is an important tool and mechanism that is increasingly being used worldwide to prevent and detect wrongdoings, particularly economic and financial-related crimes. According to Salihu (2019), whistle-blowing is the act of informing others of a specific circumstance or potential threat. Adeyemo (2015) defined whistle-blowing as the disclosure of illegal, immoral, or potentially serious wrongdoing by a company or those in a position of responsibility is the act of whistle-blowing. Hence, whistle-blowing could be described as an act of disclosing wrongdoings that have negative impacts on organisation and society. According to Makinde (2018), the whistle-blowing policy was designed by the Federal Ministry of Finance to encourage anyone with information about any violation of financial regulations, mismanagement of public funds and assets, financial malpractice, fraud and theft to report it to the relevant government agency.

The former Minister of Finance, Mrs. Kemi Adeosun, stated that the motives of the whistle-blowing policy are to increase transparency and accountability in the management of public funds and to help in the recovery of public funds for the deployment of infrastructural development (Qudus & Fahm, 2021). The whistle-blowing policy is a mechanism for reporting misconduct, fraud and other forms of illicit or unethical behaviour that allows the public to be aware of violations and breaches that would otherwise remain concealed (Chalouat *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, Makhija and Kulshrestha (2018) posited that a whistle-blowing policy educates employees of an organisation about any ambiguity towards regular practices being followed in the organisation. It is a policy that discourages employees from following unethical activity and makes them responsible for reporting such acts.

In Nigeria, the good application of the whistle-blowing policy would serve as an effective instrument for uncovering and fighting corrupt practices. Additionally, a whistle-blowing policy will enhance a corruption-free society and the attraction of foreign investors. Adeniran *et al.* (2016) described information as meaningful communication symbols transferred between any two points in human communication or machine networks. As the information awareness of the public increases, its information demand will increase as well (Liu, 2013). This means that sharing information with civil-servants and institutions could create a win-win situation for all parties involved in the fight against corruption, as it would make whistle-blowing more efficient. Thus, awareness of information emphasis is to inform whistle-blowers of how to go about being part of fighting corruption. Ultimately, information awareness is paramount to whistle-blowers' utilisation of information resources, which may positively influence the fight against corruption.

Kupoluyi (2019) conducted a study on whistle-blower, ICTs and Good Governance in Nigeria. The study examined how to promote good governance through the use of the whistle-blowing programme to curb corruption in Ogun State, Nigeria. The study used both quantitative and qualitative approaches to collect data. Using stratified sampling, data were collected from 145 respondents. The findings of the study showed that there is a high level of awareness of the whistle-blowing policy among the respondents. Moreover, Okafor *et al.* (2020) investigated the advantages and drawbacks of employing whistle-blowing as an accountability strategy to combat fraud and corruption in Nigeria. The findings showed that public awareness of whistle-blowing legislation, practical difficulties, and institutional climates that encourage venality

undermine the effectiveness of whistle-blowing in Nigeria. Furthermore, Clark *et al.* (2013) investigated the cultural factors that influence the propensity to blow the whistle in China, Taiwan, and the United States. A survey questionnaire was created to investigate the effect of culture on the intention to blow the whistle. The findings of the study revealed that Americans are more likely than the Chinese and Taiwanese to report illegal activities. The study also demonstrated that, in comparison to Americans, the intention of Chinese and Taiwanese whistle-blowers is influenced more by the dollar amounts involved and the impact of illegal, immoral, or illegitimate practices on businesses and societies. Similarly, Latan *et al.* (2018) investigated the intentions of public accountants in Indonesia regarding whistle-blowing. New insights into the relationship between the individual levels of the antecedents and how the intention of whistleblowing is moderated by perceived organisational support (POS), team norms (TNs), and perceived moral intensity (PMI) were provided by the study, which contributed to the body of knowledge.

Tyessi (2023) investigated the five years that Nigeria's whistle-blowing policy has been in place. The findings showed that the policy had little effect. Okechukwu and Oji (2021) evaluated the effectiveness of Nigeria's whistle-blower policy as a tool for fighting corruption. In terms of methodology, it examined ways in which the policy could be improved to address Nigeria's corruption issues. In addition, Ahmadu (2021) argued that whistle-blowing policy is seen from a public policy perspective as a unitary approach within a federal system because it has not adequately included the sub-national government (states and local governments) in the policy formulation and implementation processes. Egboh and Akobundu (2020) examined whistle-blower policies to fight corruption. The study showed that with the advances in a culture of receptiveness and straightforwardness, whistle-blowing strategies have been significant in the fight against corruption and other unlawful conduct in both general society and confidential circles.

Additionally, Michael *et al.* (2020) investigated the usefulness of the president's whistle-blower initiative as an anti-corruption tool. The findings of the study showed that whistle-blowing is a worthwhile endeavour that has had significant effectiveness in recouping stolen money. Moreover, Dauda *et al.* (2020) identified challenges and potential of Nigeria's "whistle-blowing" anti-corruption policy. The findings revealed the potential obstacles to the successful implementation of the policy as the nature of the Nigerian state, the sway of wealthy elites, the absence of effective legislation protecting whistle-blowers, a corrupt and compromised judiciary, socioeconomic difficulties, and the politicisation of Nigeria's anti-corruption campaign, among others. Omojola (2019) investigated the whistle-blowing policy's potential to reduce corruption in Nigeria as well as the long-term viability of its success. The study concluded that the whistle-blowing policy will face significant failures in the absence of a strong legal framework to protect whistle-blowers. Akinbinu and Tihamiyu (2016) examined public servants' sources of information in ministries in Lagos State, Nigeria. The findings of the study showed that newspapers, government publications, internal files, colleagues or superiors, internal files, and the Internet are the most widely used and accessible sources of information for policy-making.

The reviewed literature establishes whistle-blowing as a globally recognised mechanism for

exposing wrongdoing, improving accountability, and combating corruption (Makinde, 2018; Chalouat *et al.*, 2019). Various studies have also highlighted its potential to strengthen transparency in Nigeria, especially when supported by government-led initiatives such as the 2016 whistle-blowing policy (Qudus & Fahm, 2021). Studies consistently acknowledge that whistle-blowing contributes to a corruption-free environment and can attract foreign investment by boosting public confidence in governance (Makhija & Kulshrestha, 2018; Adeniran *et al.*, 2016). Beyond its theoretical benefits, empirical studies conducted in Nigeria and other countries have examined the effectiveness, outcomes, and challenges of whistle-blowing. For instance, Kupoluyi (2019) reported high awareness of whistle-blowing practices, whereas Okafor *et al.* (2020) emphasised how low public awareness, institutional weaknesses, and practical barriers undermine its implementation.

Comparative and international studies (Clark *et al.*, 2013; Latan *et al.*, 2018) have further explored cultural, organisational, and moral factors that shape individuals' willingness to report wrongdoing. Nigerian-focused works, such as Tyessi (2023), Okechukwu and Oji (2021), and Dauda *et al.* (2020), have highlighted policy limitations, lack of legal protection, and socio-political constraints that reduce the effectiveness of whistle-blowing in curbing corruption. However, a critical gap emerges when these studies are collectively examined. Existing research predominantly evaluates the policy performance, legal challenges, cultural influences, and institutional barriers associated with whistle-blowing. Very few studies interrogate the information dimension, particularly the availability of information sources, public information awareness, and accessibility of reliable channels needed for potential whistle-blowers to act effectively.

Only Akinbinu and Tiarniyu (2016) touched on sources of information among public servants, but their study was not situated within the context of whistle-blowing or anti-corruption efforts. No known study specifically examines how information awareness and information accessibility influence the whistle-blowing behaviour of civil servants, despite civil-servants being key actors who are often closest to administrative irregularities. This is a serious oversight because whistle-blowing cannot function optimally if individuals lack access to trusted information sources or are unaware of how and where to report corrupt practices. Thus, the literature reveals a clear and unaddressed gap, which includes the role of information awareness and accessibility as tools that enable whistle-blowers in the fight against corruption remains largely unexplored, particularly among civil-servants in Kwara State. This gap justifies the conduct of the present study, which seeks to provide empirical evidence on how information-related factors shape whistle-blowing practice in this critical public sector context.

## **Methodology**

This study adopted a descriptive survey design, considered appropriate for gathering data from a large population in order to examine trends, attitudes, and perceptions related to information awareness and accessibility for whistle-blowing among civil servants. The design aligns with the study's intention to capture real-world experiences within government ministries in Kwara State. The population of the study consisted of 6,650 civil-servants across the 16 ministries in Kwara State (Office of the Head of Service, 2021). The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's (1967) statistical formula, resulting in a sample of 377

respondents, deemed adequate for generalising the findings. A proportionate sampling technique was used to distribute the sample across ministries according to staff strength, while simple random sampling was employed to select individual participants, ensuring fairness and equal representation. A structured questionnaire served as the primary instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into sections reflecting the research objectives and was designed to capture respondents' sources of information, awareness of the whistle-blowing policy, perceptions, and challenges encountered in whistle-blowing practices.

To ensure validity, the instrument underwent expert review by scholars in Information Science and Research Methods. A pilot study involving 30 civil-servants outside the study area was conducted, and the instrument yielded a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.82, indicating good internal consistency. Data collection was carried out over four weeks through physical distribution in each ministry. Respondents were approached in their offices with the assistance of administrative officers who facilitated access to the staff. At the end, A total of 377 copies of the questionnaire were administered across the 16 ministries. Out of these, 351 copies of the questionnaire were completed and returned, representing an impressive 93.1% return rate. This high rate enhanced the reliability and validity of the findings.

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequency counts and percentages, which were used to address the research questions. Findings were presented in tables for clarity and ease of interpretation using APA-formatted tables. Each table was interpreted narratively immediately after its presentation to explain the pattern of responses and address the corresponding research question. Ethical standards were strictly adhered to throughout the study. Respondents were informed of the purpose of the study, and their participation was strictly voluntary. Informed consent was obtained before completing the questionnaire. Participants were assured of confidentiality, with no identifying information collected that could link responses to individuals or ministries. The study also guaranteed anonymity, ensuring that data were used solely for academic purposes. Furthermore, respondents were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences. All procedures complied with standard ethical guidelines for research involving human participants.

### **Data Analysis and Results**

This section presents the analysis of data collected from civil-servants across the 16 ministries in Kwara State. The results are organised in line with the research objectives and provide insight into respondents' awareness, accessibility, and utilisation of information in supporting whistle-blowing efforts against corruption.

#### **Sources of Information available for Civil-servants in Kwara State**

This section provides an overview of the sources of information accessible to civil-servants in Kwara State, which are essential for facilitating effective whistle-blowing and engagement in anti-corruption activities. The respondents were asked to indicate the availability of each source of information using a three-point nominal scale: Available, Not Sure, and Not Available. Table 1 presents the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents' access to these information sources.

**Table 1:** Sources of Information Available to the Respondents (N=351)

Sources	Available F (%)	Not Sure F (%)	Not Available F (%)
Whistle-blowing policy document	84 (23.9)	250 (71.2)	17 (4.8)
Civil service rule document	243 (69.2)	102 (29.1)	6 (1.7)
Newspaper reports on whistle-blowing	175 (49.9)	176 (50.1)	–
Magazines on whistle-blowing	151 (43.0)	194 (55.3)	6 (1.7)
Anti-graft agencies hotlines	192 (54.7)	159 (45.3)	–
Family, friends, and colleagues	211 (60.1)	134 (38.2)	6 (1.7)
Broadcast media (television and radio)	242 (68.9)	109 (31.1)	–

Field Survey, 2024

Table 1 shows that 84(23.9%) of the respondents attested to the availability of whistle-blowing policy documents, 25(71.2%) are not sure, while 17(4.8%) attested to its unavailability. Also, 243(69.2%) of the respondents attested to the availability of civil service rule documents, 102(29.1%) are not sure, while 6(1.7%) attested to its unavailability. It further shows that 175(49.9%) of the respondents attested to the availability of newspaper reports on whistle-blowing, while 176 (50.1%) are not sure. The table shows that 242(68.9%) of the respondents attested to the availability of Broadcast media (i.e. television and radio) while 109(31.1%) are not sure. The findings of the study suggest that there are various sources of information, such as newspapers, magazines, friends, anti-gravity agencies, broadcast media and many more.

#### Level of Awareness of Whistle blowing Policy

This section provides an analysis of the respondents' level of awareness regarding the whistle-blowing policy in Nigeria. Respondents' awareness was measured using a four-point Likert-type scale: Very High, High, Moderate, and Low. Table 2 presents the frequency and percentage distribution of responses across the different dimensions of awareness.

**Table 2:** Awareness Level of Whistle-Blowing Policy among the Respondents (N = 351)

Statements	Very High F (%)	High F (%)	Moderate F (%)	Low F (%)
I am aware of the Whistle-blowing policy in Nigeria	152 (43.3)	156 (44.4)	31 (8.8)	12 (3.4)
I am aware of the reward for whistleblowers	91 (25.9)	183 (52.1)	77 (21.9)	–
I am aware of the protection available for whistleblowers	97 (27.6)	142 (40.5)	94 (26.8)	18 (5.1)
I am aware of the importance of a whistle-blowing policy	64 (18.2)	207 (59.0)	61 (17.4)	19 (5.4)
I am aware of the appropriate authority to make a report	71 (20.2)	188 (53.6)	65 (18.5)	27 (7.7)
I am aware of the legal framework for whistle-blowers	67 (19.1)	179 (51.0)	74 (21.1)	31 (8.8)

Field Survey, 2024

Table 2 shows that 152(43.3%) of the respondents have a very high level of awareness of whistle-blowing policy in Nigeria, 156(44.4%) have a high level of awareness, 31(8.8%) have a low level of awareness, and 12(3.4%) have a very low level of awareness. On the level of awareness of the respondents on reward for whistle-blowers, 91(25.9%) of the respondents have a very high level of awareness, 183(52.1%) have a high level of awareness, while 77(21.9%) have a moderate level of awareness. On the level of awareness of the respondents on the protection available for whistle-blowers, Table 2 shows that 97(27.6%) of the respondents have a very high level of awareness, 142(40.5%) have a high level of awareness, 94 (26.8%) have a moderate level of awareness while 18(5.1%) have a low level of awareness. The findings of the study indicate that there is a high level of awareness of information on whistle blowing policy among the participants of the study.

### Perception of Whistle-Blowing Policy among the Respondents

This section provides an analysis of civil servants' perception of the whistle-blowing policy in Kwara State. Respondents' perceptions were measured using a four-point Likert-type scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Table 3 presents the distribution of respondents' perceptions across different statements regarding the whistle-blowing policy.

**Table 3:** Perception of Whistle-Blowing Policy among the Respondents (N = 351)

Statements	SAF (%)	AF (%)	Df (%)	SD F (%)
The whistle-blowing policy encourages civil servants to report corrupt practices and other violations of financial regulations	95 (27.1)	204 (58.1)	40 (11.4)	12 (3.4)
I perceive that the whistle-blowing policy is a good mechanism for fighting corruption among civil servants	126 (35.9)	183 (52.1)	42 (12.0)	—
My perception of whistle-blowing policy is that it could be used as a witch-hunting tool among civil servants	100 (28.5)	175 (49.9)	65 (18.5)	11 (3.1)
Whistle-blowing policy is not an all-inclusive way to fight corruption in the civil service	96 (27.4)	198 (56.4)	49 (14.0)	8 (2.3)
I perceive that a whistle-blowing policy, if not made into law, is not sustainable	83 (23.6)	233 (66.4)	35 (10.0)	—
My perception of the whistle-blowing policy is that it would help to increase transparency and accountability in the civil service	157 (44.7)	170 (48.4)	24 (6.8)	—
The whistle-blowing policy is an ethical way of reporting wrongdoings in the civil service to the relevant authorities	121 (34.5)	217 (61.8)	13 (3.7)	—
I have a positive perception towards the whistle-blowing policy	101 (28.8)	234 (66.7)	9 (2.6)	7 (2.0)

Field Survey, 2024

Table 3 shows that 96(27.4%) and 198(56.4%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed, respectively, that whistle-blowing policy is not an all-inclusive way to fight corruption among civil-servants, while 49(14.0%) and 8(2.3%) of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed, respectively. Also, Table 3 indicates that 83(23.6%) and 233(66.4%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed, respectively, that they perceived that whistle-blowing policy, if not made into law, is not sustainable, while 35(10.0%) of respondents disagreed. Table 3 shows that 157 (44.7%) and 170(48.4%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that their perception of whistle-blowing policy is that it would help to increase transparency and accountability in civil service, while 24(6.8%) of the respondents disagreed. In addition, Table 3 shows that 101(28.8%) and 234(66.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that they have a positive perception towards the whistle-blowing policy, while 9(2.6%) and 7(2.0%) of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. The findings of the study indicate that respondents have a positive perception towards whistle-blowing policy.

### Challenges Facing the Whistle-Blowing Policy

This section presents an analysis of the challenges encountered by civil servants in engaging with the whistle-blowing policy in Kwara State. Respondents' views were measured using a four-point Likert-type scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Table 4 presents the frequency and percentage distribution of responses regarding the challenges faced in utilising the whistle-blowing policy.

**Table 4:** Challenges facing the Whistle-Blowing Policy (N = 351)

Challenges	SA F (%)	A F (%)	D F (%)	SD F (%)
Fear of being attacked hinders participation	163 (46.4)	134 (38.2)	20 (5.7)	34 (9.7)
Lack of appropriately enacted laws	155 (44.2)	94 (26.8)	81 (23.1)	21 (5.9)
Lack of continuity in government policy	89 (25.4)	111 (31.6)	49 (13.9)	102 (29.1)
Perceived lack of integrity in the government's anti-corruption campaign	184 (52.4)	107 (30.5)	35 (9.9)	25 (7.1)
Lack of confidence in law enforcement agencies and the judicial system	145 (41.3)	191 (54.4)	15 (4.3)	–
Stress associated with being a witness	162 (46.2)	106 (30.2)	49 (13.9)	34 (9.7)
Opposition by political parties other than the ruling party	99 (28.2)	170 (48.4)	64 (18.2)	18 (5.1)
Absence of a legal framework backing up the anti-corruption campaign at the state level	152 (43.3)	108 (30.8)	73 (20.8)	18 (5.1)

Field Survey, 2024

Table 4 shows that 163(46.4%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 134(38.2%) agreed that fear of being attacked hinders participation of individuals in promoting the whistle-blowing policy, while 34(9.7%) and 20(5.7%) disagreed and strongly disagreed, respectively. Table 4 shows that 155(44.2%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 94(26.8%) agreed that the lack of appropriately enacted laws is an issue facing whistle-blowing policy, while 81(23.1%) and 21(5.9%) disagreed and strongly disagreed, respectively. Also, Table 4 shows 89(25.4%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 111(31.6%) agreed that lack of continuity in government policy is a problem facing whistle-blowing policy, while 49(13.9%) and 102(29.1%) disagreed and strongly disagreed, respectively. Furthermore, 184(52.4%) of the respondents strongly agreed, and 107(30.5%) agreed that the perceived lack of integrity in the government's anti-corruption campaign is an issue facing whistle-blowing policy. Similarly, 145(41.3%) strongly agreed, and 191(54.4%) agreed that lack of confidence in our law enforcement agencies and judicial system affected whistle-blowing policy, while 15(4.3%) disagreed.

Additionally, Table 4 shows that 162(46.2%) strongly agreed and 106(30.2%) agreed that stress associated with being a witness is a problem facing whistle-blowing policy, while 49(13.9%) and 34(9.7%) disagreed and strongly disagreed, respectively. Moreover, the findings show that 152(43.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed and 108(30.8%) agreed that the absence of a legal framework backing up the anti-corruption campaign at the state level is an issue facing the whistle-blowing policy, while 73(20.8%) and 18(5.1%) disagreed and strongly disagreed, respectively. The findings of the study infer that there are many challenges facing whistle-blowing policy, which could affect the thriving of the policy towards corruption eradication.

### **Discussion of the Findings**

The study revealed that civil-servants had a high level of awareness of the whistle-blowing policy in Kwara State, Nigeria. The majority of respondents were aware of the rewards for whistle-blowers, the importance of the policy, the appropriate authorities to report to, and the legal framework for whistle-blowers. The findings can be explained that whistle-blowing policy is well known to the majority of the stakeholders, which could be a result of inducements that serve as a motivational factor. The high level of awareness among civil-servants suggests that the whistle-blowing policy will flourish in promoting transparency and accountability in the fight against corruption. Moreover, the findings of this study revealed a positive disposition towards the whistle-blowing policy. Specifically, a higher percentage of respondents believed that the policy encourages civil-servants to report corrupt practices and violations of financial regulations. Also, most respondents felt that the policy would only be sustainable if it became law. The findings align with a previous study by Hwang, Chen *et al.* (2013), who reported that Americans have a greater disposition to engage in whistle-blowing than Chinese and Taiwanese individuals. The perception of Chinese and Taiwanese individuals to engage in whistle-blowing is more influenced by the amount of money involved. However, the findings of this study differ slightly from those of Mustapha and Siaw (2012), who reported that final-year accountancy students had a relatively moderate approach towards their willingness to engage in whistle-blowing.

Furthermore, the findings of the study revealed that the civil service rule document was the most

accessible source of information. This is followed by broadcast media (TV and radio) and family, friends, and colleagues. The high number of respondents citing the civil service rule document is unsurprising since civil-servants receive a copy of this document upon resuming work to guide them in their conduct. However, most of the respondents were uncertain about the availability of the whistle-blowing policy document and newspaper reports on whistle-blowing. The findings are consistent with previous studies by Anyanwu *et al.* (2011), who reiterated that in-house memoranda, government publications, and newspapers/popular magazines are the most accessible sources of information for civil-servants in the Imo State Civil Service.

Also, Akinbinu and Tihamiyu (2016) reported that internal files, colleagues or superiors, newspapers, government publications, and the internet are the most frequently used and accessible sources of information for civil-servants in selected ministries in Lagos State. The findings of the study on the perceived effect of information accessibility in the fight against corruption in Nigeria revealed that the lack of access to information can negatively affect the fight against corruption. The majority of the respondents strongly agreed that the inability to access information can hinder the fight against corruption, while a higher percentage of the respondents agreed that information accessibility promotes transparency and thus helps in the fight against corruption. The findings align with the assertion of Van Rooij and Fine (2019), who speculated that access to information creates a win-win situation for all parties involved in the fight against corruption, as it would make whistle-blowing more efficient. Similarly, DiRienzo *et al.* (2007) established that greater access to information leads to lower levels of corruption.

The findings suggested that information awareness plays a crucial role in the fight against corruption in Nigeria, which is in line with previous literature that showed the importance of information in the fight against corruption. For example, a study by Liu *et al.* (2024) posited that access to information creates a win-win situation for all parties involved in the fight against corruption, as it would make whistle-blowing more efficient. Similarly, DiRienzo *et al.* (2007) declared that the greater the access to information, the lower the corruption levels. Moreover, a study by Berti *et al.* (2020) revealed that information dissemination through the media and social networks can help to increase awareness of corruption and its negative effects, leading to a reduction in corrupt practices. Another study by Otusanya and Lauwo (2019) reiterated that public education and awareness campaigns on corruption can help to change attitudes and behaviour towards corrupt practices. The findings indicate that a majority of the respondents strongly agree or agree that the lack of information accessibility can hinder the fight against corruption. The results also suggest that access to information has a direct consequence on fighting corruption and that information accessibility promotes transparency and helps in the fight against corruption. Respondents also agreed that without access to information, the fight against corruption might not be successful and that information accessibility has helped to reveal corrupt practices. Additionally, respondents agree that information accessibility makes fighting corruption easier.

Overall, the findings suggested that information accessibility is crucial in the fight against corruption. Ameen and Ahmad (2019) reported that information availability is essential in reducing corruption. This supports the idea that without access to information, the fight against corruption is compromised. Similarly,

in a study on the role of information in promoting transparency, accountability, and good governance, Azeem and Umar (2023) noted that access to information is crucial in enhancing transparency and accountability. A study on transparency and anti-corruption policies, by Osman and Abdel Mohsen (2022) observed that transparency is essential in fighting corruption. This suggests that information accessibility can be a key tool in promoting transparency and ultimately reducing corruption. Additionally, in a study on the use of information and communication technology in fighting corruption, Pattanasrivichian (2022) noted that access to information can help to increase public participation in anti-corruption efforts. This implies that access to information plays an essential role in fighting corruption.

### **Conclusion**

The study's findings indicate that civil servants have a relatively high level of awareness of the whistle-blowing policy, including its rewards, protections, reporting authorities, and legal framework, as the respondents demonstrated positive perceptions towards the policy, recognising its potential to promote transparency, accountability, and ethical reporting in the civil service. Thus, the study revealed that civil servants rely on multiple sources of information, with civil service rule documents, broadcast media, and interpersonal networks (family, friends, and colleagues) being the most accessible, in spite the limited accessibility to whistle-blowing policy documents and media reports on whistle-blowing, highlighting gaps in information dissemination. The identified barriers affecting effective engagement with the whistle-blowing policy, like fear of victimisation, lack of enacted laws, perceived weaknesses in anti-corruption campaigns, stress associated with being a witness, and absence of legal frameworks at the state level potentially undermined the effectiveness of the policy and hinder civil servants' active participation in combating corruption. Over all, both information awareness and accessibility were established as critical enablers of whistle-blowing and effective anti-corruption efforts.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Given that civil servants have limited access to whistle-blowing policy documents and related media reports, it is recommended that ministries and anti-corruption agencies ensure wider dissemination of relevant materials. Digital platforms, in-house libraries, and periodic workshops should be utilised to improve access to accurate information.
2. Despite high awareness, gaps remain in knowledge regarding rewards, protections, and reporting procedures. Regular training sessions, seminars, and targeted awareness campaigns should be implemented to deepen civil servants' understanding of whistle-blowing policies.
3. To sustain civil servants' positive perception of whistle-blowing, the government should emphasise the ethical and legal framework supporting whistle-blowers. Public recognition of successful whistle-blowers can also reinforce the benefits of ethical reporting and encourage active participation.
4. To mitigate barriers such as fear of retaliation, lack of enacted laws, and weaknesses in anti-corruption

mechanisms, policymakers need to enact and enforce comprehensive whistle-blowing legislation at the state level. Additionally, establishing protection mechanisms for whistle-blowers, ensuring continuity in anti-corruption campaigns, and strengthening confidence in law enforcement agencies will support effective whistle-blowing practices.

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