

## WHISTLE BLOWING PERCEPTIONS – A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MALE AND FEMALE EMPLOYEES

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### ABSTRACT

*With the increase in women employees in the organizations one has to understand the ethical leadership quality among the male and female employees and their challenges. It is highly important to have ethical leadership and decision making in connection with the management by both male and female employees in a competitive environment. In this light this paper aims at analyzing the perceptions of male and female employees about whistle blowing at their workplace and thereby testing the differential perceptions existing thereon with respect to level of whistle blowing, in choosing whistle blowing mechanism, reasons for not reporting the observed wrong doing and their experience by blowing the whistle. The results indicates there exists no significant difference between male and female employees with respect to level, mechanism, and experience. However there is significant differences with respect to some of the reasons for not blowing the whistle.*

**Keywords:** *Whistle blowing, perception difference, gender.*

**Introduction:**

With the increase in women employees in the organizations one has to understand the ethical leadership quality among the male and female employees and their challenges. It is highly important to have ethical leadership and decision making in connection with the management by both male and female employees in a competitive environment. In this light this paper aims at analyzing the perceptions of male and female employees about whistle blowing. US Academicians Miceli and Near (1984) defines Whistle blowing as “the disclosure by organizational members (former or current) of illegal, immoral, or illegitimate practices under the control of their employees, to persons or organizations that may be able to effect action”. Ethical leader and whistle blower are strongly associated. This can be very much understood by the famous whistle blowers in the global context namely Sherron Watkins, Cynthia Cooper, Coleen Rowley who were all females. But in Indian Context, where culture and values have strongly associated with individual behavior, it is difficult to generalize the whistle blowing culture, though with little hidden features but highly essential in today’s organization context. The challenges are many with the single and simple concept of whistle blowing, which can be particularly associated with organization ethics and gender.

**Literature Review:****Organization Ethics and Gender:**

When it comes to the matter of understanding organization ethics, males were more in agreement than females that the firm had an ethical environment (Charlotte Mc Daniel 2001) but females are more in agreement with the statements reflecting a less supportive ethical environment than are male employees (Charlotte Mc Daniel 2001). Females are found to adopt a more ethical stance than their male peers and males generally perceive a stronger ethical environment than females (Charlotte Mc Daniel 2001). Male and female managers do not differ on their underlying ethical models, but they differ in the manner in which they evaluate others (Charlotte Mc Daniel 2001).

**Whistle Blowing and Gender:**

As more women are climbing the corporate ladders and become part of the executive leadership, more women are seen in whistle-blower situations (Linda Hunt 2010). Women may be more likely whistle-blowers because of lessons learned in childhood games (Linda Hunt 2010). Women are actually more likely to blow the whistle because they are not as entrenched in the organization as men are (Linda Hunt 2010). Women seem to be getting all the attention for being whistle-blowers. Men are still blowing the whistle but getting less attention (Linda Hunt 2010). Males may be more likely than females to blow the whistle (Janet P Near, Marcia P Miceli 1985). Males may also have more opportunities to observe wrongdoing, because as a group they are more widely distributed across different job categories than are females, who tend still to be occupationally segregated (Janet P Near, Marcia P Miceli 1985). But however gender is considered as an inconsistent factor with respect to whistle blowing (Abhijeet K Vadera, Rath V Agvilee and Briann B-Caza 2009).

Women face unique repercussions and are often more hesitant to bring wrongdoing to the surface (Linda Hunt 2010). When women step out of their perceived social status, retaliation can be the consequence (Linda Hunt 2010). Women often have lot of fear and anxiety about whistle blowing (Linda Hunt 2010). Male whistles blowers experiences less retaliation than females (Linda Hunt 2010). Serious wrongdoing is associated with more retaliation and it is stronger when the whistle-blower is a woman than men. (Michael, T Rehg, Marcia P Miceli Janet, James 2008). Women perceived that they experienced more retaliation than men (Michael, T Rehg, Marcia P Miceli Janet, James 2008). There is less variance in retaliation against men than against women (Michael, T Rehg, Marcia P Miceli Janet, James 2008). Most significant factor for not reporting is it would have no impact and less significant factor is feared retaliation (Lawrence Rhoades 1995).

Most studies concentrate on retaliation as the major factor that the whistle blowers experience and the type of retaliation is less mentioned. But one need to understand different views by observers of wrongdoing when they report and when they are not willing to report. There is no much literature found

on whistle blowing mechanism and the reasons for not blowing the whistle among male and female employees.

### Need for the Study:

The demographic factors such as age , gender, income, experience, education is having affect on whistle blowing attitude of an employee. Therefore there is a need to understand the level of affect of these demographic factors on whistle blowing. Among the various demographic factors, gender is one of the major factor to be considered in analyzing whistle blowing perceptions. This paper checks whether there is a significant difference or not between male and female employees and their whistle blowing perceptions.

### Objectives:

1. To analyze the level of whistle blowing based on gender.
2. To analyze the whistle blowing mechanism based on gender.
3. To examine the reasons for not blowing the whistle among male and female employees.
4. To examine the experiences by male and female whistle blowers.

### Hypotheses:

The following are the null hypothesis of the study.

**H1<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant difference between male and female employees with respect to the level of whistle blowing.

**H2<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the male and female employees in choosing whistle blowing mechanism.

**H3<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the male and female employees for not reporting observed wrong doing.

**H4<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the male and female whistle blowers in their experience.

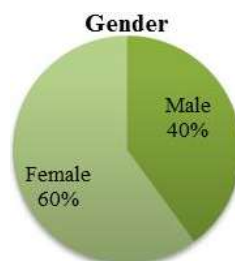
### Research Methodology:

The primary data was collected by conducting an online survey and the structured questionnaire was designed and addressed to employees working in different organizations of education industry i.e., service sector. The questionnaire consists of ten questions, out of which 2 questions relating to demographic factors namely gender and age and remaining 8 questions were related to wrongdoing reporting attitude of employees. The 5 point Likert Scale is being used in the questionnaire with 1 as strongly disagree, 2 as disagree, 3 as neutral, 4 as agree and 5 as strongly agree. The simple random sampling technique was selected and time duration of data collection was fixed for 30 days. Out of 85 respondents selected for data collection, 34 respondents participated in an online survey in the given period. The response rate through online survey for this study is 40%, which is quite appreciable. And the same 40% is considered in analyzing the data. The statistical tools such as Chi-Square, ANOVA and Paired Sample T Tests have been used for testing the hypothesis. And graphs such as pie chart and bar graph is used for analyzing the data.

### Demographic Profile of Respondents:

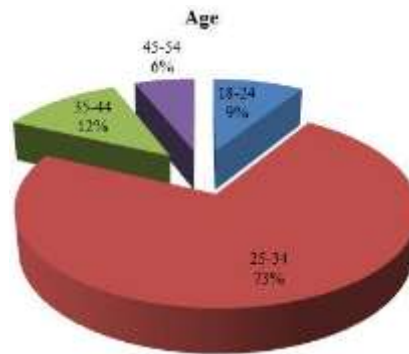
The demographic factors such as gender and age has been considered for analysing the data.

**Chart:1**



Out of 34 respondents , 40% are male and 60% are female employees.

Chart-2



73% of the respondents belong to the age group of 25-34, 12% of the respondents belong to the age group of 35-44, 9% of the respondents belong to the age group of 18-24 and only 6% of the respondents belong to the age group of 45-54. The majority respondents belong to the age group of 25-34 who have at least 3 or more years of job experience.

**Survey analysis and Findings:**

73% of the respondents say that they have observed directly wrongdoing at their work place irrespective of people working in different levels in the organization. Only 28% of the respondents say that they have not observed any wrongdoing directly. Out of observed wrongdoing respondents nearly 71% rate their observations on wrong doing as low and neutral. 16% of the respondent’s observations on wrongdoing is considered as high. Only 3% of the respondent’s observations on wrongdoing at work place is considered as very high. 10% respondent’s observations on wrongdoing is being rated as very low. In connection with the reporting of wrongdoing , 41% of the respondents who observed wrongdoing agree that they report it. 50% of the respondents said they did not report it, and remaining 9% unanswered the question whether ther report or not. The study does not analyze to whom it was reported. When the seriousness of the wrongdoing was considered in reporting attitude, 52% of the respondents who reported wrongdoing considered such wrongdoing as serious and 39% considered as neutral , 6% considered not serious and only 3% considered such reported wrongdoing as highly serious. When the question relating to reporting mechanism was asked. 13% of them used email/internet for reporting, 4% used telephone (mobiles and landlines), 4% used anonymous letters, and nearly 78% of the respondents who reported wrongdoing by person only and was orally reported. When opinion about future reporting attitude was considered, 33% of the respondents said they will blow the whistle again, 23% said they will not blow the whistle and 43% said they can’t say anything about future whistle blowing.

**Table:1 Respondents feedback on reasons for not reporting the observed wrong doing.**

S. No	Reasons	Average Rating
1	It was evident that no corrective action would be taken.	3.54
2	It may lead to strong retaliation from the employer	3.52
3	It may lead to ill treatment by peers	3.28
4	It was not my obligation to report.	2.80
5	Not aware of reporting mechanism	2.68

Source: Primary Data

**Hypothesis Testing:**

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is significant difference between male and female employees with respect to the level of whistle blowing.

Table:3

	Male	Female	Total
NWB	(50%)7	(50%)10	(50%)17
WB	<b>(42.87%)6</b>	<b>(40%)8</b>	<b>(41.18%)14</b>
NA	(7.13%)1	(10%)2	(8.82%)3
Total	(100%)14	(100%)20	(100%)34
NWB- Non Whistle Blowers			
WB- Whistle Blowers			
NA- Not Answered			

Chart:3

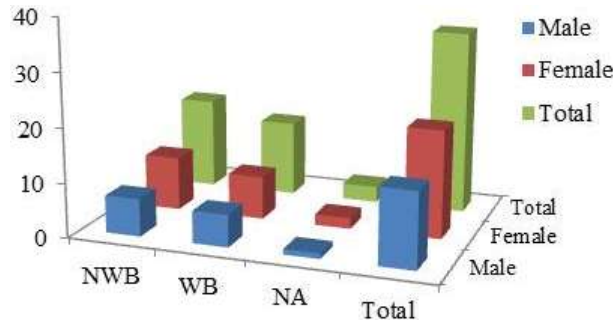


Table 4: ANOVA

Do you report such directly observed wrongdoing?					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.002	1	.002	.008	.928
Within Groups	7.675	29	.265		
<b>Total</b>	<b>7.677</b>	<b>30</b>			

The sig. Value is .928 which is greater than p value 0.05. (Refer Table:4) Therefore, there is no significant differences between male and female with respect to the level of whistle blowing. The null hypothesis is accepted and research hypothesis is rejected.

H2: There is a significant differences between the male and female employees in choosing whistle blowing mechanism.

Table 5: Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	male & female	6	.967	.002

Table 6: Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	male - female	-.333	1.366	.558	-1.767	1.100	-.598	5	.576

The sig. value is .576 which is greater than p value 0.05. (Refer Table: 6) Therefore, there is no significant differences between male and female in choosing whistle blowing mechanism. The null hypothesis is accepted and research hypothesis is rejected.

H3: There is a significant difference between the male and female employees' reasons for not blowing the whistle.

Table 7

S. N.	Reasons for not blowing the Whistle.	Chi-Square Calculated Value	Chi-square Table Value	P Value	Accept/Reject
1	It was evident that no action would be taken	12.357	9.488*	<b>0.015</b>	Reject Null Hypothesis There is a significant difference.
2	It may lead to strong retaliation from the employer.	6.692	9.488*	0.153	Accept Null Hypothesis There is no Significant Difference.
3	It may lead to ill treatment by peers	14.385	9.488*	<b>0.006</b>	Reject Null Hypothesis There is a significant difference.
4	It was not my obligation to report	0.923	9.488*	0.921	Accept Null Hypothesis There is no Significant Difference.
5	Not aware of reporting mechanism	5.154	9.488*	0.272	Accept Null Hypothesis There is no Significant Difference.

\* The table value at 5% significance level when  $df = (c-1)(r-1) = (2-1)(5-1) = (1)(4) = 4$

In the above case there exists no differences with respect to item no 2, 4 & 5 among male and female employees for reasons for not blowing the whistle. Male and female employees do not differ in giving the reasons for not blowing the whistle when reasoning factors were, it may lead to strong retaliation from the employer, it was not my obligation to report and not aware of reporting mechanism. But still we could find significant difference when reasoning factors were, it was evident that no action would be taken and it may lead to ill treatment by peers.

**H4:** There is a significant difference between the male and female whistle blowers in their experience.

Table 8: Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1   Male - female	-.154	.801	.222	-.638	.330	-.693	12	.502

The sig. Value is .502 which is greater than p value 0.05. (Refer Table:8). There is no significant difference between male and female employees in their experience by whistle blowing. Among the 13 factors relating to whistle blowing experience the male and female employees did not differ with each other significantly. The null hypothesis is accepted and research hypothesis is rejected.

**Limitation of the Study:**

1. This study mainly considers the particular group as sample, majority having common characteristics with respect to age and experience.
2. Gender is the main demographic factor considered in this study.
3. Sample is derived from service sector only.

**Further scope of the study:**

The other demographic factors can be taken as combined factors of gender influencing whistle blowing. For example, young vs aged, married vs unmarried, highly experienced vs less experienced, high income group vs low income group.

**Conclusion:**

There are no significant differences with respect to the level of whistle blowing, the mechanism being used to blow the whistle, experiences after blowing the whistle. However there exist significant differences in giving reasons for not blowing the whistle between male and female employees. Among the given five factors for reasons for not blowing the whistle, two related factors are having significant difference. Firstly, when the reasoning factor is, it was evident that no action would be taken which can be supported by the statement “females are more in agreement with the statements reflecting a less supportive ethical environment than are male employees” (Charlotte Mc Daniel 2001). Therefore it can be said whistle blowing among female employees likely depends on stronger ethical supporting environment i.e organization support towards ethical behavior. Secondly when the related reasoning factor for not blowing the whistle is ill -treatment by peers, females were mostly associated with this factor compared to their male counterparts. This factor also depends on the supportive ethical environment of peers who are part of the organization. The ill-treatment by peers may be due to peer support towards the unethical behavior of the wrongdoer, or it can be competition among whistle blower and their peers, having impact on the whistle blowing. When females perceive this situation more than their male counterparts, which also indicates the role of communication among the female employees. Effective and open communication skill is very much essential among female employees to overcome ill treatment by peers for blowing the whistle. But still when there is a lack of support from their peers irrespective of their gender, females can be encouraged towards whistle blowing by having trusted and open communication which has sound justice in building stronger ethical leadership quality among the female employees. And on other side organization promoting open communication with the authority among their employees will enhance the commitment and fair work among the employees.

Female role in a family is more appreciable as a mother, daughter, wife, sister in protecting and caring the family members and their welfare. Organizations also working with sought of family system where employers and employees are considered as family members. Female employees in an organization must work as insider rather than outsiders. And on the other side she should be treated by authority as an insider than outsider for wellbeing of the organization and individual both. The male counterpart must provide supporting working environment for female counterparts and female counterparts must work for the wellbeing and success of all the organization’s family members in achieving the organizational vision mission and objectives.

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