WHISTLE BLOWING INTENTION AMONG ENFORCEMENT OFFICER: EMPIRICAL STUDY OF ROYAL MALAYSIAN POLICE

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Abstract - Recently, unethical misconduct among enforcement officers have been a major concern both in developed as well as developing countries. Enforcement officer can easily abuse their powers or exploit their position for personal gains which subsequently will tarnish the image of public sector as a whole. Whistleblowing can be seen as a sort of mechanism for controlling and monitoring organization, protecting against misconduct and fraudulent act. This study aims to assess the current level of readiness to blow whistle among RMP officers. Data collected from 101 Royal Malaysian officers revealed that respondents confidence on the whistle blowing policy and protection and ready to blow whistle if the their office provide whistle blowing infrastructure such as hot or help line and confidentiality. However, their willingness to blow whistle depending on the severity and frequency of the unethical behavior. The fact that the enforcement officers are more willing to blow whistle if they believed that their report will be investigated provide indication that based on their experience some of whistle blowing reports were not seriously investigated.

Keywords - Whistleblowing, Royal Malaysian Police, Unethical Behaviour

I. INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia, there is an accusation that some enforcement officials are practicing misconduct as a custom in their daily role (Abdul Karim, Said & Mustaffa Bakri, 2015). Though the percentage of those involved in the cases of misconduct is insignificant, it has tainted the reputation of the police force as a whole (Abdul Karim, Said & Mustaffa Bakti, 2015). These may tarnish the image of the police force as an enforcement agency, which Manning (1997) believes, as employees of an enforcement agency, police officials represents morality and standards of civility and dignity.

Unfortunately, no matter how good an organization is being managed, some employees are inclined towards committing acts of misconduct (Marquet International, 2006 -2012). Such a behavior is known as employee fraud or occupational fraud. Employee fraud happens when an employee deliberately misuses or misapplies the assets or resources of a business for their own personal purposes (Wells, 2001).

Generally, it is difficult to detect employee frauds unless they are uncovered by accident or exposed by a whistleblower (Klein, 2014). Since the 1980s, the increase in employee fraud worldwide has resulted in an increase in whistleblowing cases (Martin, 2011). Whistleblowing can be seen as a sort of mechanism for controlling and monitoring organization, protecting against misconduct and fraudulent act. Meng and Fook (2011) also agreed that in order to achieve good governance in an organization, whistleblowing should be part of an internal control mechanism in combating misconduct and enhancing governance. Furthermore, based on a survey conducted by Ernst and Young, Fraud Investigation and Dispute Services (2016), whistleblowing act as an initial preventive measure before a more serious corporate scandal happen. By establishing a clear blowing channel and policies, it helps in illuminating awareness of employee about whistleblowing policies and it can encourage people to whistle blow. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate the level of readiness of Royal Malaysian officer to blow whistle to mitigate unethical behavior.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Whistleblowing Intention

Whistleblowing according to Law of Malaysia, Act 711, Whistleblower Protection Act, (2010) is: "An act of a person to disclose on wrongdoing, corruption within private or public sector organization". Whistleblowing Protection Act, 2010 was introduced as one of National Key Result Areas (NKRA) plan in fighting corruption under Government Transformation Programme. The enactment of the act is intended to encouraging people especially employees and also protecting them in disclosing corruption and mismanagement in an organization. Once enacted, officers of a company or organization or government agencies or any other person who provides information regarding the malpractice or wrongdoing of an organization or its directors or persons within the organization are entitled to be protected by law. Although the act is introduced to protect the witness (whistleblower), it depends on the persons itself and the belief they hold toward the action (corruption or wrongdoing).

Even with the protection, not everyone is willing to be a whistleblower due to the ethical dilemma that they faced upon discovering their colleagues' wrongdoings (Barnet Bass, & Brown, 1996). Some even faced job retaliation as the act of blow the whistle is considered an act of betrayal to the

company as it gave a bad appearance of company corporate governance (Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005). Hence, becoming a whistleblower is challenging as it might adversely affects one's career, particularly in Malaysian enforcement agencies.

Malaysian enforcement agencies are involved in the Government Transformation Programs, which have their own set of ethical code of conduct and even have, its own Integrity units. However, even with all precautionary measures taken, the enforcement agencies are still exposed to corruptions and fraud. Inevitably, the enforcement agencies nature of working environment makes them susceptible to the risk of misconduct and fraud.

Shamsuddin et al (2015), studied on the perception and intention of the Malaysian enforcement agencies' employee on the Whistleblower Protection Act, 2010 in Malaysia Police (RMP), Royal Malaysia Custom Department, Immigration Department of Malaysia, Road Transport Department and Malaysia Anti-corruption Commission. The result reveals that there is a positive relationship between ethics and locus of control towards the perception and intention of the "Malaysian Enforcement Agencies" employees on Whistleblower Protection Act 2010. However, it is vital to note that whistleblowing intention and whistleblowing behavior are different. According to Izraeli and Jaffe (1998) while the former refers to the pre-acting (to do or not to) motive, that occurs based on the perception of a person, the latter refers to the action which holds the whistle blow.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Three RMP branches were selected as samples where the offices are is located in the Klang Valley. The Purposive Sampling is used to suit the objective of the study (Palys, 2008), which is to examine the readiness to blow whistle among RMP officers. The sample consist of employee officers works in those three Royal Malaysian Police's (RMP) branches. A total of 300 set of questionnaires were distributed, where 110 responded, giving 36.67% response rate.

The questionnaire consists of two (2) sections. The first section relates to respondents' demographic information such as gender, age, education level, job position, number of years serving the department, ethnic and average monthly salary received. Meanwhile, the second section elicit the level of whistleblowing practices using nine items questions adopted from Corporate Integrity System Assessment Questionnaire, Malaysian Institute of Integrity with some modification. The respondents give opinions on the measurement item description based on five point-Likert rating scales (see Table 1).

Table 1 Measurement of Whistleblowing Intention

Code	Item Description I will will report on unethical behavior ….
B1	..if my office offers a channel where employees can bring up complaints about unethical behavior
B2	…if my office promises measures of confidentiality to whistle blower
B3	…if my office provide "hotline" or "helpline" services to channel for confidential complaints
B4	…depending on the severity consequence of the unethical behaviour
B5	..depending on the person who involve in the unethical behaviour
B6	…if I believe the management will investigate the issue objectively
B7	…depending on the frequency of the unethical behavior the person have been involved
B8	….even though I know my office will not take any necessary action against my report
B9	…even though I know I will be isolated by my colleague

IV. FINDINGS

Out of 300 distributed questionnaires, only 110 was successfully collected. However, only 101 set is analyzed due to missing data. In this section, the demographic data of the respondents, gender, age, and education levels, position holds within the agency, years of services in the agency, ethnicity and the average income per month.

Of those 101 employees, 41.6% (42 employees) were males and 58.4% (59 employees) were females. In term of ages, majority of the respondent were between the ages of 20 years to 30 years old which consist of 54.5% (55 employees) out of total respondents, followed by 31 years to 40 years old (35.6% or 36 employees), 41 -50 (5.9% or 6 employees) and lastly 51 years old and above (4% or 4 employees). Additionally, 72.5% (73 employees) are degree holders, 13.9% (14 employees) are Master degree holders, 9.4% (10 employees) are diploma holder and remaining 4% is from others (SPM & STPM).

Majority of the respondents come from middle management (78.2% or 79 employees), followed by support staff (16.8% or 17 employees) and top management (5% or 5 employees). Regarding the years of services among the respondents. 64.4% of the respondents have served less than five years in the agencies, followed by five to ten years of services (14.5% or 15 employees), ten to fifteen years (11.9% or 12 employees), and 8.9% (9 employees) for above fifteen years.

Based on ethnicity, the majority of the respondent were Malay (98%) and another 2% come from others

(Bajau). On the level of monthly income of the respondent, 84.2% or 85 employees have monthly income less than five thousand (RM4,000). This group represents the majority of the respondent's level of monthly income. Second highest frequency on monthly income is in the ranges between RM4,000 to RM6,000 which is 14.5% (15 employees), and only 1% with the monthly income above that RM8,000.

In measuring the level of whistleblowing intention among employees, nine questions were asked. These questions were adopted and modified from Corporate Integrity System Assessment Questionnaire, Malaysian Institute of Integrity and seventh Likert-scale was used with the option of '1' for "strongly agree" to '5' for "strongly disagree".

Table 2: whistle blowing intention

Item Description	(%) Strongly agree	(%) agree	(%) Not sure	(%) disagree	(%) Strongly disagree	(%) at least agree	(%) at least disagree
I would report to relevant authorities…							
..if my office offers a channel where employees can bring up complaints about unethical behavior	10.9	44.5	23.8	19.8	1.0	**55.4**	**20.8**
…if my office promises measures of confidentiality to whistle blower	12.0	30.6	16.8	20.8	19.8	**42.6**	**40.6**
…if my office provide "hotline" or "helpline" services to channel for confidential complaints	16.9	39.6	19.8	19.8	4.0	**56.5**	**23.8**
…depending on the severity consequence of the unethical behaviour	22.0	23.6	23.8	21.8	8.9	**45.6**	**30.7**
..depending on the person who involve in the unethical behaviour	11.0	26.7	14.9	20.8	26.6	**36.7**	**47.4**
…if I believe the management will investigate the issue objectively	12.0	27.8	8.9	18.7	31.7	**39.8**	**50.4**
…depending on the frequency of the unethical behavior the person have been involved	11.0	27.7	9.0	25.8	26.6	**38.9**	**52.4**
….even though I know my office will not take any necessary action against my report	1.0	34.9	10.9	27.7	25.7	**35.9**	**53.4**
…even though I know I will be isolated by my colleague	1.0	18.8	17.7	27.8	34.7	**19.8**	**62.5**

Findings from Table 2 revealed that the respondents will blow whistle if their department offers a channel where they can bring up complaints about unethical behavior (55.4%); the office provide assurance on some measures of confidentiality (42.6%); provide provide "hotline" or "helpline" services to channel for confidential complaints (56.6%). However, 30.7% respondents disagree that their willingness to blow whistle depends on the severity consequence of the unethical behavior; and the person who involve in the unethical behavior (47.4%). This implies that willingness to blow whistle does not depends on severity and the person involved in the unethical behavior.

Only 39.8% of respondents will perform whistle blow if they believe the management will investigate the issue objectively. The balance 50.4% are not ready to blow whistle if they believed their effort is not appreciated by the management. In other words, if they believed their office will not take any necessary action on the report, they will not blow whistle. 52.4 % respondents disagree on the statement that they will perform whistle blowing depending on the frequency of the unethical behavior the person have been involved. However 38.9% agrees that the wiliness to blow whistle depends on the person involved in the unethical behavior. 62.5% of the respondents willing to blow whistle even if they know they will be isolated by their colleague. However, a small percentage of the respondents 19.8% will not blow whistle if they believed they will be isolated from their action.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to assess readiness among Royal Malaysian Police officers to perform whistle blow.

The government of Malaysia has launched many initiatives to minimize corruption such as Government Transformation Program which includes the enactment of Whistleblowing Protection Act, 2010, the enhancement of Integrity divisions through compliance unit within the enforcement agencies and the awareness publicity in encouraging good ethical conduct. Hence, the current study is useful for the government sector and also other organizations to get initial understanding on the readiness of employees to blow whistle.

The findings provide early signal that enforcement officers are ready to blow whistle. However the department is expected to provide infrastructure such as channel to facilitate whistleblowing, confidentiality of reporting. The fact that the enforcement officers are more willing to blow whistle if they believed that their report will be investigated provide indication that based on their experience respondents believed most whistle blowing report were not seriously investigated. Also fear of management's power to retaliate might play a part in respondents' decision. These are questions that should be pursued in future studies.

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