

Information Technology and Quantitative Management (ITQM 2017)

# Prioritizing the Factors influencing Whistle Blowing Intentions of Teachers in Higher Education Institutes in India

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## Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to identify and prioritize the factors which influence the whistle blowing intentions of teachers working in private higher education sector in India. The prioritization of the factors is done by using Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) to determine their relative importance. 13 influencing factors of whistle blowing are considered in the study, which are categorized under 4 main factors viz. whistleblower's demographic characteristics; whistleblower's personality variables; contextual variables and wrongdoing characteristics. The findings of the study suggest that wrongdoing characteristics and contextual variables are the most important factors which may influence the whistle blowing intentions of teachers working in private higher education sector in India.

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Peer-review under responsibility of the scientific committee of the 5th International Conference on Information Technology and Quantitative Management, ITQM 2017.

*Keywords:* Whistle blowing Intention; Analytic Hierarchy Process; Higher Education Sector; Teachers; India

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## 1. Introduction

Whistle blowing is "the disclosure by organization members (former or current) of illegal, immoral, or illegitimate practices under the control of their employers, to persons or organizations that may be able to effect action." [1,2]. Although the subjects of interest of whistle blowing research vary from auditors [3], public officers [4], military officers [5], nurses [6], etc.; but the whistle blowing behavior of teachers have not been explored much. The role of teaching profession in investigating teachers' ethical decision-making behavior towards whistle blowing intentions has been very much neglected. Teachers working in private higher education sector face varied types of academic frauds such as agreements between students and teachers or administrators for good grades; charging for admissions; malpractices in the examination process; fake accreditation listings and rankings, mushrooming of fake journals and publications, etc. [7]. Some of the private

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universities/colleges in India are faced with allegations like employing under qualified faculty, operating without approvals from the regulatory bodies, charging huge fees and exploiting students, etc. [8]. The disclosure of such wrongdoings may help in curbing corruption from the education sector and improving the effectiveness of the educational institutes. The present study attempts to find out the relative importance of various factors which influence the whistle blowing intentions of teachers working with private Higher Education Institutes. The paper first identifies different factors influencing the whistle blowing intentions on the basis of literature review and then prioritizes them using Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP). The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 discusses the prior studies on whistle blowing for identifying the factors which influence the intentions to whistle blow. A brief discussion of the AHP technique is done in section 3. Section 4 presents the hierarchal model developed on the basis of literature review. A discussion regarding the methodology is done in Section 5. In section 6, the analysis is done and the results are discussed. Finally the paper is concluded in section 7.

## **2. Review of literature**

### *2.1 Factors Influencing Whistleblowing Intentions*

Prior studies suggest that the factors influencing whistle blowing intention can be categorized into the following broad categories: whistleblower's characteristics, contextual factors and the characteristics of wrongdoing [9, 10]. The three categories are discussed below.

#### *2.1.1 Whistleblower's Characteristics*

Prior research shows that the individual characteristics which influence the whistle blowing intentions include whistleblower's demographic characteristics [11] and other personality characteristics such as job performance, organizational commitment, personal responsibility to report, and personal cost of reporting [9, 12, 13]. Literature suggests that age, gender and organizational tenure may influence the whistle blowing intentions [1, 14]). Researchers have mixed opinions regarding the relationship of gender with the intention to whistleblow [15, 16]. There is consensus on the difference of opinions between men and women in terms of ethical values and moral behavior [17]. But some researchers believe that women are more ethical in their judgment and behavior as compared to men [18] and are more likely to whistle blow, whereas some researchers have the opinion that men are more willing to whistle blow [9, 16]. Organizational tenure is also related to the intentions of whistle blowing. Senior employees are expected to have greater whistle blowing intentions as compared to new employees as they are closer to retirement and have very less fear of retaliation. They also possess high levels of power and organizational commitment which increases their likelihood of whistle blowing [9, 12]. On the other hand, new employees may not be aware as to how their organization reacts to the reporting of wrongdoing and are less concerned with stopping of such wrongdoings [15]. Findings of the prior studies also show that whistleblowers tend to be well educated and hold higher-level positions in the organization's hierarchy [12, 16].

Further, considering the whistleblower's personality characteristics, literature has consensus that whistleblowers possess high moral values and consider whistle blowing as a means of correcting unethical behavior [9, 12]. Schultz et al. [19] have found that perceived cost of reporting is the most influential variable which affects whistle blowing intentions. Prior studies find support for a negative relationship between the perceived personal cost of reporting and whistle blowing intentions [20-22]. Locus of control is another personality variable which may explain the probability of an individual's whistle blowing intention. Many researchers have argued that individuals with internal locus of control are more likely to whistle blow [1, 23].

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