

The Role of Whistleblowers in Detecting and Preventing Employee Fraud in Licensed Commercial Banks in Sri Lanka: A Qualitative Study

Fahra, M.F.F.¹ and Gunasekare, U.L.T.P.²
University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka

Abstract:- The research on employee fraud within licensed commercial banks in Sri Lanka focused on assessing the perceived effectiveness of whistleblowing, identifying motivational factors, and exploring challenges faced by whistleblowers. The Qualitative thematic analysis was used to analyze data collected through in-depth interviews with 21 executives from 7 licensed commercial banks.

The findings of the research indicated that while there is a high perceived effectiveness of whistleblowing, there are areas that require improvement in whistleblowing policies, reporting mechanisms, rewards, support, and recognition provided to whistleblowers. The interviews also revealed a need to enhance employee awareness regarding whistleblowing.

The research serves as a reflection of the current state of whistleblowing in Sri Lankan banks. It highlights the importance of strengthening and fortifying the whistleblowing system for the future. The key lessons learned emphasize the shared responsibility of organizations, regulators, and society in creating an environment where whistleblowers are not only recognized but celebrated for their crucial role in combating fraud.

The research concludes with a call to make whistleblowing more than just an act of bravery but to celebrate and support it as an integral part of ensuring the integrity of banking systems.

Keywords:- Whistleblower, Employee Fraud, Detection, and Prevention.

I. INTRODUCTION

➤ Background of the Study

Commercial banks play a vital role in the economic landscape of Sri Lanka, serving as key contributors to the country's financial stability, economic development, and overall growth. These institutions act as intermediaries between savers and borrowers, facilitating the flow of funds throughout the economy. With a mix of domestic and foreign banks, the banking sector in Sri Lanka addresses the diverse financial needs of individuals, businesses, and the

government. Commercial banks mobilize savings from the public, providing a secure avenue for individuals and businesses to store their wealth while fostering financial inclusion and stability.

In addition to mobilizing savings, commercial banks in Sri Lanka extend credit to various sectors, contributing to the creation of businesses, job opportunities, and overall economic expansion. They also actively participate in trade finance, supporting both international and domestic trade transactions. Embracing technological advancements, these banks offer innovative financial services such as online banking, mobile banking, and electronic payment systems, contributing to financial literacy and inclusion.

Despite their critical role, commercial banks face the ever-present threat of employee fraud, which can undermine trust in the financial system and result in significant financial losses. Employee fraud in banks encompasses various schemes, including embezzlement, fraudulent transactions, and abuse of authority. The potential consequences of lax internal controls were starkly highlighted by the 2018 Wells Fargo banking scandal in the United States. In the dynamic banking landscape of Sri Lanka, employee fraud poses a substantial threat to financial stability and the reputation of licensed commercial banks.

➤ Research Problem Identification

The research problem identified in this study centers on the significant gap in understanding the role of whistleblowing in preventing employee fraud within licensed commercial banks in Sri Lanka. While whistleblowing is recognized as crucial in the broader context of fraud prevention, limited qualitative studies have been conducted, particularly within the banking sector. This research aims to address this gap by exploring the specific contributions of whistleblowing mechanisms in detecting and preventing employee fraud, evaluating the effectiveness of existing policies and practices, and understanding the motivational factors and challenges faced by whistleblowers.

➤ *Research Questions and Objectives*

The overarching research problem seeks to investigate the role of whistleblowing in detecting and preventing employee fraud in licensed commercial banks in Sri Lanka. The specific sub-research questions focus on the perceived effectiveness of current whistleblowing policies, the motivational factors encouraging whistleblowers, and the challenges faced by whistleblowers in reporting incidents of employee fraud. The research objectives include identifying the perceived effectiveness of current whistleblowing policies, exploring motivational factors for whistleblowers, and understanding the challenges they encounter.

➤ *Significance of the Study*

The significance of this study lies in its potential contributions to the existing body of knowledge, offering context-specific insights into whistleblowing practices within the banking sector in Sri Lanka. The findings guide policymakers and bank executives, enhancing fraud prevention strategies and supporting the development of ethical corporate cultures. Additionally, the study has educational, societal, and practical implications, emphasizing the importance of whistleblowing for transparency, accountability, and the overall ethical fabric of the banking industry in Sri Lanka.

➤ *Research Gap*

Despite limited qualitative studies on the role of whistleblowers in fraud prevention, a significant research gap exists, particularly in understanding the specific contributions of whistleblowing mechanisms within licensed commercial banks. The study aims to address this gap by exploring the direct impact of whistleblowing mechanisms on preventing potential frauds, investigating the factors influencing employees' decisions to blow the whistle, and utilizing qualitative methodologies to comprehend nuanced whistleblowing experiences within the banking industry. The vulnerability of banks to employee fraud necessitates a comprehensive examination of whistleblowing mechanisms, highlighting the need for proactive strategies to detect and prevent fraudulent activities. This research endeavors to fill critical knowledge gaps, contribute to the academic literature, and provide practical insights to strengthen fraud prevention efforts in the banking sector of Sri Lanka.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Fraud, an activity relying on deception for financial gain, poses a persistent threat across various sectors, casting a shadow over businesses, institutions, and individuals (Black's Law Dictionary). Its multifaceted nature encompasses a spectrum of schemes, from complex corporate embezzlements to sophisticated online scams, eroding trust, destabilizing economies, and tarnishing reputations. The study of fraud is imperative for several reasons.

Fraud poses a substantial threat to financial stability, making it crucial for individuals and organizations to understand the tactics employed by fraudsters to implement preventive measures and safeguard assets (Smith, 2018). Trust, foundational to functioning societies, is eroded by fraud, damaging relationships and necessitating the study of fraud to comprehend methods for restoring confidence in financial transactions and business dealings (Borgaonkar et al., 2019). Comprehensive research on fraud is essential for governments and regulatory bodies to formulate effective policies and regulations, protecting citizens and businesses (KPMG, 2021). As technology evolves, studying fraud is vital for technologists and cybersecurity experts to stay ahead in the arms race against cybercriminals (ACFE, 2022).

Furthermore, understanding fraud aids in developing advanced security systems and protocols, ensuring the integrity of digital transactions and sensitive information (Munyua et al., 2021). Within corporations, fraud can lead to financial losses, legal consequences, and reputational damage. Studying past fraud cases and their impact on corporate entities is essential for implementing robust internal controls and governance structures, fostering ethical business practices (Miceli & Near, 1992). Law enforcement agencies rely on expertise in fraud detection and prevention to investigate and prosecute criminals, ensuring justice is served and perpetrators are held accountable (Miceli & Near, 2016).

Knowledge about fraud and its consequences serves as a deterrent, promoting ethical behavior in personal and professional spheres (Near & Miceli, 2013). In conclusion, the study of fraud is paramount for fostering a secure, trustworthy, and ethical environment.

Whistleblowing, the act of exposing wrongdoing within an organization, has emerged as a powerful mechanism for ensuring transparency, accountability, and ethical conduct (Miceli & Near, 2008). The term "whistleblower" was coined by Ralph Nader in the 1970s, but the concept has historical roots in the American and British legal systems (Miceli & Near, 2016). Albert O. Hirschman's "exit, voice, and loyalty" concept aligns closely with whistleblowing, representing an active and courageous response to organizational misconduct (Hirschman, 1970).

Theories underpinning whistleblowing include the social contract theory, which views whistleblowers as upholding ethical standards by exposing breaches of the social contract within an organization (Miceli & Near, 1992). Ethical decision-making theories, such as utilitarianism and deontological ethics, guide whistleblowers in making principled decisions that prioritize the greater good over personal or organizational interests (Miceli & Near, 1992). Organizational justice theory intersects with whistleblowing, as whistleblowers act in response to perceived injustices, seeking to rectify wrongs and restore fairness and integrity to the workplace (Miceli & Near, 1992). Psychological theories,

including cognitive dissonance theory and moral development theory, explain the internal struggles faced by potential whistleblowers, considering factors such as personal beliefs, social norms, and moral reasoning (Miceli & Near, 1992).

The Sri Lankan banking industry, regulated by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, is dynamic and integral to the country's economy. It features state-owned banks, private commercial banks, foreign banks, and specialized financial institutions, demonstrating resilience amidst economic fluctuations. Technological advancements have ushered in a new era, with online banking, mobile apps, and digital payment solutions becoming ubiquitous (Borgaonkar et al., 2019). Sustainable banking practices align the industry with global sustainability goals, while challenges like interest rate fluctuations and cybersecurity threats are met with strategic planning and innovative risk management approaches (KPMG, 2021).

The vulnerability of banks to fraud is rooted in technological advancements, insider threats, and regulatory challenges (PWC, 2020). Rapid technological changes create new avenues for cybercriminals, emphasizing the need for robust cybersecurity measures (Smith, 2018). Insider fraud, facilitated by employees with insider access, is a significant threat, requiring effective internal controls and continuous employee training (Munyua et al., 2021). Regulatory challenges, while crucial for transparency and accountability, can create compliance gaps that fraudsters exploit, necessitating regular audits and transparency in financial operations (KPMG, 2021).

The relationship between frauds and whistleblowing is complex but crucial for early detection and prevention. Organizations with robust whistleblowing mechanisms experience lower instances of fraud, as employees are encouraged to report suspicious activities without fear of reprisal (Miceli & Near, 1992). Whistleblowers, possessing critical insider knowledge, play a proactive role in preventing intricate fraud schemes (Miceli & Near, 2008). However, challenges such as social isolation and retaliation create a chilling effect on potential disclosures, requiring legal protections and organizational support (Near & Miceli, 2016). Organizational responsiveness is crucial for the effectiveness of whistleblowing in combating fraud, fostering trust in the whistleblowing process (Miceli & Near, 2008). In conclusion, the relationship between frauds and whistleblowing is nuanced, requiring a delicate balance between exposing illicit activities and the moral imperative to act against them.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed deductive thematic analysis to analyze qualitative data driven from in-depth interviews with internal audit department executives in licensed commercial banks in Sri Lanka. The interviews were coded into themes to draw meaningful conclusions. The research's conceptual

framework explores the relationship between whistleblowers and the detection and prevention of employee fraud in Sri Lankan commercial banks. The perceived effectiveness of whistleblowing, covering fraud detection, prevention, and whistleblowers' willingness to report, serves as the key independent variable. Dependent variables include elements of whistleblowing policies, organizational support, and management's approach. Control variables consider employee designation and bank types, recognizing the impact of organizational structure on whistleblowing effectiveness.

Content analysis, a method systematically predicting phenomena within a text, was evident in previous literature. Thematic content analysis, focusing on systematically identifying and categorizing thematic content, was chosen. Themes were largely determined by the interview schedule but were subject to potential bias. The analysis followed steps outlined by Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998). It involved selecting relevant interview segments, defining content categories based on the literature review, sorting materials into categories, and drawing conclusions from the results. Selection of subtext involved choosing interview segments addressing whistleblowing in fraud prevention. Content categories were defined based on the literature but adjusted as needed. Quotations were then assigned to these categories, capturing diverse perspectives on whistleblowing in fraud prevention. Finally, conclusions were drawn from the synthesized content, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the executives' viewpoints on the role of whistleblowers in detecting and preventing employee fraud in Sri Lankan commercial banks.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

By using the thematic analysis and coding several themes were identified results were generated based on it.

Themes identified were,

- A. Awareness and Understanding of Whistleblowing
- B. Involvement and Observation of Whistleblowing Activities
- C. Perceived Effectiveness of Whistleblowing
- D. Motivational Factors for Whistleblowing
- E. Discouraging Factors and Challenges
- F. Risks and Consequences for Whistleblowers
- G. Reporting Process and Support
- H. Improvements in Whistleblowing
- I. Anonymity and Confidentiality
- J. Training and Awareness

A. Awareness and Understanding of Whistleblowing

All the executives in the internal audit department were aware of the existence of whistleblower policies and the definition of whistleblowing.

B. *Involvement and Observation of Whistleblowing Activities*

Some executives were not involved due to the confidentiality and the nature of the assignment. However certain other executives were involved.

C. *Perceived Effectiveness of Whistleblowing*

Most of the executives regarded whistleblowing as effective mechanism in detecting and preventing employee frauds at the earliest possible and very few considered it to be a highly effective mechanism.

However, some executives considered whistleblowing as an ineffective, time consuming, or wasting mechanism in preventing and detecting employee fraud as some grievances or false allegations are being forwarded by employees due to personal grudges or conflicts arose at work.

D. *Motivational Factors for Whistleblowing*

➤ *Sense of Integrity and Duty*

Employees are motivated by a deep sense of integrity and duty to report fraud within the organization. This intrinsic motivation stems from a strong moral compass and a commitment to upholding ethical standards. Whistleblowers feel a responsibility to contribute to the organization's integrity and transparency.

➤ *Ethical Responsibility and Commitment to Justice*

Whistleblowers are motivated by their ethical responsibility to expose fraud, driven by a commitment to justice and a desire to maintain the organization's integrity. This motivation is reinforced by a positive organizational culture, well-defined whistleblowing policies, and assurance of protection.

➤ *Commitment to Organizational Reputation*

Employees are motivated by their commitment to ethical conduct and a desire to safeguard the organization's reputation. This commitment is fueled by a strong sense of duty and moral courage. Supportive organizational culture, clear whistleblowing policies, and assurance of non-retaliation further reinforce their motivation.

➤ *Commitment to Honesty and Fairness*

Whistleblowers are motivated by their commitment to honesty and ethical conduct, driven by a strong sense of morality and dedication to organizational fairness. A positive workplace ethos, clear and accessible whistleblowing policies, and assurance of safety for whistleblowers enhance their motivation.

➤ *Sense of Responsibility and Dedication to Organizational Standards*

Employees are motivated by their sense of responsibility and dedication to maintaining the organization's ethical standards. This motivation is characterized by a strong moral compass and a commitment to organizational integrity. A

supportive work culture, transparent whistleblowing policies, and recognition through rewards contribute to their motivation. - "The sense of responsibility and dedication to upholding the organization's ethical standards drives many employees to engage in whistleblowing. Their strong moral conviction, combined with a supportive work culture and transparent policies, enhances their commitment to organizational integrity."

E. *Discouraging Factors and Challenges Discouraging Factors for Whistleblowing*

➤ *Lack of Trust in the Reporting System*

Whistleblowers often face discouragement due to a fundamental lack of trust in the reporting system. The skepticism surrounding the confidentiality and effectiveness of the reporting process creates a significant barrier. Individuals may fear that their concerns will not be handled confidentially, hindering their willingness to come forward. This lack of trust undermines the integrity of the reporting mechanism and dissuades potential whistleblowers from taking action.

➤ *Fear of Retaliation upon Revealing Fraud*

Whistleblowers encounter discouragement due to a palpable fear of retaliation upon revealing fraud. The apprehension about facing negative consequences for exposing wrongdoing can be paralyzing. Individuals may worry about potential reprisals affecting their professional standing or personal well-being, creating a strong deterrent against whistleblowing.

➤ *Peer Pressure to Remain Silent*

Whistleblowers encounter discouragement through peer pressure to remain silent. The influence of colleagues and the social dynamics within the workplace can exert significant pressure on individuals not to report fraudulent activities. The fear of isolation or negative perceptions from peers contributes to a culture of silence.

F. *Risks and Consequences for Whistleblowers*

➤ *Fear of Professional and Personal Repercussions*

Whistleblowers confront the challenge of fearing professional and personal repercussions, including the risk of job loss and potential damage to their career prospects within the industry. The anxiety surrounding legal implications and potential lawsuits adds to the complexity of their decision to expose fraud.

➤ *Fear of Social Ostracization and Isolation*

Whistleblowers grapple with the challenge of fearing social ostracization and isolation within the workplace. Worries about potential damage to their professional reputation and credibility further compound the emotional distress and anxiety associated with the responsibility of exposing misconduct.

➤ *Fear of Personal Safety and Potential Harassment*

Whistleblowers encounter the challenge of fearing personal safety and potential harassment from those involved in the fraud. Apprehension about the long-term impact on their career and employability, coupled with struggles with guilt and moral dilemmas, creates a multifaceted challenge.

G. *Reporting Process and Support*

Whistleblowing Processes and Support Mechanisms

➤ *Internal Whistleblowing Committee*

In this system, employees are encouraged to report fraud directly to the internal whistleblowing committee. The committee conducts a detailed interview with the whistleblower, gathers evidence, and conducts a thorough investigation. The results are then shared with the HR division and relevant authorities for necessary actions. Full support, including protection and confidentiality, is provided to the whistleblower

➤ *Designated Hotline or Online Platform*

Employees in this system report fraud through a designated hotline or online platform. An internal investigative team ensures confidentiality and provides regular updates to whistleblowers on the progress of the investigation. Emotional support, legal counsel, and protection against retaliation is offered to whistleblowers.

➤ *Confidential Reporting through Email*

Whistleblowers in this system submit detailed reports to a confidential email address, monitored by a specialized team. Counseling services, emotional support, and regular follow-ups ensure the whistleblower's well-being. Legal protection and job security are offered to cope with potential stressors.

➤ *Secure Online Portal or Anonymous Reporting*

Whistleblowers can report incidents through a secure web portal or dedicated phone line. A specialized team conducts discreet investigations, and whistleblowers receive regular updates, ensuring they feel heard and valued. The emphasis is on maintaining anonymity and providing ongoing support.

H. *Improvements in Whistleblowing*

➤ *Training and Confidence Building*

Improving whistleblowing involves providing proper training to relevant staff, fostering trust, and instilling confidence in individuals to report fraud without fear. A standardized approach across banks in terms of policies and processes ensures consistency and reliability in the whistleblowing framework.

➤ *Continuous Improvement Initiatives*

To enhance the whistleblowing process, conducting anonymous surveys for feedback and establishing a whistleblower protection fund are recommended. Drawing

inspiration from corporations like Google and Microsoft, known for robust whistleblower protection, provides insights for improvement.

➤ *Educational Workshops and Peer Support*

Conducting periodic workshops to educate employees on whistleblowing importance and establishing a peer support network are key improvements. These initiatives aim to create awareness and emotional assistance for whistleblowers.

➤ *Recognition and Immediate Support*

Implementing a reward system for acknowledging whistleblowers publicly and establishing a dedicated helpline for immediate support are essential improvements. Periodic surveys gauge the effectiveness of support mechanisms.

I. *Training and awareness*

Training and Awareness Enhancement

➤ *Integration into Induction*

Whistleblowing training is seamlessly integrated into the induction program, ensuring that every new employee receives comprehensive information. This proactive approach establishes a foundation for ethical reporting from the onset.

➤ *Accessible Policies*

The accessibility of whistleblowing policies at any given time is emphasized, ensuring that employees can easily refer to the guidelines. Placing policies in lunchrooms across departments and branches enhances visibility and encourages regular reference.

➤ *Online Learning Modules*

The bank adopts online learning modules for whistleblowing policy training, ensuring flexibility for employees to access the material at their convenience. Mandatory completion reinforces the importance of understanding and adhering to the policy.

➤ *Awareness Campaigns*

The bank launches a month-long whistleblowing awareness campaign, utilizing various channels to educate employees about their rights. Personalized support through designated mentors ensures that new employees feel supported and informed. These strategies collectively contribute to a robust framework for whistleblowing awareness and training, fostering a culture of responsibility, transparency, and ethical conduct within the organization.

J. *Anonymity and Confidentiality*

Whistleblower Anonymity and Confidentiality

➤ *Anonymous Reporting Option*

The organization ensures that whistleblowers can choose to remain anonymous, providing a crucial layer of protection for individuals reporting misconduct. Rigorous protocols and

advanced cybersecurity measures are implemented to safeguard the identity of those who choose anonymity

➤ *Absolute Confidentiality Assurance*

Whistleblowers are assured that their identity will never be disclosed, instilling confidence in the reporting system. Utilizing third-party platforms with advanced encryption and secure channels further ensure absolute anonymity for whistleblowers.

➤ *Secure and Encrypted Reporting Channels*

Whistleblowers are given the option to report anonymously, and the organization ensures the use of secure, encrypted reporting channels. The guarantee of complete anonymity is reinforced by involving external, independent entities to handle the investigation process.

In conclusion, the exploration of whistleblowing in the context of detecting and preventing employee fraud within licensed commercial banks in Sri Lanka reveals a nuanced landscape. Motivated by factors such as a strong sense of duty, commitment to ethical conduct, and the desire to uphold organizational integrity, whistleblowers play a crucial role in exposing fraudulent activities. However, they face formidable challenges, including a lack of trust, fear of reprisals, and peer pressure, which may deter individuals from coming forward. The implementation of effective whistleblowing mechanisms, characterized by robust reporting processes, confidentiality assurances, and continuous support, emerges as a critical aspect. The findings underscore the importance of fostering a culture that encourages ethical reporting, coupled with comprehensive training and awareness initiatives. By addressing challenges and reinforcing support mechanisms, organizations can create an environment where whistleblowers feel empowered to contribute to a transparent and accountable workplace, ultimately enhancing the overall integrity and resilience of the banking sector in Sri Lanka.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research on whistleblowing within licensed commercial banks in Sri Lanka reveals a complex landscape where whistleblowers, driven by a sense of duty and commitment to organizational integrity, play a crucial role in exposing fraudulent activities. Despite their noble motivations, significant challenges such as a pervasive lack of trust, fear of retaliation, and peer pressure act as deterrents to individuals contemplating whistleblowing. The study emphasizes the critical need for effective mechanisms characterized by robust reporting processes, assurances of confidentiality, and continuous support for whistleblowers. The findings underscore the necessity for a holistic approach that not only focuses on reporting structures but also addresses the well-being of whistleblowers. Fostering a culture that encourages ethical reporting through comprehensive training and awareness initiatives is essential. However, a deficiency in the support system for whistleblowers within licensed commercial

banks is identified, highlighting the urgent requirement for fundamental changes. The absence of a comprehensive support scheme represents a missed opportunity to cultivate an environment encouraging ethical reporting and safeguarding the well-being of whistleblowers. Therefore, implementing a reward system becomes imperative to offset potential risks and recognize the essential role of whistleblowers in upholding the industry's ethical foundation. The research advocates for the establishment of a dedicated helpline to provide whistleblowers with immediate support, acknowledging the emotional toll they face. This strategic improvement could serve as a crucial lifeline, enhancing the well-being of whistleblowers and reinforcing the organization's commitment to fostering a culture that values and protects those who report misconduct. Confidentiality emerges as a linchpin in the efficacy of whistleblowing mechanisms. The provision of anonymous reporting options, coupled with absolute confidentiality assurances, ensures that individuals can come forward without fear of reprisal. The research emphasizes the ethical and legal imperative of maintaining absolute confidentiality. The proposed strategies, including training, awareness, measures to ensure anonymity, and confidentiality, collectively form a robust framework. Standardizing policies and processes across banks, gathering feedback, establishing a whistleblower protection fund, and drawing inspiration from successful corporate models contribute to a dynamic and responsive whistleblowing framework. Education and peer support are pivotal in fostering a whistleblowing culture. Training integrated into induction programs, accessible policies, online learning modules, and awareness campaigns contribute to building awareness and confidence among employees. Establishing peer support networks and conducting educational workshops create a community where experiences can be shared, and emotional assistance provided. In conclusion, the complex landscape of whistleblowing within licensed commercial banks in Sri Lanka demands a strategic and multi-faceted approach. By embracing the proposed strategies and continually refining the whistleblowing process, the banking sector can fortify itself against fraudulent activities, foster a culture of responsible reporting, and contribute to ensuring a resilient and trustworthy financial environment in Sri Lanka. Additionally, the establishment of an external whistleblowing reporting mechanism can further strengthen the organization's commitment to a zero-tolerance fraud culture, ensuring that fraudulent activities perpetrated by top management are promptly addressed and creating an environment free from fear of retaliation.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Several limitations are inherent in the study on the role of whistleblowing in detecting and preventing employee fraud in licensed commercial banks in Sri Lanka. First, the potential for response bias looms large, as participants may withhold information due to fears of retaliation, impacting the openness and accuracy of discussions related to whistleblowing and

fraud activities. Second, there exists a limitation in accessing internal organizational data, policies, or specific incidents of employee fraud, primarily due to confidentiality concerns, thereby restricting the depth of analysis and the ability to validate participant responses. Third, the influence of cultural and contextual factors on participants' attitudes towards whistleblowing and fraud reporting poses a challenge in generalizing findings beyond the specific context of the study, given the varying norms across regions and organizations. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data introduces a limitation, as participants may exhibit social desirability bias, potentially distorting the true extent of certain behaviors or attitudes. Finally, the study acknowledges the possibility of researcher bias, where the researcher's own perspectives and beliefs could unintentionally influence study design, data interpretation, and the conclusions drawn, underscoring the need for careful consideration of potential biases throughout the research process.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future directions in whistleblower investigations and consequences within the entire banking system require a comprehensive approach, encompassing both quantitative factors such as profit and loss considerations and cultural/contextual factors such as attitudes and experiences. The establishment of a Whistleblower Committee and regular audits can serve as essential components in this strategy. Quantitatively, investigations should delve into the financial impact of fraudulent activities, assessing profit and loss implications for the entire banking system. Concurrently, qualitative factors such as the attitudes and experiences of whistleblowers and organizational culture must be considered. A Whistleblower Committee, formed with the purpose of overseeing investigations and safeguarding whistleblower rights, can play a pivotal role. Regular audits conducted by this committee ensure the effectiveness of the whistleblowing process, addressing challenges identified in qualitative research, and aligning the banking system with a culture of transparency, accountability, and ethical conduct. This integrated approach provides a roadmap for the future, fostering a resilient and trustworthy financial environment.

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