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Are Millennials Whistle-blowers?

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Scholars, educators, journalists, corporate persons and others believe that millennials are modern-day whistle-blowers (Abdul Aziz & Abdul Latiff, 2019). Why? Do they have superpowers to detect wrongdoings? The answer is not about the powers. The answer is that the millennials have certain characteristics for becoming whistle-blowers (Campos, 2019; Scholar & Gaudet, 2016). The characteristics have already been embedded and appropriate actions. Thus, with such characteristics, it may be easy for such millennials to put whistle-blowing into action.

Before explaining further on the above matter, first, who are millennials? Millennials are the modern-day generation or Generation Y who dominate the workforce today (Puspanathan et al., 2017). On the other hand, whistle-blowers are individuals who inform on another individuals or organizations regarded as engaging in unlawful or immoral activities (Ab Ghani, 2013). Both can be connected since millennials have the said characteristics that make them suited for whistle-blowing. More precisely, millennials are educated, narcissistic and altruistic and thus, these attributes make them more likely to be involved in whistle-blowing action. (Markowitz, 2013).

Such characteristics have been mentioned in one of the most cited academic studies on whistle-blowers (Lin et al., 2017). According to Markowitz (2013 p. 1), “the study concludes that whistle-blowers should have some characteristics such as the following:

- are driven by altruism.
- can overcome insecurity through exhibitionism in order to release information.



- are generally moralistic, becoming committed and even obsessed about a personal belief.
- have a propensity to rely on moral theories that emphasize rights.
- are strong-willed.
- are stubbornly committed and uncompromising.
- are willing to go against social conventions and rely on their own attitudes and beliefs.”

The above theory has been proven by several studies around the world. Since 1985, researchers have predicted individuals with such characteristics will more likely become whistle-blowers (Dozier & Miceli, 1985; Miceli et al., 2008;). Lately, in-depth studies carried out on such millennials’ characteristics for whistle-blowing purposes (Scholar & Gaudet, 2016). The studies investigated factors affecting whistle-blowing actions among working millennials (Abdul Aziz & Abdul Latiff, 2019; Lin et al., 2017). Among the factors tested include moral intensity, attitude, subjective norms and perceived behaviour control. Investigating such factors are important in determining millennials with the said characteristics as whistle-blowers (Mahardhika & Zakariah, 2020).

Similarly, in Malaysia, a study was carried out to investigate factors affecting whistle-blowing intention among working millennials (Abdul Aziz & Abdul Latiff, 2019). A moral intensity model that contains several individual factors is used to predict the millennials’ whistle-blowing intention. Also, the researchers included another factor of fear of retaliation to test millennials’ characteristics. Results indicated the factors that contribute to proving millennials are the ultimate whistle-blowers.



Although it has been proven by many studies that millennials are whistle-blowers, yet, other factors may need consideration as well. For example, in Malaysia, the gap in Whistleblowing Protection Act 2010 (WPA 2010) has contributed to a low number of whistle-blowers nowadays (Ram, 2021). Why? Are millennials not all around? According to Ram (2021), the main reason is there are deficiencies in the WPA 2010 which need amendments to the requirements, especially the requirements for the channel of reporting and the whistle-blowers' protection (Ram, 2021). Perhaps such requirements may further provide a complement for future studies.

To conclude, millennials are whistle-blowers. The characteristics of being educated, narcissistic and altruistic are perfect for becoming whistle-blowers. Supported by many researchers, such characteristics have already been studied for many years. In fact, many of those studies have been justified by several studies lately. The only matter is to encourage millennials to uphold justice by reporting wrongdoings.

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