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Abstract

The importance of eliminating fraud, illegal activities and generally unethical practices has always been of paramount significance in the corporate world. Thus, whistleblowing has become ever more important. Over the past years, organizations have adopted certain practices in order to encourage a greater number of employees to report misconducts; it would therefore be intriguing to anticipate whether there is any gender association with whistleblowing. This research illustrates the differences in gender by highlighting the reasons that could exist behind these assumptions. Particularly, the purpose of this paper is to afford insights into whistleblowing in medium to large organizations, and to determine whether there are any differences in how whistleblowing manifests. Particularly, we analyze how gender differences might affect an individual's decision to 'blow the whistle', with a focus on under what circumstances employees may feel the need to act accordingly. Our findings show that women are more likely to whistleblow than men based on their character traits of emotional, fair and caring. However, results also prove that both genders are aware that whistleblowing is sometimes necessary thus supporting that they should do it. Limited prior literature combining gender and whistleblowing reflects the originality of this research and how future research can build on these findings.

Keywords	whistleblowing; gender; unethical behavior; misconduct; character traits; corporate world
Corresponding Author	Tahir Nisar
Corresponding Author's Institution	University of Southampton
Order of Authors	Tahir Nisar, Guru Prabhakar, Mariateresa Torchia
Suggested reviewers	Man Yeung, Tuulikki Haaranen

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26 January, 2018

Dear Professor Latham,

We hereby submit our paper, entitled Whistleblowing: When Do Employees Act to 'Blow the Whistle'? We have thoroughly re-written the paper in accordance with the reviewer feedback given to us earlier. We should be most grateful if you would consider it for possible publication in your esteemed Journal.

Best regards,

Tahir Nisar

Guru Prabhakar

Mariateresa Torchia

Whistleblowing: When Do Employees Act to 'Blow the Whistle'?

Tahir M Nisar
Southampton Business School
University of Southampton
Highfield, Southampton SO17 1BJ UK
t.m.nisar@soton.ac.uk

Guru Prabhakar
Faculty of Business & Law, UWE
Bristol BS16 1QY UK
Guru.Prabhakar@uwe.ac.uk

Mariateresa Torchia
Professor of Organization and Management
International University of Monaco - Groupe INSEEC
2 Av Albert II 98000 Monaco
mtorchia@inseec.com

Whistleblowing: When Do Employees Act to 'Blow the Whistle'?

INTRODUCTION

The term 'whistleblowing' dates back many years, originating from the way the police officers used to blow their whistles, while witnessing a law being violated in order to signal and attract attention. Whistleblowing has always been important for every organization and individual, as every company, either private or public could be put in jeopardy if things might not turn out favorably. In fact, it has evolved so much over the past years that from a derogatory term it is now utilized as a tool to aid employees on how they can report misconduct while highlighting existing choices.

Both 'whistleblowers' and the term 'whistleblowing' have attracted critique in the past and, from an offensive epithet conveying a betrayer, it now signifies a courageous and accountable employee. Consequently, during the nineteenth century, a series of concurrent events shook public opinion while increasing the need for

policies to emerge that would safeguard whistleblowers and punish those violating the law. Whistleblowing has always played a paramount role in organizations as it encourages employees to expose unethical behaviors before concerns become actual problems. Thus, it can be a very powerful tool in strengthening corporate governance, ethics, and improving internal organizational culture through setting up formal whistleblowing procedures, but it can also prove a powerful tool in reducing corruption. Over the past years, we have witnessed unethical behavior in various firms, which therefore makes it vital to establish whether there is an evident dissimilarity in behavior according to gender so as to encourage any possible solution that could favor one gender or both genders dealing with the issue of whistleblowing. Today, whistleblowing has been encouraged and promoted all over the world with the aspiration that organizations, employers, employees and practically anyone can perceive its significance and use it as a mechanism to fight corruption. We study how gender differences might affect one's decision to 'blow the whistle', with a focus on under what circumstances employees may feel the need to act accordingly. To address these questions, we also

consider the relationship between gender and whistleblowing.

WHISTLEBLOWING TODAY

Albert Einstein once said that "the world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing". Whistleblowing in the existing literature has been defined through various ways; thus, it can be argued that it is heavily dependent on what each individual's point of view is. The most common, universal definition of whistleblowing is when an employee announces either publicly or privately if the organization is involved in any corrupt, illegal or immoral activities that might affect the company as a whole. However, James Roche, the General Motors Chairman after the scandal of GM contradicts the previous statement by claiming that possible competitors or enemies of a company might encourage employees to blow the whistle, probably to prove their disloyalty but also as a means of creating discord and interference into businesses. Every day, thousands of people witness

unethical behavior within their jobs from doctors to mere workers, which can reflect serious illegal activities. Prior research and current activities imply that such occurrences of blowing the whistle are not rare; on the contrary, they are quite commonplace in the working cycle. Although antecedent research has addressed this topic, further research needs to be done as to which gender is more likely to whistleblow and the reasons that drive such decision making.

Academics have mainly argued that the decision to blow the whistle is a personal one and motivation plays a significant role in their final action. Following this line of thought, and the importance it has gained over the years, many international organizations now show a much greater interest in creating ethics codes and encouraging their employees to spot any unethical activities, and also creating departments for reporting them. There has also been a massive campaign by the governments in various countries to advise people to blow the whistle. Whistleblowing has always been of paramount importance in organizations worldwide but in certain areas the level of importance is higher whereas in others it is relatively a new idea. For example, every year, in

the United States the editors of the Time magazine choose their 'person of the year' who is the person considered to have changed history the most during a period in time. Paradoxically the 'person of the year' in 2002 comprised three women all of whom were whistleblowers in large corporations like Enron, WorldCom and FBI. Recent cases during the millennium including Enron and WorldCom reflect that women like Sharon Watkins are the most prominent examples that mirror a perfectly orchestrated ethical manner.

Gender and whistleblowing

Prior literature on genders has portrayed that women are more emotional than men in the working environment. This mainly roots from the stereotypical image of women as caring, irrational and emotional beings on the contrary to men, who were considered as the 'breadwinners' in a patriarchal society. Women were mostly viewed as having a nurturing role in society. Therefore, social changes have influenced the portrayal of women over the past years, both at work and in their personal lives. In the late

eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the number and kinds of jobs available, particularly for women, were far more limited than those they have today. Women were mostly forced to be submissive to men; getting married and reproducing is perceived as their basic function. The idea of independence only came years later.

Similarly, in the business sector, researchers have highlighted the differences of men and women as unemotional and logical versus irrational and emotional. Hofstede supported this argument by stereotyping males as being anticipated to be absolute and confident, both physically and mentally strong, centering their attention on succeeding for things that are valuable. It is found that women tend to rely more on their instincts whereas men were proved to be more rational and critical. Although genders are very often juxtaposed, it is emphasized that these dissimilarities in character supplement each other at work. However, it is also suggested that female researchers have begun to stress the dissimilarities of women supporting that feminine behavior/attitudes are above average in merit and intelligence, exceeding those of males. A respectable number of scholars support this argument and portray

female managers as promoting interaction, group work and power distribution. For many years, academics have shown a particular concern in establishing a relationship between one's actions and one's gender. Examining this from the angle of 'gender socialization' it is evident that men are less likely to be ethical in the way they conduct their decisions or act while women tend to be more moral. Consequently, it is of paramount importance to comprehend gender differences so as to understand the reasons why each gender would blow the whistle.

Academics also stress the relationship between culture and whistleblowing and how these could lead to different decisions. We can postulate that such findings stem from the cultural norms of a society where both genders were raised with the same sense of morality; but where women were more likely to whistleblow. It is obvious that such findings might stand in stark contrast to other countries (hence other cultures) of a much bigger scale. For example, in a study of whether cultures affect the managers in whistleblowing, Tavakoli et al. found that American managers were more likely to whistleblow. Similarly, if these findings are compared to the case of the Arab countries where culture is male-

dominated, results would vary extensively as women are less courageous and opinionated.

Study Project

The predominant purpose of this paper is to analyze and reflect on whether gender differences play a paramount role in the decision-making process within an organization. These issues are considered in terms of employees making the right choice to act against unethical practices. We empirically investigate the various gender attitudes in the firms while providing an overview of why men and women choose to blow the whistle. This is accomplished by concentrating on two questions: are gender differences evident in the course of deciding if they should whistleblow? Are women more likely to whistleblow due to their stereotypical image as emotional and caring? We designed a questionnaire survey in such a way that all participants were fully informed about the scope of the research and that questionnaires would remain anonymous and the information provided would only be used for the purpose of this research. The

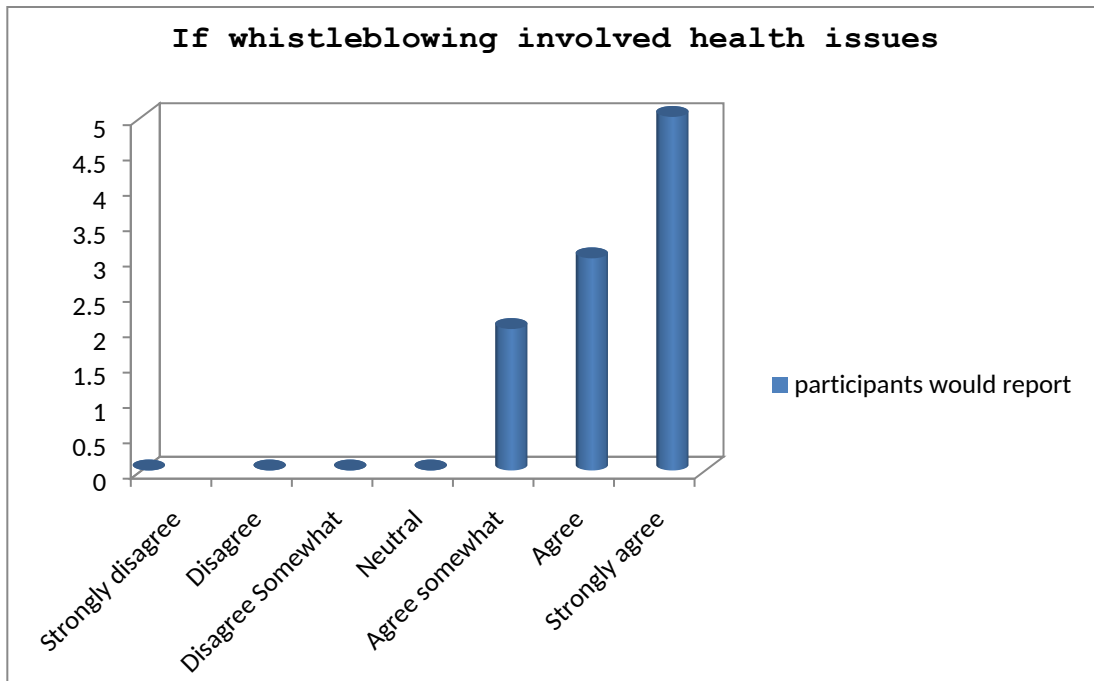
questionnaire was distributed to medium-large organizations, which were more likely to be aware of the different whistleblowing practices. The findings are based on a sample group of 153 participants. To analyse the distribution of sex in the sample, the data were coded so that 'Male' was converted into '1' and 'Female' into '0' so that numerical formulations could be applied. The overall mean value was then calculated, which was '0.55'. Obviously this figure should be as close to a 50-50 split as possible to indicate a random sample, however due to the relatively small sample size, this is not possible.

We first examine the question whether there are gender differences when deciding if they should whistleblow. We carry out a comparison between the two variables - *gender* and *whether or not the respondents believe that they should whistleblow* in any given situation. As we find, there are no gender differences when deciding if they should whistleblow. Secondly, women on average score differently from men when it comes to if they would whistleblow. This means there are gender differences with women being more likely to whistleblow. In other words, there are gender differences concerning

whistleblowing, and that women are more likely to act upon it than men. This result is in line with the literature's finding that genders differ in terms of decision making both internally and externally. It could be argued that women are more likely to whistleblow due to their nature as caring and emotional. On the contrary, men are considered more rational and rigid; however, as there is not sufficient evidence to support this argument, we cannot be entirely conclusive for the reasons behind this choice.

Nonetheless, these findings are particularly interesting as we can see that although there are gender differences in terms of whether they would whistleblow, both genders are aware that they should. This idea highlights that the majority of women and men realize that whistleblowing is sometimes necessary, which is something very positive for the future of companies as both genders agree that they should whistleblow.

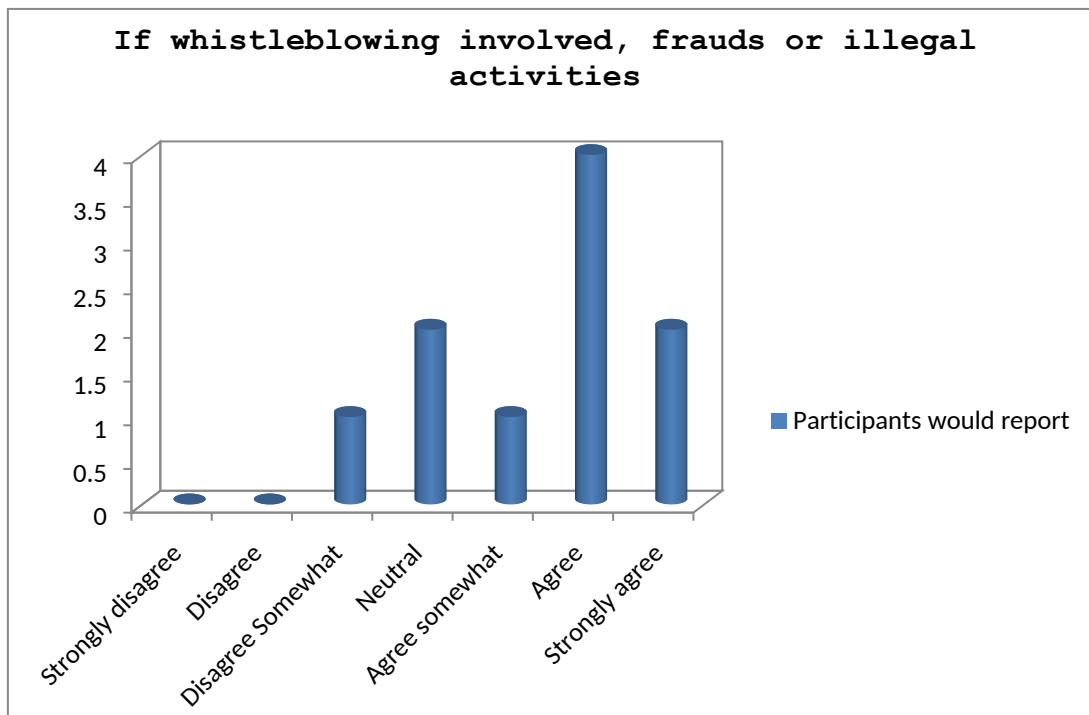
Figure 1: If whistleblowing involved health issues



It is also interesting to comprehend the reasons as to under what circumstances individuals would whistleblow. Figure 1 illustrates that the majority of participants 'strongly agree' that they would whistleblow if the situation involved health issues, while the rest supporting 'agree' and 'agree somewhat'. It is assumed that in any situation involving health issues employees would strongly report them, but this is just an inconsequential observation and it is best open to different interpretations. It should also be noted that this question was more dominant by females but also

included a small sample of males, which could reflect the assumption that due to their nature as caring and emotional they were more likely to report an incident that could jeopardize or affect one's health.

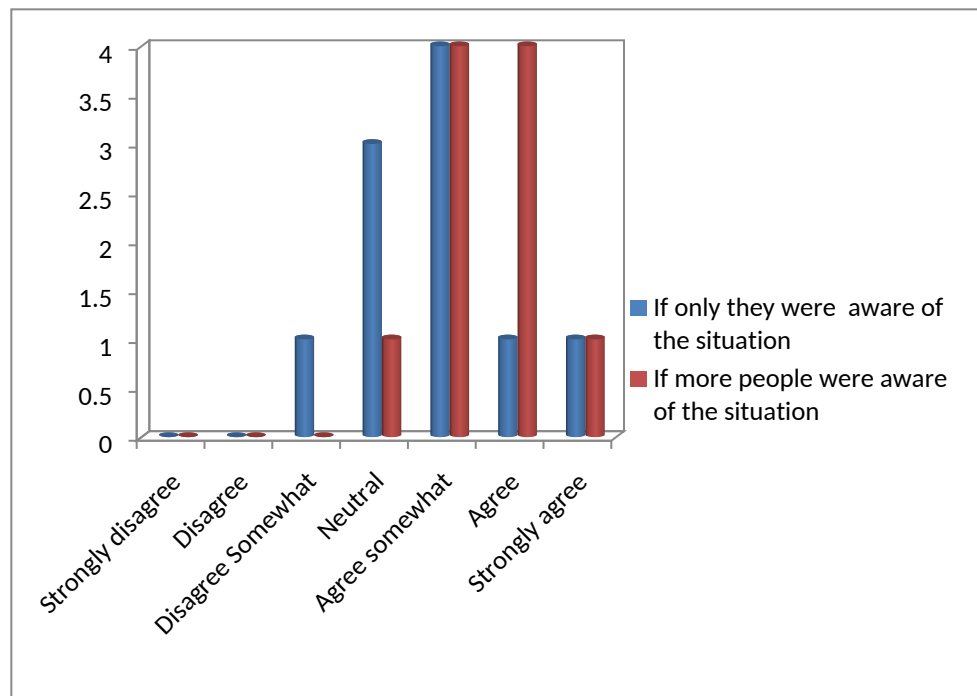
Figure 2: If whistleblowing involved, frauds or illegal activities



The second option focused on frauds, illegal activities and any related situation which reflects a more proportionate response (see Figure 2). In these cases, respondents also replied in terms of 'agree somewhat', 'neutral' or 'disagree somewhat', compared to

health related issues. This also provides a clearer picture as to how employees would prioritize the issues affecting their willingness to whistleblow. For instance, health issues are considered to be much more significant than reporting frauds or illegal activities; as when financial malpractices are involved employees may fear that whistleblowing would put their jobs in jeopardy.

Figure 3: If others are involved in a whistleblowing situation



Responses also portray that whistleblowing related situations vary if one employee is only aware of the situation or if others are also involved, as Figure 3 proves that individuals feel more confident in whistleblowing if more people are aware of the situation. This could be based on the logical assumption that individuals might not have enough courage to whistleblow on their own but feel safer when others support them. However, such conclusions could not be fully verified because the samples gathered were mostly from medium to large organizations where employees would easily be supported by their co-workers.

Why Men and Women Choose to Blow the Whistle

The current research has two objectives: whether there are gender differences in whistleblowing, and if both genders support that whistleblowing is a practice that everyone should perform. Our findings show that women are more likely to whistleblow than men based on their character traits of emotional, fair and caring. However, the results also prove that both genders are aware that

whistleblowing is sometimes necessary thus supporting that they should do it. Particularly, the survey results prove that there are no gender differences while deciding if one should whistleblow. As previously mentioned, only two variables were taken into consideration - gender, and whether or not the respondents believe that they should whistleblow in any given situation. Findings of this study illustrate that both genders are aware that they should whistleblow. It is important to note that this study addresses two factors that differ completely in context - the factors of 'would' and 'should'. Our research aims to prove that although both genders perceive that whistleblowing is something that they should do, it is unlikely that both genders would actually perform it. There is a significant difference between the two, and subsequently a difference in how each gender would approach it. If they feel they *should*, this is based more on moral principles, culture, and each individual's code of ethics, but if they *would* is based more on the character traits of each gender.

From the perspective of morality and ethics, the first question emphasizes that although men and women are different mentally with regards to basic morality, there

seems to be an apparent consensus. Though there is a plethora of studies that support that women are more ethical than men, a sufficient number of scholars have emphasized that in terms of gender and ethics both genders are alike. The second question focuses on whether there are gender differences in whistleblowing. Although this can be supported to a greater extent due to the extensive literature on gender differences, there is lack of sufficient evidence to prove it. For example, in the study of MacNab and Worthley, although there was a particular distinction between the way women and men make their decisions, the study did not reach any indicative result which links the association between whistleblowing and gender weakness tendencies. Our assumptions were made based on the characteristic traits of genders and there are differences in genders in the business environment as men are considered to be unemotional, while it is the opposite for women, who are portrayed as more irrational and emotional. Therefore, it is more likely that women would report unethical behavior or take action to suppress those who violate the law, whereas men would adopt a more passive approach. In fact, this male 'absolutism' was also evident in the process of analyzing the results as a greater amount of women who replied to

the questions provided either a 'yes' or a 'maybe'. One of the key problems while analyzing the data on gender whistleblowing is that there are no empirical examinations focusing on gender attitudes and whistleblowing solely, thereby reflecting a gap in the literature that this study addresses.

Moreover, it has been particularly significant to understand under what circumstances individuals would whistleblow. The results have proven that both genders had a stronger tendency to whistleblow in areas that involved health issues whereas they were less likely to report it if the situation involved any fraud or illegal activities. This could be linked to how individuals prioritize things in life; some might support that health is the most important issue, while others place less emphasis on reporting incidents that involve frauds or illegal activities. It could also be argued that the size of the company in which the participants were working could also have influenced the results of this research as the majority of the employees claimed that if more people were aware of the situation then they would be more motivated to whistleblow, rather than having to report something on their own. As previously mentioned,

such assumptions could be only partly supported because the samples gathered were mostly from medium to large organizations where employees would easily be supported by their co-workers, contrary to the case in much smaller firms.

CONCLUSION

The importance of eliminating fraud, illegal activities and generally unethical practices has always been of paramount significance in the corporate world. Thus, whistleblowing has become ever more important. Over the past years, organizations have adopted certain practices in order to encourage a greater number of employees to report misconducts; it would therefore be intriguing to anticipate whether there is any gender association with whistleblowing. This research illustrates the differences in gender by highlighting the reasons that could exist behind these assumptions. Particularly, the purpose of this paper is to afford insights into whistleblowing in medium to large organizations, and to determine whether there are any differences in how whistleblowing

manifests. Particularly, we analyze how gender differences might affect an individual's decision to 'blow the whistle', while focusing on under what circumstances employees may feel the need to act accordingly. We also consider how a company might utilize our study's findings in order to encourage whistleblowing from both genders.

Whistleblowing is important; this has long been the case in every corporation. In order for an organization to remain robust, it must be free from fraud and unethical behavior. Even though it seems apparent that most individuals would report unethical behavior, some choose to conceal the truth due to fear of losing their jobs or that their careers may be at stake. Aroused by the curiosity around whistleblowing, this research has a main aim; that is to understand gender differences in whistleblowing and how each gender would possibly react. Digging into the literature, it is evident that existing literature is limited in the tests of this combination and do not significantly prove the relationship between gender weaknesses in the working environment and whistleblowing. Looking further into how genders react and how they might differ in decision making, there are

suggestions that individuals' character and morals can be particularly important in believing that they *should* perform an action and if they *would* actually perform the action. With whistleblowing being in its infancy, academics had not yet analyzed this distinction to any great extent. Considering this in line with the literature, there is a mixture of findings; although some studies supported that there are differences, others could not distinguish them. However, this is mainly because the field of gender differences has been extensively analyzed over the past and so dissimilar approaches are the case. This paper supports the idea that gender differences might be present depending on what the circumstance is.

Furthermore, the findings of this study demonstrate that gender differences are only evident in the course of performing this action. Thus, even though both genders support that whistleblowing is something that everybody should do when witnessing unethical behavior, women are more likely to act upon it. Following this thread of thought, this research has seized on the opportunity to further analyze the reasons as to under what circumstances employees would whistleblow and why.

However, for the purpose of identifying gender differences in whistleblowing, using the data gathered it has been established that in cases that involve health issues, one is more likely to whistleblow whereas in cases concerning fraud, or illegal activities, one is less likely to do so. These findings are subject to further study on whistleblowing in general regardless of gender roles. It is also evident that individuals have a stronger inclination to whistleblow when others are also aware of the situation. Nevertheless, such observations cannot stand firmly as a hypothesis and are subject to further study. Through this paper and its findings managers can perceive how genders react with whistleblowing, which is of high importance in the corporate world while identifying that women are more likely to have the willpower to report an incident; while firms and organizations can direct their focus to how to encourage male employees to whistleblow. As Aristotle asserted, 'you cannot live a good life in an unjust society'.

With whistleblowing being a relatively new term, particularly in much smaller countries, there is a great need for further research. It would be particularly

interesting to comprehend the reasons as to why some employees would whistleblow and how this relates to gender roles within an organization. As shown from previous literature in the field, there has always been a combination of results, with some academics supporting that there are gender differences while others support the opposite argument. This mainly stems from the fact that genders in general are rather complex and no one can actually predict how they would act and react. It should also be borne in mind that while considering genders all external and internal factors must be taken into consideration such as culture, ethics and the environment. Conclusively, this brings a greater complexity to the study, which gives it the chance to be further enhanced and worked upon.

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Tahir M. Nisar is an Associate Professor within Southampton Business School at the University of Southampton. He has published numerous papers in distinguished academic journals, including Journal of Corporate Finance ("Diverse Boards: Why do Firms Get Foreign Nationals on their Boards?" 41(3) 2016) and LSE Business Review ("Director Nationality and Board Effectiveness and Performance" 2016). His current research is on the determinants and effects of whistleblowing.

Guru Prakash Prabhakar is presently Senior Lecturer of project management, Bristol Business School, University of the West of England. He earned the BBM (Hons.) and MBM degrees in management from Dayalbagh Educational Institute (Deemed University), India and the PhD degree in strategy, project & program management from ESC Lille (SKEMA Business School), France. Previously, he has conducted research, in conjunction with the Wharton School, Philadelphia, PA, USA in the area of global leadership and organizational behavior.

Mariateresa Torchia is Professor of Management at the International University of Monaco. She has published

in several leading international academic journals such as Journal of Business Ethics, European Management Journal, International Business Review, Corporate Governance, Public Management Review, Journal of Small Business Management, Journal of Management & Governance, International Journal of Public Administration, International Studies of Management & Organization, and Public Organization Review. She is currently Chair of the Strategic Interest Group "Corporate Governance" and chair of the track "Board of Directors and Top Management Team" at the European Academy of Management.