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## A CONCEPTUAL STUDY ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE IMPORTANCE OF WHISTLE-BLOWING AND ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR

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### **ABSTRACT**

Whistle-blowing subject which is often mentioned in the scope of “Organizational Citizenship Behavior” represents the efforts of the workers who try to expose the faults they have faced. Whistle-blowing emerges as unethical and illegal, concludes in negative effects against both organizations and workers, expresses a difficult course unless the support of the organization is provided. Existence and success of the organizations are closely related with the workers’ behaviors beyond the in-role requirements. As for the worker who starts the Whistle-blowing process, Organizational Citizenship Behavior may be a significant intervening variable. Although whistle-blowing may seem like a threat to organizations, it may have key role for the organizations that want to save themselves from unethical and illegal actions. In this context, organizations must encourage workers about whistle-blowing and must strengthen their perception of Organizational Citizenship Behavior.

**Keywords:** Whistle-blowing, Whistleblower, Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB).



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Organizations may give meaning to their existence through being nourished by ethical assets. The commitment to law and ethical assets of organizations is linked to the commitment of the workers to these values. However, the initiator of the whistle-blowing process is not always welcomed as a hero; in some cases he/she is punished (Paul and Townsend, 1996: 149). Whistle-blowing, refers to the process of notifying the authorities inside the organization, and if unresolved, notifying the authorities outside the organization, about the illegal and unethical situations taking into account the probable damages to person and entities (Aktan, 2006:1). In this context, inner whistle-blowing has a priority in the order of importance. Attitude and reaction of the organization against this situation may procreate an advantageous result on preventing unethical events. Since the problem is solved from the source, compensation may be less destructive. Reaching out to the authorities outside the organization due to unresolved cases may increase the compensation that the organization will pay; even, this may threat the existence of the organization. Despite this risk, organization managers may choose to punish these whistle-blowers. Most of the workers, choose to stay quiet since they can't predict the reaction they'll draw and think they will pay a heavy cost. Although Whistle-blowing has remained on the agenda since 1980s (Paul and Townsend, 1996: 149), interest shown to this subject increased in 2003 when Time Magazine chose 3 women as the "People of the Year".

"Organization Citizenship Behavior", the contemporary of whistle-blowing, which has been used by Organ and his colleagues, consists of behaviors around voluntariness base beyond in-role requirements (Aslan, 2008: 166). Organizational Citizenship Behavior on the brink of altruism, civic virtue, conscientiousness, courtesy and sportsmanship (Koys, 2001: 104; Bolat and Bolat, 2008: 79), is about, beyond in-role requirements, performing sensitive actions towards the other workers in the organization and the tasks that have been carried out. In this context, OCB is an important variable in order to prevent unethical and illegal behavior inside the organization.

Aim of this research is to argue the importance and place of the OCB in the interior and exterior whistle-blowing process against unethical situations.

## 2. WHISTLE-BLOWING: CONCEPT, CONTEXT AND IMPORTANCE

Requiring to drive the traces of the origin of social and organizational Whistle-blowing concept of moral values means to reveal or expose the wrongs in workplace (Aydın, 2003: 80). In a wider sense, whistle-blowing means to notify the interior and exterior authorities who have the power and ability to solve the problems which consists of illegal and unethical behaviors by current or old workers who are experienced in this subject (Aktan, 2006: 1). No translation is available in Turkish language for whistle-blowing concept (Yılmaz, 2010: 3-4); however it is attempted to be explained by emphasis on the content as "accusations of the workers on the fraud and abusive actions" (Bunget et al., 2009: 44-45). The concept means "whistling" in English and its roots go to the whistling action of English policemen in order to warn a criminal (Aktan, 2006:1). Although there are many definitions are possible on Whistle-blowing, three criteria are mentioned in all of the definitions (Greene and Latting, 2004: 220):

1. Notifying the powerful figures in the organization about the abusive behaviors inside the organization.
2. To act with the will to prevent the possible damage to others.
3. Actions of a worker or ex-worker who has the privilege to reach information about the organization is mentioned (Note that, it's not someone outside the organization or a journalist).

It is possible to line up the properties of the whistle-blowing based upon the definitions above (Aktan, 2006: 1-2):

- Existence of illegal, unethical and unscrupulous situations in public and private organizations.
- Detection of this situation by at least one worker (whistleblower).
- Volunteer to notify this detected unethical or illegal situation.



- These illegal and unethical applications damage the organization and surroundings.
- Worker at first, should contact the authorities with power to solve this problem inside the organization, if not decisive must contact exterior authorities (Media, District Attorney “DA”, etc. and relevant institutions).

- Their guides are their beliefs and attitudes, they never lie to cover things up.
- Generally they are well-educated and have jobs as manager or professional worker.
- They collect lots of documents about the situations they find abusive.

Regardless of whether in public or private, revealing the whistle-blowing which can be revealed in every organization, require the existence of whistleblowers who aims to act on reaching the information about the subject and notifying the interior – exterior authorities about the subject.

### 3. WHISTLE-BLOWING CASE AND IMPORTANCE AND PROPERTIES OF WHISTLE-BLOWERS

Whistle-blowing is based on willingness and the effectiveness of the process depends on the intention, effort, courage and determination of the whistleblower (Aktan, 2006: 3). Unless there is a whistleblower who may reveal the problem, the problematic subject means nothing to the authorities. If the problem goes on covered and revealing efforts go into vain, the dark side of the whistle-blowing occurs. The whistle-blowing process shall be uncovered by the whistleblower. By that, whistleblower is the pre-requisite of the whistle-blowing process. At first, whistleblower notifies the interior authorities about the mistreatment inside the organization. However, if he/she has strong doubts that this notification will cause bad results against the whistleblower, he/she can directly contact exterior authorities with necessary documents and information (Miceli and Near, 1988: 267; Varelius, 2009: 263). From what Kaptein (2011: 514) mentioned based on Miceli and his co-workers (2009); workers have second thoughts about notifying the authorities about mistreatment in the organization since they are afraid that this might turn out badly for themselves. As the starter of the process, it is possible to list the properties of the whistleblowers as follows (Greene and Latting, 2004: 220-221):

- They act on the altruistic emotions. Their intension is to be beneficial for the victims.
- They are pragmatists and have a high level of moral development. No matter the pressure applied to stay quiet, they act on the thought of “acting is necessity of social liability and honesty”.
- They are not interested in changing their attitudes no matter how much the situation is private.

Whistleblower deserves a special importance since he/she is the determiner of the process. In this context, whistleblower is the person who fights to prevent the illegal and unethical behaviors which results in hurting community’s health, threatening life standards of the organization. Although what he/she does is called “against the organization”, his/her efforts on pointing out the mistakes of the organization and revealing the mistreatments is the key point of the survivability of the organization. Although these people are marked with bad adjectives (rather, unreliable, etc.), because they risk their careers in order to prevent unethical behavior and corruption in the organizations they are highly courageous, ethical and single-minded people (Sayğan and Bedük, 2011: 172). Whistleblowers are the first step to preserve the organizational activity and performance, at the same time they are the solution to organizational problems (Rothwell and Baldwin, 2007: 341). As Verschoor indicated: “We need more whistleblowers” in order to prevent the possible damage to organization and its surroundings (2010: 15). According to what Sayğan and Bedük (2011: 172) told based on Yüksel (2005: 150), because of whistleblowers many unethical situations and illegal activities, cheatings, frauds, abuses are revealed and hauled personal fortunes are directed to governments’ fortunes. Between 1986–1994, in USA, return of 1.8 billion U.S Dollar to the government’s fortune is a crucial example.

Yielding results out of whistle-blowing depends on the worker’s consideration of some notations. These are; whistleblower must be well-intentioned and logical, mustn’t pursue a goal out of hostility or jealousy mustn’t have any intentions of hurting and obtaining a personal benefit, briefing actions must be completed reasonably (Aydm, 2002-2003: 86-87; Yilmaz, 2010: 6).

### 4. DIFFERENT KINDS OF WHISTLE- BLOWING

Whistle- blowing can be categorized in internal and external whistle- blowing (Paul and Townsend, 1996: 150). Internal whistle- blowing describes the situations, in which the worker



shares the information about an illegal/unethical case with the authorized people in the organization (Sayğan and Bedük, 2011:176). Encouraging the internal whistle-blowing might contribute lots of things like; raise the security and peace in the organization, decrease the wrong management, sustain good faith, support legal measures (Paul and Townsend, 1996: 150). External whistle-blowing is the search of a worker for a solution by external sources, when a problem can't be solved in the organization. Workers can refer to the government, the police or the press but it's important that the whistle-blower does not start to the external whistle-blowing process before the internal whistle-blowing (Mansbach and Bachner, 2010: 484; Sayğan and Bedük, 2011:177).

The illegal/unethical case should be solved in the organization, it's important for the manager and workers. The manager should not ignore the problem which comes up in the whistle-blowing, because it might damage the organization over the long term. Putting pressure on the whistle-blower, threats or removal from office might start the external whistle-blowing process. Transition of the case to press or to ruling can damage the reputation of the organization and cause a crisis (Yılmaz, 2010: 15-17). This crisis requires special effort and professional assistance and it might cause financial problems besides the loss of reputation (Sayğan and Bedük, 2011:177).

Aktan (2006: 4) categorizes the whistle-blowing in public and implicit whistle-blowing. Public whistle-blowing is the transmission of the illegal/unethical behaviors and cases written or spoken. By implicit whistle-blowing the whistle-blower uncover the illegal/unethical case anonymously (Sayğan and Bedük, 2011:177).

## 5. ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR: DESCRIPTION, MEANING AND COMPERHENSION

Organizational citizenship behavior that was used by Organ and his colleagues first in 1980's, is based on Barnard's (1938) "volunteerism for collaboration" and Katz's(1964) "innovative and spontaneous behaviors" (Podsakoff et al., 2000: 513). There are two other basic notions that helped to OCB's improvement; prosocial behavior and organizational spontaneous. Prosocial behavior is the volunteer contribution of the workers to reach the organizational goals. Spontaneous behavior consists of positive behaviors, which increase the collaboration between the workers and protect the organization system as a whole (Aslan, 2008: 166).

Executing organizational purposes of the workers consists of defined roles and willingly executed situations (Williams and Shiaw, 1999: 656) by itself, Organ (1998) explained the OCB as "although they are not directly defined by the prize system of the organization, one's willing and formal role behaviors". In this context, OCD base on 4 fundamental facts :

- These behaviors are grounded on volunteerism so workers should behave sincerely,
- Organizational citizenship behavior is independent from the formal obligations,
- These behaviors are not connected to any organizational award system,
- OCB improves efficiency and productivity of the organization.

According to Demirel and Özçınar (2009: 131) the organizational citizenship behavior is about beliefs and social values. This statement involves the dimensions of OCB; altruism, conscientiousness, courtesy, civic virtue and sportsmanship. There are two different dimensions to approach to worker's performances in the organization; in-role and extra-role. In-role contains a worker's behaviors that influence the mission of the organization and work success directly or indirectly. Extra-role is the behaviors that don't take place in the job definition of a worker and these behaviors support the organization and increase the success in the work. Collaboration between workers, volunteerism for overtime, helping to the new workers can be some examples for the extra-role (Bergeron, 2007: 1078; Chen and Chiu, 2009:476; Zellars et al., 2002: 1068).

## 6. ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR AND ITS DIMENSIONS

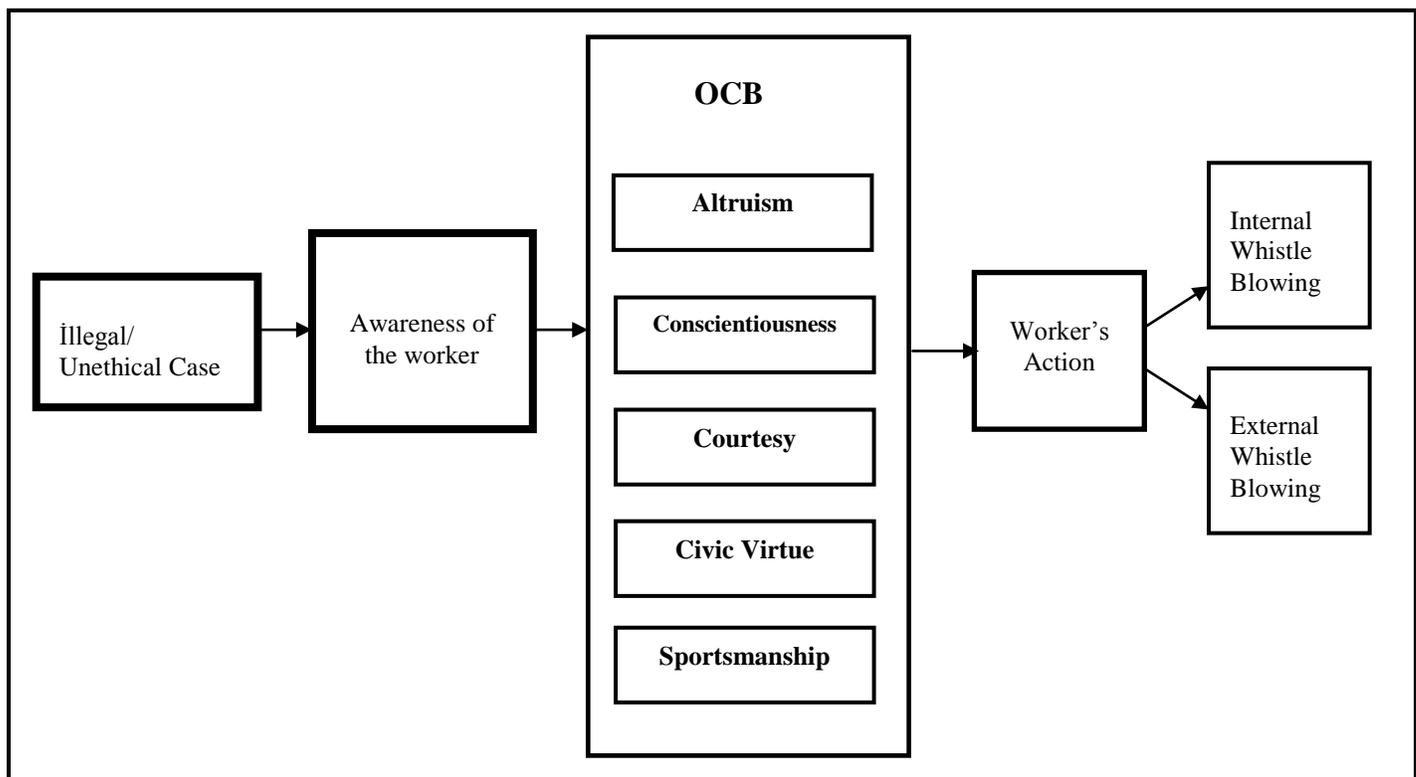
Most of the researches about the organizational citizenship behavior are based on Organ's 5-dimensioned organization. These five dimensions are; altruism, conscientiousness, courtesy, civic virtue and sportsmanship. (Koys, 2001: 104; Tayyab, 2005: 51, Boiral, 2009: 224; Çetin, 2004:19; Titrek et al., 2009: 91-92; Bolat and Bolat, 2008: 79; Aslan, 2008: 166-167; Demirel and Geçgel, 2011: 314-315).

**Altruism:** Altruism means that workers help to the other workers as volunteers to solve their problems. Experienced workers should be helpful to the new ones, so they can improve their success at work. This behavior is based on the

volunteerism and has an important role on the workers self-development.

**Conscientiousness:** This notion contains volunteer behaviors of a worker as a part of the organization. Attendance, careful-working, not abusing the breaks, protecting the sources of the organization can be examples for conscientiousness. All of these behaviors can contribute to the efficiency and productivity of the organization.

**Figure 1:** Whistle- Blowing Process



**Courtesy:** It consists of communication and collaboration in the organization. The courtesy dimension of the organizational citizenship behavior contains the conscious behavior of the workers to avoid the problems in the organization. In this

context workers should be delicate and controlled. They should determine the cases, which might cause problems, and they should strive to them.



**Civic Virtue:** It presents the commitment and the highest interest in the organization. That includes taking part in management, giving opinion about the organization strategy, considering opportunities and threats and turning threats into opportunities.

**Sportsmanship:** It contains keeping the positive attitude against negative situations, being tolerant to different ideas, enthusiasm in group- projects, positive perspective. These behaviors can help to minimize the conflicts between the workers or between workers and managers.

## 7. AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN WHISTLE-BLOWING: ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR

Whistle-blowing process depends on the worker's perception of the case. If the worker ignored the illegal case, the process would disrupt, so workers should be more sensitive about the cases. In this case; the altruism notion, which means the self-development of the worker, is very important for the whistle-blowing process (Demirel and Geçgel, 2011: 314). The worker, who improves himself about the work, can create a more conscious approach for the organization and realize the mistakes more easily. In this context, it might be harder to ignore illegal cases/ situations and the worker might try to avert the negative consequence to secure the organization.

Conscientiousness is also an important dimension of the organizational citizenship behavior, which leads the worker to the whistle-blowing process (Bolat and Bolat, 2008: 79). This dimension of the OCB can make the worker more sensitive and keep the worker objective.

Courtesy contains all efforts for the communication between the workers (Çetin, 2004:19). It's very important in whistle-blowing, that after the worker realizes the illegal/ unethical OCB brings a higher possibility of workers head for direct their power to positive behaviors for the organization, help other workers about work, stay away from situations that might damage the organization and react when someone else is damaging the organization. Nevertheless, the course of whistle-blowing process depends on the will and determination of the worker. At this point, OCB confronts us as an intervening variable that forces workers to react. Employee must have a strong sense of OCB in order to risk

Ethical behavior is the basic reference for all the studies about the whistle-blowing. Ethic values have an important role in closing the gap between whistle- blowing and illegal cases. Ethic values constitute the basic dynamics of leading the worker to whistle-blowing and help reporting the illegal case to the authorities. There are different researches about some variables, which company to ethic values in the whistle-blowing process and of these variables is the organizational citizenship behavior. We can see the process, which evokes the worker against the illegal/unethical case, in the following figure

As you can see in figure 1, the Whistle-blowing process begins with an illegal/ unethical case or situation in the organization. This case/situation should be realized by the worker and the worker should not ignore it or worry about the reactions of the who cause this case/situation.

case, worker should share it with the authorized people in the organization. At first, whistle-blower should try to solve the problem with the authorized people in the organization. If the communication with these people was difficult, the whistle-blowing process would choke up. Then the whistle-blower can start the external whistle-blowing process but the whistle-blower shouldn't refer the external whistle-blowing before the internal whistle-blowing. In this context managers should be sensitive about workers communication demands.

Civic virtue describes the commitment to the organization and the highest interest, so it's very important for the whistle-blowing process (Boiral, 2009: 224). Commitment and highest interest make worker avoid from the negative behavior to the organization.

Sportsmanship, which is another dimension of the organizational citizenship behavior, helps workers to keep their positive attitudes towards bad situations in the organization (Demirel and Geçgel, 2011: 315). The workers should stand by their behavior and decisions even they encounter difficulties like threats, discharge or isolation.

lots of negative results and stay on the target. The determination to act on the whistle-blowing action will direct the worker to go to the exterior authorities if interior authorities are not decisive.

## 8. CONCLUSION



Whistle-blowing contains the reactions that based on ethic, civil virtue and courtesy to avert wrong situations in the organization. In this process, behavior of the whistle-blower should not go beyond from the purpose to defend the organization. At first the internal whistle-blowing should be tried in the process. If it was not efficient enough, then the external whistle-blowing would come into the process and the case should be directed to press or judgment. Whistle-blowing is not easy for all the workers. Sharing the illegal case with the authorized people in the organization is as important as knowing the case. Most of the workers prefer to stay silent against these cases. Some variables can improve the whistle-blowing process for workers and the organizational citizenship behavior is one of these variables.

There is a close relation between the whistle-blowing process and the organizational citizenship behavior that includes worker's volunteer behavior. There are similarities in both behaviors like; volunteerism, conscientiousness, working for organization's benefits.

Every organization might become a place for illegal and unethical situations to occur. This probability stands for every organization. It's not always easy for the management to avert these cases. In this context managers can take some measures:

- Internal and external organization control mechanism should be run efficiently.
- More competent workers shall be put to the head of the departments especially where illegal and unethical situations are easier to occur in order to provide pecuniary advantage.
- Worker's warnings about the case should be considered and if it's necessary, measures should be taken.
- Social values like ethical behavior, honesty should be organization's policies.
- Workers should be encouraged to share the illegal cases.
- Communication canals in the organization should be open for the information flow.
- In the performance assessment of the workers, behaviors like civic virtue, sportsmanship, conscientiousness should be considered as important criteria and these workers should be rewarded.

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