I Whistleblow As I Am a University Student: An Investigation on the Relationship Between Self-Efficacy and Whistleblowing

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Abstract -**The purpose of this study is to reveal whether there is a relationship between university students' self-efficacy and whistleblowing levels. There are two facts which attribute authenticity to this study. The first is that there are only a limited number of studies in literature dealing with these two variables together. The other is the existence of a certain amount of findings. For instance, foreign literature (literature outside Turkey) asserts that these two variables are associated with one another. It is also claimed that general self-efficacy is the premise of internal whistleblowing. In fact, contrary to the perception, which is very common in Turkish culture, that "a person with high self-efficacy does not engage in whistleblowing for anyone", foreign literature suggests that university students with high self-efficacy are more inclined to whistleblow. In the study, self-efficacy is analyzed in general terms whereas whistleblowing is dealt with under the dimensions of internal whistleblowing, external whistleblowing, and indifference. In this sense, correlation analysis was conducted in order to reveal the relationship between variables, and regression analysis was conducted for the aspect of influence. The sample of the study covers 120 participants studying in Mersin University Erdemli School of Applied Technology and Business and Erdemli Vocational School. According to the analysis results, there are significant relationships between self-efficacy and whistleblowing. The sample of the study was limited to university students due to problems of time and cost and for the sake of making analysis on the sector of education.**

IndexTerms—**Self- efficacy, whistleblowing, university.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Success is one of the indispensable outcomes of today's business world. Internal evaluation of success is known to be the desired way of measurement in cases where certain criteria are available. To what extent the success is internal depends on to what extent the individual assesses himself/herself. Such self-evaluation of an individual regarding the ability to fulfill a responsibility indicates the concept of self-efficacy. Therefore, if there are individuals with self-efficacy available in the organization, they are asked to evaluate their own success.

It is important to note that self-efficacy does not refer to ability, although these two are conceived as similar concepts most of the time. One of the main differences between these two concepts is based on to what extent these concepts are internal and external. There can be some externalities involved when measuring the abilities. For example, most of the time, other people decide on how successful an individual is. However, self-efficacy is concerned with the individual's prediction of achieving success, not with the individual's ability. From this aspect, self-efficacy distances itself from external evaluations, since external warnings are not taken into consideration in self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy is a concept with positive connotation. However, there are some other concepts with negative connotation that emerge as a result of internal evaluations of individuals. Whistleblowing is one of these concepts, meaning "exposing activities that are not correct". Given especially the external evaluations (for example when an individual thinks about what will happen after a complaint), we can recall that whistleblowing is an undesirable action. Although the literature suggests an inference that "exposing bad practices in organizations results in a bad way", whistleblowing can be said to be a proper behavior when its reasons are legitimate and its outcomes provide benefits to the organization. Even if he/she knows that it will give harm to himself/herself, an individual with self-efficacy must resort to whistleblowing, since he/she believes that it is beneficial to the organization. Besides, whistleblowing is a must in determining the problems impeding the development of organizations. The findings from the literature review on the relationship between these two concepts indicate that "individuals with higher self-efficacy are more likely to engage in whistleblowing". These findings constitute the driving force behind this study. The number of organizational studies on this subject is limited, which makes this study more meaningful.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of self-efficacy that Bandura developed as part of the social learning theory is among the main factors that regulate human behaviors (Uysal, 2013: 144). Perceptions of self-efficacy are personal evaluations of individuals regarding their ability to exhibit certain behaviors that will help to achieve the targeted outcomes (Bieschke, 2006: 80). Bandura defines perceived self-efficacy as the individual's beliefs in his/her capacities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments (Tarım et al., 2015: 849), while Özçelik and Kurt define it as an individual's perception of his/her competence to successfully overcome a situation (Gürbüztürk et al., 2015: 792). On the other hand, general self-

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efficacy is a concept referring to individuals' judgement about stressful situations and their belief about their competence to cope with them (Aypay, 2010: 118; Uysal, 2013: 145), and it indicates the general level of trusting in one's own capabilities to overcome unfamiliar and problematic new situations encountered in the daily life (Luszczynska et al., 2005: 81; Aypay, 2010: 119). Perceived general self-efficacy (GSE) is different from the task-specific self-efficacy (contextual) in that GSE enables prediction of behaviors to be exhibited in more than one field, not only the abilities specific to a field (Aypay, 2010: 120). Thus, self-efficacy beliefs focus on competence based on subjective evaluations of an individual, but do not take into account the other environmental factors (Schwarzer et al., 1997: 72-74). Perceived self-efficacy helps individuals to evaluate the opportunities and constraints they encounter and plays a role in choosing their courses of action as well as affecting the effort they will put into to execute an action and determining their ability to cope up with the constraints they will encounter on the way to achieve their goals (Betz, 2000: 208-209; McCoach and Colbert, 2010: 32). Self-efficacy is not an ability, but the belief that "I can do it" (Dikmen and Çağlar, 2015: 232). In this sense, self-efficacy does not refer to one's skills, but refers to the perceptions of competence about one's skills, and it can affect the outcomes of an action, behavior or situation independent of the individual's qualifications for that action, behavior or situation (Topal and Akgün, 2015: 345).

Self-efficacy cannot be said to be a popular concept in the fields of business administration, management, and organizational behavior. In the field of education, self-efficacy is used to explain individual differences in the performance of teachers, to gain insight about the behaviors of teachers, and to develop these behaviors (Demirtaş et al., 2011: 99; Kurt, 2012: 200). The education-oriented self-efficacy studies recently conducted in Turkey focus mostly on computer self-efficacy beliefs, self-efficacy beliefs of pre-service teachers and teachers, academic self-efficacy of students, and development of self-efficacy scales or adaptation of existing scales into Turkish (Demirtaş et al., 2011: 99-100).

Another concept investigated in this study is whistleblowing which is defined as the disclosure by organization members of illegal, immoral, or illegitimate practices under the control of other members (Near and Miceli, 2016: 108). Rothschild and Miethe divided the personal and organizational behaviors that affect whistleblowing intentions of individuals into three categories. These are internal or external disclosure of wrongdoing and remaining silent (Park, Rehg and Lee, 2005: 389). However, most of the studies conducted in Turkey addressed this with its internal and external dimensions. Internal whistleblowing means disclosure by an employee of an ethical or legal violation that he/she is aware of within the organization or reporting such violation to the concerned people in the organization. Internal whistleblowing refers to any kind of disclosure made within an organization to stop or end the wrongdoings. External whistleblowing is disclosure by an employee of an ethical violation to the competent authorities outside the organization.

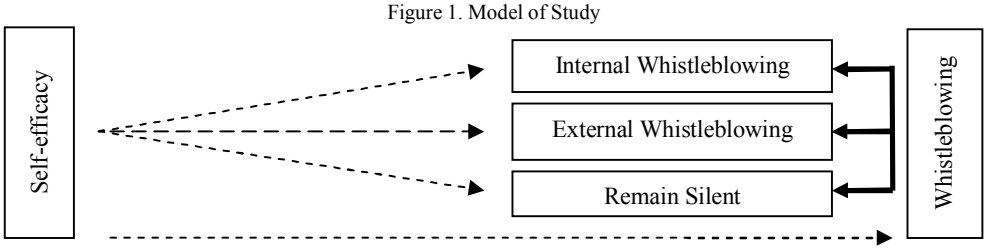
In the internal whistleblowing, the organization members are informed of the wrongdoings, while external whistleblowing involves informing other parties outside the organization of any kind of organizational wrongdoing to make them take necessary action. It is indicated that external whistleblowing without resorting to internal whistleblowing is not a proper behavior and one should resort to external whistleblowing only when internal whistleblowing does not produce an adequate result (Sayğan 2011: 13-16). Whistleblowing has some individual and organizational components. Among the individual components are mission-related values and job-related motives, and among the organizational components are environment-culture-structure, respect-openness, cooperation-flexibility and fair treatment (Lavena, 2016: 116-120). The studies on this concept usually cover the healthcare sector (McDonald and Ahern 2000: 319), leading companies of Europe (Sayğan 2011: 27), public and private sector (Thiessen 1998: 140; qtd in: Eren and Orhan, 2013: 461), organizational culture (Jones, 2016), inspection companies (Alleyne et al., 2016) and governments (Lavena, 2016).

MacNab and Worthley are among the most distinctive researchers examining the relationship between whistleblowing and self-efficacy. According to the findings of their study, general self-efficacy and whistleblowing are related to each other. Still, according to Miceli et al., among the college students believing that they can resort to whistleblowing,those with high self-efficacy for whistleblowing are more likely to be engaged in whistleblowing than those with low self-efficacy (Jones et al., 2014: 650). According to MacNab and Worthley, whistleblowers have high level of self-efficacy (Cassematis and Wortley, 2013: 628). Miceli and Near developed a model that reveals the effect of self-efficacy onmaking a decision to whistleblow. In this model, self-efficacy is considered among the personal factors. Wise also studied the effect of general self-efficacy on whistleblowing, but could not obtain findings that support the findings of Miceli and Near (MacNab and Worthley, 2008: 418). These developments have encouraged us to study the potential effects of general self-efficacy on whistleblowing. Based on the foregoing, the model of the study was established as follows.

As it can be understood from the model, the effects of self-efficacy on whistleblowing and its subdimensions were examined. Thus, the following research questions were (RQ) formed. RQ 1: Do the self-efficacy levels of students influence their levels of internal whistleblowing? RQ 2: Do the self-efficacy levels of students influence their levels of external whistleblowing? RQ 3: Do the self-efficacy levels of students influence their levels of remain silent? RQ 4: Do the self-efficacy levels of students influence their levels of whistleblowing (general)? RQ 5: Do the demographic characteristics of the students vary by variables?

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Figure 1. Model of Study



III. METHOD

Descriptive statistics (number, percentage, mean, standard deviation) were used in analyzing the research data. In comparing the quantitative data, t-test was used for determining the difference between two groups; one-way Anova test was used for comparison of parameters between groups when there were more than two groups; and Scheffe's test was used for finding out the group causing the difference. The relationship between the research variables was tested via Pearson's correlation analysis and interaction between them was tested via regression analysis. The research findings were evaluated on the basis of reliability level of 95 % and significance level of 5 %.

Aim, Significance, and the Limitations of the Study

Literature contains limited number of studies on the relationships of self-efficacy, and whistleblowing with different phenomena and no research on the interaction of these two concepts. The present study is significant because it aims to show those self-efficacies which lead to whistleblowing. The aim of the study is to indicate the self-efficacies of students which lead to whistleblowing. The study is limited to the students of Mersin University Erdemli School of Applied Technology and Management and Erdemli Vocational School due to time and cost constraints.

Research Reliability

Alpha coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) was used in testing the reliability of the scale. Reliability coefficients concerning self-efficacy, whistleblowing, and relevant subdimensions found in the analyses are given below.

Table 1.Reliabilities of The Self-efficacy, Whistleblowing, and Their Related Subdimensions

Titles and Their Subdimensions	(Cronbach Alpha)
Self-Efficacy	**0,918**
Whistleblowing	**0,675**
External Whistleblowing	0,642
İnternal Whistleblowing	0,733
Remain Silent	0,798

The survey reliability was decided to be satisfactory because the reliability of all factors was over 0.60.

Research Sample

The levels of this two titles and relationship between self-efficacies and whistleblowings of students of Mersin University Erdemli School of Applied Technology and Management and Erdemli Vocational School were examined in the study. In this regard, the scale questions were administered to 200 randomly chosen students, and 120 usable scale forms were obtained. There were a total of 1900 students in two schools. 60 % of the scale forms were returned, and the rate of representation was 6 %.

Data Collection Tools

Three scales were used in study. The first one is the self-efficacy scale developed by Schwarzer and Jarusalem (Schwarzer vd., 1997: 71-72) consists of a total of 10 questions and translated into Turkish by Aypay in 2010 (Uysal, 2013: 146-147). The second is the whistleblowing scale developed by Park vd. (2005) and prepared and used by Saygan in his dissertation (2011). This scale consists of three dimensions and 8 questions; internal whistleblowing (3 questions), external whistleblowing (3 questions), and remain silent (2 questions). The last scale used in the study is five-question scale developed to determine the demographic characteristics of the participants. The items in the scale were rated through 5-point Likert-type rating.

Findings

The sample distribution in terms of demographic characteristics is as follows: Of the research participants, 78 % were between 19 and 22 age and 22 % were between 23 and 27 age; 51 % were female and 49 % were male; 50 % were associate students, and 50 % were undergraduate students; 13 % were banking and insurance students, 27 % accounting students, 50 % business information management students, and 10% business administration students; and finally 67.5 % 2nd grade students, 5 % 3rd grade students, and 27.5 % 4th grade students. Pearson's correlation analysis results regarding the relationships between the variables are as in Table 2.

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Table 2. Results of Correlation Analysis

		Self-Efficacy	External Whistleblowing	Internal Whistleblowing	Remain Silent	Whistleblowing (General)
Self-Efficacy	**r**	1.000				
	p	0.000				
External Whistleblowing	**r**	0.012	1.000			
	p	0.895	0.000			
Internal Whistleblowing	**r**	**0.223***	0.541**	1.000		
	p	0.014	0.000	0.000		
Remain Silent	**r**	-0.109	0.128	-0.078	1.000	
	p	0.235	0.163	0.394	0.000	
Whistleblowing (General)	**r**	0.170	0.742**	0.831**	-0.418**	1.000
	p	0.064	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

**correlation is significant at the 0.05 level ** correlation is significant at the 0.01 level*

The correlation results show the following: There is a significant weak positive relationship between internal whistleblowing and self-efficacy. There is no significant relationship between other variables statistically. Regression analysis results regarding the relationships between the variables are as in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of Regression Analysis(Stepwise)

Dependent Variable	*Independent Variable*	ß	t	p	F	(p)	R^2
Whistleblowing (General)	Constant	2.599	7.718	0.000	3.506	0.064	0.021
	Self-Efficacy	0.159	1.872	0.064			
External Whistleblowing	Constant	2.699	5.698	0.000	0.018	0.895	-0.008
	Self-Efficacy	0.016	0.133	0.895			
Internal Whistleblowing	Constant	2.293	5.007	0.000	**6.178**	**0.014**	**0.042**
	Self-Efficacy	0.286	2.486	0.014			
Remain Silent	Constant	3.092	5.125	0.000	1.424	0.235	0.004
	Self-Efficacy	-0.181	-1.193	0.235			

According to results of regression analysis, level of self-efficacy increased the level of internal whistleblowing. There is no interaction between the other dimensions of whistleblowing and self-efficacy statistically.

Table 4. Mean Values of Research Sample According to Variables

Dimensions	Group	n	*Mean*	*Std. Dev*	t	p
Self-Efficacy	Associate	60	3.837	0.846	-1.243	0.217
	Undergraduate	60	3.995	0.507		
External Whistleblowing	Associate	60	2.722	0.955	-0.469	0.640
	Undergraduate	60	2.800	0.857		
Internal Whistleblowing	Associate	60	3.306	0.840	-1.327	0.187
	Undergraduate	60	3.522	0.946		
Remain Silent	Associate	60	**2.650**	1.236	2.579	**0.011**
	Undergraduate	60	**2.117**	1.018		
Whistleblowing (General)	Associate	60	**3.098**	0.563	-2.074	**0.040**
	Undergraduate	60	**3.342**	0.715		

The associate students were found to have higher remain silent scores in comparison to the undergraduate

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students. Finally undergraduate students were found to have higher general whitleblowing scores in comparison to the associate students

IV. Conclusion and Discussion

According to the research results, only the results of the first and the fifth research questions are significant. In this sense, a high self-efficacy level means a high internal whistleblowing level. It is thought that one of the reasons leading to this is that the students with self-efficacy also have self-confidence, which enables them to communicate with their instructors more easily and closely. Moreover, it is also possible that students embrace the organization which they are part of, demonstrate a protective attitude towards it, and take responsibility or feel responsible and have a consciousness to conserve moral values based on their role as an organizational citizen. As a matter of course, these results may be interpreted negatively. For instance, students may intend to look down on the opposing parties and ingratiate themselves to instructors by whistleblowing them in order to tip the scales for their own favor. In addition, associate degree students' having higher scores of indifference than bachelor degree students may stem from their feeling of incompetence due to their low school entrance scores. As a result of this feeling, associate degree students may refrain from taking responsibilities. Also, having no career objectives for themselves, these students may not embrace and care about their organization. Therefore, they may not communicate with their instructors effectively. It is believed that the reason why bachelor degree students have higher whistleblowing scores than associate degree students is that they have loyalty to their organization due to spending longer period of time at school and having a closer communication with their instructors. It is possible to say that some results consistent with the literature (MacNab and Worthley, 2008) were obtained in the present study. Future studies are recommended to include different disciplines, variables, and larger samples.

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