

The Effects of the Individual-Level Antecedents on the Intention of Accountants' Whistleblowing by Moderating Organizational and Individual Factors¹

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Research Paper

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Whistleblowing plays an important role in improving organizational health. The term whistleblowing refers to the disclosure by organizational members (former or current) of illegal, immoral, or illegitimate practices under the control of their employers, to persons or organizations that may be able to effect action. Since employees are among the first to witness illegal and immoral things in organizations, therefore, using this potential can play an important role in improving organizational health.

Whistleblowing can happen internally or externally. Both methods have important but different consequences for organizations. Internal whistleblowing improves organizational efficiency because it provides the necessary opportunity to correct wrong-doings and reduce organizational costs. On the other hand, external whistleblowing improves the level of organizational health due to things like being accused wrongly, more regulatory supervision, and legal consequences. Since whistleblowing includes financial and accounting issues, accountants can play an important role in achieving the goals of whistleblowing. Therefore, the government and the policymakers of the accounting profession must provide the legal requirements for the participation of accountants in the whistleblowing process.

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Therefore, this study attempts to investigate whistleblowing in the accounting profession in the form of a comprehensive model. In this regard, in this study, the effects of five individual-level antecedents (attitude towards whistleblowing, perceived behavioral control, professional commitment, personal responsibility for reporting, and personal costs of reporting) on internal and external whistleblowing have been investigated by taking into account the moderating effects of three variables of perceived organizational support, team norms and perceived moral intensity.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study is practical in nature and is considered a descriptive-exploratory correlation study. The population of this study is accountants working in Tehran city and the period is the first season of 2022. The required data were collected through a questionnaire. Since the questionnaire of this study included 43 items (excluding demographic items), we attempted to complete at least 5 questionnaires for each item. With effort much, 218 usable questionnaires were collected. In this study, the convenience sampling method was used to collect the required data.

The research data were analyzed using the structural equation modeling method. Since this method applies a confirmatory factor analysis to estimate latent constructs. The latent variable or construct is not in the dataset, as it is a derived common factor of other variables and could indicate a model's cause or effect.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the research findings, five independent variables (attitude towards whistleblowing, perceived behavioral control, professional commitment, personal responsibility for reporting, and personal costs of reporting) affect two dependent variables (internal and external whistleblowing). Among the five independent variables, only the personal costs of reporting had a negative effect and the rest of the variables had a positive effect on the dependent variables. This means that (1) the more the accountants' attitude towards internal and external whistleblowing improves, the more their intention to whistleblowing increases. (2) The more the accountants' beliefs about internal and external whistleblowing are increased, the more their intention to whistleblowing increases. In other words, if the accountants are sure that they will receive the necessary support regarding whistleblowing, their motivation to report wrong-doings will increase. (3) The

higher the professional commitment of accountants, the higher their willingness to report wrongdoings to competent authorities inside and outside the organization. (4) According to the code of professional conduct, accountants are required to report wrongdoings. Therefore, the greater the adherence of accountants to the code of professional conduct, the greater their willingness to report wrongdoings to competent authorities. (5) The higher the costs associated with whistleblowing, the lower the willingness of accountants to report wrongdoings.

In this study, the moderating effects of three variables of perceived organizational support, team norms, and perceived moral intensity on the relationship between independent and dependent variables were investigated. This means that the perceived organizational support variable affects the relationships between all independent and dependent variables, except for the relationship between perceived behavioral control and external whistleblowing.

Also, the team norms variable has a moderating effect on the relationship between independent variables and dependent variables, except for the relationship between personal responsibility and internal whistleblowing, as well as the relationship between perceived behavioral control and external whistleblowing. The perceived moral intensity variable has a moderating effect on the relationship between all independent and dependent variables.

Finally, the effects of five demographic variables (gender, age, education, length of service, type of organization) on internal and external whistleblowing were studied. Based on the research findings, among the five demographic variables, only the age variable has a significant effect on internal whistleblowing, as well as the variables of age and length of service on external whistleblowing.

CONCLUSION

Our study contributes by providing new insights into the relationship between the individual levels of the antecedents to the intention of whistleblowing moderated by perceived organizational support, team norms, and perceived moral intensity. The study findings show that individual-level antecedents can increase the accountants' intentions of whistleblowing. The model used in this study showed a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships between individual-level antecedents to the intention of whistleblowing reinforced by moderating variables.

Finally, since accountants have the necessary knowledge and experience about possible financial wrongdoings, therefore, the results of this study can be used by many stakeholders.

Keywords: Intention of Whistleblowing, Individual-Level Antecedents, Organizational Factors, Personal Factors.

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