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Perceived organizational climate and whistleblowing intention in academic organizations: evidence from Selçuk University (Turkey)

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Abstract

This paper investigates the relationship between organizational climate drivers and whistleblowing intention through a cross-sectional study in Selçuk University in Turkey. Contrary to our expectations, the findings do not fully support the existing literature and the hypotheses underpinning this research. While the work environment in faculties and institutes of Selçuk University seems to portray an overall positive organizational climate, lecturers, researchers, and research assistants have expressed a deep reluctance in the likelihood to sound the alarm in case they witness wrongdoings and malpractices committed by their supervisors and fellow colleagues. The investigation reveals that some organizational climate drivers such as organizational justice, morale, leader credibility and mobbing are consistently associated with informal whistleblowing intention while only individual autonomy is bound with formal whistleblowing intention. Nevertheless, the outputs highlight individual autonomy and morale to have negative impact on whistleblowing intention which is opposite to our expectation. Furthermore, the findings do not support the assumption relating to the mediating role of trust and safety climate in the relationship between organizational climate drivers and whistleblowing intention.

Keywords Organizational climate · Trust · Safety climate · Whistleblowing intention · Academic organizations

1 Introduction

Following the failure of market regulation, Jensen and Meckling (1976) developed agency theory to raise the key issues related to the principal/agent relationship, including the informational asymmetry, the moral hazard, the adverse selection, and

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the conflicting interest behaviors. This paved the way to corporate governance with an array of coordinating and monitoring mechanisms, including audit committees, boards, and other legal provisions. However, the relevancy of these traditional regulatory devices is called into serious question since they failed to prevent numbers of recently occurred scandals of which Enron in 2001 and Madoff in 2008 in United States should be considered the biggest frauds and embezzlement never experienced before in the mankind. Perhaps, this is why whistleblowing evolved to get increasing prominence and greater visibility as a powerful denunciation tool for the public (Seifert et al. 2014b). It has even become a buzzword in the encyclopedia of corporate governance jargons (Banerjee and Roy 2014) since whistleblowing appears as a credible alternative to early stop or rectify wrongdoings in working environment.

In the whistleblowing process, employees hold the prominent role and are best placed to sound the alarm (Near and Miceli 1985; Bouville 2007) since they are the very first people to realize or suspect a potential malpractice in their workplace. However, whistleblowers may have a lot to lose because of retaliations (mobbing, intimidation, harassment, dismissal, hostile treatment or violence) from employers, management, supervisors or even their fellow colleagues, without an opportunity for vindication. In many countries, whistleblowing is even associated with treachery or spy. Perhaps the most remarkable example is the US whistleblower, Edward Snowden (Murphy 2014), who leaked details of several top-secret related to US and British government mass surveillance programs to the press, and then, was forced to flee his country to escape prosecution.

In a fearful environment, it seems to be very difficult, if not impossible, for an employee to get involved in whistleblowing actions (Gül and Özcan 2011). In contrast, a perceived positive working climate may stimulate the employee to report witnessed wrongdoings (Near et al. 1993). Indeed, the employee would be encouraged to speak out if he/she is assured against retaliations and confident that he/she will be listened to and that appropriate actions will be taken. To this end, the employees would feel less threatened in regarding whistleblowing as a fair process when managers demonstrate organizational justice and correct reported wrongdoings (Seifert et al. 2014). It then seems that the nature of organizational climate plays a key role in building employee's confidence in whistleblowing process. In this respect, Huang et al. (2013) argued that the establishment or improvement of the ethical climate can enhance whistleblowing intention for organizational members. Equally, Near et al. (1993, p. 204) posited that "positive organizational climate may discourage serious wrongdoing and encourage whistle-blowing under some conditions, but the relationship is not as straightforward as might be expected".

Yet, the extant literature lacks clear empirical evidence addressing the relation between organizational climate and whistleblowing. Moreover, the investigations on whistleblowing are often concentrated in trade-oriented organizations of the Anglo-Saxon countries. While ethics and courteous manner are inviolable principles in the field of education, the theory of whistleblowing has been used very little in the academic organizations. Departing from this trend, this study aims to examine the effects of organizational climate on whistleblowing intention in academic organizations. Beyond the mismanagement, corruption or financial scandals often discussed in profit-oriented companies, universities appear as a relevant environment

to discuss whistleblowing since they hide other types of deviations such as trading sex for grades, cheating with tutors or lecturers' implications, issuing of undeserved grades or fake degrees, etc. These wrongdoings in an assumed high probity and integrity environment may remain hidden because of either the passivity of universities staffs or prevailing organizational climate. It then seems relevant to examine how organizational climate influence whistleblowing intention in universities.

The remainder of the research is organized as follows. The second section reviews the extant literature. Third, the paper outlines the research method. Fourth, we present the statistical outputs. Fifth, we discuss the findings. The sixth and final section concludes and suggests directions for future investigations.

2 Literature review

2.1 Whistleblowing in organizational framework

Etymologically, whistleblowing derives from the association of the word “whistle” and the verb “to blow”. The original meaning of the expression “blow the whistle” or “Whistleblowing” is associated to an action from a referee or a policeman (Sampaio and Sobral 2013). The former refers to a whistle to either signalize an illegal action or a foul within a game while the latter uses it to draw attention on an infraction in the social setting or summon the public to help apprehending a lawbreaker. In both cases (policeman and referee), the whistleblower has the authority to either immediately stop the wrongdoer or to alert officially the law enforcement authorities to maintain fair-play as well as save the public from any harm or injustice.

In organizational context, whistleblowing refers to speak out, to tell, to utter secretly, to whisper, to squeal, to signal, to summon, or to give secret information in order to unveil a wrongdoing, an irregularity or a witnessed injustice. The most recurring definition encountered in the literature is suggested by Near and Miceli (1985, p. 525), who define whistleblowing as “the disclosure by organization 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 affect action”. Perks and Smith (2008) emphasized that whistleblowing aims to eradicate unethical behavior in the workplace. When involving in whistleblowing, the employee believes that the public interest overrides the interest of the organization he or she serves (Nader et al. 1972). Yet, the employee in a workplace usually lacks a real power or authority to immediately stop wrongdoings and must appeal to someone with a higher decision-making responsibility.

The introduction of the whistleblowing concept in organizations challenged the theoretical based of the employee loyalty. The loyal employee sacrifices his or her own goals and interests and then gets involved with and identifies his or herself with the organization (Lurie and Frenkel 2002). It requires the obligation of discretion and confidentiality, the complete devotion to the corporate priorities, and after all the abstention from any acts that could harm the company. The loyalty duty prevents then the employees from reporting their employers' wrongdoings (Riedy and Sperduto 2014) since they cannot bite the hand that feeds them. To this end,

whistleblowing actions appears as a violation of the employer-employee trust relationship (Tavani and Grodzinsky 2014) and a fraying of social fabric (Waytz et al. 2013). While considering whistleblowing to be incompatible with loyalty and morally irrelevant in working environment, Masaka (2007) also agrees that it can be tolerated in case of protecting a higher public interest. This objection raised to justify the disloyal behavior of an employee is discussed through the standard theory and complicity theory developed by Davis (1996). According to the standard theory, whistleblowing is morally permitted when the employee has already exhausted the internal procedures and possibilities without reaction and the wrongdoing will likely do serious and considerable harm to the public. Also, the employees should be sure that the external reporting will correct or stop the wrongdoing. In complicity theory, the employee is morally required to report the wrongdoing that he or she has witnessed in the working environment in order to avoid colluding with the wrongdoers. Whistleblowing actions appear then as an ethical necessity for an employee to disclaim moral responsibility (Uysal and Yavuz 2015). To this end, Wilmot (2000) reports that the ethics of whistleblowing is deeply grounded in its moral purpose, whether for changing a situation for the better or fulfilling a deontological duty.

Furthermore, the whistleblowing intention is an extension of an individual's moral judgment through a decision-making process (Brennan and Kelly 2007). In this process, the potential whistleblower may face both personal factors (years of service, supervisory status, educational level, etc.) and contextual influences such as protection legislation, the code of ethics, organizational culture, and organizational climate (Rothwell and Baldwin 2007). Whistleblowing appears then as a complex decision-making process in which the employee has to assess several factors or determining features. Though there are some studies on how some of these factors affect the whistleblowing intention, little is known about how the organizational climate can be decisive in the whistleblowing intention. Yet, it will be worthwhile to understand organizational climate concept before involving in how it shapes whistleblowing decision-making.

2.2 Organizational climate and the whistleblowing intention

Organizational climate is a multidimensional construct that encompasses a wide range of individual evaluations of the work environment (James and James 1989). It is the set of perceptions shared by workers who occupy the same workplace (Peña-Suárez et al. 2013). It is associated to the social setting made by the specific characteristics and features perceived by organization members and which determine their behaviors. Tagiuri and Litwin (1968) define it as values of a set of characteristics or attributes related to the quality of the total working environment experienced by organization's members and which can influence their behavior. As put by Forehand and Von Gilmer (1964), it is the environmental variation enduring over time in a workplace, distinguishing an organization from others and influencing the behavior of its members.

Organizational climate has been measured in many ways. For instance, Litwin and Stringer (1968) referred to dimensions such structure, responsibility,

warmth, support, rewards, conflicts, standards, identity, and risk. Later, Neal et al. (2000) measured it using employees' perceptions about seven different aspects of their work environment, including appraisal and recognition, goal congruency, role clarity, supportive leadership, participative decision-making, professional growth, and professional interaction. Equally, Burton et al. (2004) referred to trust, morale, rewards equitability, leader credibility, conflict, scapegoating, and resistance to change. Organizational climate has also been assessed using variables such as individual autonomy, organizational justice, esprit (the spirit of unity), and consideration or through psychological measures such as disengagement, hindrance, intimacy, and aloofness. In this study, we assess organizational climate relying on variables psychologically sensitive to individual decision-making. These are individual autonomy, organizational justice, morale, leader credibility, trust, safety climate, and mobbing. Most of these selected variables have already been studied in earlier studies such as that of Rentsch (1990), who includes behavior of the leader and trust. Other variables were also investigated by James et al. (2008) and Patterson et al. (2005). These dimensions are not exhaustive, but they reflect those that are relevant to our study.

The perception of the working environment can determine the behavior of organization's members and therefore shapes their decision-making process. It is then obvious that the organizational climate experienced should affect the employees' whistleblowing intention, either positively or negatively. For instance, the employee's perception of trust, safety, justice, and ethic in the working environment may positively drive whistleblowing decision-making. To this end, Seifert et al. (2014) emphasize that trust to supervisor and to organization are key factors that mediate the relationship between organizational justice and the likelihood of whistleblowing. Accordingly, Seifert et al. (2010) also argued that the organizational justice increases the likelihood of whistleblowing.

Furthermore, a potential whistleblower also pays attention to how previous whistleblowings were addressed. He or she cares about the transparency and the fairness of whistleblowing procedure as well as its related treatment. The employee may assess managerial attention to the complaint and actions taken to stop the wrongdoings or the following retaliations measures against the whistleblower (Miceli and Near 1985). When an organization publishes general information related to the number of incidents or wrongdoings reported and general actions are taken about those incidents, employees may feel safety and trustful climate which may positively impact their likelihood to unravel wrongdoings observed in the working environment. Such information could serve as a signal that the organization is trustworthy, and its climate is safe in handling whistleblowing. Moreover, Colquitt and Rodell (2011) showed a reciprocal relationship between organizational justice and trustworthiness. More broadly, general organizational climate provides a context for specific safety evaluation. Indeed, if employees perceive that there is an open communication and the organization is supportive of their general welfare and well-being, they will be more likely to perceive that the organization values the safety of employees (Neal et al. 2000).

However, the perception of mobbing in a working environment could significantly impede whistleblowing intention. In fact, mobbing or psychological terror in working

life is a psychosocial harassment involving hostile and unethical acts directed in a systematic way by one individual or a group of individuals against a specific person who is pushed into helpless and defenceless position (Leymann 1996). The mobbing aims to prevent the victim from effective communication; to maintain good contact with his or her work environment; to deprive the victim of any rewarding activity (professional or social). It hurts and destabilizes the victim who may lose self-confidence and feels intense low self-esteem. Gül and Özcan (2011b) revealed that mobbing can lead to organizational silence by being a muting factor for employees.

Overall, the employee has the alternative of remaining silent or blows the whistle on wrongdoings depending on perceived organization climate. To take the decision to sound the alarm, employee needs to be certain of protections (availability of whistleblowers protection laws) or have exceptional courage, or both. It implies that the employee may decide not to blow the whistle if they fear retaliations, if the misconduct was committed by a high-status member of the organization, and if the organization does not tolerate dissent and does not provide support for its members. Similarly, Rothschild (2013) argue that the relationship between whistleblowing judgment and whistleblowing intention is moderated by the fear of retaliations, the status of the wrongdoer, the perceived organizational support and the tolerance for dissent within the organization. In contrast, the employee may display higher intentions of whistleblowing when the organization displays a positive climate. Though the literature has not provided a full overview of how each component of organizational climate affects whistleblowing intention, we expect to come up with useful insights on this issue. Accordingly, we broadly assume that whistleblowing intention depends upon all factors perceived in the organizational environment having psychological effects on employees' decision making-process. While some of them foster the whistleblowing intention, others may impede it. Based on this rationale, we posit the hypotheses underpinning this study as follows.

H₁ The organization climate variables affect whistleblowing intention

- H_{1a} There is a positive relationship between individual autonomy and whistleblowing intention
- H_{1b} There is a positive relationship between organizational justice and whistleblowing intention
- H_{1c} There is a positive relationship between morale and whistleblowing intention
- H_{1d} There is a positive relationship between leader credibility and whistleblowing intention
- H_{1e} There is a positive relationship between trust and whistleblowing intention
- H_{1f} There is a positive relationship between safety climate and whistleblowing intention
- H_{1g} There is a negative relationship between mobbing whistleblowing intention

3 Research method

3.1 Data instruments scales

We developed a questionnaire structured in three sections. The first section includes items related to the whistleblowing intention. The second section groups to the measures of organizational climate. The last section focuses on demographic characteristics of the respondents. The wording of the scale items is refined to suit the context of academic organizations. The questionnaire is also translated into Turkish language. Though the literature reveals different Likert-scales, in this study, we reduce all of them to five-point (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = partly disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = partly agree, 5 = fully agree) with answers representing different levels of agreement in each item. A complete listing of the variable-scales is presented as follows:

3.2 Dependent variable: whistleblowing intention (Whi_Int)

We refer to the whistleblowing intention (Whi_Int) as dependent variable. It is the likelihood of an employee reporting wrongdoings in the workplace. Although Huang et al. (2013) reported that there is no sufficiently stable questionnaire available for whistleblowing intention, we have relied on the scales developed by Gökçe (2013) and Ponnu et al. (2008) to set up fourteen item-scales to measure whistleblowing intention in which two of them are just controlling items.

3.3 Independent variables

3.3.1 Individual autonomy (Ind_Aut)

Autonomy is the degree to which the task provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out (Hackman and Oldham 1975). Individual Autonomy is assessed by adopting three items related to dimensions including work method autonomy, work scheduling autonomy, and work criteria autonomy as specified by Breaugh (1985) and later used by Denton and Kleiman (2001).

3.3.2 Organizational justice (Org_Jus)

It is measured by considering its three dimensions highlighted in the literature. These are distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice. Five items have been used to assess Organizational Justice by referring to studies of Al-Zu'bi (2010) and Niehoff and Moorman (1993).

3.3.3 Morale (Morale)

It refers to the atmosphere related to employee satisfaction and enthusiasm towards the achievement of individual and group goals in a given job situation. We have assessed Morale using four items by referring to Hardy (2009).

3.3.4 Leader credibility (Lea_Cre)

Credibility is the combination of three factors, including competence, trustworthiness, and caring/goodwill (McCroskey and Teven 1999). From an employee perspective, credibility is characterized not only by consistency between words and deeds, but by an alignment between the values of the trustor and the trustee (Schoorman et al. 2007). Leader Credibility has been measured with three items referring to supervisor source credibility scale developed by Steelman et al. (2004).

3.3.5 Trust (Trust)

It is an expression of confidence between the parties in which one party expects not be harmed or put at risk by the other (Jones and George 1998). It is related to factors such as reliability, honesty, worthiness, benevolence, credibility, truth, good faith and confidence (Kramer and Tyler 1995). We use four items to assess Trust by referring to works of AL-Abr row et al. (2013), Islamoglu et al. (2012), and Yeh (2009).

3.3.6 Safety climate (Saf_Cli)

It describes shared employee perceptions of how safety management is being operationalized in the workplace, at a particular moment in time (Byrom and Corbridge 1997; Zohar 1980). It refers to the perceptions workers share about the importance of safety to their organization (Wills et al. 2005) and has been assessed by five items.

3.3.7 Mobbing (Mobb)

It is assessed with four item-scale by referring to the works of Hacıcaferoğlu and Gündoğdu (2013), Yaman (2009), and Aiello et al. (2008).

3.4 Sampling and data source

The population of our study encompasses Konya's universities academic staff. From this population, we have chosen Selçuk University as information gathering basis. Indeed, Selçuk University, established in 1975, is the first, most populous, the most famous and largest university in Konya. It comprises 8 faculties and 4 university institutes. In 2014, it is ranked the 10th best entrepreneurial and innovative Turkish university by TUBITAK (Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey) and the 15th out of 144 universities based on University Ranking by Academic

Performance (URAP) index established by Middle East Technical University. As part of our study, we conducted a cross sectional survey by sending randomly questionnaires to faculties or institutes members (lecturers, researchers and research assistants) leading to a sample of 250 statistical units.

3.5 Analysis methods and equations specifications

In this investigation, we refer to Chronbach Alpha to check the reliability of the findings while factor analysis is used to test validity. Then, we check correlation issues using the correlation matrix. Later, we conduct a linear regression analysis to test the relationship between organizational climate drivers and whistleblowing intention using the following model.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Whi_Int}_i = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot \text{Ind_Aut}_i \\ & + \beta_2 \cdot \text{Org_Jus}_i + \beta_3 \cdot \text{Morale}_i \\ & + \beta_4 \cdot \text{Lea_Cre}_i + \beta_6 \cdot \text{Trust}_i \\ & + \beta_7 \cdot \text{Saf_Cli}_i + \beta_5 \cdot \text{Mobb}_i + \varepsilon_i. \end{aligned}$$

4 Findings

4.1 Demographic distribution of the sample

The survey of this study has been carried out by giving opportunity to 250 Selçuk University faculties or institutes members (lecturers, researchers and research assistants) to fill questionnaires, in which 120 have provided usable data (a response rate of 48%). Most of the individuals surveyed are male (70.83%) and married (52.50%). 77.50% of the individuals surveyed are between 25 and 45 years old. These statistics reflect the general structure of academic staff in Turkey. For instance, the academic staff of the Selçuk University include about 30% of females. The demographic profile of the sample is presented in the Table 1.

4.2 Descriptive statistics

The descriptive statistics and Cronbach's Alpha coefficients are summarized in the Table 2.

Table 2 has revealed that organizational climate in Selçuk University is overall positive. Indeed, all the variables used to assess organizational climate in this study except mobbing have revealed an average score above 3 with low standard deviation (less than 1). The mobbing perceived by the academic staff in Selçuk University is low (average score 1.767 with standard deviation of 0.836).

Contrary to our expectation, the likelihood of whistleblowing intention is weak although the overall organization climate is positive. In fact, the whistleblowing intention shows an average value of 2.527 with standard deviation of 0.841. This

Table 1 Demographic profile of the sample

Demographic patterns	n	%
Sex		
Male	85	70.83
Female	35	29.17
Marital status		
Married	63	52.50
Single	57	47.50
Age		
Under 25 years	8	6.67
25–35	60	50.00
36–45	33	27.50
46–55	17	14.16
56 or older	2	1.67
Work experience in this university		
Under 1 year	7	5.83
1–3	34	28.33
4–6	30	25.00
7–9	11	9.17
10 years and more	38	31.67
Current position		
Research assistants	67	55.83
Specialists	1	0.83
Lecturers	7	5.83
Assistant professors	20	16.67
Associate professors	17	14.17
Professors	8	6.67

Source: created by the authors by processing cross sectional survey data (2014) with SPSS13.0

implies that faculties or institutes members (lecturers, researchers and research assistants) in Selçuk University do not have the intention to sound the alarm when they witness a wrongdoing of a colleagues or supervisors.

The outputs also display Cronbach's Alpha coefficients ranging between 0.671 and 0.911 meaning that the reliability scores of the instruments are globally acceptable.

4.3 Factor analysis

We refer to principal component analysis using Varimax method along with Kaiser Normalization to determine the factor structure and assess scale validity. We drop out three items with insignificant correlation coefficients at 5% level. We have found no items with correlation coefficients higher than 0.9. This confirms that there is no multicollinearity problem within the data. The determinant coefficient (D), the

Table 2 Descriptive statistics and reliability scores of variables

	Variables	Symbols	Number of items	Mean	Std. Dev.	Cronbach's Alpha
Independent variables	Individual autonomy	Ind_Aut	3	3.602	0.885	0.671
	Organizational justice	Org_Jus	5	3.306	0.926	0.807
	Morale	Morale	4	3.602	0.874	0.823
	Leader credibility	Lea_Cre	3	3.798	0.879	0.782
	Mobbing	Mobb	4	1.767	0.836	0.840
	Trust	Trust	4	3.481	0.960	0.890
	Safety climate	Saf_Cli	5	3.533	0.813	0.825
Dependent variable	Whistleblowing Intention	Whi_Int	12	2.527	0.841	0.911

N = 120 Respondents; Cronbach's Alpha of all items taken together = 0.850

Source: created by the authors by processing cross sectional survey data (2014) with SPSS13.0

Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett test (χ^2) was found significant revealing that the sample size is consistent, and data are normally distributed. For every independent variable, the factor analysis reveals only a single factor, which we labelled with the related variable's identifier namely individual autonomy, organizational justice, morale, leader credibility, trust, safety climate, and mobbing. As for the dependent variable, the factor analysis has confirmed two-factor structure for whistleblowing intention that we have labelled formal whistleblowing intention (For_Whi) and informal whistleblowing intention (Inf_Whi) as inferred by the underpinning items. The outputs of factor analysis have been given in the Table 3.

4.4 Correlation analysis

Before beginning the regression analysis, we have computed the Spearman's rho correlation coefficients of all variables as listed in the Table 4. As expected, all the correlation coefficients are significant among the independent variables (individual autonomy, organizational justice, morale, leader credibility, trust, safety climate, and mobbing). On the contrary, most of the correlation coefficients are not significant between whistleblowing intention and organizational climate drivers. Most coefficient correlations among independent variables indicate relatively moderate values assuming low association.

4.5 Linear regression analysis

As the variable related to whistleblowing intention has been split into two sub-variables, i.e. formal whistleblowing versus informal whistleblowing, following the principal component analysis, the regression models are also operated accordingly. The

Table 3 Principal component factor analysis outputs

Ind_Aut ^a	Items	Component F ₁
Q7_1	I have the control over scheduling my work	0.824
Q7_3	I am able to modify what my work objectives are	0.760
Q7_2	My supervisors encourage me to suggest ways to improve job quality	0.760
Org_Jus ^b	Items	Component F ₂
Q7_4	My work schedule and my work load are quite fair compared to those of my colleagues	0.848
Q7_7	My supervisors treat me with respect and dignity when making work decisions	0.833
Q7_6	My supervisors discuss with me the implications of work decisions made	0.760
Q7_5	All work decisions are applied consistently to all faculty members	0.728
Q7_8	My level of pay and other rewards I receive are quite fair compared to those of my colleagues	0.579
Morale ^c	Items	Component F ₃
Q7_10	I am cheerful at work	0.873
Q7_12	I feel lots of energy at work	0.847
Q7_9	I look forward to going to work	0.844
Q7_11	My job is interesting	0.669
Lea_Cre ^d	Items	Component F ₄
Q7_19	I have confidence in the feedback my supervisors give me	0.897
Q7_18	My supervisor is fair when evaluating my work performance	0.879
Q7_17	In general, I respect my supervisors' opinions about my work performance	0.733
Mobb ^e	Items	Component F ₅
Q7_26	I am excluded from informal gatherings in my faculty	0.854
Q7_27	I feel like I am usually targeted of humiliating remarks or unfriendly attitude in my faculty	0.848
Q7_28	My speech or opinions are constantly criticized in my faculty	0.801
Q7_25	I have hostile or unfriendly relationship with my colleagues	0.790
Trust ^f	Items	Component F ₆
Q7_14	The faculty members are honest	0.940
Q7_13	The faculty members are reliable	0.930
Q7_15	The faculty members are benevolent	0.913
Q7_16	Rules and procedures applicable in my department are reliable and credible	0.687
Saf_Cli ^g	Items	Component F ₇
Q7_23	Good working relationships exist in the faculty	0.862

Table 3 (continued)

Saf_Cli ^g	Items	Component F ₇
Q7_20	I can openly discuss work policy with colleagues or supervisors	0.773
Q7_21	All faculty members are told when changes are made to the working environment	0.752
Q7_24	I am confident about my future with the faculty	0.749
Q7_22	I have sufficient thinking time to plan and carry out my works to an adequate Standard	0.700
Whi_Int ^h	Items	Component F ₈ F ₉
Q7_33	If I am aware of wrongdoings committed by a colleague, I will report it by using official procedures	0.894
Q7_36	If I am aware of wrongdoings committed by my supervisors, I will report it to the appropriate person inside the faculty	0.887
Q7_29	If I am aware of wrongdoings committed by a colleague, I will report it to the appropriate person inside the faculty	0.887
Q7_38	If I am aware of wrongdoings committed by my supervisors, I will report it by giving detailed information about myself	0.886
Q7_31	If I am aware of wrongdoings committed by a colleague, I will report it by giving detailed information about myself	0.881
Q7_30	If I am aware of wrongdoings committed by a colleague, I will report it to the appropriate person outside the faculty	0.681
Q7_37	If I am aware of wrongdoings committed by my supervisors, I will report it to the appropriate person outside the faculty	0.674
Q7_34	If I am aware of wrongdoings committed by a colleague, I will report it in an informal manner	0.876
Q7_41	If I am aware of wrongdoings committed by my supervisors, I will report it in an informal manner	0.867

F8 formal whistleblowing intention, F9 informal whistleblowing intention

^aD=0.613 > 0.00001; KMO=0.652 > 0.5; $\chi^2=56.310$ (p < 0.000); Total variance explained= 61.150%

^bD=0.153 > 0.00001; KMO=0.672 > 0.5; $\chi^2=217.161$ (p < 0.000); Total variance explained= 57.095%

^cD=0.206 > 0.00001; KMO=0.783 > 0.5; $\chi^2=184.442$ (p < 0.000); Total variance explained= 65.968%

^dD=0.386 > 0.00001; KMO=0.644 > 0.5; $\chi^2=123.405$ (p < 0.000); Total variance explained= 70.477%

^eD=0.187 > 0.00001; KMO=0.757 > 0.5; $\chi^2=194.219$ (p < 0.000); Total variance explained= 67.853%

^fD=0.047 > 0.00001; KMO=0.817 > 0.5; $\chi^2=356.499$ (p < 0.000); Total variance explained= 76.346%

^gD=0.151 > 0.00001; KMO=0.763 > 0.5; $\chi^2=218.242$ (p < 0.000); Total variance explained= 59.108%

^hRotation converged in 3 iterations; D=0.001 > 0.00001; KMO=0.884 > 0.5; $\chi^2=775.085$ (p < 0.000). Total variance explained= 75.139%

Table 5 reports the regression outputs concerning the association between organizational climate drivers and whistleblowing intention (formal vs informal).

Among the seven organizational climate variables included in this model, only individual autonomy shows a significant coefficient at 10% level. Since

Table 4 Summary of Pearson's rho correlations

	Ind_Aut	Org_Jus	Morale	Led_Cre	Mobb	Trust	Saf_Cli	For_Whi	Inf_Whi
Ind_Aut	1.000								
Org_Jus	0.499*** (0.000)	1.000							
Morale	0.543*** (0.000)	0.467*** (0.000)	1.000						
Led_Cre	0.582*** (0.000)	0.583*** (0.000)	0.537*** (0.000)	1.000					
Mobb	0.464*** (0.000)	0.589*** (0.000)	0.227*** (0.013)	0.566*** (0.000)	1.000				
Trust	0.553*** (0.000)	0.720*** (0.000)	0.646*** (0.000)	0.710*** (0.000)	0.608*** (0.000)	1.000			
Saf_Cli	-0.477*** (0.000)	-0.530*** (0.000)	-0.361*** (0.000)	-0.587*** (0.000)	0.518*** (0.000)	-0.593*** (0.000)	1.000		
For_Whi	-0.178* (0.055)	-0.095 (0.307)	0.006 (0.946)	-0.095 (0.302)	-0.112 (0.224)	-0.007 (0.938)	0.038 (0.679)	1.000	
Inf_Whi	-0.081 (0.387)	0.038 (0.683)	-0.067 (0.470)	0.064 (0.492)	-0.224 (0.014)**	-0.037 (0.694)	-0.029 (0.757)	0.001 (0.988)	1.000

We consider a statistical significance "p-value" up to 10%, i.e. a 90% confidence interval for the calculated Pearson Rho coefficients

***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); **Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); *Correlation is significant at the 0.1 level (2-tailed)

Source: Created by the authors by processing cross sectional survey data (2014) with SPSS13.0

Table 5 Regression outputs

Independent variable	Formal whistleblowing intention	Informal whistleblowing intention
(Constant)	0.007 (0.944)	-0.010 (0.908)
Ind_Aut	-0.233* (0.068)	-0.064 (0.591)
Org_Jus _i	-0.115 (0.414)	0.247* (0.064)
Morale	0.089 (0.516)	-0.242* (0.062)
Lea_Cre	-0.111 (0.452)	0.295** (0.035)
Trust	0.222 (0.219)	0.024 (0.888)
Saf_Cli	-0.081 (0.519)	-0.104 (0.377)
Mobb	-0.070 (0.605)	-0.525*** (0.000)
	R ² =0.068; F=1.132 (p=0.349)	R ² =0.172; F=3.212 (p=.0004)

*p < 0.1; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01; p-values are provided in brackets

Source: Created by the authors by processing cross sectional data regression with SPSS13.0

this coefficient is also negative, it can be inferred that individual autonomy in Selçuk University is inversely associated with formal whistleblowing intention. In essence, a higher level of individual autonomy in Selçuk University decreases the likelihood of whistleblowing when the academic staff has to use formal procedures to report wrongdoings.

Contrary to the first regression outputs, the regression coefficient of individual autonomy is not significant while the coefficients related to organizational justice, morale, leader credibility and mobbing become significant. At the same time, morale and mobbing display negative coefficient whilst organization justice and leader credibility come out with positive coefficients. In this vein, morale and mobbing seem to be inversely associated to informal whistleblowing intention in Selçuk University when organization justice and leader credibility positively impact it.

5 Discussions

When considering a formal procedure, the findings reveal no association between organizational variables and whistleblowing intention except for individual autonomy. In the latter case, individual autonomy is negatively related to formal whistleblowing intention. Contrary to our expectation, this contradictory relationship implies that an academic member with an important level of autonomy displays a low likelihood to report wrongdoings. Therefore, none of the sub-hypotheses is supported and consequently the main hypothesis is rejected. It follows that a relevant

association between organizational climate variables and whistleblowing intention can be hardly established under a formal whistleblowing process. In this context, the surveyed individuals may hide their true response regarding the likelihood of reporting wrongdoings depending on the organizational climate.

With the informal whistleblowing intention, the statistical outputs are completely different. In fact, the findings reveal that morale and mobbing are negatively related to informal whistleblowing intention while organizational justice and leader credibility positively affect it. It means that an increasing leader credibility and organizational justice in Selçuk University lead to a higher level of blowing the whistle. As expected, a high perception of mobbing by academy members seems to prevent them from blowing the whistle when witnessing wrongdoings. In contrast, an employee with high morale displays a low likelihood of reporting wrongdoings. As for individual autonomy, trust and safety climate, there show no relationship with whistleblowing intention. It follows that the hypotheses H_{1b} , H_{1d} and H_{1g} are supported while H_{1a} , H_{1c} , H_{1e} and H_{1f} are rejected.

Overall, the findings support the theoretical hypothesis posited by Near et al. (1993) when assuming that “positive organizational climate may discourage serious wrongdoing and encourage whistle-blowing under some conditions, but the relationship is not as straightforward as might be expected”. In fact, the study reveals that positive organizational climate drivers, except morale, foster whistleblowing intention while mobbing impedes the likelihood of report wrongdoings in the workplace. This result holds only in the case of informal whistleblowing procedures. The results are also consistent with Rothschild (2013) when arguing that retaliations can dampen whistleblowing intention.

Furthermore, the study advanced the knowledge about the connection between organizational climate variables and the whistleblowing intention. Indeed, the investigation unveils two positive organizational climate drivers (organizational justice and leader credibility) and mobbing to be very sensitive to the whistleblowing intention. Hence, organizational justice and leader credibility have to be accurately leveraged in academic organization to ease whistleblowing in academic organizations. It is also important to dispel out mobbing or psychological terror to increase the likelihood of academic members to report wrongdoings in their workplace. In essence, these relevant variables should be efficiently handled to increase whistleblowing and consequently maintain high level of corporate governance.

6 Conclusion

This study lent empirical support on how organizational climate variables affect the likelihood of whistleblowing in academic organizations. Although all the seven organizational drivers do not display significant coefficients in the regression analysis, it is clear that some of the variables contribute to the whistleblowing decision-making process. In essence, organizational justice, morale, leader credibility and mobbing are associated with informal whistleblowing intention while only individual autonomy is bound with formal whistleblowing intention. However, the negative

effect of individual autonomy and morale on whistleblowing intention is opposite to our expectation. Further, the findings depict trust and safety climate as irrelevant determinants of whistleblowing intention in Selçuk University.

Our findings contribute to theoretical and empirical backgrounds associated with whistleblowing decision-making regarding organizational climate impacts. However, only the positive organizational climate will not be sufficient in the decision-making process leading an employee to blow the whistle in case he or she witness a wrongdoing or malpractice committed by his or her supervisors or fellow colleagues in the work environment. Other relevant factors such as religious issue, national culture and lack of whistleblower protection laws may hamper the appropriate impact of an organizational climate on whistleblowing decision making process.

The results can also be applied to other contexts such as African countries where the paternalistic management environment in the universities does not favor the denunciation. For example, how to detect and report plagiarism? A complex and multi-faceted phenomenon, academic plagiarism in universities in developing countries is part of future studies that not only can have practical positive implications for the development of universities but also for the literature of the theory of denunciation. How to contribute to academic integrity? What is the relationship between corruption and denunciation in academia? Do isomorphism pressures influence or explain them mimicry of whistleblowers? In developed countries, reporting is a stressful process as it can lead to legal threats and various forms of retaliation (Fox and Beall 2014). However, in developing countries and especially in the academic world where bureaucratic hierarchies and cultural orientations need to be considered, it appears that the whistleblower finds himself in discomfort and shame to make malicious revelations (Pillay et al. 2017). Comparative studies can thus be envisaged (Pillay et al. 2017).

Although being aware that the results of this research might not be fully generalizable outside the academic organizations, we suggest that more investigations should be carried out to present an extensive model with more climate drivers to examine the relationship between organizational climate and the likelihood of whistleblowing intention of university staffs. In addition to regression analysis, more sophisticated data analysis methods can be applied to get better results and understanding about this relationship. Despite these limitations, we believe that our study adds valuable information to the understanding of the complex issues regarding to the relationship between organizational climate perception and the likelihood of wrongdoings and malpractices to be reported in academic organizations.

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