Chapter 13

Can Whistleblowing Be a Solution to Unethical Behaviors in the Tourism Industry?

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ABSTRACT

Researchers have discussed the concept of whistleblowing in a variety of fields including psychology, sociology, ethics, law, and public policy. Whistleblowing is expressed as the disclosure of illegal, unethical or illegitimate practices under the control of employers by members of the organization to persons or organizations that may affect the action. Whistleblowing is so important especially in the tourism industry that many tourist establishments cannot disregard it. Unethical behaviors may arise from the organization itself as well as the personality characteristics of the employees in the tourism industry as in different sectors. The behaviors of superiors and individuals within the organization, ethical practices in the tourism industry, moral climate of society, and organizational policies constitute sources of unethical behaviors in the tourism businesses. For this reason, it is very important to encourage and legally protect whistleblowers who will inform the authorities of ethical and illegal behavior.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, organizations can continue their existence depending on the labor force and customer loyalty they have. It has become increasingly importance for both employees and customers (guests) how organizations stand against laws and ethical principles. Since each employee wants to be in an environment with ethical climate, each customer (guest) also has desire to purchase product or service from any or-
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Whistleblowing, one of the new subjects of the organizational behavior, is used to define the act of the employee to announce illegal, unethical, suspicious or not correct behaviors within an organization to the authorities or public, i.e. the act of non-compulsory disclosure (Jubb, 1999:83). The formal/informal structure of the organization, leaders’ styles, employees and managers’ moral values and the loyalty levels the employees feel to the organization have an effect on whether the act of whistleblowing is performed or not (Yarmaci, 2018:83). In 1993, an employee named “Jeffrey Wigand” working in a company which produced cigarettes disclosed that the nicotine in the cigarette increased addiction and led to cancer, which is shown as one of the first examples of whistleblowing (Ozdemir, 2015: 17). As the number of these examples is gradually increasing in different sectors, the concept of whistleblowing has been provided to take place in management literature as a subject needed to be investigated.

Also, in the tourism industry which is a labor-intensive sector, illegal and unethical behaviors between either managers and their subordinates or employees and guests in the organizations may lead to damage to the organization in the long term. Therefore, it is important that tourism employees perform wrong behavior in question and struggle with unethical behaviors. In the literature review, it is seen that whistleblowing studies performed in the tourism industry are insufficient. This study was therefore intended to inform and encourage staff on whistleblowing action and to contribute to academic studies in this industry. The study examines the concept of whistleblowing in the tourism industry. The content of this chapter includes whistleblowing and whistleblower; theories of whistleblowing; types of whistleblowing; reasons of whistleblowing; whistleblowing process; outcomes of whistleblowing; legislative regulations on whistleblowing; and unethical behaviors in the tourism industry.

WHISTLEBLOWING AND WHISTLEBLOWER

Concept of Whistleblowing

The concept of whistleblowing is also expressed as “Organizational Misconduct/Wrongdoings” and “Principled Organizational Dissent” in the literature (Aktan, 2006:3). Whistleblowing has recently been seen in organizations as a subject that requires a systematic study that attracts the attention of the authorities and the public (Near and Miceli, 1985:14). Researchers discuss the concept of whistleblowing in a variety of fields including psychology, sociology, ethics, law and public policy. Both organization and government policy-makers are greatly interested in the successful implementation of legal and organizational systems to promote the reporting of illegal or unethical behaviors. However, researchers can only offer a limited number of recommendations for the design and implementation of such systems without establishing a comprehensive theoretical framework on whistleblowing (Park, 2009:545).

The concept of “whistleblowing” which began to take place in the literature in the 1990s started to be used with the whistling of British policemen to warn criminals. The concept of whistleblowing has been also used in organizations along with the announcement of illegal practices and the disallowance