

Predicting Employees' Intent to Confront and Stay Silent about Wrongdoing: Are Kohlberg's Six Stages of Moral Development Significant?

조직 내부의 부정에 대한 구성원의 대결 및 침묵 의도의 예측: Kohlberg의 도덕발달 6단계가 중요한가?

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ABSTRACT

이 연구에서는 구성원이 조직 내부에서 부정을 보았을 때 이에 맞설 것인가 침묵할 것인가의 의도 예측에, Kohlberg 도덕발달 이론에서 개인의 도덕 발달의 수준이 중요한 역할을 하는가를 분석하였다. 그 동안 부정에 대한 구성원의 반응이라는 점에서의 대결 및 침묵 의도와 개인의 도덕발달 수준 간의 관계에 대한 연구는 거의 없었다. 이러한 점에서 첫째, Kohlberg의 도덕발달 6 단계에 의한 구성원의 도덕발달 수준이 내부에서 부정을 목격했을 때 이에 맞설 것인가 침묵할 것인가의 의도를 예측하는 유효한 변수인가? 그런 경우, 도덕 발달 각 단계는 이러한 의도를 얼마나 설명하는가를 연구문제로 설정하고 가설을 수립하였다. 이를 검증하고자 설문지를 개발, 교육기관 구성원들을 대상으로 조사하였다. 총 290명으로부터 응답을 받아 분석한 결과, 첫째 구성원 개인의 도덕발달 수준은 대체로 중요한 예측 변수가 아닌 것으로 나타났다. 둘째, Kohlberg 이론에서 개인의 도덕발달 수준을 나타내는 P 값은 부정에 맞서려는 의도 예측에는 유의하였으나 기대했던 것과는 반대로 영향은 부정적이었다. 또 침묵 예측에는 유의하지 않았다. 셋째, 반응 의도에 대한 개인 도덕발달 수준의 영향은 대결 및 침묵 의도 모두를 포함하여, Kohlberg 도덕발달 이론의 6단계 마다 달랐다. 즉 4, 6단계는 대결에 유의한 예측 변수였으나, 침묵 의도에 대하여는 3, 6 단계가 유의하였다. 이 연구는 이러한 결과에 기초하여 함축적 의미와 공직윤리 및 연구를 위한 시사점을 도출, 제시하였다.

Key words: 조직 구성원의 대결 및 침묵 의도, 부정, Kohlberg의 6단계 도덕발달이론

INTRODUCTION

What causes employees to confront and stay silent about the wrongdoings observed in organizational settings? When employees notice any wrongdoing but are not directly involved, why are some of them ethically obliged to intervene into the situation? The general belief is that an individual's level of moral development

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is an essential source of ethical awareness and motivations. Employees and their responses are invaluable to detect or prevent the incidence of wrongdoing in an organization (Miceli & Near, 2005: 100; Bowen & Blackmon, 2003: 1393-1394; Kaptein, 2011: 513; Premeaux & Bedeian, 2003: 1537; Rothschild & Miethe, 1999). However, most employees choose not to confront but rather to stay silent. They often think that it is not worth speaking up. How can an organization encourage them to speak up? There have been a number of studies on when and why employees either speak up or opt for silence (Donaghey et al., 2011: 52; Milliken et al., 2003). So far, few studies have conducted how employees' moral development would influence on their intent of confrontation and silence. This paper seeks to answer the following question: "Is employees' moral development a significant predictor of how they respond to wrongdoing in the organization?" To do so, we assess employees' ability of moral reasoning based on Kohlberg's six stages of moral development and then examine whether employees' moral development is a significant impact factor on their ethical response or not. If so, to what extent does each of the stages account for their intent to confront and stay silent?

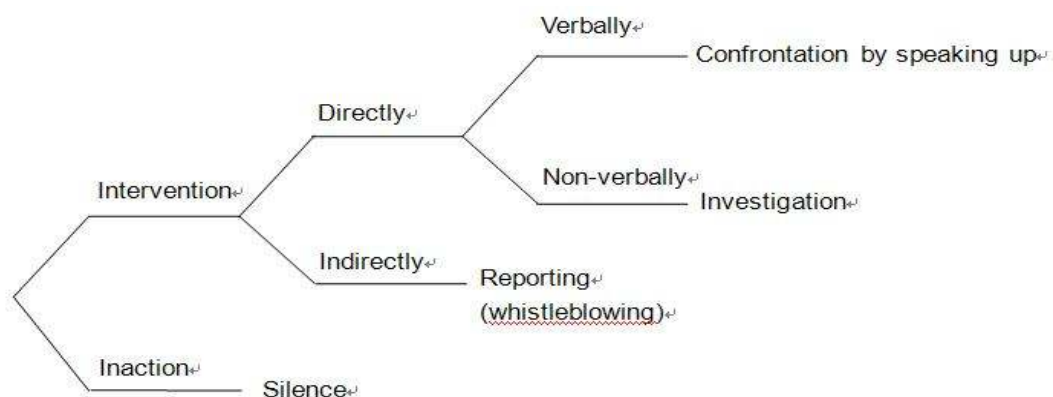
Our research is different from the existing literature in the following aspects. First, we explore the impact of employees' moral development on their response to wrongdoing. Although many studies on employees' ethical responses to observed wrongdoing—for example, whistle-blowing—have been carried out (Miceli, Near & Dworkin, 2009; Rothwell & Baldwin, 2007; Arnold & Ponemon, 1991), the relationship between employees' moral development and those responses has rarely been examined. Second, this study extends our discussion to employee confrontation. Studies on employee confrontation are relatively scanty. Kaptein (2011) was an exception and included confrontation as one of the five responses that employees may have toward wrongdoing. Today, both business and public organizations have become increasingly stressed from a variety of wrongdoing that occurs within them, which have become increasingly complex and difficult to manage. In this context, the results of this study will contribute to our understanding on how organizations can encourage their employees to ethically respond to wrongdoing in the workplace.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employees' Response to Wrongdoing in the Organization

Employees who notice organizational wrongdoing are faced with the question “Do I intervene or stay silent?” Employees who decide to refrain from taking action are “inactive or silent observers” (Kaptein, 2011: 514; Miceli & Near, 1992; Rothschild & Miethe, 1999). When employees decide to intervene, two alternatives are available: direct or indirect intervention. On the one hand, employees can attempt to resolve the wrongdoing by confronting the wrongdoer(s) directly (Kaptein, 2011: 515). On the other hand, they can simply report it (so-called whistle-blowing). Kaptein (2011) classified employees' responses into five types, namely, confrontation, reporting to management, external whistle-blowing, calling an ethics hotline, and inaction. If directly intending to intervene, employees again have two options: verbal or non-verbal intervention. Confrontation consists of both verbal and non-verbal behavior to protest wrongdoing. For example, employees may simply speak up, refuse to cooperate with the wrongdoer in other job-related issues, or attempt to investigate the wrongdoing to stop it. With regard to confrontation by speaking up, there may be various forms: asking wrongdoers to stop it, advising that it is wrong, blaming a wrongdoer for it, holding him or her liable for it, etc. Lastly, employees' inaction refers to an intentional act to deny any behaviors to cope with observed wrongdoing in the organization. Figure 1 summarizes employees' responses to wrongdoing.

FIGURE 1
A Typology of Employees' Response to Wrongdoing in an Organization



The literature on employees' response to wrongdoing mostly draws a distinction between inaction and reporting it (Kaptein, 2011: 515). For example, Teo and Caspersz (2011) posed employees' responses by "a dichotomous choice between whistleblowing and silence," while Kaptein (2011) used the distinction between inaction and external whistle-blowing. On the surface, it seems that confrontation by speaking up is nearly viewed at the opposite end of employees' response spectrum from silence. From an ethics perspective, employees' confrontation by speaking up and reporting wrongdoing is viewed as desirable because these actions contribute to preventing and correcting wrongdoing in the organization. On the contrary, silence is used as a term with negative connotations (Perlow & Williams, 2003). De Maria (2006: 223) defined silence as "the forced or voluntary withholding of public interest voice" (speeches, verbal declarations, oral evidence, conversations, etc). Rothwell and Baldwin (2007: 341) stated that silence "permits organization climates where fraud, waste, and abuse have the opportunity to flourish." Further, Beer and Nohria (2000) observed that silence gets "a bad name." However, as demonstrated by Van Dyne, Ang, and Botero (2003)'s classification of silence (Acquiescent Silence, Defensive Silence, and ProSocial Silence) and three parallel types of voice (Acquiescent Voice, Defensive Voice, and ProSocial Voice), silence has many different meanings beyond simply an absence of voice. For example, employees may not take any action if they think that the wrongdoing does not deserve their efforts to make it stop, their intervention will not be effective, or it is better to allow a wrongdoing as it stands for public interest. Some of them may reluctantly stay silent to avoid disadvantages.

Moral Development and Employees' Ethical Response

Many studies suggested that an individual's moral reasoning plays a significant role in eliciting ethical resistance such as organizational citizenship behaviors, blowing the whistle, etc. (Ryan, 2004; Doyle, Frecknall-Hughes & Summers, 2009; Arnold & Ponemon, 1991). For example, Cohn et al. (2010: 305) reported that high school students' conceptions of moral obligations were associated with their delinquent behavior, demonstrating that moral reasoning is an important predictor of rule-violating behavior. Liyanarachchi and Newdick (2009) also stated that university students' moral reasoning level has a positive impact on their propensity to blow the whistle. In their experiment in which 106 internal auditors participated, Arnold and Ponemon (1991: 12-13) found that the auditors who have relatively low

levels of moral reasoning were less sensitive to the perceptions of whistle-blowing as a means for disclosing wrongdoing. These research results imply that an individual's development of moral reasoning has a significant effect on how he or she deals with wrongdoing on a daily basis. Employee confrontation is classified as an ethical behavior while silence is occasionally considered coward behavior to evade his or her ethical obligations.

Many managerial efforts have also been implemented for the improvements of employees' ability of moral reasoning, aimed to foster employees to speak up or suppress silence at work. Morris and Wood (2011: 278) stated that ethics education programs can be a useful means to develop employees' ability to demonstrate principled moral reasoning. In previous studies (Wood, 2011: 232; Lowry, 2003), ethics education using dilemmas has been suggested to enhance employees' moral reasoning, moral awareness, ethical sensitivity, and even ethical behavior. Furthermore, Morris and Wood (2011) insisted that an ethics education program be developed based on an understanding of the concepts of ethics and moral development.

Kohlberg's Six Stages of Moral Development

Kohlberg's (1981) multi-stage theory of moral development has been widely cited as the leading theory in ethics studies, although it was not without criticism. His theory consists of six distinct stages that are grouped into three levels, based on the belief that an individual's ability of moral reasoning evolves as a function of age and education. The stages are summarized in Table 1 above.

TABLE 1
Kohlberg's Six Stages of Moral Reasoning

Level I	Pre-conventional Level
Stage 1:	The morality of obedience: Do what you're told.
Stage 2:	The morality of instrumental egoism and simple exchange: Let's make a deal.
Level II	Conventional Level
Stage 3:	The morality of interpersonal concordance: Be considerate, nice, and kind: you'll make friends.
Stage 4:	The morality of law and duty to the social order: Everyone in society is obligated to and protected by the law.
Level III	Post conventional Level
Stage 5	The morality of consensus-building procedures: You are obligated by the arrangements that are agreed to by due process procedures.
Stage 6	The morality of non-arbitrary social cooperation: Morality is defined by how rational and impartial people would ideally organize cooperation.

Note: Adapted from Chapter1 Background: Theory and research (p.5) by J. R. Rest (1994).
In J. R. Rest & D. Narvaez (Eds.). *Moral development in the professions: Psychology and applied ethics*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, pp.1-26.

At Stage 1, the child's moral judgment about "right or wrong" or "good or bad" is imposed by others, possibly based on fear and avoidance of punishment and obedience to authority. In this stage, "being 'good' is being obedient to the demands of superior others" (Rest, 1994: 6). For example, the child thinks stealing is wrong, because "I will be punished if I steal." At Stage 2, the child makes a decision to satisfy one's own needs and conform to secure rewards. The child gradually realizes that "all people have their own interests" (Rest, 1994: 6). The adolescent at Stage 3 makes a judgment by taking interpersonal relationships into account and meeting the expectations of others. They primarily consider their own social groups such as family, peers, organization, and nation, and are easily motivated to conform to the norms and expectations of the groups to which they belong. At Stage 4, the adolescents agree with the indispensability of law and

order, believing that it is always wrong to break the law. The adults at Stages 5 and 6 have independent moral judgments. They realize that diverse systems of law and value coexist in societies. The persons at Stage 5 believe that current laws and values can be changed, while those at Stage 6 orient themselves to universal principles, which are “visions of ideal cooperative societies” (Rest, 1994: 6). In Kohlberg’s six stages of moral development, the higher stage is viewed as more morally advanced than the lower ones. Rest (1979) developed the Defining Issues Test (DIT) as a scale to measure an individual’s ability of moral reasoning, based on Kohlberg’s moral development theory (Thoma, 2002: 225; Doyle, Frecknall-Hughes & Summers, 2009: 35). Employing dilemmas, the DIT assesses how people would justify their actions if placed in moral dilemmas by rating and ranking corresponding statements in terms of their moral importance. Recently, Defining Issues Test 2 (DIT2), a new revised version of the original DIT by Rest, Narvaez, Thoma & Bebeau (1999a) is mostly used. It provides the P score as a developmental index of moral reasoning, which is the principled score, computed by Stages 5 and 6. The P-score indicates the highest level of the subject’s development of moral reasoning.

Hypothesis Development

Our major interest in this research is manifest in the following questions: Is an employee’s ability of moral reasoning assessed by Kohlberg’s six stages of moral development a significant predictor in his or her intent to confront and stay silent wrongdoing in an organization? Specially, to what extent does each of the stages contribute to their intent? Moreover, what are the differences between employees’ intent of confrontation and silence in terms of the impact of employees’ development of moral reasoning on them? An individual’s ability of moral reasoning has been long believed as a fundamental factor to influence his or her ethical attitudes, intention, and behaviors. According to Xu, Iran-Nejad, and Thoma (2007: 17), “the DIT is significantly linked to many pro-social behaviors and to desired professional decision making.” De Maria (2008) stated that “interruption” of wrongdoings has been identified as characteristics of employees who are ethically higher qualified, while Morrison and Milliken (2000) wrote that “silence” is seldom ethical, in the respect that employees relinquish the opportunity to redress suspected wrongdoings in the organization. Therefore, we hypothesized that:

H1a: The scores of the high stages of Kohlberg's theory of moral development that employees obtain will be positively associated with employees' intent to confront wrongdoing in an organization.

H1b: The scores of the low stages of Kohlberg's theory of moral development that employees obtain will be positively associated with employees' intent to stay silent about wrongdoing.

Employees' intent toward a certain type of the responses may be more greatly related to a particular stage of Kohlberg's theory, because each stage entails different moral considerations in judgment from the others. For example, Stage 3 of Kohlberg's theory of moral development is more focused on the group's feelings, beliefs, or interests in the process in which an individual seeks to resolve an ethical dilemma, whereas Stage 4 primarily emphasizes an individual's duties and obligations to uphold laws, rules, and social order, relative to other stages. This leads to hypothesis 2:

H2a: The DIT P score (standing for the highest level of Kohlberg's moral development) will positively contribute to employees' intent to confront wrongdoing in an organization.

H2b: The scores of Stage 3 will have a positive effect on employees' intent to stay silent about wrongdoing.

H2c: The scores of Stage 4 will have a positive effect on employees' intent to confront it.

Demographic factors may also be an important factor to predict whether an employee would confront and stay silent about wrongdoing. For example, employees' period of service to the organization is one of those variables that may influence how he or she would respond to wrongdoing. Employees who have worked for a longer period for the organization more easily intervene in the situation of wrongdoing, because they tend to occupy a higher position with the responsibility to prevent it.

H3: Employees' period of service in the organization will contribute positively to their intent to confront wrongdoing, but negatively to the intent to stay silent about it.

METHOD

Research Participants and Data Collection

To determine whether employees' ability of moral reasoning is a significant predictor of their intent of confrontation and silence, we conducted a structured questionnaire survey of public employees who serve at education agencies nationwide in South Korea between June and December 2008. At the time, respondents participated in a three-day ethics training program offered by the Anti-Corruption & Civil Rights Commission (ACCRC). There is a wide range of training programs that public or private institutions offer to enhance short-term and/or long-term job performance, since public employees are required to attend those programs to complete 90 hours of training program a year. Public employees are asked to create the best package of programs that they would like to take on a voluntary basis to meet the required hours, while avoiding unnecessary duplication with the programs they already took and scheduling their own hours. One of the authors was an instructor of the program distributed a self-report survey questionnaire to the employees on the first day of the program, before regular class began. The questionnaire had three parts: a measure of employees' intent to confront and stay silent about wrongdoing, a section assessing Kohlberg's moral development stages, and demographic information. We obtained 317 responses and used 290 questionnaires for analysis, after eliminating the ones with uncompleted items.

Measures

Employees' Intent to Confront and Stay Silent about Wrongdoing

To measure employees' intent to respond to wrongdoing, we used multiple items to increase validity in measurement and a vignette to reduce respondents' variances in responding to our questions. The vignette was described by the detailed nature of the wrongdoing: "you discover that an employee in charge of a purchase or construction agreement has committed a wrongdoing offering advantages to a particular contractor for receiving money or other valuables not

allowed, and embezzled the related budgets for his or her own private interests by manipulating accounts and receipts.” After reading the vignette, respondents were asked to provide their answer to a question, “What would you do about it?” and were provided 5 items by which employees’ intent toward confrontation and silence could be assessed. Respondents reported their intent on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from “5 = strongly approve” to “1 = strongly disapprove.” The items are shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2
Question Items for Employees’ Intent to Confront and Stay Silent about Wrongdoing

R1	I would ask the wrongdoer to stop his or her illegitimate behavior.
R2	I would pretend not to see the wrongdoing.
R3	I would complain to the wrongdoer that he or she is committing illicit activities.
R4	I would ask him or her to take the responsibility for it.
R5	I would remain silent about it.

In the study on employee responses to observed wrongdoing, Kaptein (2011: 521) assessed employees’ intent of confrontation by an item “Try to resolve the matter directly,” and with regard to silence by “Look the other way or do nothing.” We performed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to examine whether the number of the items extracted is consistent with our typology of employees’ response. In this analysis, we designated 2 as the number of factors because employees’ responses were assumed to be confrontation and silence. Table 3 presents the results.

With respect to the results, two factors were identified, confirming that two types of employees’ responses to wrongdoing are acceptable. The factors are as follows: Confrontation (CO) and silence (SI). These factors account for 63.904% of the variance. Cronbach’s alphas for CO and SI are .851 and .756, respectively. The averages of items for each factor are computed.

TABLE 3
Results of Factor Analysis on the Items for Employees' Intent to Confront and Stay
Silent about Wrongdoing

(N=290)

Scale/Items		Factor Loading		Scale Alpha
		F1	F2	
CO	R1	.753	-.412	.851
	R3	.836	-.354	
	R4	.874	-.151	
SI	R2	-.336	.811	.756
	R5	-.218	.884	
Eigenvalues		3.195	.751	
Cumulative %		63.904	78.930	

1) Principal components analysis and Varimax rotation method were applied for extracting factors.

2) CO = 'confrontation'; SI = 'silence.'

Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development

To assess employees' development of moral reasoning, we employed the KDIT (Korean Defining Issue Test) developed by the Moral Psychology Lab of Seoul National University in South Korea. The lab created the KDIT as a Korean version, aimed to measure Korean stages of moral development by adapting DIT2. The KDIT consists of three moral dilemmas from Kohlberg's original work, and each of them uses 12 items. After reading the dilemmas, respondents were asked to answer three types of questions. The first question was "if you are the person concerned (husband, woman, and physician) in the dilemmas, what would you do?" The respondents were asked to select one of three responses—"I steal (report/accept)," "I don't know what to do," and "I don't steal (report/accept)"—to each of three dilemmas. Second, respondents rated the level of importance of their decision by responding to 12 statements to each dilemma on a Likert-type scale (5 = great importance, 4 = much importance, 3 = somewhat important, 2 = little importance, 1 = no importance). Finally, respondents ranked the 12 statements in terms of importance and selected the 4 most important statements, listing them by their importance. The KDIT produces the scores for Stages 1-4, 5A, 5B, and 6 as well as the P-score. The score of 5A indicates the respondents' moral disposition that emphasizes consensus-producing procedures and human basic rights for

organizing a society in moral reasoning, while 5B more intuitively appealing ideals than 5A. The stage scores were calculated by averaging the scores of ratings given to all the statements to measure moral reasoning at each stage. In sum, the total scores of each stage indicate the degree in which respondents rate importance of moral codes considered at each stage. The KDIT scores help us identify which stage the respondents are more interested in making decisions. However, they do not give any information on a single stage within which a respondent falls.

Demographic Variables

Respondents were asked to report their sex, age, education level, and years of service to the agency. With regard to years of service, we asked the question “How many years have you worked for the organization?” We ran frequency analysis on demographic variables to examine the characteristics of our sample. The results are reported in Table 4.

TABLE 4
Frequency (and Percentage) of Demographic Variables
(N=290)

Variables		Overall (%)
Gender	Female	140(48.3%)
	Male	150(51.7%)
Age	Less than 30	41(14.1%)
	30–39	51(17.6%)
	40–49	135(46.6%)
	50 or over	63(21.7%)
Education level	Less than high school or equivalent	11(3.8%)
	Jr. college	10(3.4%)
	4–yrs university	169(58.3%)
	Post-graduate	100(34.5%)
Years of service (tenure)	16.49 years	

For the age variable, the sample has a mean age of 42.09, ranging from 23 to 55. The mean of respondents' tenure was 16.49 years. The sample shows differences from the general population of public employees in distribution of gender and education level. The ratio of females to males is somewhat higher, and

the proportion of respondents with a post-graduate degree in terms of education level is considerably higher compared to that of the general population of public employees. It reflects the characteristics of respondents' work environment. Public employees at education agencies are granted more opportunities to study at the Master's and Ph.D. program than others because they often serve at the universities funded by governments.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

The major theme of this study is whether employees' development of moral reasoning is a significant predictor of their intent of confrontation and silence as a response to wrongdoing in or by an organization. To determine answers, a correlation analysis was performed. Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics and correlations relevant to the variables in the regression analyses that follow.

The correlation matrix demonstrates that there are some significant relationships between employees' intents as a response to organizational wrongdoing and Kohlberg's six stages of moral development. The relationship of CO and SI is stronger than any other relation, and considerably negative as expected ($r = -.612$, $p < .001$). The results reveal that CO is positively related with Stages 2 and 4 ($r = .123$, $p < .05$; $r = .205$, $p < .001$), but negatively related with Stages 5A and 6 ($r = -.132$, $p < .05$; $r = -.223$, $p < .001$); on the other hand, SI has a positive relationship with Stages 3 and 6 ($r = .155$, $p < .01$; $r = .214$, $p < .001$), but a negative one with Stage 4 ($r = -.254$, $p < .001$). Notably, Stage 3 is just the opposite of Stage 6 in terms of the relationship with employees' intent of confrontation and silence. Stage 4 has a positive relationship with CO ($r = .205$, $p < .001$), but negative with SI ($r = -.254$, $p < .001$), while Stage 6 has a negative relationship with CO ($r = -.223$, $p < .001$) but positive with SI ($r = .214$, $p < .001$). We hypothesized that the scores of the high stages of Kohlberg's theory of moral development obtained by employees will be positively associated with employees' intent to confront wrongdoing in an organization (H1a). The scores of the low stages of Kohlberg's theory of moral development obtained by employees will be positively associated with employees' intent to stay silent about wrongdoing (H1b). Therefore, hypotheses H1a and H1b were rejected. In addition, gender and tenure are significantly associated with both CO and SI. In the following analyses, these demographic variables were controlled.

TABLE 5

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations between Employees' Intent to Confront and Stay Silent about Wrongdoing and Kohlberg's Six Stages of Moral Development
(N=290)

	MEAN	S.D.	CO	SI	Stage 1	2	3	4	5A	5B	6	P	GN	ED	TE
CO	3.36	.89	1.00												
SI	2.33	.89	-.612 ^{***}	1.00											
Stage1	11.70	10.50	.080	-.059	1.00										
2	2.63	4.79	.123 [*]	-.054	.061	1.00									
3	23.47	11.67	-.006	.155 ^{**}	-.242 ^{***}	-.048	1.00								
4	27.05	13.32	.205 ^{***}	-.254 ^{***}	.076	.014	-.410 ^{***}	1.00							
5A	20.40	13.40	-.132 [*]	.045	-.441 ^{***}	-.282 ^{***}	-.230 ^{***}	-.397 ^{***}	1.00						
5B	5.10	5.06	-.095	.020	-.148 [*]	-.142 [*]	-.136 [*]	-.090	-.020	1.00					
6	9.64	8.16	-.223 ^{***}	.214 ^{***}	-.315 ^{***}	-.133 [*]	.042	-.445 ^{***}	.081	.026	1.00				
P	35.15	16.99	-.240 ^{***}	.145 [*]	-.543 ^{***}	-.328 ^{***}	-.202 ^{***}	-.553 ^{***}	.821 ^{***}	.295 ^{***}	.552 ^{***}	1.00			
GN	.52	.50	.174 ^{**}	-.145 [*]	.096	.127 [*]	.045	.143 [*]	-.182 ^{**}	-.089	-.141 [*]	-.238 ^{***}	1.00		
ED	3.24	.69	.000	-.003	.097	-.051	-.074	-.013	.043	-.030	-.020	.016	-.092	1.00	
TE	16.49	9.63	.245 ^{***}	-.233 ^{***}	.109	.174 ^{**}	.011	.103	-.190 ^{**}	-.071	-.069	-.204 ^{***}	.254 ^{***}	.068	1.00

1) *p < .05. **p<.01.***p<.001; two-tailed tests.

2) See Tables 1 and 3 for abbreviations. The others are: GN = gender; ED = education level; and TE = tenure (years to work for the organization). The report of gender was coded as 1 = male, 0 = female; levels of education as 1 = less than a high school degree or equivalent, 2 = junior college degree, 3 = 4-year university degree, and 4 = postgraduate degree.

3) The range of raw stage scores is: stage 1 (0-46.70), stage 2 (0-23.30), stage 3 (0-56.70), stage 4 (0-70.00), stage 5A (0-60.00), stage 5B (0-13.30), stage 6 (0-36.70), and P (0-83.30).

Effects of P-Score on Employees' Confrontation and Silence

Does the P-score play a significant role in predicting employees' intent to confront and stay silent about wrongdoing in an organization? If so, to what extent does it significantly explain it? We performed a regression analysis to seek possible answers to these questions. Table 6 illustrates the results.

TABLE 6
P-Score's Effects on Employees' Confrontation and Silence
(N=290)

Predictors	Dependent Variables			
	CO		SI	
P	-.010**	(-.182)	.005	(.087)
GN	.147	(.083)	-.132	(-.074)
ED	-.004	(-.003)	.003	(.002)
TE	.017**	(.187)	-.018**	(-.196)
Constant	3.342***		2.529***	
Adj. R square	.092		.056	
F value	8.281		5.290	
Significance	.000		.000	

Both models of CO and SI are statistically significant ($F = 8.281$, $p = .000$; $F = 5.290$, $p = .000$). A P-score has a significantly negative effect on CO ($b = -.010$, $p < .01$) but does not have a significant effect on SI ($b = .005$, $p > .05$). The results show that the P-score (the highest level of Kohlberg's theory of moral development, e.g., percent of Stage 5 and 6 scores) will be a significant predictor of employees' intent to confront wrongdoing in an organization. Unlike our belief based on Kohlberg's moral development theory, however, the direction of its effect on employees' intent to confront wrongdoing was negative. It indicates that the higher the P-scores obtained by employees, the more they would not confront wrongdoing. In the SI model, the P-score was not significant. Therefore, H2a, stating that the DIT P score will positively contribute to employees' intent to confront wrongdoing in an organization, was not accepted.

To test the hypotheses H2b, H2c, and H3, we conducted a regression analysis. The results are shown in Table 7.

TABLE 7
Kohlberg's Six Stages' Effects on Employees' Confrontation and Silence as a
Response to Wrongdoing

(N=290)

Predictors	Dependent Variables			
	CO		SI	
Stage 1	.000	(-.005)	.005	(.059)
Stage 2	.010	(.056)	.003	(.015)
Stage 3	.003	(.040)	.010*	(.129)
Stage 4	.008*	(.124)	-.007	(-.103)
Stage 5b	-.008	(-.048)	.003	(.015)
Stage 6	-.015**	(-.138)	.017**	(.160)
GN	.134	(.075)	-.119	(-.067)
ED	-.004	(-.003)	.015	(.012)
TE	.018***	(.191)	-.019***	(-.204)
Constant	2.880***		2.363***	
Adj. R square	.099		.106	
F value	4.528		4.802	
Significance	.000		.000	

1) * $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$; 2-tailed tests.

2) The figures in parentheses are standardized regression coefficients.

3) Stage 5a was removed due to a multicollinearity problem during regression analysis.

For CO, the independent variables explain 9.9 percent of the variance ($F = 4.528$, $p = .000$), and for SI, 10.6 percent of the variance ($F = 4.802$, $p = .000$). First, Stage 6 has a negative effect on CO ($b = -.015$, $p < .05$), but a positive effect on SI ($b = .017$, $p < .05$). The results indicate that the higher the score on Stage 6 a respondent obtains, the more he or she would not confront wrongdoing, but stay silent about it. It reconfirms that H2a is rejected. Second, Stage 3's effect is significant on SI only ($b = .010$, $p < .10$) while Stage 4's effect is significant on CO only ($b = .008$, $p < .10$). This means that the greater the scores of Stage 3 obtained by employees, the more they would choose to stay silent about wrongdoing, while the greater the scores of Stage 4 obtained by employees, the more they would interrupt wrongdoing. We had set two hypotheses regarding the effect of each stage of Kohlberg's moral theory: the scores of Stage 3 will have a positive effect on employees' intent to stay silent about wrongdoing (H2b), and the scores of Stage 4 will have a positive effect on employees' intent to confront it (H2c). Therefore, they were accepted. One of the research questions was "what

differences between employees' confrontation and silence are there in terms of the impact of employees' development of moral reasoning on them?" The results show that the effects of Kohlberg's six stage of moral development on employees' intent of confrontation and silence differ according to their responses to wrongdoing in an organization. In addition, TE is positively related to CO ($b = .018$, $p < .01$) and negatively to SI ($b = -.019$, $p < .01$), revealing that the longer respondents hold tenure in the office, the more they would confront wrongdoing and would not stay silent about it. These results support H3. It implies that employees with shorter tenure would not like to confront wrongdoing.

DISCUSSION

This study explores the roles of employees' ability of moral reasoning as a predictor of their intent to confront and stay silent about wrongdoing in an organization. One of the most important findings is that overall employees' development of moral reasoning was hardly a significant predictor. Only some of the stages are positively or negatively associated with confrontation and silence when employees' level of morality is assessed by Kohlberg's six stages of moral development. These results have some implications for ethics officers and researchers.

First, the P-score did not have a positive effect on employees' ethical response to wrongdoing. This implies that employees' level of moral development assessed by DIT might seldom be a good predictor of employees' intent to ethically respond to wrongdoing in or by an organization. There may be some potential reasons. One is the fundamental difference in the situation where morality is justified. The other is whether the DIT is a good measure to assess employees' moral intent. The DIT was developed as a tool to measure an individual's moral reasoning about daily personal issues. Fisher (1997: 143) supported this view and stated that the DIT is "a broad, general measure of moral reasoning," implying that it may be inappropriate in the situation in which an employee is confronted by wrongdoing committed in or by the organization. In this situation, his or her intent to morally act might be more involved in an employee's courage, and not morality. Doyle, Frecknall-Hughes, and Summers (2009: 35) remarked that "it does not, and cannot, fairly represent the reasoning used when facing ethical dilemmas in a business context." With these reasons, efforts to develop a context-specific DIT continue to grow in a number of research areas (Doyle, Frecknall-Hughes & Summers, 2009;

Dellaportas et al., 2006; Fraedrich, Thorne & Ferrell, 1994). Premeaux and Bedeian (2003: 1537–1538) stated that when employees believe “if they do express their views they may face retaliation, these employees often choose to remain silent rather than speak up share their ideas or opinions.” In the study that interviewed 40 employees, Hewlin (2003: 1453) found that one of the most important reasons for remaining silent is due to “the fear of being viewed or labeled negatively, and as a consequence, damaging valued relationships.” Bowen and Blackmon (2003: 1939) wrote that employees’ perceptions of “the attitudes towards an issue within their workgroup” have a significant effect on their voice. In the analysis that empirically tested whether moral development theory is useful in understanding ethical behavior, Marnburg (2001: 281) obtained a negative (even though insignificant) correlation between strong ethical attitudes and good ability in moral reasoning. These show that there may be a lot of organizational variables to prevent employees from having the intentions to response ethically.

Second, the predictors of employees’ confrontation and silence are different from each other. Stages 4 and 6 were significant predictors of confrontation and Stages 3 and 6, of silence. It means that the two responses either confrontation or silence to wrongdoing, may be motivated by different driving forces. Van Dyne, Ang, and Botero (2003: 1388) stated that “silence and voice are not simply polar opposites of each other,” and “silence presents greater ambiguity to observers (emphasis on nonverbal cues) compared to voice (verbal and non-verbal cues).” Furthermore, the results demonstrated that only Stages 3 and 4 out of the six stages have predictability on their intent of confrontation and silence.

Third, Stage 4 significantly contributes to employees’ intent of confrontation while Stage 3 contributes to silence. This is because Stage 3 places strong emphasis on interpersonal relationships in a group to which employees belong. On the other hand, Stage 4 considers law and duty most importantly and to the social order in making a decision regarding what is to be done in a dilemma. It has some practical implications about how to foster employees to act morally. At an individual level, education of law or ethical standards could be an effective approach to facilitate employees’ intent to confront wrongdoing in their organizations. An organization’s priority on laws, duties, and ethical standards will help convince employees to correct wrongdoing by personally intervening in it. If an organization is interested in interpersonal harmony, the employees easily prefer to think that the decision not to protest wrongdoing is reasonable. In addition, employees’ period of service for the organization was found to be an important

factor for predicting employees' responses to wrongdoing. Rothwell and Baldwin (2007: 353) reported that they found police supervisory status to be a consistent predictor of ethical intention and behavior. The result can be interpreted as one's period of service increases (his or her rank is likely to increase in some degree), then it is likely to encourage subordinates to act ethically.

CONCLUSION

Ethics is an important issue in any organization, regardless of its size. This study investigates whether employees' development of moral reasoning is a significant predictor of their ethical or unethical response to wrongdoing, assuming that an individual's ability of moral reasoning is positively related with the ethical act. The results revealed which stages of Kohlberg's moral development are significant predictors of employees' ethical response to wrongdoing. In the future study, it is necessary to examine which other factors contribute to employees' intent to confront and stay silent about wrongdoing in their workplace and take away their ability or opportunity to stop wrongdoing within organizational settings. Our study extends the existing literature on confrontation as an ethical response. It is hoped that this study expands our understanding of employees' ethical motivations to predict his or her ethical response to wrongdoing, and has special significance in the designing of ethics programs for reducing illegitimate activities in an organization.

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ABSTRACT

**Predicting Employees' Intent to Confront and Stay Silent about Wrongdoing:
Are Kohlberg's Six Stages of Moral Development Significant?**

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This study reports the results of our empirical research into if employees' level of moral reasoning assessed by Kohlberg's moral theory plays a significant role in predicting their intent to confront and stay silent about wrongdoing in the organization. Few studies have explored the relationship between employees' moral development and their intent of confrontation and silence as a response to wrongdoings. We attempted to answer the following questions: Is employees' development of moral reasoning assessed by Kohlberg's six stages of moral development a significant predictor of their intent to confront and stay silent about wrongdoing? If so, to what extent does each of the stages predict those intents? To test hypotheses, we used 290 usable returned responses from public employees in education agencies nationwide in South Korea. The main results of this paper can be described as follows. First, the overall employees' development of moral reasoning was hardly a significant predictor. Second, the P-score was a significant but negative predictor of confrontation while it was not a significant predictor of silence. Third, the predictors of employees' responses(either confrontation or silence) are different depending on the stages of Kohlberg's theory of moral development. Stage 4 and 6 were a significant predictor of employee confrontation while as for silence, Stage 3 and 6 were significant. This paper provides some discussion and implications for ethics officers and researchers.

Keywords : Wrongdoing, employees' intent of confrontation and silence, Kohlberg's six stages of moral development