

The Role of Job Stress and Personality Traits in Moderating the Relationship Between the Political Skills of Managers and the Deviant Behaviors in the Municipalities of Mazandaran Province

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to investigate the role of job stress and personality traits in moderating the relationship between the political skills of managers and the deviant behaviors in the municipalities of Mazandaran Province. This study is a descriptive correlational study. Its population includes 212 managers who work in the municipalities of Mazandaran Province. Based on Morgan table, 132 persons were selected as sample. To investigate the hypotheses and research questions, Partial Least Squares approach was used. SPSS V.19 software and Smart PLS2 Software were used to analyze the data. The results show that there is a relationship between the political skills and deviant behaviors. They also show that personality traits moderate the relationship between political skills and deviant behaviors but the job stress doesn't moderate this relationship. So, it is suggested to increase the possibility of the understanding the manager's political skills in the organization because it reduces the incidence of deviant behaviors.

Key words: Political skills, deviant behavior, job stress, personality traits, political skills

INTRODUCTION

Among the many academic and scientific institutions, it is believed that the organizations have the political nature. Accordingly, it is assumed that performance, effectiveness and career success require other factors such as social cleverness, positioning and knack in addition to intelligence and perseverance. Someone know the traits which enable the individual to influence successfully as interpersonal style of political perception or skills (Ferris *et al.*, 2005). Political attitude to organizations means that people should have political will and also political skills not only to be successful but to stay and survive in the organization. Although, for some decades, the issue of the policies in the organization has been the topic of scientific research but only recently, the researchers have started to study the political skills systematically (Liu *et al.*, 2007). Ferris knows the political skills as the individual trait that is used to describe the political behavior effectively to obtain or develop the identified structural power. According to him, it reflexes the leverage, the policies are the strategies which are used to create or acquire the power and political skills provide a set of skills for the effective use of resources and implementation of political behavior (Ferris *et al.*,

1989). On the one hand, discussion of organizational deviance is not a strange scenario for today's organizations and the personnel damage their own organization through different ways. For example, theft from the organization or other partners, sexual trauma, rumor, restless behavior, alcohol consumption in the workplace, etc., and other such behaviors which have been defined with different titles including antisocial behavior, organizational misbehavior, organizational deviance, non-performance behavior, counterproductive behavior, behavior of indecency and etc. that there is not a common interpretation. Over the past two to three decades, the relative prevalence of unethical behavior in the workplace and organizational environment has become a precursor to attract the attention of the scholars and experts of different scientific areas to the factors related to these behaviors (Golparvar *et al.*, 2011). Political and deviant behaviors in the workplace and organizational environment will cause psychological stress for the employees. Psychological stress is of blatant topics that in the developed and postindustrial world, it is known as one of the pests of human resources and today, it is the obsession of many individuals, managers and scholars (Abtahi, 2004). Personality is a set of psychological characteristics that the people can be categorized based

on it. These personality traits influence the professional behaviors permanently and according to them, special behaviors of people can be determined in various positions of their works and jobs. The role of personality traits on behavior and cognition sometimes causes cognitive and behavioral consequences directly and without intermediaries (Jafari, 2009).

Problem statement: The study on unethical behavior of the employees of organizations and industries has a shorter history than the study on positive behaviors which focused on the performance and production (Robinson and Bennett, 1995). Although, organizational deviance has many aspects but it must be pointed out that research on organizational deviance has been not widely paid attention and concentrated. Knowledge about workplace deviance has started to grow from >25 years ago and the scientists have studied different organizations to explain the deviance properly (Litzky *et al.*, 2006). The significant workplace deviance than can be noted are theft, fraud, irritability, infringement, counterproductive behavior, anti-organizational behavior, destructive behavior (Litzky *et al.*, 2006), rude behavior with colleagues, begrudging the effort (Colbert *et al.*, 2004) and so on. Among these, the theft is the main organizational deviance. Studies have shown that more than two-thirds of employees steal from their organizations. This type of deviant behavior can be too costly for organizations and has been the subject of several studies. Deviant behavior in organizations can bring many social and economic costs such as insurance damages, employee ethics decline and loss of reputation. According to research Bensimon this kind of behavior has damaged America's industry as much as 2.4 billion dollars annually. Many studies have been performed on destructive deviances and despite the importance of constructive deviances (voluntary behavior in violation of the norms which are important sources of innovation and entrepreneurship and help to create competitive advantage) in the workplace, little research has been done in this area (Galperin and Bruke, 2006). Deviance may be deconstructive and threatens the health of a social system but it can also have many positive results such as providing a safe gate, changing the common interests of members and providing warning signs to organizations (Robinson and Bennett, 1995). Deviant workplace behavior is a voluntary behavior that violates organizational norms and threatens the wellness of organization, its employees or both of them (Colbert *et al.*, 2004). According to the definition, deviant behavior is voluntary because staff have no incentive

to reconcile with normative expectations or they are motivated to violate these expectations (Salmani and Raadmand, 2012). According to Milam, deviant and provocative behaviors have determinant and positive relationship with psychosis and violence and negative relationship with cheerfulness and politeness. The theory and research have shown that the political practices governing the organization affect the deviant behaviors of the employees. Extensive research shows that political skills allow staff to gain the more desirable working results of mental doing and social legitimacy and have more appropriate behaviors. In general, the concept of political skills has been firstly raised to describe the individual properties to conduct the political aspect of working life effectively by Feffer and Mintzberg but the research on it has been continued in the late 1990s by Ferris *et al.* (2003). They believe that the political behaviors are used as a set of skills which ensure the good performance and successful working results (Coole, 2007). Although, Mintzberg wanted to relate political skills with official power but such skills fit better with the ideas suggested by some researchers about the "leverage devoid of formal authority" (Perrewe *et al.*, 2004). His argument was that the people require political will and political skills before engaging in political behavior. People who have high political skills are more careful and shrewd in communicating with others, they induce trust to others that allows them to manage such social capital effectively

According to Ferris *et al.* (1989), political skills must create a feeling of confidence and personal security because people will experience the feeling of others control in their works and required strategies to get what they want (Perrewe *et al.*, 2004). Sofer believed that the successful executive manager knows when to simulate passion, affection, love, concern, courtesy, reliability and control, when to smile, to laugh with whom and how to be intimidate with others. If these doings are successful, the person will have a personality in harmony with his environment (Kapoutsis *et al.*, 2011). Studying the effects of the political space of organization on the individuals, it can be said that other factors such as job satisfaction, personality types, working face and etc., affect the people. Job stress is one of the most common consequences of modern life which is increasing and has adverse health effects on the human body, especially on the cardiovascular system (Abtahi, 2004). Mental pressure also has physical effects and thereby damages the organization severely. Acute stress mutilates human resources organization and makes the organization's goal instability. People who experience the stress and don't have ability to cope with it are damaged in terms of

physical, mental and behavioral aspects and so, the stress undermines the forces as pest and makes the activities and efforts vain (Alvani, 2007). Political skills help people to get key coping resources such as social support and control. Obtained social support and control increase their abilities to overcome the job stress and reduce the symptoms of depression. Political skills is a means to reduce stress and improve the health and wellbeing of the employees. Political skills directly reduces the staff's and manager's understanding of organizational, trans-organizational and interpersonal stress factors (Perrew and Nelson, 2004). According to what was stated, the main question of this study is: Do job stress and personality traits moderate the relationship between the political skills of managers and the deviant behaviors in the municipalities of Mazandaran Province?

The importance and necessity of the research: The issue that the environment of organization is political is different in the views of the staff because their thoughts and perceptions are different and this can affect the tendencies of individuals to communicate. So, organizational politics is a controversial concept. Undoubtedly, politics is a conventional phenomenon in any organization that Robbins believes that all behaviors within the organization are political but there is little knowledge about its nature and boundaries. Managers cannot and should not eliminate political behaviors in the organizations because some of these behaviors are functional and can be used to achieve the goals of the organization. Conceptual and empirical studies have defined the political skills as "the ability to effectively understand others and situations at work and use this knowledge to influence others to act in a manner that increases a person's individual or organizational goals" (Ferris *et al.*, 2005; Coole, 2007; Liu *et al.*, 2007; Perrew *et al.*, 2004; Ferris *et al.*, 2003; Kisamore *et al.*, 2010; Kaylee, 2011). According to this definition, it can be argued that political skills include the ability to effectively communicate with others (Kisamore *et al.*, 2010). Although, these skills are not necessary for the job but they are promoted for the performance and survival in today's complex and dynamic organizations. On the other hand, we see that in every working day, nearly in every large organization (or even small-and medium-sized enterprises), some people are late to present at their workplaces, some others waste a full working day and some others are constantly engaged in behavior that is not related to their duties. Most researchers who work in this field, believe that isolationist and anti-reproductive behaviors are related to each other (Golparvar and Sabahi,

2011). Robinson and Bennett (1995) have defined the deviance in the workplace as voluntary behavior which is toward a serious violation of organizational norms; the behaviors that threaten the organizational health or even some subsets of the staff. These researchers clearly distinguish the differences between the interpersonal and organizational aspects of working deviance (Golparvar and Khaksar, 2008). Committing destructive behaviors in the workplace are the problems and issues that gradually emerged since a teamwork starts its work to achieve common goals (Golparvar and Karami, 2011). However, serious theoretical and research consideration on these behaviors has been started from the final years of the twentieth century by theorists and researchers (Mahdad and Mahdizadegan, 2010). According to some estimates, 33-75% of staff are being involved in some types of such behaviors in various forms in the workplace at some points in time. More importantly, these behaviors are responsible for about 30% of the commercial and economic problems emerged in the organizations. However in most research in line with the emphasis by Van the term of destructive behaviors was selected for the three areas of exclusion, neglect and aggressive voice because of the potential negative and harmful effects of these behaviors on organizational performance and efficiency (Golparvar and Karami, 2011). Explanation and investigation of the causes of these behaviors have been placed in the spotlight of the industrial and organizational Psychology experts and researchers (Mahdad *et al.*, 2013) psychological pressures inflicted on employees in organizations will be costly for senior managers of the organization and only a few of them can avoid it. Enough evidences in this field suggest that severe psychological stresses affect the mental and physical health and performance of individuals and are known as the most important pests of organizations and have negative impact on the performance of organization. Mental stresses reduce job satisfaction and commitment to organization (Abtahi, 2004). Psychological stress is the main cause of turnover, absenteeism and low working and reduction of psychological stress can increase the share of employees and job satisfaction. Psychological stress causes a lot of harms to the individuals and organizations (Alavi, 2005). Considering the dimensions of personality in the organization can help organization to achieve productivity. But sometimes, the individual's personality is so complicated and unknown that only some hypotheses and probabilities can be relied on. Definitely, human resources can be taken into account as the most complex, sensitive and technological resources of an organization. Although, the scholars have provided

important theories on the personality dimension to better understand the complex components of human by relying on performed research and studies but they can never speak of it as a purely scientific law because they have achieved very important results in different times and places. Deviant working behaviors in the workplace cause a lot of problems and costs for the organization and sometimes bring irreparable damages to individuals and organizations. The skill of using policy or political skills influence the presence or absence of deviant behaviors when the individuals are facing with each other and they are moderating the individual's behaviors. Stress and personality traits are of the factors influencing the occurrence or non-occurrence of such these behaviors and increase or reduce them. So that, people who are more able to endure the psychological stress, show less deviant working behavior and if they pay attention to their inner strength in other words, they are introverted or extroverted, their behaviors are different when they show and see deviant behaviors and they show these behaviors with different rates.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Before performing statistical analyses to test the hypotheses, SPSS software and PLS software were used and structural equations modeling techniques were used to analyze quantitative data and to test the hypotheses. Structural equations modeling technique tests the models in two stages, including testing the model of measurement and testing the structural model. Measurement model evaluates the reliability and validity of measurement and organizational tools of research and structural model tests the hypotheses and examines the relationship between the latent variables. In this study, the second generation of structural equation modeling techniques, i.e. Partial Least Squares (PLS) method was used to test the size pattern of hypotheses. PLS is known as a strong structural equations modelling technique because it is less dependent on sample size, the distribution of the remaining is normal and the measurement scales are interval.

Population: The population includes all the elements and people that have one or more common traits in a certain scale. The study population included all managers of the municipalities of Mazandaran province. It includes 212 people.

Sample size: A part of population that represent the population is called sample. If the ratio of sample size to

total population is higher, that sample can describe the characteristics of the population better, so it has a higher academic validity. The sample includes 132 municipal managers of Mazandaran Province using Morgan table.

The tools of data collection: Following tools were used for data collection.

Library studies: In order to collect the information in the field of theoretical foundation and literature, archive resources, articles, required books and websites were used.

Field research: In order to collect the data for the analysis, questionnaire was used. In this study, 4 questionnaires were used.

The political skills of managers: This questionnaire examines the political skills with four characteristics of social consciousness (cleverness), interpersonal influence skill, skill of doing networking and evident sincerity skill and it was designed with 40 items and in a form of 5-option (strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, disagree and strongly disagree). The options were scored as follows: strongly disagree: 1, disagree: 2, somewhat agree: 3, agree: 4 and strongly agree: 1.

Deviant behaviors questionnaire: It is consisted of 18 questions and assesses four components of productive, political, financial and personal deviances. It was designed in a form of 5-option (strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, disagree and strongly disagree). The options were scored as follows: strongly disagree:1, disagree:2, somewhat agree:3, agree:4 and strongly agree:1.

Job stress questionnaire: It includes 18 questions and assesses 3 components of job conflict, role ambiguity and physical environment. It was designed in a form of 5-option (strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, disagree and strongly disagree). The options were scored as follows: strongly disagree:1, disagree:2, somewhat agree:3, agree:4 and strongly agree:1.

Personality traits questionnaire: It includes 21 questions and assesses 2 components of introversion and extraversion. It was designed in a form of 5-option (strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, disagree and strongly disagree). The options were scored as follows: strongly disagree: 1, disagree: 2, somewhat agree: 3, agree: 4 and strongly agree: 1.

Research hypotheses:

- Political skills affect the deviant behaviors in the municipalities of Mazandaran Province
- Social consciousness affects the deviant behaviors in the municipalities of Mazandaran Province
- Interpersonal influence skill affects the deviant behaviors in the municipalities of Mazandaran Province
- The ability of doing networking affects the deviant behaviors in the municipalities of Mazandaran Province
- Evident sincerity affects the deviant behaviors in the municipalities of Mazandaran Province
- Job stress moderates the relationship between the political skills and deviant behaviors in the municipalities of Mazandaran Province
- Personality traits moderate the relationship between the political skills and deviant behaviors in the municipalities of Mazandaran Province

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data analysis with the use of structural equations modeling technique: in this section, the hypotheses were tested more accurately using Structural Equations Modeling technique and Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach was used with the use of Smart PLS 2 software (Table 1, Fig. 1).

Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability of the study variables are >0.7, showing the good reliability of

the research variables. Also, the results of the divergent validity and convergent validity show that the model is proper (Table 2, Fig. 2).

In assessing the fitness of structural model with the use of the coefficient of Z, the coefficients should be >1.96 so that their significance is confirmed at the significance level of 95%. As shown in Fig. 1 and 2, all significance coefficients Z are >1.96, this verifies the significance of all questions and the relationships between the variables at the level of 95%. The significance coefficient Z of political skills (personality traits) was calculated 3.023, since it is >1.96, it shows that the effect of personality traits variable is verified as a moderating variable at the significance level of 95%. But the significance coefficient Z of political skills (job stress) was calculated 1.396, since it is <1.96, it shows

Table 1: Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability and AVE values for the examined variables

Variables	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE	R ²
Political skills	0.943	0.949	0.455	
Deviant behaviors	0.940	0.946	0.475	
Personality traits	0.867	0.888	0.411	
Job stress	0.911	0.903	0.430	0.626
Acceptable value	≥0.7	≥0.7	≥0.4	

Table 2: Divergent validity for the examined variables

Variables	Political skills	Deviant behaviors	Personality traits	Job stress
Political skills	0.674			
Deviant behaviors	-0.343	0.689		
Personality traits	0.607	-0.377	0.641	
Job stress	-0.004	-0.124	0.193	0.655

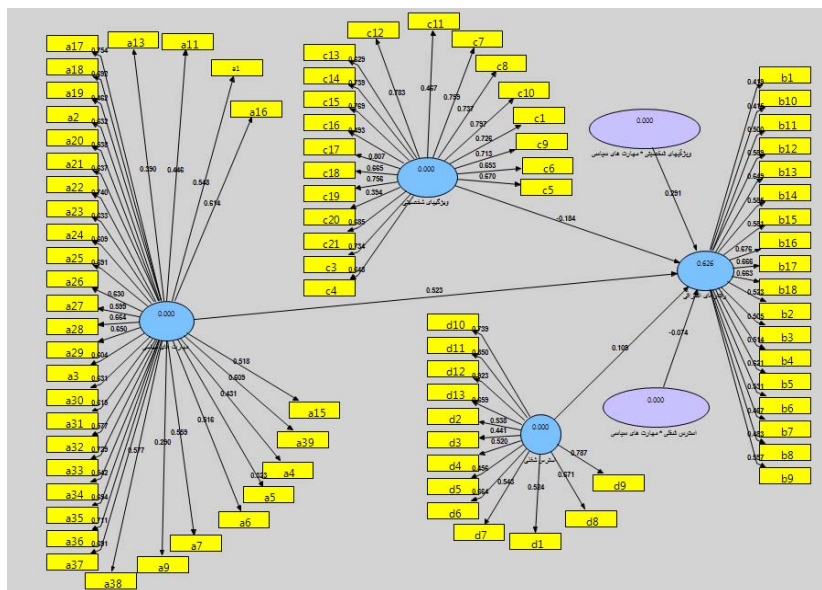


Fig. 1: The run model with factor loadings coefficients after removing the factor loadings <0.4

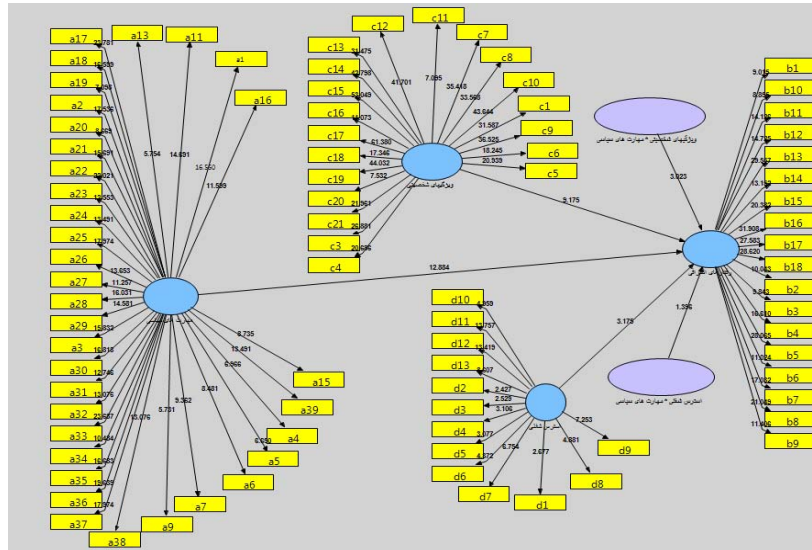


Fig. 2: Graphical model with the significance coefficients Z

Table 3: Results of hypotheses test

Hypothesis	Coefficient Z	Normalized coefficient	Result	Type of effect
Political skills affect the deviant behaviors	12.884	0.523	Confirmed	Direct
Job stress moderates the relationship between the political skills and deviant behaviors	1.396	-0.074	Not confirmed	-
Personality traits moderates the relationship between the political skills and deviant behaviors	3.023	0.291	Confirmed	Direct
Social consciousness affects the deviant behaviors	3.848	0.298	Confirmed	Direct
Interpersonal influence skill affects the deviant behaviors	0.354	-0.023	Not confirmed	-
The ability of doing networking affects the deviant behaviors	0.871	-0.56	Not confirmed	-
Evident sincerity affects the deviant behaviors	8.072	0.500	Confirmed	Direct

that the effect of job stress variable is not verified as a moderating variable at the significance level of 95%.

Political skills affect the deviant behaviors. The significance coefficient of the ways between the variables of political skills and deviant behaviors is equal to 12.884 which is >1.96 . It shows the direct impact of political skills on the deviant behaviors is significant

Job stress moderates the relationship between the political skills and deviant behaviors. The significance coefficient of the variable of political skills, job stress is equal to 1.396 which is <1.96 . It shows that the job stress has no impact on the relationship between political skills and the deviant behaviors at the significance level of 95%

Personality traits moderates the relationship between the political skills and deviant behaviors. The significance coefficient of the variable of political skills, personality traits is equal to 3.023 which is >1.96 . It verifies the impact of personality traits as a moderating factor. In the other words, it can be verifies that personality traits moderate the relationship between political skills and the deviant behaviors at the significance level of 95%

Social consciousness affects the deviant behaviors. The significance coefficient of the ways between the variables of social consciousness and deviant behaviors

is equal to 3.848 which is >1.96 . It shows the direct impact of social consciousness on the deviant behaviors is significant:

- Interpersonal influence skill affects the deviant behaviors. The significance coefficient of the ways between the variables of interpersonal influence skill and deviant behaviors is equal to 0.354 which is <1.96 . It shows the direct impact of interpersonal influence skill on the deviant behaviors is not significant
- The ability of doing networking affects the deviant behaviors. The significance coefficient of the ways between the variables of the ability of doing networking and deviant behaviors is equal to 0.871 which is <1.96 . It shows the direct impact of the ability of doing networking on the deviant behaviors is not significant
- Evident sincerity affects the deviant behaviors. The significance coefficient of the ways between the variables of evident sincerity and deviant behaviors is equal to 8.072 which is >1.96 . It shows the direct impact of evident sincerity on the deviant behaviors is significant

Political skills impact on deviant behaviors. The results of this study are consistent with the results of the research by Milam and Kristine. Milam have approved the relationship between the political skills and deviant behaviors. According to Milam deviant and provocative behaviors have determinant and positive relationship with psychosis and violence and negative relationship with cheerfulness and politeness. Kristin in their research, have shown that the political practices governing the organization affect the deviant behaviors of the employees. Extensive research shows that political skills allow staff to gain the more desirable working results of mental doing and social legitimacy and have more appropriate behaviors. Political skills of people and their ability to cope with different situations, the wits and insight of individuals and the ability to influence the people will impact on people to determine the behaviors which they do in the workplace.

Job stress doesn't moderate the relationship between the political skills and deviant behaviors. The results of this study are not consistent with the results of the research by Perrew *et al.* (2004). Brower in their research, concluded that the job stress moderates the relationship between the political skills and deviant behaviors. Political skills help people to get key coping resources such as social support and control. Obtained social support and control increase their abilities to overcome the job stress and reduce the symptoms of depression. Perrew *et al.* (2004) in their research, concluded that job stress influence the political skills. Also, they stated that the political skills are a means to reduce the stress and improve the health and wellbeing. Political skills directly reduces the staff's and manager's understanding of organizational, trans-organizational and interpersonal stress factors (Perrew *et al.*, 2004). Mental stress and tensions in the work place will affect the staff and cause that they cannot make the right decision in dealing with organizational situations and use their political skills properly, so they will be confused and in some cases they will carry out deviant behaviors in the organization.

Personality traits moderate the relationship between the political skills and deviant behaviors. The results of this study are consistent with the results of the research by Ferris *et al.* (1989) and Jafari (2009). But they are not consistent with the results of the study by Popola. Ferris *et al.* (2005) in their study, found that there is a relationship between personality traits and political behaviors and the personality traits determine the individual's political behaviors that the results of these behaviors can emerge as positive working behaviors and/or negative and deviant working behaviors in the workplace. Verdi confirmed the relationship between the

personality traits and political skills and also, knew the personality traits as the factors affecting the deviant behaviors. Ghaneei gheslugh in their research, found that there is a relationship between the personality traits and deviant working behaviors. The results of multiple regression analysis showed that neuroticism variable is a good predictor for the occurrence of deviant behaviors. Also, Ebstrup confirmed the relationship between the personality traits and deviant behaviors. Jafari (2009) in their research, confirmed the relationship between the personality traits and deviant organizational behaviors. Samari and La'ali faz in their research, confirmed the relationship between the personality traits and non-productive behaviors. Mahdad *et al.* (2013) also confirmed the relationship between the personality traits and deviant behaviors and violence in the workplace and have found that introversion and neuroticism increase the deviant behaviors and violence in the workplace. Also, Golparvar *et al.* (2011) confirmed the relationships between 5 personality traits and counterproductive and deviant behaviors. While, according to the research by Popola there is no relationship between the personality traits and deviant behaviors. Personality traits are of the factors affecting the individual's behaviors and cause that the individuals cannot make a right decision in dealing with the situations and also cannot use their skills and resort to deviant behaviors in the organization. The personality traits that cause these behaviors in an organization are neuroticism and extraversion that lead the people to do actions which are deviate from the norms and customary practices of the organization because of mental distress, failing to control their emotions and attributing the events to external factors.

Social consciousness affects deviant behaviors. The results of this study are consistent with the results of the research by Arshadi. Arshadi in their research, found that social consciousness reduces the aggressive and counterproductive behaviors in the workplace. Van heil in their research, found that social consciousness affect the deviant behaviors. Ability of individuals to understand situations and behave appropriately will lead that the people behave appropriately and normally in the organization and avoid deviant working behaviors.

The skill of interpersonal influence affect the deviant behavior. The results of the study are not consistent with the results of the research by Ferris *et al.* (2005) and Mahdad *et al.* (2013). Jelink and Aheane in their research have found that having a position among the people and influence on the people will help people to avoid deviant behaviors in the organization. Ferris *et al.* (2005) knows influence on people as a factor affecting the individual's behavior in the organization.

Mahdad *et al.* (2013) in their research, found that ability to communicate with the partners and influence on people lead that people have positive behaviors. If people have ability to make changes and impact on organizational decisions and be able to provide optimum performance, they will avoid deviant working behaviors.

The ability to do the networking have no impact on deviant behavior. In this field, no research has been found in which the relationship between these two variables has been directly investigated. But Ahmadi and Dehnavi in their research, stated that participation in team and working groups will make people feel partnership and cooperation and the willingness of people to do deviant working behaviors will be reduced. If the individuals have the ability to communicate and develop friendships and partnerships, their relations will be more intimate in the organization which ultimately will reduce the incidence of deviant behaviors.

CONCLUSION

Apparent sincerity affects the deviant behaviors in the municipalities of Mazandaran Province. The results of this study are the same as the results of the research by Fani. Fani in their research have found that apparent sincerity reduces the incidence of organizational behaviors and prevents organizational abuse. If there is sincerity in the organization, the people will avoid abuse and deviant behaviors and have no reason for such behaviors.

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