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# The Explanation of the Effect of Ethical Leadership on the Employee's Deviant Behavior with the Moderating Role of Organizational Envy: A Case Study of Petro Sina Arya Oil & Gas Company, Tehran

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**Abstract:** *The objective of the present study is to investigate the effect of ethical leadership relations on the employees' deviant behavior with the moderating role of organizational envy. The population included 157 employees in Petro Sina Arya Oil & Gas Company, Tehran. The present study used a simple random sampling method and 111 people were selected as the sample size using Cochran's sample size formula. The researcher conducted a factor analysis and used triple questionnaires for data collection. The structural relations model was used for data analysis in this study. Content validity and Cronbach's alpha were used to determine the validity and reliability of the questionnaires. Its value was 0.812, 0.88, and 0.81 for the ethical leadership questionnaire (Brown et al., 2005), the employees' deviant behavior questionnaire (Bennett and Robinson, 2000), and the organizational envy questionnaire (Jourablou, 2013). The LISREL statistical software was used for data analysis, hypothesis testing, and doing other analyses for this study. The results indicated that the managers' ethical leadership reduces the employees' organizational envy and deviant behavior in the organization.*

**Keywords:** *Ethical leadership, The employees' deviant behavior, Organizational envy.*

## INTRODUCTION

In modern organizations, all leadership styles such as scientific leadership, service-provider leadership, and the like are of critical value, but ethical leadership has a prominent role among all of them. Work ethic is a cultural norm that gives spiritual and positive value to do an appropriately desirable work in the society. The managers and experts have taken into consideration the issue of the work ethic and ethical management because of the growing complexity of the organizations and increased unethical and illegal works in work environments. Hence, leaders should act as a key source of ethical guidance for the employees. However, few experimental studies have stressed the ethical aspect of leadership. Ethical leadership is one of the leadership styles and is of many uses in the organizations. One of the newest approaches to leadership studies is the ethical leadership (Saadat et al., 2010). Ethical leadership is a kind of leadership that needs to develop ethical standards and manage the employees' behaviors; it attempts to practically match the ethical standards to their behaviors. It shows appropriate behaviors in terms of norms and through personal actions and interpersonal relations; it

supports these actions for the followers by mutual communications, enhancement, and decision-making (Brown et al., 2005). Moreover, it is an important issue to investigate the role of organization and administration in the incidence of deviant work behaviors which changes the organizational norms and threatens the health of the organization and its employees. Previous studies have categorized these behaviors in different categories such as individual and organizational deviation, constructive and destructive deviation, productive, financial, and political deviation and personal attack. Additionally, the factors related to these behaviors have been investigated in many studies. Moreover, many studies have been done on the identification of various deviant working behaviors and the role of administrators and organizations has been greatly taken into consideration (Salmani and Radmand, 2009). Furthermore, negligence of the employees' mental issues like envy results in various problems for the organization, the most important of which are the incidence of non-citizenship behaviors, reduction of self-respect, and quitting the job. Envy has been regarded as the worst disease in Islamic thought and is an unpleasant feeling that is understood by common experience for all people regardless of their culture (Smith and Kim, 2007). This feeling is created when a person has an undesirable comparison with others (Kim, 2009). In fact, envy is something that is hidden in the main core of the people's lives as social creatures (Schoeck, 1969). Therefore, according to what preceded, the main objective of the present study is to investigate the effect of ethical leadership relations on the employees' deviant behavior with the moderating role of organizational envy.

## **Literature review**

### **Ethical leadership**

Leadership behaviors directly affect the employees' commitment and job satisfaction and this, in turn, affects the turnover behaviors (Elci et al., 2012). Therefore, the ethical aspect of leadership is important because of the influence of the leader on the employees' behavior (Trevino et al., 2000). An ethical leader is a pattern in an organization and develops the ethical behavior among his subordinates (Brown and Trevino, 2005). Different theorists have also explained and interpreted ethical leadership so far. Some have defined this style of leadership from the perspective of social learning, i.e. leadership based on normative rules and values which are manifested by behaviors, actions, decision making, and the executive methods of encouraging and punishing ethical and non-ethical behaviors in organizational space (Brown and Trevino, 2005). In fact, the ethical leaders seek to make fair decisions, care for the subordinates' feelings, and attempt to create fair work environments (De Hoogh and Den Hartog, 2008). Studies also show that the relationship and leadership styles of the managers and matrons with their employees with regard to negative cases (authoritarian and dictatorial relationship regardless of their dignity, needs, abilities, and limitations) intensify the employees' tension and anxiety level. On the contrary, positive aspects in the managers' behavior somehow improve the reduction of tension and pressure of the employees in the areas related to the role, responsibility, authorities, contradictions, conflicts, and feeling of disability (Lambert et al., 2007). Therefore, ethical leadership is able to affect the employees at all levels through the processes related to ethical space and pattern. De Hoogh and Den Hartog have introduced three aspects of the ethical leadership including fairness, power sharing, and role clarification (Kalshoven et al., 2011). In this regard, (Brown et al., 2005) adds ethical guidance, honesty, tolerance, and people-oriented leadership to the said aspects. From the perspective of Brown, power sharing means that the ethical leaders let the followers introduce their ideas and listen to their ideas and problems (Brown et al, 2005). According to Bandura's Social Learning Theory, the leaders need to be reliable active models so as to be considered as ethical leaders by their followers (Brown and Trevino, 2006). Studies have indicated that ethical leadership creates values, ethical awareness, awards authority and responsibility to individuals, adopts participatory and democratic management, and creates an appropriate organizational climate so as to realize organizational health, honesty, trustworthiness, practicing the values and attitudes in behaviors, practicing the values in decision-making, and encourage fair behavior in any situation (Tutor et al, 2011). In this regard, (Vecchio, 2000) conducted a study and indicated that there is a negative relationship between leader-member

exchange (LMX) and employees' envy. (Kim et al, 2009) also investigated the effect of leader-member exchange (LMX) on employees' envy and organizational citizenship behavior. They believed that envy is an undesirable negative excitement and a person feels that when he compares himself to his colleagues and notices that others have some blessings and he does not. Moreover, they concluded that the low level of leader-member exchange (LMX) increases envy and decreases organizational citizenship behaviors. (Nandedkar, 2011) also showed that leader-member exchange negatively affects envy and envy negatively affects the employees' knowledge sharing. Moreover, envy positively affects the employees' non-citizenship behaviors (Mortazavi et al., 2013). According to the researchers, today's managers have concluded that organizations cannot only be handled by rules and regulations but another tool is needed to help them and it is called ethics. The experts believe that it is necessary to place ethics along with law, substitute self-control for social control, and change ethical objectives into ethical laws. Recently, the issue of work ethic has been greatly taken into consideration. The perception of the ethics concept is generally, and particularly in business, the foundation for creating and maintaining an ethical system in the society and, consequently, in the organizations (Konak and Jones, 1998).

### **The employees' deviant behavior**

Deviant behaviors of the workplace refer to behaviors that are intentionally done by organization members and are contradictory with the goals and interests of the organization. Counterproductive activities in the workplace can include behaviors with low intensity such as rumor mongering and inappropriate use of internet and even more serious behaviors like harassment, sabotage, theft, and physical violence (Gruys and Sackett, 2003). Deviant behaviors can also have very negative effects on the employees and the organization. According to Case's report, an approximate 95 percent of the organizations are exposed to employees' theft and deception. Identifying the antecedents of such behaviors is very important due to negative financial and living consequences of deviant behaviors in the workplace for the organization. Perception of rejection in the workplace is one of these antecedents (Hitlan and Noel, 2009).

Bennett and Robinson presented a model of deviant behaviors in the workplace in which a deviant behavior is the result of the interaction between personality traits and evaluations related to the job. Many studies have indicated that there is a significant relationship between personality traits and deviant behaviors in the workplace. Robinson believes that behaviors that are considered deviant in the workplace are unethical to the same extent. In fact, the real distinction between ethical behavior and deviant behaviors is that ethical behaviors are based on the true or false rule and rules such as justice, law or other valuable ethical guidelines while deviant behaviors focus on behaviors that violate the norms of the organization. As such, it can be said that, theoretically, the prediction of deviant behaviors through collective perceptions of the employees in the area of values and ethics in the workplace is logical (Robinson and Bennett, 1995).

Quoting from Boye and Jones, Vardi and Weiner, and Vardi, Peterson has divided the factors explaining the deviant behaviors in the workplace into individual, social, interpersonal, and organizational factors. Individual factors such as perceptive and cognitive characteristics of individuals and organizational factors such as space and organizational climate can contribute to the occurrence of deviant behaviors in the workplace in different forms.

Furthermore, Robinson and Bennett believe that deviant behavior in the workplace is an individual and intentional behavior which is called negative deviant behavior in the workplace; however, it violates organizational norms and is done in two interpersonal and organizational kinds (Robinson and Bennett, 1995). It means that the employees either constantly challenge the work of that organization (organizational deviant behavior) or the performance of the members of that organization (interpersonal deviant behavior) or both of them (Galperin, 2002). In fact, an organizational deviation is a group of behaviors between a person and an organization (e.g. coming late at work). Furthermore, the interpersonal deviant behavior is a behavior which is seen among people in the workplace such as humiliating each other, quarrel, and behaving rudely (Henley, 2005).

Many organizations seek to predict the employees' deviant behaviors while employing them. These behaviors are probably influenced by personality traits rather than factors related to ability because people consciously select to involve in these behaviors (Monte et al., 2006). In fact, personality potentially affects the process of anti-deviant behaviors such that it can affect the individuals' perceptions, their evaluation of the environment, their documents of the causes of the events, their emotional responses, and their ability to prevent aggression and show deviant behaviors (Spector, 2011).

Studies have indicated that deviant counterproductive behaviors have been identified, introduced, and investigated by different researchers. For example, (Golparvar and Salahshoor, 2016) investigated the structural model of the relationship between destructive leadership and tendency to engage in violence and deviant behaviors among the employees. According to what they say, leadership and, more clearly, leadership styles, are one of the most effective factors in the behaviors of the employees in the workplace. They indicated that tendency to engage in violence is a mediating variable in the relationship between destructive leadership and deviant behaviors. (Ely et al., 2012) investigated the relationship between organizational stressors and counterproductive deviant behaviors. They showed that there is a significant relationship between organizational stressors (an important aspect of which is the weak and destructive interaction with supervisors) and counterproductive deviant behaviors. (Shred et al., 2013) indicated that destructive leaders do destructive behaviors related to the employees and make them be inclined to violence and deviant behaviors. (Schyns and Schilling, 2012) conducted a meta-analysis on fifty seven studies and indicated that destructive leadership has a significantly negative relationship with positive attitude towards leader, well-being, and the employees' performance; however, it has a significantly positive relationship with willingness to turnover, counterproductive behaviors, and resistance and disobedience to the leader (Golparvar and Salahshoor, 2016).

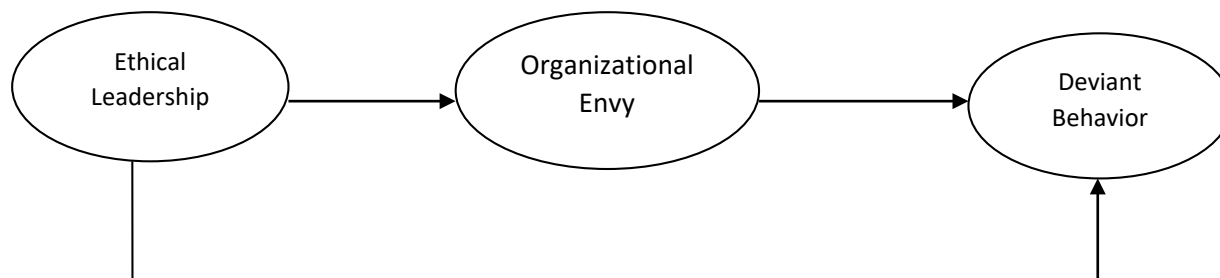
### **Organizational envy**

Envy is an unpleasantly pervasive feeling. The essence and the main axis of envy are to wish or attempt to lose another person's blessing, whether he himself receives it or not and whether it is a good thing for that person or not (Valizadeh and Azerbaijani, 2010). Most of the humans experience this feeling regardless of their culture (Smith and Kim, 2007). Often, envy results in destructive and unavoidable consequences for the individual, group, and organization. For example, Shaw and Duffy confirmed that there is a negative relationship between envy and the quality of group relationships. They simulated the characteristics of work teams using 143 teams consisting of students at different schools and concluded that there is a negative relationship between envy and group integrity, and also between envy and group ability. It means that increased envy decreases group integrity and group ability (Shaw and Duffy, 2000). Moreover, decreased integrity and group ability increases the absence of group members and decreases group performance and satisfaction (Nandedkar, 2011). The organizational researchers classify the effective factors in the incidence of envy into three general categories including individual perception, organizational factors, and understanding the subordinate-superordinate relationship (Nandedkar, 2011). (Vecchio, 1995) conducted a study titled "it is not simple to be envious: envy and sexual jealousy in the workplace". The results indicated that there is a negative relationship between leader-member exchange and the employees' envy (Vecchio, 1995).

Kim, O'Neill, and Cho also investigated the effect of leader-member exchange on the employees' envy and organizational citizenship behavior. They believed that envy is an undesirable negative excitement and a person feels that when he compares himself to his colleagues and notices that others have some blessings and he does not. (Nandedkar, 2011) conducted a study on knowledge sharing and the non-citizenship behaviors of envious employees and showed that leader-member exchange negatively affects envy and envy negatively affects the employees' knowledge sharing. Moreover, envy positively affects the employees' non-citizenship behaviors (Nandedkar, 2011). Three major consequences of envy in the workplace include work behaviors and willingness to turnover, interpersonal relationships, and anti-social or non-citizenship behaviors (Duffy et al., 2008). When an envious person wants something and does not achieve it while another person who is similar to him and

achieves that, the envious person tries to compensate for it (Heather, 2013). (Kim et al., 2009) indicated that the employees' envy decreases their citizenship behavior. Therefore, envy results in decreased knowledge sharing (Kim, 2009).

Moreover, Shaw and Duffy confirmed that there is a negative relationship between envy and the quality of group relationships. They simulated the characteristics of work teams using 143 teams consisting of students at different schools and concluded that there is a negative relationship between envy and group integrity, and also between envy and group ability. It means that increased envy decreases group integrity and group ability. Moreover, decreased integrity and group ability increases the absence of group members and decreases group performance and satisfaction (Mortazavi et al., 2013). The incidence of envy and its strength first depend on the fact that the person compares himself with others and concludes that others are similar to him in every respect, except for the benefits they have gained. Second, the person thinks that he cannot achieve the benefits others have acquired (Smith and Kim, 2007). Therefore, it can be concluded that envy originates from social comparison theory. The social comparison theory stresses the assumption that individuals evaluate their abilities by comparing themselves with similar people (Festinger, 1954). This comparison may result in two completely different results; if it is favorable, it leads to the construction of identity and if it is not, it leads to the destruction of identity. Destruction of identity results in envy by itself (Duffy et al., 2008).



**Figure1.** Conceptual model

### Hypotheses

1. Ethical leadership affects organizational envy.
2. Ethical leadership affects deviant behavior.
3. Organizational envy affects deviant behavior.

### Method

A questionnaire whose reliability had been tested was used for data collection in this study. The researcher used three questionnaires for data collection. These data were analyzed by LISREL software. The population included 157 employees in Petro Sina Arya Oil & Gas Company, Tehran. The present study used a simple random sampling method and 111 people were selected as the sample size. Content validity and Cronbach's alpha were used to determine the validity and reliability of the questionnaires. Its value was 0.812, 0.88, and 0.81 for the ethical leadership questionnaire (Brown et al., 2005), the employees' deviant behavior questionnaire (Bennett and Robinson, 2000), and the organizational envy questionnaire (Jourablou, 2013). In the present study, the research analytic model was drawn based on the data, using path diagram software. Running Perlis from LISREL, the measurement model was obtained; in this model, the hypotheses were tested by using B coefficients and t-test. Additionally, the model fitness indices were automatically calculated for the intended model by running Perlis.

Data analysis

Table 1. The research model fitness indices

| Fitness index      | Standard values   | Estimated values |
|--------------------|---|------------------|
| Degrees of Freedom | -----   | 461              |
| Chi-Square         | It is not an appropriate standard due to its dependence on the sample size. | 1177.87          |
| RMSEA              | 0.05  | 0.088            |
| NFI                | 0.90  | 0.91             |
| NNFI               | 0.90  | 0.93             |
| CFI                | 0.90  | 0.95             |
| RMR                | 0.05  | 0.061            |
| GFI                | 0.90  | 0.76             |
| AGFI               | 0.90  | 0.71             |

As shown in Table 1, the indices of fitness or goodness of fit are at a relatively acceptable level.

The structural equation test

In this study, confirmatory factor analysis was used to test the measurement model and path analysis so as to verify the research structural model. Two following diagrams indicate general models of LISREL software output which simultaneously consist of the structural model and measurement model. They will be separated and investigated in details later.

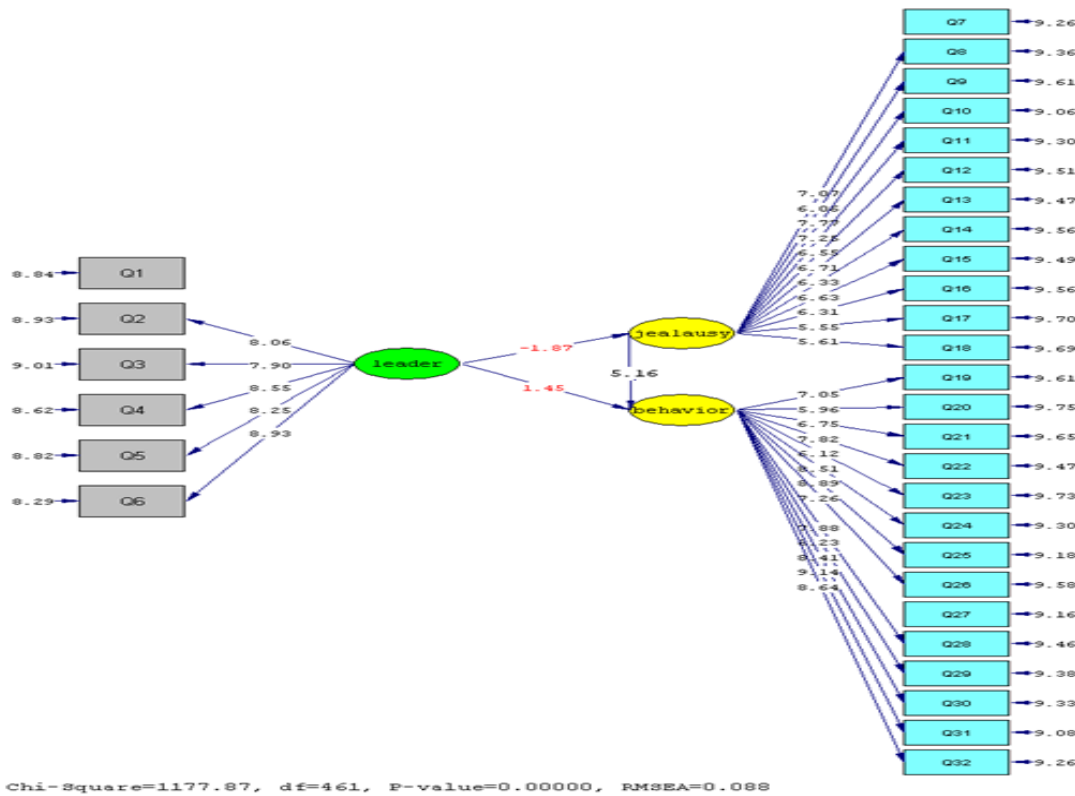
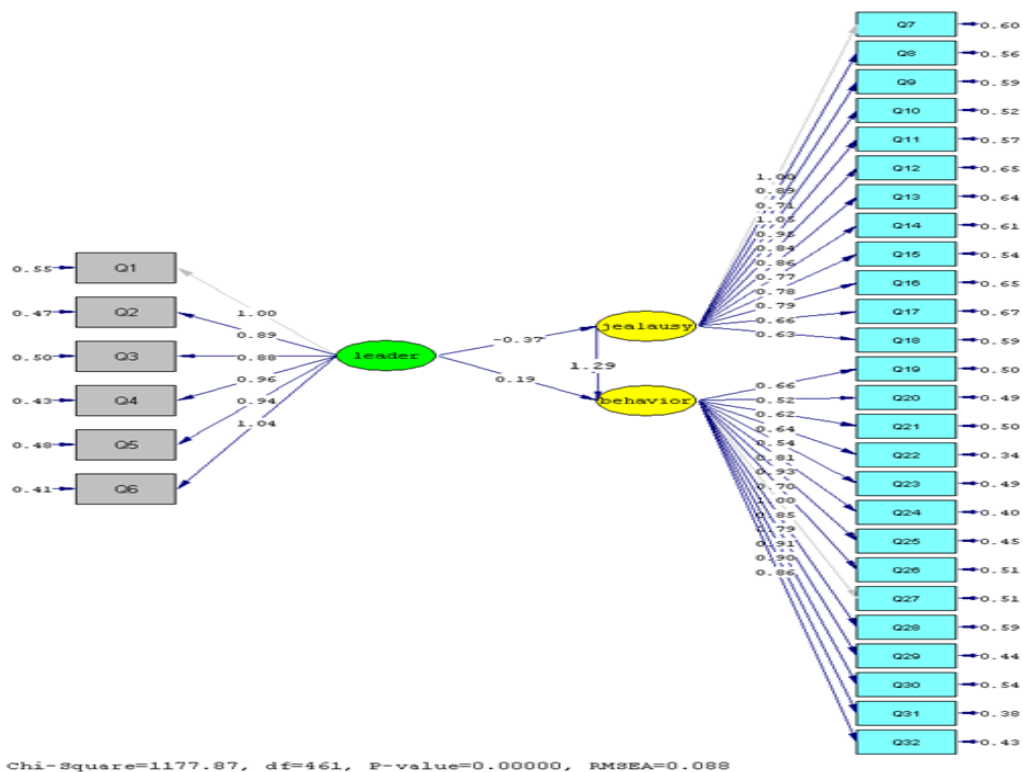


Diagram 1. The basic model with t-values



**Diagram 2.** The basic model with path coefficients

In the structural model, Beta coefficients show the correlation between latent (hidden) variables and are manifested on the diagrams that relate the latent variables to each other.

**Hypothesis testing**

**First hypothesis**

**Table 2.** The results of the first hypothesis testing

| Hypothesis   | Coefficient | t-value | Result |
|--|-------------|---------|--------|
| 1. Ethical leadership affects organizational envy. | -0.37       | -1.87   | Reject |

According to the results of Table 2, the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable has been supported by data and the path which relates these two variables is significantly negative (it is significant at the error level of 5 percent) ( $t = -1.87, \beta_{22} = -0.37$ ). Therefore, it can be said that, with 95 percent confidence, the increased ethical leadership decreases organizational envy.

**Second hypothesis**

**Table 3.** The results of the second hypothesis testing

| Hypothesis                                      | Coefficient | t-value | Result |
|---|-------------|---------|--------|
| 2. Ethical leadership affects deviant behavior. | 0.19        | 1.45    | Reject |

According to the results of Table 3, the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable has been supported by data and the path which relates these two variables is significantly negative (it is significant at the error level of 5 percent) ( $t = 1.45, \beta_{22} = 0.19$ ). Therefore, it can be said that, with 95 percent confidence, the increased ethical leadership decreases deviant behavior.

**Third hypothesis**

**Table 4.** The results of the third hypothesis testing

| Hypothesis                                      | Coefficient | t-value | Result |
|---|-------------|---------|--------|
| 3.Organizational envy affects deviant behavior. | 1.29        | 5.16    | Accept |

According to the results of Table 4, the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable has been supported by data and the path which relates these two variables is significantly positive (it is significant at the error level of 5 percent) ( $t = 5.16, \beta_{22} = 1.29$ ). Therefore, it can be said that, with 95 percent confidence, organizational envy affects deviant behavior and the increased organizational envy also increases deviant behavior.

The results of the hypotheses are summarized in the following table:

**Table 5.** The summary of the results of the hypotheses

| Hypothesis   | Coefficient | t-value | Result |
|--|-------------|---------|--------|
| 1. Ethical leadership affects organizational envy. | -0.37       | -1.87   | Reject |
| 2. Ethical leadership affects deviant behavior.    | 0.19        | 1.45    | Reject |
| 3. Organizational envy affects deviant behavior.   | 1.29        | 5.16    | Accept |

**Conclusion**

The results of the first hypothesis showed that the path coefficient between ethical leadership and organizational envy is -0.37 and the value of the related t is -1.87<1.96; according to t-test with the critical value of 0.05 at 95 percent confidence level, the null hypothesis is not rejected. As a result, the first claim of the researcher is not confirmed and it can be said that, with 95% confidence, ethical leadership negatively affects organizational envy. Therefore, the quality of the relationship between supervisor and subordinates is very important because it can greatly affect the feelings and work behaviors of the members. The results of this study are in line with those of (Mortazavi et al., 2013) who investigated the effect of the mediating role of envy in leadership style. Studies have shown that leaders are one of the effective factors in the behaviors of the organization members who define the values and norms and present a picture of the organization. Leaders play an important role in the manner and trust level in the organization, creating mutual respect, identifying and correcting problems, awarding rewards, and exerting punishments. Hence, the relationship between leader and the employees is one of the effective factors in the emergence of organizational envy. The results obtained from this hypothesis are in line with the studies of (Salmani and Radmand, 2009), (Kim et al., 2009), and (Nandedkar, 2011).

The results of the second hypothesis showed that the path coefficient between ethical leadership and deviant behavior is 0.19 and the value of the related t is 1.45<1.96; according to t-test with the critical value of 0.05 at 95 percent confidence level, the null hypothesis is not rejected. As a result, the second claim of the researcher is not confirmed and it can be said that, with 95% confidence, ethical leadership negatively affects deviant behavior. Studies show that when people feel that they are behaved unfair, they often tend to retaliate and do



deviant behaviors to compensate this injustice. However, leaders play an important role in managing changes, contradictions, communications, and time and can cope with deviant behaviors. Therefore, according to the studies conducted by (Golparvar and Salahshoor, 2016), leadership styles are regarded as one of the most effective factors in employees' behaviors in the workplace. The results obtained from this hypothesis are in line with the studies of (Salmani and Radmand, 2009) and (Mortazavi et al., 2013).

The results of the third hypothesis showed that the path coefficient between organizational envy and deviant behavior is 0.24 and the value of the related  $t$  is  $1.90 < 1.96$ ; according to  $t$ -test with the critical value of 0.05 at 95 percent confidence level, the null hypothesis is rejected. As a result, the third claim of the researcher is confirmed and it can be said that, with 95% confidence, organizational envy positively affects deviant behavior. As such, psychologists believe that envy is a negative excitement because it can result in negative consequences for the organization. Studies have indicated that envy positively affects the employees' non-citizenship behaviors. The results of this study are in line with those of the studies done by (Ziaoddini and Nasiri, 2015), (Kim et al., 2009), and (Mortazavi et al., 2013).

### **Recommendations**

Since organizational envy affects the performance of the employees and challenges the organization, it is proposed that managers first identify the cause of envy in the organization and then seek to eliminate it. In this regard, correct management and the promotion of clear communications can prevent such problems in the workplace to some extent. Managers need to equally behave with all employees and should not discriminate between them. Healthy management and right and fair rewarding are other solutions for decreasing organizational envy because observance of justice in the said affairs prevents the incidence of envy in the organization.

Moreover, managers often stipulate some rules for increasing efficiency, creating stability in the quality of the services and contributing to supervise the employees' behavior; if the employees feel that these rules are unfair, they may ignore them. Hence, it is proposed that managers observe justice and prevent the incidence of these negative behaviors in the organization in order to reduce deviant behaviors.

Furthermore, the reward and compensation system can also encourage the employees to engage in deviant behaviors. Competition for receiving reward makes the employees only consider their own benefits and regard the unethical behaviors necessary for their success. Therefore, it is proposed that managers correct the reward and compensation systems by presenting clear criteria regarding payments and observance of justice while stipulating and implementing rules so as to prevent the incidence of deviant behaviors in the organization.

Culture is also one of the effective factors in the individuals' behaviors and values and can play a role in the incidence of deviant behaviors. Therefore, it is proposed that the organizational culture be developed such that it provides the possibility for the individuals' participation and gives them organizational identities. Furthermore, the organizational culture should contain ethical programs.

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