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The Relationship of Organizational Trauma with Reducing Organizational Ethics

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Abstract

Background: "Organizational trauma" and "organizational ethics" are the key variables of interest to researchers in the field of organizational management. Therefore, the present study examined the relationship between organizational trauma and organizational ethics of staff in Urmia University and sought to determine whether organizational trauma has a significant relationship with organizational ethics.
Method: This study is applied, from the perspective of purpose; and descriptive-correlational, from that of research design. A sample of 230 employees was randomly drawn out of 630 employees of Urmia University as the statistical population. The data was collected using two standard questionnaires of organizational trauma and organizational ethics, and analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM).
Results: The results showed that organizational trauma can overshadow organizational ethics up to 33 percent. The path coefficient of organizational trauma and organizational ethics variables was measured to be 2.52, which is more than 1/96 at the error rate of 0.05.
Conclusions: According to the statistical results, research hypothesis was confirmed, and it was concluded that organizational trauma has a significantly negative impact on organizational ethics.

Keywords: Ethics, Organizational trauma, Organizational ethics

Introduction

Studying the behavior of individuals in work environments has long been considered by thinkers in the science of management, and this became more serious with the advent of organizational behavior in the early 1960s (1). Today, organizations are in an environment that must increasingly strive to adapt to the changes taking place in their surroundings, and as a result, focus a large part of their efforts on trying to differentiate their resources (2). Quality of human resources is a factor playing a crucial role in the survival of an organization. The importance of human resources is more than financial and material resources. Human resources are the most valuable

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assets of an organization (3). Present-day organizations are in a complex and highly competitive environment, thereby they have to firmly maintain their survival; identify sustainable competitive advantages; have a powerful, committed, creative and innovative personality; and be responsive to their performance and behavior (4). Besides, despite the intense competition in all technical scenes, the managers of the organizations try to create an atmosphere to achieve better understanding of the innovation process, which allows increased productivity and creativity (5). Therefore, it can be claimed that innovation as a means of facilitating the process of adapting to many environmental changes is a considerable challenge for organizations. In fact, being innovative simply means helping the organization deal with the turbulent environment that is confronted with a rapidly changing complexity (6).

One of the implications that can affect organizational innovation seems to be organizational trauma. Any injury, shock, or accident on the body are referred to as trauma, provided that it is imposed from the outside and the internal agent is not the cause of injury. In other words, trauma is any damage caused by increased pressure on the body (7). Accordingly, trauma is mainly considered to be an outside factor affecting the current and future relationships of the organizations. However, trauma is not just a situation associated with the external environment. The "internal" features and events of an organization also significantly affect its interactions with the social environment (8, 9). Some researchers referred to organizational trauma as a "shadow" of organizational culture, which causes hostile boundaries with other organizations, conflict, lack of rational decision making, passivity, and weakening of the employees' morale (10). The purpose of organizational trauma is a set of potential organizational responses to actions or internal/external events (11). These events might be caused by one or more individuals or uncontrolled phenomena that lead to mental distress, physical injury, and other damages to the employees of an organization. In other words, an offensive or catastrophic occurrence of any malicious event or action that disrupts the performance of the organization can undoubtedly affect the identities of both individuals and the organization and interrupt the work as well (12). In recent years, the occupational stress of the people who have traveled with trauma survivors has attracted a lot of attention (13). The experience of employees' burnout in a limited entity (such as an organization) had drawn attention of a wide range of scholars to the importance of organizational trauma. This has also led to a number of theories shedding light on the contagious nature of emotional impact of traumatic conditions in the workplace as well as its spread through the pain and empathy of employees (such as cases where employees are constantly exposed to the destructive effects of an experience. The unpleasant things of the past are no longer staffed). In the past decade, the effect of working with survivors of trauma has been studied under two different categories in the form of 1) burnout; and 2) stress; caused by personal and environmental damage to employees, referred to as secondary mental attack or organizational trauma. What seems important is that organizational damage has a negative impact on both the affected employee and other colleagues. The reason is that a traumatic sniff can be easily transmitted from the injured person to those who are in danger of being traumatized (14). Following the definition presented by some researchers described organizational trauma as a phenomenon that, in the event of occurrence, will be a significant shock to all individuals and organizational groups, and even to the family of employees. It breaks down the defensive structures of the organization, and creates a feeling of frustration and desperation in the organization as well. In other words, organizational trauma represents a kind of blows and shocks that are caused due to the malfunction of one or more elements of the organization, such as individuals, goals, structure, technology or the environment (15). The organization's mental impact range can be considered in four levels:

A. Individual level, i.e., employees' depression, anxiety, stress, helplessness, aggression, and emotional insensitivity that

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cause occupational dysfunction and reduced productivity (16).

B. Group level, which appears as the signs of creativity reduction, weakening of the performance and commitment of individuals in the group, and increased tensions of the group (17).
C. Organizational level, the most important aspects of which include burnout, reduced creativity, and organizational stagnation (11).
D. Societal level, which appears in the form of signs such as fear, frustration, and increased immigration and defection in the society (18).

Dimensions of the organizational trauma investigated in this study can be classified as follows:

1. Individuals: Employees of an organization may be traumatized by the mistreatment of their managers and colleagues or because of expulsion, modification of force, death and illness, or feeling of incompetency.
2. Structure: Inappropriate structural changes, improper division of labor, excessive concentration, excessive changes in laws and regulations, and the abundance of regulations and working instructions may impose heavy pressure on individuals and cause mental shock as well.
3. Goals: The absence of a defined organizational mission, and lack of clear and measurable objectives and programs can expose employees to overwhelming demands and put them at risk of mental shocks.
4. Environment: The hostile nature of the organization's relationship with the external environment and increased demands of the stakeholders from the organization or reduction and scarcity of the resources provided by the environment can put pressure on the organization's human resources and cause them a psychological shock (19).

In introducing the other variable of the present research it can be said that ethical issues are continuously related to the organizational, professional and everyday life of the individuals. Therefore, organizations need to develop and apply standards of professional conduct to survive, so that managers and employees can create common professional values for the benefit of as many stakeholders as possible (20). Researchers point out in their research that interest in ethical issues is increasing at the organizational level, because individuals are relying on structures, processes, and people around them in the face of moral problems (21). Therefore, morality is considered to be the foundation of any organization embracing aspects such as programs, organizational climate, and culture (22). Organizational ethics is an emerging area in the management of corporate affairs and employees. It generally refers to ethical issues of administration and management in relation to counseling or clinical research (23). The first studies on organizational ethics in 1987 were published in the form of systematic and developmental approaches and as a field of study. Research on organizational ethics has clearly increased in the 2000s. It was also believed that public management should understand democratic values and be responsive to people to serve them better, and that ethical considerations are required for wise management practices of the organizations (24). Since then, researchers have been thinking of creating a robust system of wisdom and virtue that seems to be essential for individuals to ensure their adequate reliance on structural mechanism in an attempt to achieve a morally constructive system (25). Organizational ethics is associated with the study of ethical issues relates to the ways in which organizations affect their members and the ways in which members affect each other and the organization. Organizational ethics examines the organizational culture, standards, and practices intended to guide behavior. These standards are often based on the core values of an organization such as honesty, respect, and trust. Employees must be aware of whatever separates moral from immoral choices (26). In other words, organizational ethics expresses the values of an organization to employees or other institutions without considering government and executive regulations (27). Dimen-

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sions of organizational ethics studied in this research are mentioned as follows:

1. Benevolence: The organization emphasis on the interests of employees
2. Independence: Use of opinions and ideas in the affairs.
3. Self-direction: The organization's emphasis on its own interests. Self-direction includes two components:
   - Effectiveness: Performing the job in the best way to achieve the desired result.
   - Profit of the Organization: Taking measures to promote the interests of the organization.
4. Justice: Putting everything in its right position and its real status, considering the importance of organizational rules and practices, and generally complying with ethical principles (28).

In the following, the seminal works associated with the subject matter in this research are presented: Some researchers conducted a research entitled "The Impact of Organizational Trauma on Staff Skills at a Private Hospital in Iran" on employees working at Khatam-al-Anbia Hospital in Tehran. Findings showed that there is a significant correlation between organizational trauma and employee skills in different degrees. An organizational trauma can reduce the technical, human, and perceptual skills of employees at the workplace and adversely affect the needs of employees. If this trauma lasts for a long time, it can affect the productivity of the organization as well (15).

Some researchers conducted a research entitled "The Effect of Organizational Traumatic Factors on the Military Staff Abandonment" on employees of Imam Khomeini Marine Science University. The results of the research indicate that the organizational trauma has a significant relationship with the dimensions of individuals, goals, structure, technology and environment. As a result, the increase in these dimensions will lead to the breakdown of network links, network relationships; and the reduction of group homogeneity, trust, commitment, mutual expectations, the common identity of employees, and the power and courage of members of organizations (29).

Some researchers conducted a research entitled "Social Work with Trauma Survivors" examined the social impact of physical blows on the survivors of severe human trauma. They concluded that organizational authorities should promote healthy working environments and develop and implement standards to promote the well-being of all their personnel (30). Some researchers conducted a research entitled "Job Stress and Work Ethics".

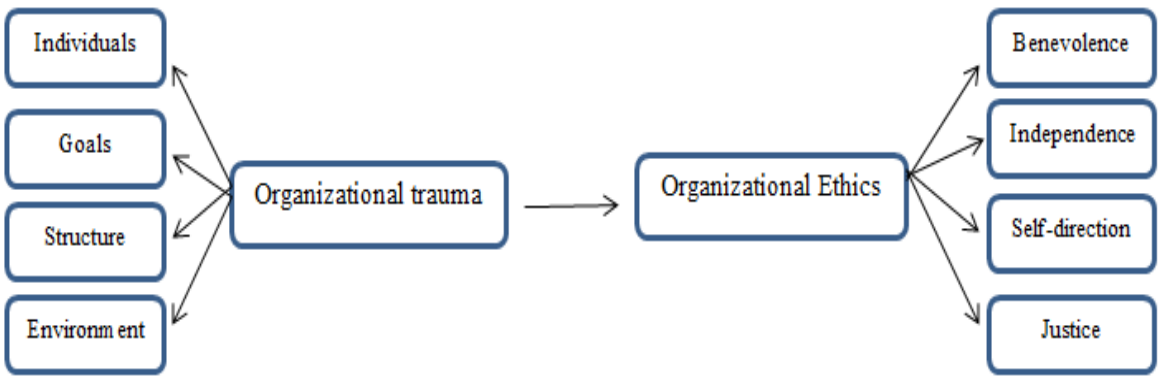


Fig 1. The conceptual model of the research

The results of this study showed that occupational stress and its consequences may lead to disappointment and lack of motivation in personnel and adversely overshadow their performance. As

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a result, their work ethic will be reduced as well (31).

Considering that universities have become important social organizations playing a major role in the comprehensive and sustainable development of countries and the source of all the fundamental changes in society (including economic, cultural and social), and regarding the influential role employees enact in this process, it is worth taking into account university and staff as the key elements deserving special attention. It is hoped that the present study reveals new dimensions of the relationships between variables in the organizational behavior, adds to the existing knowledge, and encourages other researchers to take step in this direction by identifying some of the unknown aspects in this area. The main question of the present study was whether organizational trauma has a significant relationship with organizational ethics or not.

Materials and Methods

The current research is a descriptive (non-experimental) type of surveying. The statistical population of this research includes all employees of Urmia University in 2018. The size of the statistical population is 630. In this research, the Cochran formula was used to determine the sample size. Using this formula, the sample size was estimated to be 230. This formula is presented below:

$$n = \frac{Nt^2s^2}{Nd^2 + t^2s^2}$$

Here,

t = Percentage of standard errors (acceptable coefficient of reliability)

d = degree of confidence or desirable precision

s = proportion of the population without the specific attribute

N = number of people in the community

The applied sampling method is random stratified method.

150 out of 230 subjects responding the questionnaire were male, and the remaining (80) were female. Overall, 56 respondents were single, and the rest were (174) married. Also, 136 had a bachelor's degree, 87 had a master's degree, and 7 had a Ph.D. It was observed that the highest proportion of respondents were aged 40-49; however, 89 participants had an average age of 23 years and the lowest age range was 60-69 (3 employees) and the average years of experience was 32 years. In this study, questionnaire was used for data collection. The following questionnaires were considered in this regard:

A. Organizational Trauma questionnaire was designed according to the model of Vivian and Horman (2015). The questionnaire was comprised of 22 items based on the Likert scale. Four dimensions of individuals (items 1-8), goals (items 9-12), structure (items 13-17) and environment (items 18-22) were categorized separately and evaluated using the five-point Likert scale. Content validity of the questionnaire was evaluated using the comments made by the academic experts and management professors. Also, the convergent validity was measured using AVE (with 0.85 cutoff*)* method, and confirmed to be acceptable as it was higher than 0.5. The reliability of the questionnaire was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (α = 0.94) and composite reliability (CR= 0.96), and the result confirmed its acceptable level.

(B) Organizational Ethics Questionnaire was designed following the Victor and Cullen (1998) model. The questionnaire consisted of benevolence (questions 1-3), independence (questions 4-6), self-direction (questions 7-12), and justice (questions 13-22) indicators. The questionnaire included 22 items and used the five-point Likert scale to measure organizational ethics. Standard Organizational Ethics Questionnaire also had an acceptable content validity verified by management and academic specialists. Convergent validity was found to be 0.88 using AVE method, and confirmed to be acceptable as it was higher than 0.5. The reliability of this questionnaire was measured using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (α = 0/90) and composite reliability (CR = 0.93), and verified to have a very good and acceptable level.

Determining the relationship between organizational trauma and organizational morality was

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conducted using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) method. Then, results were analyzed using SPSS (v. 22) and Smart PLS 2.0 software at two descriptive and inferential levels.

Results

As shown in Table (1), the factor loads for the research variables are higher than 0.5, and the criterion value for the coefficients of factor loads is 0.4. Therefore, the reliability of the model is verified. Factor loads are in fact the correlation between the structure and its dimensions or between structures and the relevant questions.

The Q^2 benchmark determined the predictive power of the model. If the Q^2 value for an exogenous structure is 0.3, 0.15, or 0.35, it respectively indicates the weak, moderate and strong predictive power of the structure or its related exogenous structures. Table (2) shows that the Q^2 value of the internal structure (organizational ethics) is 0.38, and this indicates a good prediction power of the model for this structure and confirms its fit as the structural model of the research.

Table 1. Coefficients of Load capacity

Organizational Trauma		Organizational Ethics	
Dimensions	**Load capacity**	**Dimensions**	**Load capacity**
Individuals	0/94	Benevolence	0/87
Goals	0/91	independence	0/88
Structure	0/93	self-direction	0/85
Environment	0/91	justice	0/92

Table 2. Q^2 coefficient of the research model

Variable	SSO	SSE	1-SSE/SSO
Organizational Ethics	920/0	839/640294	0/387348

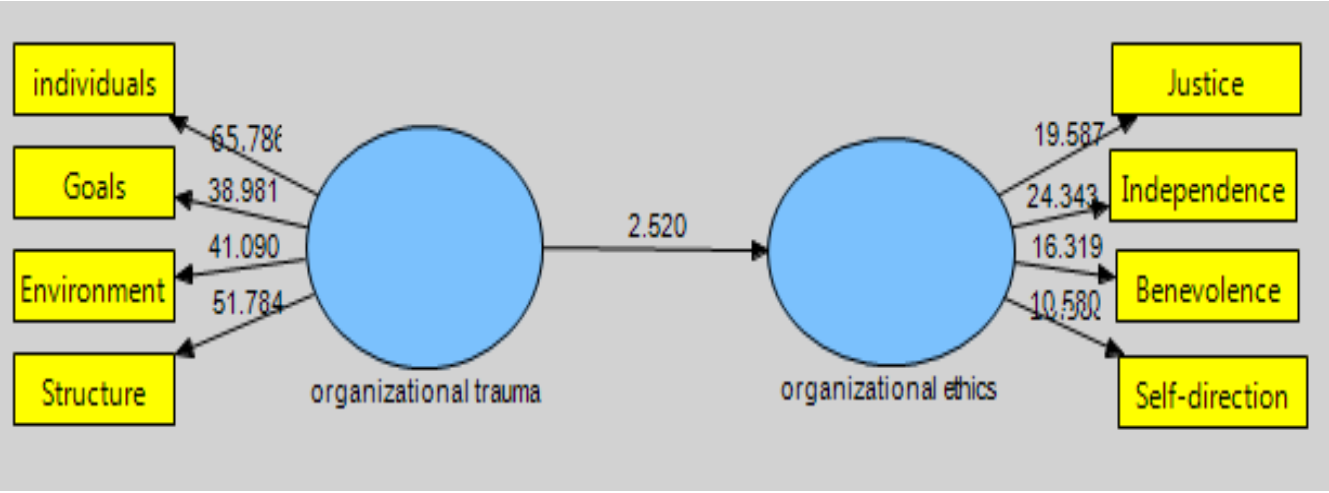


Fig 2. The T-value coefficients of the research model

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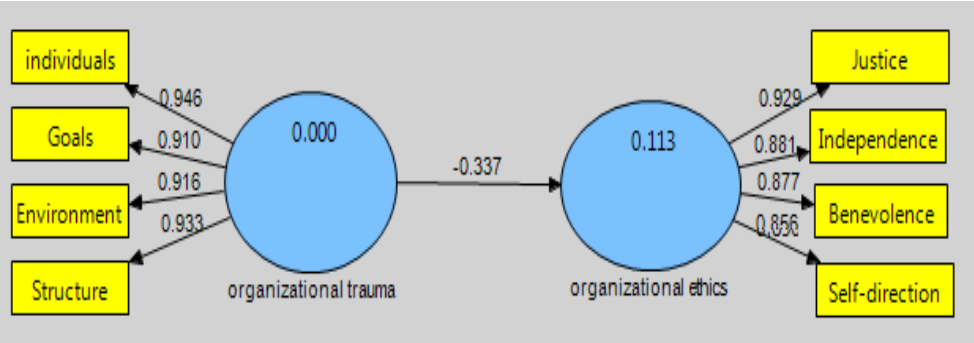


Fig 3. The research model and standardized factor loading coefficients
Research hypothesis: Organizational trauma has a direct impact on organizational ethics

As shown in Figure. 2, path coefficients of the organizational trauma and the organizational ethics were equal (2.52), which is more than 1/96 at the error level of 0.05. Furthermore, as demonstrated in Figure 3, the coefficients of the path of standardized loads between organizational trauma and organizational ethics were equal (-0.33). This suggests that organizational traumatic changes account for 33% of organizational ethical changes. Therefore, with 95% confidence, it can be claimed that organizational trauma has a directly negative effect on organizational ethics. Accordingly, the null hypothesis of the research is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is confirmed.

Table 3. Summary of the results of the research hypothesis

Result	amount of the coefficient	The significance level	Research hypothesis
Accept the hypothesis	-0/33	2/52>1/96	Organizational trauma has a significant direct effect on organizational ethics

According to Table 3, as path coefficient or the significant level is greater than 1.96-at 95% confidence level and with an error level of 0.05- the values of the standardized loading factor coefficients are significant and the research hypothesis is confirmed.

Discussion

In the research hypothesis, the path coefficients between organizational trauma and organizational ethics is 2.47, which indicates the effect of the exogenous change, that is, organizational trauma on organizational ethics. To assess the extent and severity of the relationship, standardized loading factors were used, indicating that more than 33% of the organizational ethical variance was due to organizational trauma. This implies the directly negative impact of organizational trauma on organizational ethics. In explaining the result of the research hypothesis, it can be said that in organizations where impacts and shocks are usually due to the malfunction of one or more elements of the organizational components (e.g., individuals, goals, structure, technology or environment) employees fail to achieve team cohesion and take on their individual responsibilities. It simply means that in the event of internal disagreements, they are suppressed rather than encouraged to solve the problem. Organizational decisions are made without collective agreement. Commitment to customers can lead to excessive and unrealistic expectations for employees. Notably, compliance with social and environmental changes is wider and conflicts with the true identity of organizations. Moreover, the weakness of professional

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ethics is assumed to be a disadvantage for an organization because it may undermine relationships improvement, reduce the atmosphere of understanding, increase conflict, decrease the commitment and accountability of the staff, and finally augment control costs. And from the point of view of social responsibility, reduced legitimacy of the organization and its actions will definitely result in declined commitment to professional ethics; reduced importance of the stakeholders, income reduction, profitability, and competitive advantage; and finally organizational failure. Therefore, when the codes of professional ethics are weakened in an organization, it simply means that they can no longer help the organization reduce its tensions and succeed to achieve its goals effectively; therefore, it may practically lose its function in the organization. Finally, it can be said that the results of this research are consistent with the findings of other researchers (15, 29, 20, and 31).

In the following, multiple recommendations are presented to planners and executives of the University of Urmia and other higher education institutions:

- To deal with corporate trauma, university administrators are highly recommended to accept the reality in the organization rather than deny or escape it. In the event of a problem, they are expected to rightly guide the personnel and seek to resolve the given problem. They are also suggested to provide in-service training on organizational trauma and mental shocks for employees. Developing social networks in the organization through strengthening the norms of the sense of usefulness, productivity, and identity of employees; and stimulating staff members to participate more in meetings and various ceremonies is also a matter of great importance.
- It is recommended that university administrators and leaders develop educational, religious, and spiritual programs on the values of the organization, adhere to the ethical norms in their human resources management, and encourage employees to observe work values and human ethics.

Conclusion

The present-day organizations are in a complex and highly competitive environment. Therefore, their survival entails powerful, committed, innovative, and responsible employees. Considering that universities have become important social organizations playing a major role in the country's comprehensive and sustainable development and the source of all fundamental changes of the society (including economic, cultural and social), and regarding the influential role employees enact in this process, it is worth taking into account university and staff as the key elements deserving special attention. Universities now play a vital role in human capital education as the key factor in the social, economic, cultural and political development of human societies. The analysis of the factors affecting the growth and development of both developed and developing societies shows that the effective educational system in each country contributes to its comprehensive development. Educational institutions have found that under the difficult prevailing circumstances, they fail to meet the growing needs of their community education without having the human resources equipped with controlled mental harm and organizational ethics. In this regard, the need to pay attention to the work environment of the staff is believed to be a key task of higher education authorities.

Ethical Consideration

In this research, by introducing references used, the ethical principle of scientific confidentiality was embodied in respect for the intellectual rights of authors of works and other principles of scientific ethics such as secrecy and confidentiality of participants' profile were also observed.

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forts toward collecting data required for the present research.

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