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A study of the relationship between locus of control and job involvement in Iran public employees

Mohammad Hossein Motaghi Pisheh

Graduate School of Business, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800 Minden, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia.
E-mail: motaghi@usm.my. Tel: +60-4-653-5343, +60-194370139. Fax: +60-4-653-2792.

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With governments throughout the world being increasingly under pressure to be more responsive and effective, there has been a great deal of interest in employee involvement with job. The primary objective of this research is to investigate the correlation of locus of control and job involvement in public sector organizations of Iran. Previous studies revealed that locus of control may be related to job involvement. The author conceptualizes job involvement along three dimensions to better explore the correlation of variables. Data were collected from 200 public employees working in Kerman Township of Iran. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. Results suggested that in public organizations, the majority of respondents are characterized as having internal locus of control. It is also indicated that while locus of control is directly related to job involvement, it is correlated to just two facets of job involvement: job importance and spending time on the job; but not related to the third facet: importance of success. The results highlighted some culturally induced practices which contribute towards the employees' perception of success on the job.

Key words: Locus of control, work attitude, job involvement, public sector, Iran.

INTRODUCTION

Managing and working today needs nimbleness and flexibility to help organizations develop and prosper. Concomitant of prosperity is organizational development for which organizations must sustain a competitive edge in a competitive world. One of the crucial keys to competition is human capital that is directly influenced by individual differences. The quality of this capital is nearly impossible to replicate. Human capital, with its special personality characteristics, paves the way for the organization, determines organizational behavior, and affects the work quality. In other words, human capital could be considered as critical building blocks in the success or failure of any organization. Therefore, it is necessary to scrutinize its personality, attitude, and behavior in organizations. The role of personality at work has been increasingly reaffirmed (House et al., 1996; Mount et al., 2003). Some personality characteristics that could be determinants of individual behavior at work are formed in a special group and are related to the locus of control (Robbins, 1998). Researchers have agreed that locus of control is an important individual difference factor, and can be regarded as a stable personality trait

(Levenson, 1974; Paulhus, 1983). This personality trait plays an important role at work (Ng et al., 2006) and predicts job attitudes (Robbins, 2003; Judge and Bono, 2001).

In recent years, governments throughout the world are increasingly under pressure to be more responsive and effective (Khaled and Chowdhury, 2011). As a result there has been a great deal of interest in employee involvement with the job. Many have argued that employee involvement predicts organizational success (Bates, 2004; Baumruk, 2004; Harter et al., 2002; Richman, 2006). This success is especially important for public sector in developing countries such as Iran. In the Asian Productivity Organization ranking, Iran has been ranked as 17th among 18 members (Dehghan et al., 2006). It is extremely important that employees in any organization have the proper attitudes to perform well in their job. Attitudes are the internal competencies that are attached to the employees (Stup, 2003). Job attitudes are, actually, an inevitable part of productivity (Turnbull, 1986). Elankumaran (2004) suggested that any effort to maximize organizational productivity requires a higher

degree of job involvement. Ng et al. (2006) study indicates that locus of control may be related to attitudinal and behavioral outcomes at work. Lawler and Hall (1970); Loscocco and Roschelle (1991); Knoop (1981); and Elloy and Terpening (1992) posited that personality traits are predictor of job involvement. Nevertheless, little attention has been given to employees' job involvement and, especially, their personality traits as generators of observed differences in attitudes and behaviors towards work and organization in Iran. This study investigated the relationship between locus of control and job involvement of public employees in Iran.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Locus of control

Locus of control originally developed within the framework of Rotter's (1966) social learning theory (Akomolafe and Popoola, 2011). Locus of control theory is a psychological/sociological concept related to where individuals conceptually place responsibility, choice, and control for events in their lives (Baev, 2007). Ball (1977) believes that this construct has existed in different forms throughout the history of mankind. Tragedies of ancient Greece are replete with thoughts of man's desperation when faced with gods or its own fate. As far as locus of control is concerned, there has been a controversy of fatalism against free will among philosophers. Sociologists have proposed self-determination against self-alienation; and psychologists have called it behaviorism against subjectivism. However, the construct of locus of control as a psychological structure came into being a few decades ago (Ball, 1977).

Rotter (Karimi, 1998) advocated free will in action, particularly, if the free will makes sense to people with internal locus of control. He believed that the factors involved with reinforcement expectancy are labeled "external" and "internal" control. Internal locus of control refers to the perception of positive or negative events as being a consequence of one's own actions and thereby under one's own personal control. In contrast, external locus of control refers to the perception of positive or negative events as being unrelated to one's own behavior in certain situations and thereby beyond personal control (Sief, 2000).

Therefore, locus of control is a psychological/sociological construct concerning the individual's perception of events. It is related to the individual's evaluation of her/himself in controlling events that occur and accepting their own personalities (Richardson, 2000). According to Rotter (Karimi, 1998) with regard to his emphasis on cognitive variables, human beings can organize and lead their own experiences, while choosing their own behaviors. He assumed that people, although, affected by external variables, are able to form the

essence and scope of these effects. He also emphasized that most behaviors are learned and little importance is placed on genetic factors; meaning that, it is mostly education, not nature; and experience, not heredity that leads people. Some factors that may play a role in forming an individual's locus of control include socio-economical, educational levels and religious beliefs of the family. Individuals with an external locus of control are usually born in illiterate and religiously radical families with low incomes (Ball, 1977). According to Wiley (2006), religious orientation seems to contribute to people's sense of spiritual meaning and locus of control. A family's living conditions and educational environment are important factors in forming the locus of control. Social culture is a determinant and effective element of internal and/or external locus of control (Sief, 2000).

From a cultural point of view locus of control as an individual difference factor is instructive. According to Weisz et al. (1984), culture prescribes different desired ways in which a person can exercise control. Iranian culture is a collectivist as compared to individualist (Hofstede, 1980; Yeganeh and Su, 2007; Javidan and Dastmalchian, 2003). Collectivist cultures stress fitting in with the social environment and harmonious interpersonal relationships, whereas the individualist ones stress self-actualization and self-resilience (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1994). Locus of control has proven itself to be highly useful in distinguishing the active/passive attitudes of individuals in relation to their environment (Kongsompong, 2006). Therefore, collectivist values in a culture place emphasis on the aspirations of the group rather than those of the individuals and define the self in relation to collectivism (Triandis, 1995). Consequently, development of an external locus of control is more likely in such societies. Therefore, locus of control as a personality trait plays a major role in the quality of an individual's perception, her/his reaction, and evaluation of the environment. In general, it may have a differential impact on individual's motivation to perform. This could be related to the individual's job attitudes such as job involvement.

Job involvement

Individuals in the workplace have different attitudes. One of these attitudes is job involvement. Job involvement has been restricted to the cognitive dimension of attitudes towards a job. Thus, it should be viewed as a generalized cognitive style of psychological identification with the job (Kanungo, 1979, 1982). Identification with a job implies greater eagerness as a 'colleague' to react to the demands which are made upon the job, and there are many reasons which cause this attitude. According to Steers (Moorhead and Griffin, 1995), job involvement might be derived from personal factors such as age and years of service; it might also be due to organizational elements, such as participation in decision making

process and job security. Rabinowitz and Hall (1977) in their review of the literature on job involvement found several studies, for example, where individual characteristics such as age, education, sex, tenure, need strength, level of control and values were linked to job involvement, although, these linkages were not very consistent across studies. Mirhashemi (2008) demonstrated that male employees in his statistical population in Iran had a higher level of job involvement than female employees.

Some studies related job involvement to situational variables in the work environment including leadership style, decision making process, interpersonal relations and job characteristics as well as with work outcomes such as job satisfaction, turnover and absenteeism (Knoop, 1986; Elloy et al., 1991). Saal (1978) in a study of manufacturing employees found that perceived job characteristics were a better predictor of job involvement than individual difference variables. Employees' perception toward their manager is another effective element in job involvement. Managers, who seem trustworthy and encourage employees to perform well, play a significant role in development of job involvement. They create an organizational climate which nurtures job involvement and helps to maintain it (Elloy et al., 1991). Knoop (1986) suggested that job characteristics, in comparison to individual differences, are a much better indicator of job involvement. In a study by Steel and Rentsch (1997) it was illustrated that both, personality factors and situational factors play an effective role in job attitudes. Several innovative studies have shown the influence of a person's disposition on job attitude. One of the first studies in this area demonstrated that a person's job satisfaction scores have stability over time even when s/he changes jobs or companies (Staw and Ross, 1985). Some studies also mentioned genetic factors as basic elements of this attitude, which have, naturally, brought about many opponents (Schrader, 2005). Since job involvement, more or less, is derived from job satisfaction, existence of genetic factors for this attitude is also worth contemplating (Keller et al., 1992).

The concept of job involvement reflects the extent to which work is a central life interest. As Dubin (1956, 1968) describes it, job involvement is the degree to which the total job situation is perceived to be a major source of satisfaction of important needs. More involved employees feel more competent and successful at work, and believe that their personal and organizational goals are compatible (Liao and Lee, 2009). Along the same lines, Lodahl and Kejner (1965) defined job involvement as the degree of importance of one's work to one's total self-image. Job involvement, therefore, seems to be primarily determined by the individual's self-image and understanding of what is important in life, and only secondarily by the influence of organizational characteristics. Thereby, it is expected that job involvement largely is shaped by individual attributes and previous life experiences

rather than by situational elements. Based on above, three characteristics (psychological states) were attributed to job involvement as: a) The degree to which an employee feels the job has value and importance; b) The degree to which an employee feels success on the job; c) The degree to which an employee spend time on the job. These three psychological states, in turn, influence work outcomes (absenteeism, work motivation, etc). It is worth noting that these psychological states were not mentioned by Lodahl and Kejner (1965) in their original job involvement scale. They were developed by the author, through literature review, and used as facets of job involvement in this study. They are, culturally, the most predictive of job involvement and organizational performance.

Locus of control and job involvement

A number of researchers (Dubin, 1956; Rabinowitz and Hall, 1977) argued that job involvement is a personal characteristic which is less likely to be influenced by organizational factors; thus, it is mainly a function of individual attributes. According to Hall and Mansfield (1971), job involvement is a relatively non-manipulated personal characteristic. Roter contended that the sense of control was a significant element in workplace situations (Qutaiba, 2011). Some people have personal characteristics that correlate with higher levels of job involvement. Job involved individuals tend to attribute positive work outcomes to internal and personally controllable factors (Furnham et al., 1994); Liao and Lee, 2009). Norris and Niebuhr (1984) asserted that "to the extent that internality-externality represents a generalized tendency, internals may be expected to attribute job success to internal causes and externals to external causes". A number of studies pointed out a significant positive relationship between internal locus of control and job involvement (Dailey, 1980; Edwards and Walters, 1980; Heaven, 1994; Knoop, 1981; Parasuraman and Alutto, 1984; Remondet and Hansson, 1991). However, there are some studies which indicated a non-significant relationship between internal locus of control and job involvement (Batlis, 1980; Noe, 1988; Reddy and Rahman, 1984).

In a study done by Kimmons and Greenhaus (1976) significant difference in the job involvement of internal versus external oriented individuals was reported. Reitz and Jewel (1979) investigated the relationships between job involvement and locus of control from six different countries.

The results illustrated that internals significantly scored higher on job involvement than externals, across cultural settings. Therefore, the relationship between locus of control and job involvement seems to be uncertain and needs further investigation, especially across different cultures.

Objectives and hypothesis

Job-involved individuals perceive work as a very important aspect of their lives (Dubin, 1956; Rabinowitz and Hall, 1977). They may possess a collection of characteristics, needs and values that make them likely to become involved in their jobs (Rabinowitz and Hall, 1977). With no exception, all organizations desire employees who are highly involved with their jobs; however, to have such individuals is not an easy task, largely because of variation in personality characteristics of employees. Personality develops over time, responding to the culture and experiences that each individual has been exposed to as a child or as an adult. These experiences and cultural elements are important shaper of personality (George and Jones, 2008). Thus, different cultural experiences shape different personalities which have different values, attitudes and aspirations.

Iran as an Islamic state with a collectivist culture shares many values with other Islamic countries (Yeganeh and Su, 2008). One of the widespread Islamic work-related values is respect for obedience (Namazie and Tayeb, 2003). Fatalism mixed with personal choice is another work related value (Latifi, 1997). Celen and Kusdil (2009) suggested that obedience is positively related to external locus of control. Rotter (1966) argued that fatalism is a belief in an external locus of control over the events in one's life; whereas, personal choice might be considered as generalized expectation that outcomes are contingent on one's own behavior. Thus, it is envisaged that internal and external control of reinforcement by a person is influenced by life experience. This life experience, as an important shaper of personality, programs people about what they should strive for in life and how one should feel, think, believe and behave in general or at work. Values and work values in particular are supposed to play a functional role in work related attitudes such as job involvement (Dose, 1997; Meglino and Ravlin, 1998; Roe and Ester, 1999). Therefore, based on aforementioned argument, the ultimate determinant of job involvement, as Kanungo (1979) also believes, should be the value of one's work in life. Thus, if what one values and strives for in life is shaped by personality, then, personality should be related to job involvement.

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between locus of control (internal and external) and job involvement of the public civil servants in the context of Iranian culture. Ram et al. (2011) asserted that "locus of control may be particularly important to study in an Asian society where many people have been raised to believe that fate plays a big part in their success". The study seeks to understand the extent to which dispositional characteristics are related to the attitudinal aspect of job involvement and its three ascribed psychological states. According to Saari and Judge (winter, 2004), the major practitioner knowledge gaps are in the areas of: (a) the causes of employee attitudes; and (b) how to measure and influence employee attitudes. The results of this

study may provide empirical evidence (in the context of Iran) for affiliation of personality traits and job involvement to narrow the gap. Moreover, In order to improve the degree of job involvement, one must have a realistic view of what determines it. The results of this study would lay the ground to assess the impact of variables that can be used as predictors or determinant of job involvement. In order to arrive at this issue, the present paper was compiled on the basis of the following hypothesis and based on a field study:

1. Locus of Control (internal and external) is associated with job involvement (importance of job, spending time on the job and importance of success on the job) of Iran public employees.

(a) Internal locus of control is positively associated with the importance of job, the importance of success on the job and the time spent on the job for Iran public employees.

(b) External locus of control is negatively associated with the importance of job, the importance of success on the job and the time spent on the job for Iranian public employees.

METHODS

In this research, the descriptive method (of the correlation kind) was deployed. The statistical population of this research included employees of public organizations in Kerman Township. Kerman Township is the capital of Kerman province which is one of the biggest provinces of Iran with more than two and half million population and more than 20 townships. Using Cochran's formula ($n = \frac{Z^2}{4e^2} N$), a sample of 200 persons was drawn from a target population of 2454 employees from 24 public organizations. For the selection of the sample, multistage stratified proportional to the size was employed. Therefore, in each organization the formula of

$(n_1 = \frac{n_{\max}}{N} \times N_1)$ was applied to determine the number of

respondents. After determining the number of respondents from each organization, the list of employees was acquired through human resource department and the sample was randomly generated from the list. The ratio of male: female respondents were 1:1 and the mean \pm SD for the respondents' age was 38.2 ± 7.4 years old. Data gathering instruments included two closed-ended questionnaires: 1) Rotter (1966) 29 item internal-external locus of control scale (This scale has been used extensively and has been found to be reliable and valid) (Lefcourt, 1966); and 2) Job involvement questionnaire of Lodahl and Kejner (1965). The validity and reliability of these instruments were tested (using Kendal's and Speerman's coefficients and Cronbach's α coefficient) and obtained: 94, 92.8, 91.1 and 96.4%, respectively.

The distribution and collection of the questionnaires were made by the researcher, upon agreement of the organizations' managing directors. A cover letter was provided and signed by the researcher explaining the purpose of the investigation and indicating that there were no wrong or right answers and all choices were valid. It was also pointed out that the results served academic purposes and the respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. After two months of follow-up, the researcher received a 100 per cent response rate on his survey. Data was gathered and analyzed by

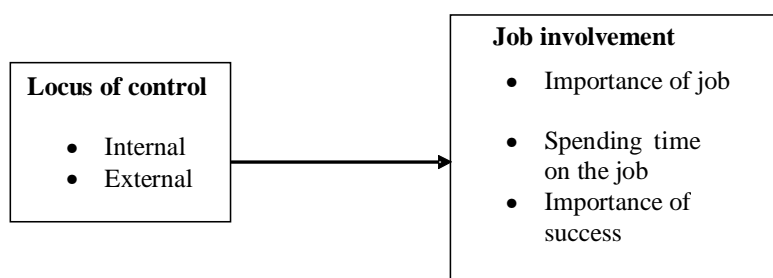


Figure 1. The relationship between locus of control (internal and external) and job involvement (importance of job, spending time and importance of success).

Table 1. Frequency distribution of locus of control, rate of job involvement and its facets.

Sample's response variable	Frequency		
	Low	High	Very high
Job involvement	38 (19)	158 (79)	4 (2)
Job importance	70 (35)	123 (61.5)	7 (3.5)
Time spending	42 (21)	119 (59.5)	39 (19.5)
Importance of success	36 (18)	159 (79.5)	5 (2.5)
Internal		171 (85.5)	
External		29 (14.5)	
Total		200 (100)	

descriptive statistics (frequency tables and percentile) and inferential statistics (Kendal correlation test, Spearman, Chi-Square, Mann-Whitney and Bi serial test).

FINDINGS

Data analysis illustrated that public employees' locus of control was significantly related to their job involvement (Figure 1). Comparison of statistical data indicated that the rate of positive answers to job involvement increased from externals to internals. In other words, internals, in comparison to externals, displayed higher level of job involvement. Internal and external locus of control were related to importance of job and time spending on the job; however, they were not related to importance of success.

Explanation of variables

1. Analysis of the data indicated that 14.5% of respondents were external and 85.5 percent were internal. Job involvement among 19% of the respondents was low, 79% was high and 2% was very high. Table 1 shows frequency and frequency percentile of each of the job involvement denominators.
2. Data analysis indicated that the rate of job involvement and its facets varies according to whether respondents

are internal or external (Table 2).

3. Regarding Bi serial correlation coefficient (Rb) and its significance, it was indicated that there is a relationship between locus of control (internal and external) and job involvement (job importance, time spending and importance of success). However, internal and external locus of control were not related to the facet of importance of success (Table 3).

4. Mann-Whitney U-statistic and its significance indicated that the internals had a higher level of job involvement than externals. Furthermore, internal and external locus of control were related to job importance and time spending on the job. However, the relationship between internal and external locus of control and importance of success was not significant (Table 4).

DISCUSSION

Based on the research findings, approximately less than one seventh (14.5%) of the statistical population were external and the remainder (85.5%) were internal. This implies that most of the respondents possibly believe that due to their behavior, they are able to control the receiving enforcements and rule their own lives. This is not in conformity with Quah and Campbell (1994) opinion that in Asian societies many people have been raised to

Table 2. Frequency distribution of job involvement and its facets with regard to the locus of control of respondents.

Variable	Frequency					
	Low	High	Very high	Low	High	Very high
Job importance	2 (6.9)	16 (55.2)	11 (37.9)	52 (3.4)	112 (65.5)	7 (4.1)
Time spending	13 (44.83)	13 (44.83)	3 (10.34)	29 (16.96)	106 (61.99)	36 (21.05)
Importance of success	-	8 (27.6)	21 (72.4)	28 (16.4)	138 (80.7)	5 (2.9)
Job involvement	-	11 (37.9)	18 (62.1)	27 (15.8)	140 (81.9)	4 (2.3)

Table 3. Relation of locus of control and job involvement and its facets (Bi serial correlation coefficient).

Variable	Locus of control	
	Rb	P
Job importance	0.289	0.000
Time spending	0.347	0.000
Importance of success	0.116	0.198
Job involvement	0.231	0.000

Table 4. Distribution of respondents' responses concerning job involvement and its facets regarding locus of control – Mann-Whitney test.

Variable	Locus Control						U	PU
	Internal			External				
	Frequency	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Frequency	Mean rank	Sum of ranks		
Job importance	29	62.93	1825.00	171	106.87	18275.00	1390.00	0.000
Time spending	29	68.86	1997.00	171	105.85	18103.00	1562.00	0.001
Importance of success	29	91.12	2642.50	171	102.09	17457.50	2207.50	0.340
Job involvement	29	63.97	1855.00	171	106.70	18245.00	1420.00	0.000

believe that fate plays a big part in their success. They go on that, this is indicated perhaps most graphically in the use of geomancers to specify the best dates to marry, to setup a business, to move to a new home, etc. In this study the respondents' internal personality structure is an effective determinant of their hard-work and endeavor towards their wants and needs. Bahaee (1995) also believes that although Iranian people rely on spiritual and religious figures for guidance in their life, it appears that they manage to create a balance between relying on faith and spiritual guidance for happiness and salvation and taking control of their own actions to shape and manage their working life. In the same vein, Yeganeh and Su (2007) mentioned since Iranian culture has been pervaded by religion and belief in God, it might be plausible to suppose that it has a propensity for subjugation and fatalism (subjugation implies that life is largely determined by external forces and people really cannot change their fate). They went on, "among our respondents the score for 'Subjugation' is relatively low indicating that Iranian respondents do not seem to be subjugated. The 'Koran' specifically asserts that humans

are able to choose and to intervene in their destiny".

From a cultural perspective, as was mentioned previously, Iran is a collectivist society (Hofstede, 1980). Hamid (1994) found that individuals from a collectivistic society likely to have an external locus of control than individuals from an individualistic society. The findings of this study are not in compliance with Hamid (1994) findings. This contradiction not only might be due to the effects of "Western culture on Iranian society" (Yaganeh and Su, 2008) but also could be ascribed to the fact that Iran population is mostly young. Bidmeshgipour (2009) believes that one of the characteristics of youth people in Iran is working more individually rather than working in teams and groups; Javidan and Dastmalchian (2003) also asserted that Iranians could be considered as individual performers. Therefore, cultural orientation of Iranian youth and educated people is perhaps pulling mostly towards individualistic tendencies rather than collectivistic ones. This suggests that an internal locus of control is more likely in such a situation.

Some researchers have suggested that locus of control is a significant predictor of job attitudes (Judge et al.,

2003). Martin, Thomas, Charles, Epitropaki, and McNamara (2005) proposed that people with internal locus of control report higher levels of job attitudes. Place (1979) also found that internal locus of control was an accurate predictor of levels of efficiency in the work of directors in some governmental departments. Job involved individuals tend to attribute positive work outcomes to internal and personally controllable factors (Furnham et al., 1994). Based on this, one can deduce that 81% of the statistical population has high and very high job involvement which varies from internals to externals. In other words, in the statistical population of this study internals had a higher level of job involvement than externals.

It shows that despite the Islamic work-related values (respect for obedience, fatalism mixed with personal choice) in Iran, public employees take control of their own actions and sway away from external locus of control due to their personal choice. They act out of their own strength. They believe in themselves and aim to get involved in their job and put enough time to do so. This finding is in accordance with Linz and Semykina (2007) who believed that there is a large literature based on surveys conducted which documents a strong relationship between locus of control and a variety of work-related characteristics including job attitudes. Furthermore, this result, somehow, is in accordance with Mudrack (2004) who also believes that the prevailing assumption in research seems to be that high job involvement is an inherently desirable attribute of employees.

The findings illustrated that 65% of the respondents considered their jobs as "important" and "very important" and this is related to their locus of control. Job importance (task significance) is one of the job characteristics which imply the fundamental influence of job on employees' lives (Moshabaki, 1998). Fried and Ferris (1987) in their meta-analytic examination found that job characteristics were strongly related to job attitudes. For highly involved employees, their jobs seem inexorably connected with their very identities, interests, and life goals, and are crucially important (Mudrack, 2004).

Popular stereotypes of public employees support the image of bureaucrats in government as being motivated by power (Baldwin and Farley, 1991). As a matter of fact, professional titles in Iran are used to enhance power and status both inside and outside of organization (Yeganeh and Su, 2007).

This is in line with Hackman and Oldham (George and Jones, 2008) definition of task significance as a factor which has impact on the lives of other people in or out of the organization. Thus, for Iran public employees their organizational positions are important and indicative of status and prestige and their locus of control (internal and external) is related to this situational characteristic. Research findings indicated that 79% of the statistical population spends much of their time on their job and it was found that the locus of control is related to "time

spent" facet of job involvement. Blau (1994) also believes that Job involvement is associated with a record of regular attendance and punctuality at work. However, it should be borne in mind that with an unemployment rate of 16.3 percent (IranMania, 2004), fear of being "rightsized" out of the organization leads many people to attend their work on the regular basis and be punctual. Of course, punctuality and attending to the work does not necessarily reflect employees' preferences. Nonetheless, Iran public employees' locus of control (internal and external) is related to the facet of spending time on the job. Therefore, based on the 'psychological characteristic' of locus of control, people find an attitude of themselves which cause them to emotionally experience different feelings. As a result, to the extent that the individuals identify with the job, they find a perception or a way of thinking based on the importance of the job. In such a situation, spending time on the job is envisaged.

Based on research findings, job success of 82% of the respondents is "important" and "highly important". However, there was no relationship between locus of control and the rate of importance in being successful on the job (Tables 3 and 4), and the distribution of the statistical populations' responses, regarding the importance of success on the job among internal and external locus of control, was the same (Table 4). Despite, the importance of job success for the statistical population, there were no correlation between locus of control and importance of job success. This could, most probably, be due to the fact that the opportunity of being promoted and/or appointed to prosperous positions is not related to the rate of the employee's level of success on the job. "Most of time, promotions are based on a wide range of behavioral or implicit criteria, which are not related to performance or professional capabilities" (Yeganeh and Su, 2008). Alvani (1999) also believes that organizations in developing countries, while appointing and promoting, do not take rules and regulations into account; whereas factors such as kinship, recommendations from those in high administrative positions, nepotism (Hagen and Amin, 1994) and personal relations are the criteria of selection. Faradonbeh (2000) suggests that the manifestations of social networking are very prevalent in Iran management. Personal connections and informal channels seem more practical, whereas formal systems, official institutions and procedures are considered less efficient and even bothering. As a direct result, Yeganeh and Su (2005), Namazie and Tayeb (2003) mention that Iranian society tends to operate rather on the basis of personal relationships among people, than on the basis of impersonal and dehumanized institutions. Namazie (2003) reported that Iranian managers prefer to "employ people who are known to them rather than people who they do not know".

The use of informal channels may imply bending rules and taking advantages to which one is not formally entitled. The popular Persian term for this practice and

other forms of nepotism and favoritism is 'partibazi', which is a common practice in Iranian organizations. For instance, it would not be unusual for Iranian managers to hire a relative or acquaintance for a job vacancy, even though they could easily employ a more competent but unknown candidate.

Due to this practice, it is not possible to have meritocracy in the organization. According to Ichniowski (1988), Ford and McLaughlin (1985) nepotism culminates in lower morale for those who feel that promotions and rewards are given unjustifiably to a relative. Burger (1989) also asserted that when internals attempt to control a situation which cannot be controlled the psychological conflict which ensue can bring negative behavioral outcomes. Similarly, Toy et al. (1988) pointed out that nepotism can deal a nasty blow to morale when hardworking and talented employees get passed over for those who share a last name with the boss. In such a situation, these practices directly influence employees' perception and despite importance of success, cause them to be indifferent toward their success on the job. They withdraw psychologically and carry on day to day work because 'partibazi' blocked their advancement. Thus, lack of correlation between locus of control (internal and external) and importance of success on the job is envisaged.

Conclusion

Although, there is a dearth of knowledge on personality traits and attitudinal issues in public organizations of developing countries such as Iran, this study carries some significant theoretical and managerial implications. Results do not lead toward theory development, yet they signify the role of culture in explaining locus of control and job involvement in organizations.

Culture must be taken into consideration to understand personality traits and job involvement of employees; otherwise, the results might be misleading. Iran national culture is collectivist. In collectivist societies individuals likely to have an external locus of control; however, the findings of this study revealed that personality traits of the respondents is more in compliance with individualistic culture.

The respondents reflected a more individualistic orientation with respect to locus of control. The major finding of this study revealed that the majority of Iranian public employees in the statistical population of the study were internals.

Furthermore, locus of control (internal and external) was related to job involvement of public employees. Internals had a higher level of job involvement than externals. For internals, job was more important than externals and they also spent much of their time on the job and were more punctual than externals.

Despite the fact that job success was important for employees, there was no relationship between internal

and external locus of control and importance of success on the job.

At the managerial level, findings of the study would help the public managers to better understand that employee attitudes and behaviors may be related to their locus of control.

Managers should be aware of the fact that internals, if not able to practice their control power might stuck in a psychological conflict, react in a negative way and perform at a minimum required level. In other words, high level of perceived control in such a situation might lead to a negative response.

Therefore, despite the high level of job involvement productivity remains at its lowest level. Understanding of these psychological textures of work behavior may help to improve managerial effectiveness. These findings, however, must be interpreted with caution.

There are two shortcomings which need to be acknowledged.

First, the study investigated just public employees in Kerman Township which limits the ability to generalize the study to broader contexts. Second, considering some organizational conditions derived from political sensitivities in Iran, the study solicited the perception of respondents about their own job involvement. With self-reporting mechanism, the potential for false reporting must be recognized and it should be considered as alimitation for the study's construct validity.

Notes

1. For sample size calculation a sampling error (e) of 7 and 95% confidence interval were considered.

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