

The Relationship between Equity-Perception and Job Burnout among Tehran Urban Rail Operators (Metro)

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Abstract: The aim of this study was the investigation of relation between equity perceptions with job burnout in Tehran metro operators. For this, 100 metro operators were selected with available sampling. The used scales were included Arjmandnia Equity Perception Questionnaire (AEPQ) (1388) and Maslash Job Burnout Questionnaire. In this causal- comparative research, Results showed that there wasn't significant relationship between equity perception and job burnout in metro operators. But totally equity perception wasn't high in metro operators. As well as score of job burnout in metro operators was high. The other results were presented in dissertation.

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1. Introduction

Perception process is responsible for organizing and interpreting individual feelings. When an individual pays attention to his feelings, he starts a conscious effort to organize and classify information conceptually and significantly (Tett, R.P., & Meyer, J.P. (1993). Researchers and scholars have been interested in studying corporate justice perception and it has become one of the main subjects of corporate behavior and industrial psychology (Summers, t.p., Hendrix, W.H. (1991). An individual's attitude to his work indicates his positive or negative evaluation of different aspects of his working place. Most researches on corporate behavior are related to these three attitudes: job satisfaction, job dependency, and corporate commitment (Van Dierendonck D, Schaufeli WB, Buunk BP. 1998). Statistics show that stress and its side effects will cause the loss of hundreds of working days annually and almost one million people every day avoid going to work because of deceases and disorders (Van Dierendonck D, Schaufeli WB, Buunk BP. 1998).

1.1. Models and definitions

1.1.1. Equity Perception

Equity perception is the theme of a theory which was raised by J. Stacy Adams in 1990s in the field of corporate behavior. It means to perceive and to feel that we have the same income and rewards that others do (Shirom A. 1989). Adam's equity theory is one of the most famous and prominent theories of social exchange processes. This theory is related to enhancing our perception of behaving in corporate environment. Two main components of Adam's theory in exchanging relations are inputs and outputs. Inputs or investments are each participant's contributions to relational exchange. When an individual exchanges his services with another individual, inputs might include previous job

experiences, knowledge and information, job efforts, education and job training and internship. Outputs are things which are obtained through exchange. For employees, the most important output might be salary. In relational exchange considerations, two points should be taken into account. First, an input or output should be known by one or two sides of relational exchange. Second, an input or output should be related to the exchange that is it should have a side benefit. As long as inputs and outputs are not both identified and are not related to each other, no relational exchange would occur. Adams suggests that individuals assess inputs and outputs based on their importance to them. Inputs are assessed by gathering input data and outputs are considered independently, even though they might be much related to each other. Equity occurs when the ratio of inputs that an individual brings to a job and the outcomes that he receives from it is equal to the perceived inputs and outcomes of others. Inequity happens when the ratio of these ratios are unequal.

2.1.1. Job Burnout

Job burnout is a kind of spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical fatigue which is caused by inappropriate work conditions during a long time (Simons, 2001, 31). Job burnout is psychological processes which results from strict work conditions and represents itself as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reducing the motive for making progress and achievement. (Shirom A. 1989). Job burnout is mainly due to job stress. Neurological and psychological pressure which is called stress is frequently observed in our daily life. Stress or mental pressure, is an event or a disorder which psychologically has invasive features and might cause some organic impressions (Shirom A. 1989).

The first harm caused by job burnout is suffering from physical exhaustion. Those who are suffering

from this disorder will face lack of energy and serious fatigue. Moreover, such people frequently report some signs of physical pressure such as headache, vomit, insomnia, and some changes in their eating diet. Although some people are more prepared to develop this disease in terms of their personality and individual and internal traits, job burnout is treatable and reversible by taking some special measures and treatments. According to Maslak, job burnout is a syndrome which results from chronic mental stress and contains three components of emotional exhaustion or fatigue, self cynicism (depersonalization), lack of personal achievement or improvement. And it is more common among social jobs that provide help and assistance such as counselors, teachers, social workers, doctors, police, nurses, and stuffs like these and it is probably due to the kind of tasks and responsibilities of such jobs. Job burnout is together with stress, job confusion, and poor performance and its cause is discussed in both individual and corporate aspects of jobs. Most recent longitudinal studies on job burnout, have applied very complicated analyses to determine how environmental stressor changes in workplace can predict changes in job burnout. A general opinion is that the best and the most idealistic people will suffer from job burnout since these people overwork to achieve their job standards and ideals. But when they find out that their efforts and satisfaction were not sufficient to achieve their goals, they develop job burnout and pessimism. Another opinion is that job burnout is the ultimate result of being exposed to chronic job stress. Thus, job burnout must be more common among people who have been engaged in one job for a long time than the beginners. Some researchers have been studying the relationship between personality traits and job burnout syndromes. Their findings indicate that those who emotionally suffer from job burnout are often perfectionist and are extremely busy with their job and on the other hand, they draw some unrealistic plans in their minds (Ivone Félix de Sousa²; Helenides Mendonça. (2009).

2. Material and Methods

This research is an analytical descriptive cross-sectional survey. The reason is to investigate the existing situation based on collected data.

1.2. Research Questions

1. Is there any relation between equity perception of urban train operators and their job burnout?
2. Is there any relation between education of urban train operators and their equity perception?
3. Is there any relation between job experience of urban train operators and their equity perception?
4. Is there any relation between the age of urban train operators and their equity perception?

5. Is there any relation between education of urban train operators and their job burnout?
6. Is there any relation between job experience of urban train operators and their job burnout?
7. Is there any relation between the age of urban train operators and their job burnout?

2.2. Sampling and sample size

After determining the studied community in this research, the random systematic approach was used and 100 subjects out of the total 700 train operators were randomly chosen as the sample. Questionnaire was distributed among the subjects of the sample. After the subjects' answering the questions, the questionnaires were gathered by the researcher and the necessary information and data were extracted and applied in SPSS software.

3.2. Data Collection Tools:

A. Maslach job questionnaire which includes 25 questions is now the most common tool for measuring job burnout. It evaluates three main factors of fatigue, personal performance, depersonalization and an optional factor of engagement. In this test, 9 questions are allocated to emotional exhaustion (which represent answerer's emotions, extreme tiredness and emotional exhaustion before the customers and clients in work place), 8 questions are allocated to personal performance (it lets the answerers to express their feelings of qualification and accomplishment in relation to the customers and clients), 5 questions are allocated to depersonalization (it lets the answerers to express their attitudes in the form of indifference and lack of interest towards the customers), and 3 questions are allocated to engagement (which shows the amount of interest in job). In terms of frequency, points are classified to 1 to 6 as several times a year, monthly, several times a month, weekly, several times a week, every day and never (never is scored zero) and intensity is classified to 1 to 7 as very low, low, substantial, moderate, almost high, high, and very high.

B. Equity perception questionnaire contains 22 questions; 5 questions to measure distributive justice, 11 questions to perceive procedural justice, and 8 questions to measure interactional justice. In this test, questions are scored from 1 to 5 from "completely agree" to "completely disagree" which are answered by each subject.

4.2. Validity and Reliability of Questionnaires

A. Reliability of Equity Perception Questionnaire

Equity perception questionnaire was prepared by Garrosa, E., C. Rainho, et.al 2010 based on equity theory of Stacy Adams (1963). Various components of this approach in preparing questionnaire (distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice) have been considered. To

prepare the questionnaire, first of all, 30 items were arranged and were initially applied for 30 employees of Bakhtar regional power department. After observing the status of the items and their internal consistency coefficient, 8 items were eliminated and the final questionnaire was prepared with 22 items. It should be noted that Cronbach's alpha coefficient for 22 items was (0.78). This 22-item questionnaire was examined by some experts in corporate behavior and psychology to test its validity and was confirmed to be a suitable questionnaire. (Reliability of equity perception was calculated by means of Cronbach's alpha in this research which was (0.82) (Author).

B. Validity of Job Burnout Questionnaire

During a research on 420 subjects (69% women and 31% men), Maslach and Jackson calculated the internal consistency of the questionnaire for (0.83) frequency by means of Cronbach's Alpha. Also, Alpha coefficient was calculated for four sub-tests as follows: emotional exhaustion: 0.89, personal performance: 0.74, depersonalization: 0.77, and engagement: 0.59. Different studies in western countries with MBI questionnaire indicates the similar reliability of Maslach and Jackson's findings (Whisenant, W & Smucker, M. (2007).

3. Results

1.3. Population and Demographics:

Sample community of the research includes 100 operators of Tehran urban rail who are all men because of their job and are working in shifts.

Table 1: The age of the personnel participating in research

Age	26-30 years	31-40 years	41 years and more	total
Number	66	22	6	94
percent	70.2	23.4	6.4	100

According to this table, about 70.2 percent of the operators are between 26-30 years old, 23.4 percent between 31-40, and 6.4 percent are 41 years or older

Table 2: educational status of the personnel participating in research

Education Degree	Under Diploma	Diploma	Associate's and Bachelor's degree	Total
Number	2	42	50	94
Percent	2.1	44.7	53.2	100

According to table 2, about 2.1 percent of the operators are under diploma, 44.7 percent have diploma, and 53.2 percent have associate's degree or bachelor's degree

Table 3: Job experience of the personnel participating in research

Job Experience	2-3 years	4-10 years	10-15 years	15-20 years	20 years and more	Total
Number	9	72	3	3	2	91
Percent	9.9	79.1	3.3	5.5	2.2	100

According to table 3, about 9.9 percent of the operators have 2-3 years of job experience, 79.1 percent 4-10 years, 3.3 percent 15-20 years and 2.2 percent of them have 20 years or more job experience. Diagram 3-4 shows the observations related to the operators job experiences.

Statistical Tables:

Table 4: descriptive explanation of job burnout based on age

Emotional Exhaustion Years	Sample	Average	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	Minimum	Maximum
-30 years old	66	23.52	361.1	2.014	0	79
31-40 years old	22	14.20	083.18	2.789	1	46
41and more	6	12.83	600.13	5.552	0	37
Total	94	4.22	15.606	1.610	0	79
26-30personal performance	66	67.35	12.478	1.536	0	56
31-40	22	33.53	12.293	2.621	12	51
41 and more	6	23.67	23.67	9.570	0	56
Total	94	34.4	13.462	1.389	0	56
26-30Depersonalization	66	36.9	10.429	1.284	0	53
31-40	22	36.9	7,201	1.535	0	27
41and more	6	0.6	10.564	4.313	0	27
Total	94	45.8	9.784	1,009	0	53
26-30 Engagement	66	36.8	5.302	0.653	0	21
31-40	22	23.7	5.789	1.234	0	21
41and more	6	67.3	6.831	2.789	0	17
Total	94	80.7	5.579	0.575	0	21

According to table 4, the average scores in table 4, and relatively high scores in ages 26-30 in emotional exhaustion indicates the difference of the average scores of job burnout in this age group in comparison to other age groups.

Table 5: descriptive explanation of job burnout and its items based on education degree

Education degree	Sample	Average	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	Minimum	Maximum
Emotional Under Diploma	2	18.00	24.024	0.17	1	35
Exhaustion Diploma	42	19.86	13.460	2.385	0	63
Associate's Degree	50	24.36	15.624	2.210	0	79
Total	94	21.22	15.671	1.616	0	79
Personal Under Diploma	2	36.50	7.07	0.5	36	37
Performance Diploma	42	34.98	13.377	2.064	0	56
Associate's Degree	50	33.84	14.083	1.991	0	56
Total	94	34.40	13.558	1.389	0	56
Under Diploma epersonalization	2	0.10	2.828	2.000	8	12
Diploma	42	8.50	9.590	1.480	0	35
Associate's Degree	50	9.02	10.659	1.507	0	53
Total	94	8.81	10.029	1.034	0	53
Engagement Under Diploma	2	11.00	1.414	1.000	10	12
Diploma	42	7.48	6.046	0.933	0	21
Associate's Degree	50	8.10	5.183	0.733	0	21
Total	94	7.88	5.532	571	0	21

According to table 5, the analysis of the results of job burnout in table 42 and the high average scores of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization among operators who have got associate's degree

shows that there is a difference between different education groups and job burnout and in Associate's degree group, this difference is rather more than other groups.

Table 6: descriptive explanation of job burnout based on job experience

Years	Sample	Average	Standard deviation	Standard Error	Minimum	Maximum
Emotional 2-3	9	26.78	10.616	3.539	9	39
Exhaustion 4-10	72	23.60	16.237	1.914	0	79
10-15	3	8.67	2.887	1.667	7	12
15-20	5	6	14.639	6.547	0	37
20 and more	2	2.50	2.121	1.500	1	4
Total	91	22.46	15.789	1.655	0	79
Personal 2- 3 performance	9	35.56	13.712	4.571	13	52
4-10	72	34.22	12.981	1.530	0	56
10-15	3	44.33	6.658	3.844	37	50
15-20	5	36.80	18.213	8.145	14	56
20 and more	2	7.00	9.899	7.000	0	14
Total	91	34.23	13.671	1.433	0	56
2-3 Depersonalization	9	19.11	15.941	5.314	4	53
4-10	72	36.8	8.642	18.1	0	35
10-15	3	33.3	2.517	1.453	1	6
15-20	5	80.5	11.883	5.314	0	27
20 and more	2	50	0.707	0.500	0	1
Total	91	8.95	10.086	1.057	0	53
Engagement 2-3	9	10.00	5.979	1.993	0	21
4-10	72	8.24	5.409	0.673	0	21
10-15	3	33.5	3.213	1.856	3	9
15-20	5	60.4	7.232	3.234	0	17
20 and more	2	2.50	3.536	2.500	0	5
Total	91	7.99	5.563	0.538	0	21

According to table 6 and with regard to job experience, in operators with little job experience who form the majority of the personnel, there is much

difference of emotional exhaustion which might be the result of unfamiliarity with workplace, lack of correlation and lack of proper communication with

colleagues and officials.

Also, high average scores of depersonalization and low scores of personal performance indicate the difference between this age group and other age groups. Considering that the applied tool for measuring equity perception includes 22 items with 5 alternatives for each one, obviously the highest score in this questionnaire will be 110. If we divide equity perception to three levels of high, medium, and low, and thus classify the scores up to 34 as low equity perception, 35 -68 as medium equity perception, and

above 69 up to 110 as high equity perception, then it can be concluded that the rail operators' equity perception towards their organization is not ranked in high level and since the average is 59.48, it is concluded that equity perception is in medium level.

It is interesting that the age group of 41 and more got the highest average and has higher equity perception. This state is repeated in all three items of perception that is distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice

Table 7: descriptive explanation of equity perception and its items based on age

Years	sample	Average	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	Minimum	Maximum
Equity perception						
26-30	66	59.67	11.503	1.416	37	93
31-40	21	56.57	7.082	1.545	42	71
41 and more	6	67.67	17.305	7.065	46	89
Total	93	59.48	11.269	1.169	37	93
Distributive Justice						
26-30	66	11.44	0.667	0.451	5	21
31-40	21	11.67	0.671	0.583	7	17
41 and more	6	12.83	0.601	0.286	5	21
Total	93	11.58	0.588	0.372	5	21
Procedural Justice						
26-30	66	28.53	6.512	0.802	15	46
31-40	21	27.14	5.351	0.168	18	40
41 and more	6	34.33	9.730	0.972	22	45
Total	93	28.59	6.630	0.688	15	46
Interactional Justice						
26-30	66	19.68	0.465	0.426	12	27
31-40	21	19.52	0.188	0.696	12	26
41 and more	6	20.50	0.937	0.607	14	24
Total	93	19.70	0.403	0.353	12	27

Table 8: results of analysis of equity perception based on the age group of the subjects

Source of change	Total Squares	df	Average Squares	F	Significance
intergroup	582.3	2	291.043	2.360	0.1
Intra-group	11101.143	90	123.346		
Total	11683.2	93			

Results of table 8 show that since total F is significant at level (0.10), (F=2.360), therefore there is significant difference between different age groups based on equity perception scores. In order to

determine the difference between each of these groups, Tukey's Post Hoc Test was used. The results are shown in the following table.

Table 9: Results of Tukey's Post Hoc Test for different averages of various age groups based on their equity perception scores

Comparison of Groups	with each other	Average difference	Standard Error	Significance
Age group	Age Group			
31-40	26-30	3.09	2.78	0.5
41 and more	26-30	-8	4.73	0.21
26-30	31-40	-3.09	2.78	-0.5
41 and more	31-40	-11.09	5.14	0.08
26-30	41 and more	8	4.73	0.21
31-40	41 and more	11.09	5.14	0.08

Table 9 indicates that the difference between the averages of various age groups is significant. Results show that there is a significant difference between the equity perception of 26-30-year-old age

group and the group of 41-year-olds and more at level (0.10). It should be noted that since equity perception in age group of 40-year-olds and more is greater than

other groups in average, then there is a significant difference between this group and other ones.

Table 10: descriptive explanation of equity perception and its items based on education degree

education	sample	average	Standard deviation	Standard error	minimum	maximum
equity under diploma	2	69	9.899	000.7	62	76
perception diploma	42	59.29	10.597	1.635	40	81
AD and BA	49	58.73	11.583	55.1	37	93
Total	93	59.20	11.105	52.1	37	93
Under diploma	2	11.50	0.707	0.500	11	12
Distributive diploma	42	11.69	3.719	0.574	5	21
Justice Ad and BA	49	11.48	3.280	0.469	6	21
Total	93	11.48	3.438	0.356	5	21
Under diploma	2	36.00	7.071	5.000	31	41
Procedural diploma	42	28.07	6.056	0.935	18	44
Justice AD and BA	49	28.37	6.954	0.992	15	46
Total	93	40.28	6.586	0.683	15	46
Under diploma	2	21.50	0.5363	2.500	19	24
Interactional diploma	42	19.50	3.329	0.514	14	27
Justice AD and BA	49	19.61	3.610	0.516	12	26
Total	93	19.60	3.458	0.359	12	27

Since the applied tool for measuring equity perception includes 22 items with 5 alternatives for each, obviously the highest score in this questionnaire will be 110. If we divide equity perception to three levels of high, medium, and low, and thus classify the scores up to 34 as low equity perception, 35 -68 as medium equity perception, and above 69 up to 110 as high equity perception, then it can be concluded that the rail operators' equity perception towards their organization is not ranked in high level and since the average is 59.48, it is concluded that equity perception is almost in medium level with regard to education degree.

Accursing to table 11, since the applied tool for measuring equity perception includes 22 items with 5 alternatives for each; obviously the highest score in this questionnaire will be 110. If we divide equity perception to three levels of high, medium, and low,

and thus classify the scores up to 34 as low equity perception, 35 -68 as medium equity perception, and above 69 up to 110 as high equity perception, then it can be concluded that the rail operators' equity perception towards their organization is not ranked in high level and since the average is 59.48, it is concluded that equity perception is almost in medium level with regard to education degree. It should be noted that those who have much job experience own higher equity perception but have lower equity perception in distributive justice. This finding might be related to more expectation of personnel with much job experience to receive more shares of rewards and income. It is interesting that in procedural and interactional justice, they own nearly high equity perception. This is consistent with the researcher's expectations with regard to corporate subjectivity.

Table 11: descriptive explanation of equity perception and its items based on job experience

year	sample	Average	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	minimum	maximum
Equity 2-3	9	58.33	10.440	3.480	41	75
Perception 4-10	71	59.07	11.789	1.399	37	93
10-15	3	52.00	6.083	3.512	48	59
15 - 20	5	64.00	7.906	3.536	54	71
20 and more	2	56.50	6.364	4.500	52	61
Total	90	58.98	11.245	1.185	37	93
Distributive 2 - 3	9	10.67	646.2	0.882	7	15
Justice 4 - 10	71	11.49	3.617	0.429	5	21
10 - 15	3	10,00	4.583	2.646	6	15
15 - 20	5	11.80	1.095	0.490	11	13
20 and more	2	9.00	5.657	4.000	5	13

Total	90	11.32	3.473	0.366	5	21
Procedural Justice 2 – 3	9	28.78	6.815	2.272	20	41
4 – 10	71	28.44	6.809	0.808	15	46
10 – 15	3	23.33	5.033	2.906	18	28
15 – 20	5	30.60	5.177	2.315	24	35
20 and more	2	30.00	9.899	7.000	23	37
Total	90	28.46	6.688	0.705	15	46
Interactional Justice 2 – 3	9	18.89	3.180	1.060	13	23
4 – 10	71	19.65	3.550	0.421	12	27
10 – 15	3	18.67	3.055	1.764	16	22
15 – 20	5	21.60	2.074	0.927	19	24
20 and more	2	17.50	2.121	1.500	16	19
Total	90	19.60	3.4180	0.360	12	27

4. Discussions

After completing the questionnaire by the subjects of research community, data obtained from them were analyzed and based on extracted statistics, the results are as follow: Considering three levels of equity perception that is low, medium, and high equity perception, equity perception of rail operators was not ranked as high, but there is a difference between the equity perception of some groups with regard to their average. Moreover, general results of this research about rail operators indicated that there is a direct and significant relation between job burnout and job experience with 95% level of confidence and the average score of various groups are different in terms of job engagement and emotional exhaustion.

1.4. Answering the Research Questions:

In answering the first question – the relation between equity perception and job burnout – the findings of this research indicate that there isn't a significant relation between equity perception and job burnout. Researcher believes that as the job of operators is almost new and with regard to little job experience, more research needs to be conducted in this regard in future.

In answering the second question – Is there any relation between education of urban train operators and their equity perception? – The findings of the research do not confirm any relation between education and equity perception. This research is consistent with the findings of Case and Hewed (2005) who determined that there is no relation between equity perception and education (Schaufeli WB, Janczur B. 1994). It is interesting that in this research those who are less educated, according to average scores have more equity perception. In responding the third question – Is there any relation between job experience of urban train operators and their equity perception? – overall findings of the research show that there is no relation between equity perception and job experience and these findings are consistent with those of Reynolds, D., Tabacchi, M.,

(1993). Moreover, Maslach C, Jackson SE. 1981 proved that there is no relation between corporate atmosphere and job experience. However, average of scores indicates that the difference between the scores and equity perception of the group with 15-20 years experience is rather more than other groups. But in this research experienced operators had lower equity perception in items of distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice which, considering the rules of organization and determining salary based on high academic degrees and with regard to the fact that experienced operators in this organization have low education degrees and the ignorance of employees experience in relation to their salaries which results in distributive justice, impressed employees' emotions based on feeling equity perception with distributive item. These findings are consistent with the researcher's expectation. In response to the fourth question – Is there any relation between the age of urban train operators and their equity perception? – Overall findings of the research approve of a relation between the age of operators and their equity perception, but the results of the research are not consistent with the findings of Rodger W. Griffith, Stefan Gaertner.2001. It is interesting that in this research there is a relation between equity perception and age in group of 41-year olds or more which got the highest average and had almost high equity perception. Other three items show that perception of distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice was quite low in them. It seems to the researcher that as age increases, mental capacity of the employees increases as well. This, together with their corporate experience, helps the employees to deal with the issues more easily and admit and follow the rules much better. In response to the fifth question – Is there any relation between education of urban train operators and their job burnout? – Overall findings of this research show that there isn't a significant relation between education and job burnout. This result is consistent with the findings of). In response to sixth question – Is there any relation

between job experience of urban train operators and their job burnout. According to the findings of this research there is a significant relation between the sub-item of job engagement and job experience with 95% confidence and also there is a significant relation between emotional exhaustion and job experience of the operators with 95% confidence. These findings are consistent with those of Rothmann, S. (2003). In response to the seventh question – Is there any relation between the age of urban train operators and their job burnout? – The findings of Greenhalgh, L. & Rosenblatt, Z. (1984) indicated that there is a relation between age and job burnout got the same result in his research. In this research no relation was found between age and job burnout, but according to the average scores, younger operators got the highest average in relation to job burnout. Observing justice is one of the most important concerns of organizations' employees. Undoubtedly, employee's perception of following justice will lead to the feeling of equity and job satisfaction. It is quite natural for human beings to stand against it when they face injustice or feel it and then they try to compensate for it. We all have experienced this issue so far. Therefore, equity perception and consequently job satisfaction will enhance job commitment, productivity and job motivation of employees and prevents their job burnout (Zopiatis, A., Constanti, P., (2005).

2.4. Research Limitations:

1. Applying tools prepared by the researcher which naturally lack standardized psychometric properties in relation to equity perception in Iran.
2. Lack of enough domestic and foreign studies in relation to this subject in order to compare the results of this research and other researches.
3. Conducting research in a certain city which leads to some problems in generalizing the results.

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