

## **A model for illustrating the effective factors of strategic behavior**

**(Case study: Social insurance company of Tehran)**

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### **Abstract**

Achieving the organizational objectives needs employees' behavior and their collaboration with management. Strategic behavior-driven is depend on different factors. The aim of this article is to determine the impact of factors on strategic behavior-driven. A conceptual model was developed and tested on a survey in Social Insurance Company of Tehran which employees' participated. Data collected by questionnaire from managers and stuffs and structure equation model (SEM) was used for data analysis by LISREL software. The findings show that employees' engagement impact on strategic behavior-driven and perceptions of job autonomy, and organizational status were significantly impact on greater employees' engagement.

### **Keywords**

Autonomy, Employee engagement, Role benefit, Strategic behavior.

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## **Introduction**

Recently considerable attention has been given to the study of the positive aspects and the development of employees' optimal psychological and psychosocial functioning (Sanchez-Cardona, 2012, p.2163). In health-care organizations, employees are expected to be engaged in their work, show initiative and be innovative. In order to achieve this, organizations should arrange working conditions with sufficient motivating and energizing resources (Hakanen, 2008, p.78). It is important to understand the aspects of frontline employees' roles that could contribute both to improving work performance and to strengthening the firm's competitive advantage.

In recent years, there has been a sharp increase in the interest towards the concept of employee engagement and its role in work performance and competitive advantage. In particular, various studies have noted that employee engagement is able to predict employee turnover intention, employee productivity, financial performance, customer satisfaction, and so forth. Baumruk (2004) stresses the important role of employee engagement, but labels this construct as the "the missing link" in relation to the factors that contribute to a firm's success. Saks also describes employee engagement as a "new and emerging area" (Saks, 2006, p.612). Consequently, employee engagement has emerged as a critical element for business success. (Slatten, 2011, p.88).

Consequently, it is important to identify, on the one hand, those factors that engender strategic behavior-driven, and, on the other hand, how strategic behavior-based pays off for organizations. Given that firms in the healthcare industry are currently facing problems, such as incompatibility of structure, mission and organizational culture with scientific findings as well as goals and strategies which are not in line with the employees' needs, in order to achieve strategic planning for enriching the organization and improving profitability (Lashley, 2008; Onsoyen, 2009), so it is necessary for employees to adjust their behavior to the organization's needs.

The social insurance company has emphasized the importance of

the point that if those principle of human resources can have significant influence on a system that can reach its true potential. However, studies show that the employees' monotonic behavior lacks innovation and creativity. In this organizational culture, things are done in a conventional repetitive manner, and there is little collaboration between employees. The hierarchical management structure and non-flexible regulations of this organization have suppressed the employees' sense of creativity and responsibility (Nezhadsam, 2009, p.172).

In order to satisfy its needs and maintain its competitiveness, the organization needs to expand the range of its employees' skills. Therefore, fundamental changes are needed to create and maintain strategic behavior in employees and managers. Alike, this is the problem we address in this research.

This study contributes to the call for more research related to employee engagement, job autonomy, organizational status and objects. Pacifically, this article focuses on employee engagement in relation to frontline employees about strategically behavior in Hospitality Company. This company offers a valuable opportunity for research because the critical role that frontline employees play in a hospitality companies success (Lashley, 2008; Onsoyen, 2009). Although there have recently been studies focusing on employee engagement in hospitality organizations (Kim *et al.*, 2009), this is the first study in hospitality research that has empirically examined certain antecedents and effects of employee engagement on strategic behavior from a frontline perspective.

This article begins with a discussion of the concept of employee engagement, job autonomy, organizational status and objects. Next, in this study there is a discussion of the antecedents and effects of job autonomy, role benefits and organizational status on employee engagement and organizational objects, and also impact of employee engagement and organizational objects on strategic behavior under examination. Third, the methodology used in this study is described. Fourth, there is a presentation of the analysis and empirical findings. This article concludes with a discussion of the implications of the

study and points out the limitations and suggestions for future research.

### **Literature review**

Day (1999) has identified important aspects of an appropriate strategy. According to Day (1999), “a sound strategy is directional ... it includes activities ... to deliver a particular value proposition to a target group of customers ... [And] to gain competitive advantage”. Moreover, according to Day; “everyone in the organization contributes to the strategy” (Day, 1999, p.10). These statements point to five fundamental dimensions or challenges related to a firm’s strategy. First, a strategy should be goal-oriented (“directional”), that is, a strategy should incorporate a motivational aspect for reaching those goals. Second, there is (or should ideally be) a close link between strategy as a plan and strategy as an act (“includes activities”). This idea stresses the importance of implementing the strategy through the organization. Third, a strategy should embrace all employees in the organization (“everyone ... contributes to the strategy”), this entails that everyone (from the bottom to the top in the firm) is responsible to live up to the firm’s selected strategy. Fourth, all strategies deal with the challenge of how to please customers in satisfactory way (“to deliver value proposition to customers”). Fifth, strategy is about how to achieve or uphold a reasonable level of performance and thus to ensure survival in the future (“to gain competitive advantage”). This last consideration refers to the retaining and attracting of new customers and consequently the building of a foundation for survival both in the short and the long term. Although all the aforesaid aspects of strategy are important, it is reasonable to assume that the implementation of strategy is the most critical. Without implementation, the organization’s strategy is useless. Consequently, implementation is fundamental for a firm’s success (Slatten, 2011, p.93).

According to Kahn, when they are engaged, “people employ and express themselves psychically, cognitively and emotionally during role performances”. In his qualitative mapping of the general

conditions of experience that influence degrees of personal engagement, Kahn finds that there are three psychological conditions associated with engagement or disengagement: Meaningfulness, Safety, and Availability. Consequently, workers were more engaged when they were in situations that offered them greater meaning and when they felt mentally safe and were more psychologically available (Slatten, 2011, p.90).

Work engagement is defined as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Vigor refers to high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, and the willingness to invest effort in one's work and persistence in the face of difficulties. Dedication is characterized by a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge. The third defining characteristic of engagement is identified as absorption, a sense of being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work, so that time passes quickly and one finds it difficult to detach oneself from work (Hakanen *et al.*, 2008, p.79).

Consequently, engagement can be characterized as a "persistent, positive effective-motivational state of fulfillment. Employee engagement is positively correlated with customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, productivity, and profitability, and negatively correlated with employee turnover (Menguc *et al.*, 2012, p.1). As employees become more engaged, they find their work more meaningful, self-fulfilling, and inspirational and, accordingly, become more dedicated, concentrated, and engrossed in their jobs. This positive and motivated state of mind should carry over to how they treat and serve customers. For example, research has shown that engagement influences not only in-role behavior but also proactive behavior and extra-role behavior such as organizational citizenship behavior. It seems that engaged employees have an expanded view of their role in job and reach out to a broader set of activities in their jobs. This suggests that at least, engagement will have a positive effect on how employees handle their in-role duties, including providing superior service to customers (Menguc *et al.*, 2012, p.3).

Employees should be involved in the formulation of the content of

the firm's strategy. This step can help the firm to ensure that the employees' point of view is taken into consideration in the preparation of the strategy. Then, they should be able to the strategy and be trained on how to strive consciously towards contributing to the organization's overall strategy. Clear understating of the content of the firm's strategy and the effectiveness of the role that each individual employee has in the fulfillment of the firms' strategy can persuade employees about their roles. Employees have to perceive their job as a resource for status enhancement and should have been clearly shown the different steps in the career path and the criteria of how they could progress along that path to achieve the company's goals. Therefore, each individual employee must play an active role in developing the career plan (Slatten, 2011, p.101).

Sieber (1974) has classified the positive benefit of multiple roles (or what he labels as "role accumulation") into four types: (Slatten, 2011, p.91)

1. Role privileges;
2. Overall status security;
3. Enrichment of the personality and ego gratification; and
4. Resources for status enhancement.

The perceived role benefits some points to individual employee perceptions of career opportunities and professional visibility. Role benefit was the most important construct in creating employee engagement. Consequently, employee-perceived role benefit can be identified as a key construct or crucial aspect in relation to employee engagement (Slatten, 2011, p.100).

Job resources were defined as those physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that not only potentially reduce the negative effects of job demands and help to achieve work goals, but may also stimulate personal growth, learning and development, and positive state of work engagement (Hakanen, 2008, p.79).

Intrinsically motivated behaviors can occur without external rewards (e.g., prizes) are engaged for their own sake, that is, for the pleasure, fun, and satisfaction derived from participation itself, and are optimally challenging. Activities that lead the individual to experience

these feelings are intrinsically rewarding and are likely to be performed again (Lim and Wang, 2009, p.53).

Autonomy is generally a requirement where work cannot be easily standardized, which is most often the case for frontline jobs in the health-care systems. Job autonomy refers to the freedom and independence that people performing the tasks has in determining how to execute their duties. Previous research has found that job autonomy is linked to certain factors related to employee engagement, such as the willingness to dedicate one's efforts and abilities to a work task, intrinsic job motivation, and individual development (Slatten, 2011, p.102).

People are more likely to be intrinsically motivated, that is, to do an activity simply for the enjoyment they derive from it, when they can freely choose to pursue an activity (autonomy/choice), when they master the activity (competence) and when they feel connected and supported by important people, such as a manager (relatedness). According to the theory of planned behavior, people's overt statement of intention is the strongest predictor of behavior. Hagger (2003) proposed that intention summarized a person's general effective and cognitive orientation towards the behavior (attitude), the perceived pressure placed on them by important people to participate in the target behavior (subjective norm), and their competence-related evaluation of their faculties and capacities towards the behavior (perceived behavioral control). As such, more self-determined forms of behavioral regulations (which affect more positive consequences or adaptive outcomes) are more likely to enhance stronger intentions from a person (Lim and Wang, 2009, p.53).

Strategic behavior-driven in this study refers to how the firm's strategy serves as a guiding principle or a compass for employees in their work role and assumes that employee's strategic behavior-driven is a driver to engagement and perceived organizational objects; specifically, the more a person perceives a match between the strategy and his or her own contribution to the strategy, the more engaged this person will be. Of course, the opposite is also possible, but, again, this study examines the positive perceptions of a perceived match.

## Conceptual Model

Job autonomy here refers to the freedom and independence that people performing the tasks that determines how to execute their duties (Zhou and Shalley, 2008). Previous research has found that job autonomy is linked to certain factors related to employee engagement, such as the willingness to dedicate one's efforts and abilities to a work task (Gagne and Deci, 2005), intrinsic job motivation (Hackman and Oldham, 1980), and individual development (Deci and Ryan, 1985). To these authors' knowledge, there are only two previous studies that have explicitly tested the link between job autonomy and employee engagement. Xanthopoulou *et al.* (2009) have studied employees from three branches of a Greek fast-food company. In addition to other variables, the authors examined how job autonomy was linked to employee's engagement.

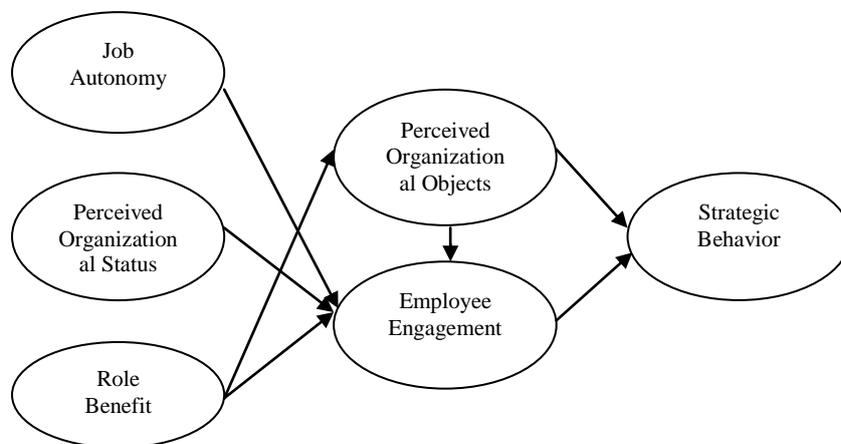
It reasonable to assume that an individual perceives these resources since being meaningfully contributes to engagement in the work role. The opposite is also possible: an individual who perceives the same resources as being meaninglessly contributes to disengagement in the work role. Meaningless work is often associated with apathy and detachment (Thomas and Velhouse, 1990). However, this study concentrates on the more desirable or positive perceptions. Following this reasoning, this study assumes that a person's perception of role benefits causes to augment the engagement in the work role. Consequently, employees' perceived role benefit is positively linked to employee engagement.

According to Van de Ven (1986, p.592), the "foundation of strategy activity is employees' actions". Given the nature of engagement, it is reasonable to assume that employee engagement is related to strategic behavior.

The model links employee engagement to strategic behavior for two reasons. First, Miles (2000, p.371) characterizes studies of strategic in services. This is paradoxical because the growth in the service sector has been so expansive that the label of a service-dominated economy is a commonplace (Tether, 2005). Because of the

lack of research on strategic behavior in services, there has been call for more research on strategy in service firms. Second, this study concentrates on frontline employees with the hospitality industry as the setting. In the hospitality industry (and in service industries in general), frontline employees are of central importance for guest experience (Onsoyen *et al.*, 2009; Lashley, 2008).

Based on literature review, Figure 1 shows the research model and provides a summary of the variables and hypotheses guiding in this study.



**Fig. 1. Conceptual model**

According to conceptual model, this study proposes the hypothesis:

- H1.** Job autonomy has a positive impact on perceived organizational objects.
- H2.** Job autonomy has a positive impact on employee engagement.
- H3.** Perceived organizational status has a positive impact on employee engagement.
- H4.** Role benefit has a positive impact on perceived organizational objects.
- H5.** Role benefit has a positive impact on employee engagement.
- H6.** Perceived organizational objects have a positive impact on employee engagement.
- H7.** Perceived organizational objects have a positive impact on strategic behavior-driven.

**H8.** Employee engagement has a positive impact on strategic behavior-driven.

## Method

### Sample

To ensure a common understanding among the researchers, there were workshops that explained the overall aim of the research project, the questionnaire, and the conceptual model. The questionnaire scale is 5 point Likert scale, these scales of each item ranges from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

All researchers were instructed to give each respondent a brief introduction of the aim of the study and to inform all participants that their responses would be kept anonymous. The data were collected from health-care organizations. 145 questionnaires (Cochran.php with: sig=0.95, N=288) were distributed between employees and asked to participate in the survey. If the respondent was willing to participate, the person received a questionnaire, was informed about the importance of the study and that their responses would remain anonymous. Participants were returned their survey. 129 questionnaires returned to the lead investigator.

Seventy four respondents are female (57.4%) and the most frequently respondent's educations are Bachelor (47.3%). The mean organizational tenure is approximately 10 years (SD=1.27) and the most frequently respondent's posts are expert (41.1%).

### Measures

The questionnaire consisted of six main sections that covered the six constructs in the conceptual model in Figure 1. We discuss the set of questionnaire items for each construct (Table 1).

Table 1. questionnaire items

Constructs	Indicators	Standardized loading	t-value
	I have a great deal of freedom for how I can go about doing my job	1	--

Continue Table 1. questionnaire items

Constructs	Indicators	Standardized loading	t-value
Autonomy	I get encouraged to solve different tasks singlehandedly	0.85 0.71	9.61
	I try to do my job without need to refer to superiors or others		8.01
	I always try to cultivate behaviors toward the organization's goals	1	--
Strategic Behavior-driven	I am interested to perform in order to achieve the organization's long-term plans	2.73	3.07
	I am conscious about doing my job in line with the company's vision and aim	4.55	3.16
	I try to choose best practices innovatively in order to do my job in line with the company's goals	3.28	3.13
Engagement	I like to work intensely to develop operational plans of the organization or my work unit	1	---
	I am diligent and effective when doing my job	1.08	6.65
	I participate in the work program with high energy and enthusiasm	1.23	6.73
Role benefit	I work with high energy to address job barriers	0.90	6.33
	This job is a "springboard" for my future career		
	The job gives me an opportunity to show my skills	1 .78	---
Perceived organizationa l objects	This job is an opportunity for me to succeed	1.07	7.40
	Reasonably, this job is providing my personal interest	1.01	7.71
Perceived organizationa l status	I know what my work unit's goals are	1	---
	I am aware of the company's annual and long term goals	0.90	8.44
Perceived organizationa l status	I am aware of the organization's overall goals	0.58	6.01
	I understand our organization's status completely	1	---
Perceived organizationa l status	I know our organization in what situation is to achieve its goals	0.89	8.44
	I Know the strengths and weaknesses of our organization to achieve its goals	0.58	6.01

## Results

### Reliability and validity

This study employed a structured questionnaire, with most of the questions developed from the literature. Some questions used from Slatten (2011) and the others added by the author from literature (Mauno *et al.*, 2007; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2008; Xanthopoulou *et al.*, 2009). The questionnaire was evaluated by experts and knowledgeable professors and managers who related to the content of working health-care organizations. A pilot test was conducted to test the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. The first draft of the survey instrument was distributed to 30 randomly selected employees. A total of 30 completed surveys were returned. A reliability analysis was performed and its alpha reliability calculated as 0.90.

In addition, for reliability we used the factor loading by LISREL, measure of factor loading has shown in Table 1 and *t*-value for all Indicators are meaningful; hence, the indicators for analysis are reliable.

### Mean of Constructs

For determining the situation of constructs, we used the mean of all constructs by *t*-test, Table 2 illustrates the results for constructs mean and significant of them are meaningful.

Table 2. *t*-test result for mean of constructs

constructs	Mean	Sig.
Job autonomy	3.80	0.0001
Perceived organizational status	3.71	0.0021
Role benefit	3.35	0.0001
Perceived organizational objects	3.61	0.0001
Employee engagement	4.06	0.0000
Strategic behavior-driven.	4.16	0.0000

### Hypothesis tests

Data analysis and hypotheses testing procedure was done in the following manner. Preliminary data were gathered via surveys, and

research variables were calculated. In this study, according to the assumptions made, Structure Equation Model (SEM) by LISREL software is used to examine the impact of variables.

We estimated this model using LISREL 8.54. The results suggested a good fit of the second-order specification for our measures (chi-square= 324.12, df= 178, P= 0.001; goodness of fit index [GFI]= 0.92; root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA]= 0.063; comparative fit index [CFI]= 0.95; incremental fit index [IFI]= 0.94. The GFI, CFI and IFI statistics exceed the recommended 0.90 threshold level (Hoyle and Panter, 1995). Furthermore, the RMSEA was below 0.08 and the root mean square residual [RMR] and the standardized RMR were 0.051 and 0.047 respectively, which are considered acceptable.

The structural model is presented in Figure 2. This model summarizes the eight hypotheses proposed relating Job autonomy, perceived organizational status, employee engagement, Role benefit, perceived organizational objects, employee engagement, and strategic behavior. Conventional maximum likelihood estimation techniques were used to test the model (Joreskog and Sorbom, 1996). The fit of the model is satisfactory (*chi-square*= 324.14, *df* = 178, P= 0.000; GFI= 0.92; RMSEA = 0.063; CFI= 0.95; IFI= 0.94). Results of Hypothesis tests issued in Table 3.

**Table 3. construct structural model and results**

Hypothesis	Standardized coefficients	t-value	Result
Job autonomy → perceived organizational objects	0.290	2.08	Supported
Job autonomy → employee engagement	0.41	1.12	Not supported
Perceived organizational status → employee engagement	-0.62	-1.16	Not supported
Role benefit → perceived organizational objects	0.45	2.38	Supported
Role benefit → employee engagement	0.38	1.57	Not supported
Perceived organizational objects → employee engagement	0.26	2.06	Supported
Perceived organizational objects → strategic behavior-driven.	0.10	2.19	Supported
Employee engagement → strategic behavior-driven	0.12	2.03	Supported

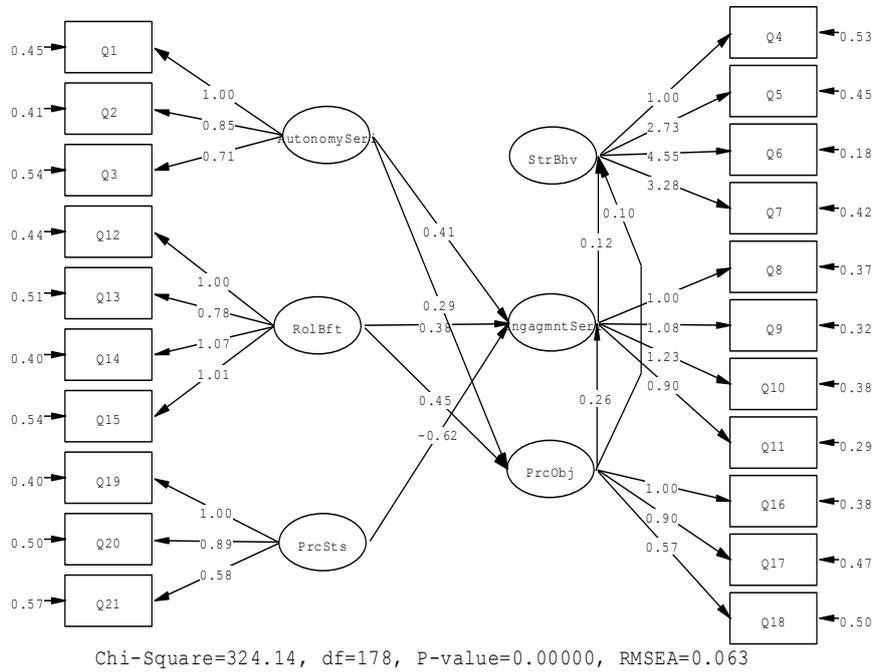


Fig. 2. Structural model by LISREL 8.54

Based on results, 4 hypotheses: H1, H4, H6, H7, H8 are supported and accepted and 3 hypotheses: H2, H3, H5 are not accepted, Although the significance level for the mean of their constructs were less than the suggested level of 0.05, the significance level (*t*-value) obtained from the structural equation model was lower than 1.96, as a result the hypotheses are rejected at the 0.95 confidence level. A proposed model was illustrated as a new model in Figure 3.

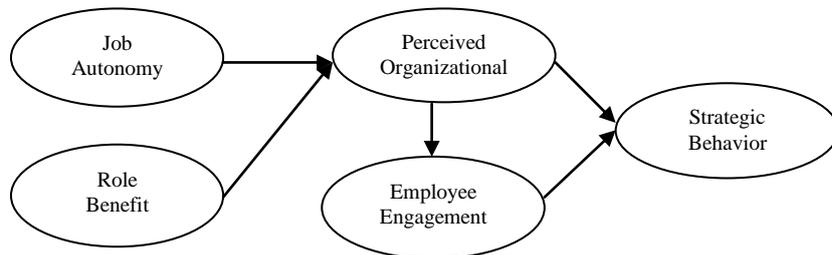


Fig. 3. Proposed model

## **Conclusions**

Our research has demonstrated the effect of employee engagement on strategic behavior-driven and it emphasizes the role of employee engagement in the health-care service firms. Although previous service research has focused on the factors that drive employee performance, it seems that most of this research has been inspired by the idea of the service profit chain advanced by which focuses on the effect of employee satisfaction on performance. Consequently, the effect of employee engagement on performance has been relatively neglected or absent from empirical examination (Slatten, 2011). This study addresses this lack by empirically demonstrating the effect of employee engagement on the strategic behavior-driven in specific work role.

This study considers job autonomy as the freedom and independence that people have when performing a task (Zhou and Shalley, 2008). The construct of job autonomy was linked to perceived organizational objects and employee engagement. This finding supports previous studies that suggest a positive relationship between job autonomy and employee engagement in organizations in general (Mauno *et al.*, 2007; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2008; Xanthopoulou *et al.*, 2009; Slatten, 2011). Yet, this study needs to go further by specifically demonstrating that employees' perception of freedom and independence in frontline jobs drive their engagement and perceived organizational objects.

According to the literature on strategy (Owen *et al.*, 2001, Zhou and Shalley, 2008; Xanthopoulou *et al.*, 2009), perceived organizational status can achieve the promised results of strategic plans, it needs that perceived organizational status is a close link to employee. Consequently, a service firm's strategy is worthless if it is not implemented in the minds of the organizational members. Strategic attention is able to stimulate employee engagements, but results of this study are different with literatures. It is so strange since the first study doesn't support the impact of perceived organizational status on employee engagement.

This study shows the impact of role benefit on perceived organizational objects from the perspective of a frontline employee. The role benefits point to individual employee perceptions of career opportunities and professional visibility. The findings reveal that role benefit was the most important construct in creating perceived organizational objects. This result is the same as previously researches (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Zhou and Shalley, 2008; Owen *et al.*, 2001; Slatten, 2011). Based on literature, employee-perceived role benefit can be identified as a key construct or crucial aspect in relation to employee engagement (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Mauno *et al.*, 2007; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004; Slatten, 2011). In contrast to literature, this study shows that role benefit does not have impact on employee engagement.

Consequently, employee-perceived role benefit can be identified as a key construct or crucial aspect in relation to employee engagement. The findings are supported by causality-orientations theory (Deci and Ryan, 1985). Causality-orientations theory provides an explanation for a person's selective perception and rationale or attribution for pursuing a given activity. One explanation for a person's performing a job that follows this reasoning is that the job is seen as a means to an end. The person perceives the demands from customers and managers with a specific work role as being reasonable (even when they conflict). The person interprets these demands to mean that these customers and managers are actually providing important information for the improved performance of the job. According to the findings from this study, persons who perceive the challenge of handling the demands in a specific work role as being an advantageous element become more engaged in that work role.

In this study Perceived organizational objects has impact on employee engagement and strategic behavior-driven, these results have been supported by literature (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Owen *et al.*, 2001; Zhou and Shalley, 2008; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2008; Xanthopoulou *et al.*, 2009; Slatten, 2011).

Employee engagement has impact on strategic behavior-driven, this finding supports previous studies that suggest a positive relationship

between employee engagement and strategic practices and performance in organizations in general (Mauno *et al.*, 2007; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004; Xanthopoulou *et al.*, 2009).

Practical and implication aspects of this study have listed as bellow:

- The order of the effective factors for creation of strategic-driven behavior in staff, engagement in operational programs, job autonomy, perceived organization status, and job benefits of staffs should be promoted in order of priority.
- By creating job autonomy, staff are given greater responsibilities and expected to have a better performances which are evaluated according to their situations.
- Organization strategy must be prepared as a combination of motivational aspects to achieve goals.
- The importance of offering treatment services, optimistic culture, esteem to basic nobilities of life, and humanitarianism are established as values. This factor is one of the basic foundations of what motivation and role benefit are.
- The Capability to understand the activities' steps to achieve goals should be promoted by continuous training and creating a correct understanding of the organization's situation and the effects of staff on its promotion.
- Strategic thinking and behavior should be interiorized in the organization by sharing staff in strategic programs.
- Communicational and educational values and patterns should be focused by logical partitioning an organization to different compatible departments, creating opportunity for entrepreneurship, and emphasizing on organizational flexibility, instead of individual measures.
- Trying to create a mental image for activities according to organization's goals by preparing a clear image from the organization.
- Promoting braveness spirit against new situations and coercing emotions against unexpected events.

**Limitation and recommendation for future researches**

Limitation and recommendation for future researches:

- This research is studied social insurance company of Tehran; future research can study in other organizations, according to the importance of creation of strategic-driven behavior in organizations.
- In this study, we illustrated a structural model for factors of strategic behavior, future research can focus on a pattern prepare to measure strategic-driven behavior.
- This study has considered frontline employees for strategic behavior, another researches can study strategic-driven behavior evaluate in staff.
- We did not consider organizational culture as a factor that could have impact on strategic behavior future research, and determine the relationship between organizational culture and strategic-driven behavior.

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