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## **INVESTIGATING THE EFFECT OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT ON THE EMPLOYEES' PERFORMANCE WITH THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL HAPPINESS (CASE STUDY OF EMPLOYEES WORKING IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION OF ARDABIL)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The current research aimed at investigating the effect of organizational commitment on the employees' performance with the mediating role of organizational happiness. The statistical population included employees working in the ministry of education of Ardabil. Due to the boundaries of the sample, census method was utilized. Data were collected among 280 employees. The data has been collected through sending the questionnaires, whose questions were extracted from Allen and Meyer's Three-Component Organizational Commitment Scale, Chen, et al.'s questionnaire of organizational commitment performance and the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ). In order to analyze the data, the SEM technique and LISREL software were used. The research results showed that there was a significant correlation between organizational commitment and employee performance, and organizational happiness also affected employees' performance. Moreover, the positive effect of organizational commitment on organizational happiness was confirmed in relation to the correlation between organizational commitment and organizational happiness. In addition, the relative mediator role of organizational happiness regarding the relation between organizational commitment and employees performance was confirmed.*

**Keywords:** Organizational commitment, Employees' performance, Organizational happiness, The Ministry of Education.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Employees' good performance and effectiveness are one of the keys to the success of organizations. That is why the successful organizations of the world are trying to identify and manage the factors affecting employees behavior, and achieve this success accordingly (Abu al-Ala'i, 2017). Therefore, employees of an organization, as intangible assets and strategic capitals of the organization, directly affect organization's performance and productivity (Kaplan and Norton, 2008). One of the intangible factors affecting employees performance is their organizational commitment, which is a strong motivational source for enhancing employees performance and convincing them to continue working under difficult situations such as stress and work-related pressures (Carlos et al., 2014). Organizational commitment is a link between an individual and organization affecting various investments, such as wages,

retirement and social relationships (Lambert et al., 2015). Creating organizational commitment necessitates the creation and constant psychological maintenance among organization's employees. (Vujičić, et al., 2015). On the other hand, Dehaghi (2012) has mentioned happiness in his study, as a factor affecting managers' commitment. Happiness could be considered as the high ratio of emotions and positive sensations to negative ones. Uchida et al., defined positive excitements and psychological behaviors as the descriptors of happiness. Nastaran Boroujeni et al., in their recent research, investigated the relationship between happiness and organizational commitment regarding teenage sport employees. They indicated a positive and significant relationship between employees' happiness and their dependency and commitment to the organization. Surprisingly, when employees are happy in the working environment, they are more creative and responsible (Gavin and Mason, 2004).

Since the Ministry of Education, as one of the educational organization, has been considered as one of the most important organizations of every society, and the administrators of education are individuals as the source of social, political, economic and cultural changes, there would be no doubt on the fact that dynamic and effective education would bring growth and development for every society. As a result, paying attention to its issues, and trying to identify and improve its key factors affecting its success or failure, are among the responsibilities of researchers. Meanwhile, manager's attention to employees are of utmost priority. Considering the vital and key role of this organization in developing and improving the country, this organization is in need of having decent and skilled managers as well as farsighted employees (Majidian Fard and Rahimian, 2018). The current research investigated the relationship between organization commitment and employees' performance as well as the effect of organizational happiness on these two variables. According to the aforementioned issues, the research question would be as following: Is there a significant correlation between organizational commitment dimension and employees' performance?

Organizational commitment is an attitude regarding employees' faithfulness to the organization, which is a constant process. Reilly and Chatman (1986), defined organizational commitment as the emotional support and adherence of the organization to the its goals and values, away from its instrumental values (a means for achieving other goals). On the other hand, different definitions have been presented for performance. What is common in all these definitions, is the way duties and responsibilities are done. In a definition, some have defined human performance as the productivity of the work. Morhen and Griffen believed that performance has a concept beyond data and product, which is a set of behaviors related to the job that people show by themselves. Holton and Bates stated that performance is a multi-dimensional structure, whose evaluation is different depending on various factors. Most of the researchers believed that performance is a multi-dimensional factor, whose most important factors include contextual performance and task performance (Befort and Hattrup, 2003). Task performance includes the behaviors involved in activities related to the organization's transformation and maintenance, such as product production, management of subordinates, provision of services, and selling goods. Contextual performance has been defined as a behavior that is based on the psychology, social and organizational context of work (Gellaty and Georgy, 2000). Organizational happiness is another aspects affecting the commitment and performance of employees. When defining happiness, it could be said that happiness results from human judgment about how to live a life. This judgment is not imposed from the outside,



rather it is an internal affair being affected by positive emotions (Dadgar et al., 2016, as cited in Argyle, 2003).

Winhoven (2013) believed that happiness refers to the individual's judgment of the degree to which the quality of his life is desirable. Happiness is a vital factor when creating organizational relationships between employees, which finally develops organizational commitment of employees. In most of the researches, the employees' performance has been considered as one of the significant indexes when measuring the organizational performance (Johari, 2009).

A study by Suliman and Iles (2000) investigated the relationship between the three dimensions of organizational commitment with performance. Their results showed that only the emotional and normative commitment dimension of the power contained the clearness of the performance.

In their research, Olivia et al. (2010) pointed out that performance goals of the organization were related only to emotional commitment. Mohammad Riyaz Khan (2010) concluded that there was a positive correlation between all three dimensions of organizational (affective, normative, and continuance) commitment and employees' performance. Bahremand and Nazari (2015) found out that there was a positive correlation between the organizational commitment and employees' performance. Rahman et al. (2015) concluded that all aspects of organizational commitment had a significant and positive correlation with job performance. Accordingly, the main research hypothesis was as the following:

H1: Organizational commitment affects employees' performance.

Moreover, in their research, Bagheri and Tavalli (2011), concluded that employees' organizational commitment could positively affect the job performance and increase the effectiveness and productivity of the organization.

Vedadi et al. (2013) also indicated that there was a significant and inverse correlation between organizational commitment and its (affective, normative, and continuance) dimensions with the quitting of employees. Boroujeni and Asadi (2014) concluded that they would increase the efforts of organizations for promoting employees' morale and increasing their happiness, dependency to the organization and their commitment and efforts to improve the performance of the organization. Moeini (2016)'s results showed that there was a negative and significant correlation between inadequate mental status and happiness. Accordingly, the second hypothesis has been presented as follows:

H2: Organizational commitment affects employees' organizational happiness.

The results of the research conducted by Mollazehi (2014) showed that there was a significant correlation between organizational justice and organizational climate with organizational commitment. Hosseinpour and Esmaeili (2016) found that there was a negative and significant correlation between the total organizational happiness scale and subcomponents of self-concept, life satisfaction, psychological preparedness, aesthetic feeling, self-efficacy, and hope with burnout. Allameh (2016) results showed the impact of organizational culture on employee performance. Therefore, the third hypothesis of the research was as follows:

H3: Organizational happiness affects employees' performance.

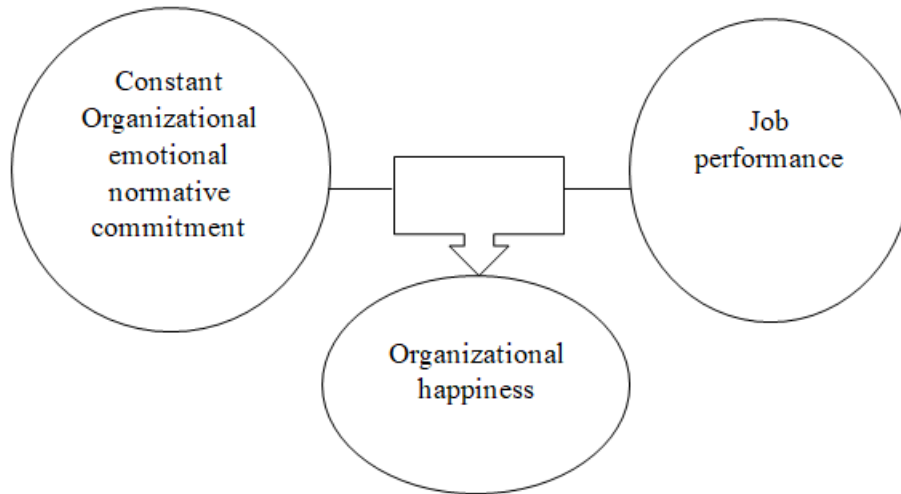
Field (2011)'s results indicated a positive relationship between happiness and emotional organizational commitment. She ultimately considered happiness as a predictor of an emotional organization's commitment. Lachander and Rajib (2015) indicated that there was a



strong relationship between organizational commitment of employees and increasing the quality of staff services. Thomas and Feldman (2011) found that organizational commitment was investigated as an affirmation of the relationship between organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Araujo-Lopez (2015) believed that employees' understandings in an organization could provide significant contributions to organizations and ultimately would have a special impact on the performance. Kundu (2017) showed that employees' perception of labor diversity could affect organizational performance. Arménio Rego et al. (2017) argued that happiness played a mediating role in the relationship between organizational virtues and organizational commitment, and they play a positive and significant role between organizational virtues and organizational commitment. Accordingly, the fourth research hypothesis was as follows:

H4: Organizational happiness has a mediating role between organizational commitment and employee performance.

Riyaz Khan (2010) believed that one of the ways to improve performance is to improve the organizational commitment of employees. In fact, the basis of the conceptual model of the present research has been based on the work of Riyaz Khan. In this study, the performance variable is the dependent variable, and the organizational commitment is the independent variable, and organizational happiness is the mediating variable. The current research aimed at identifying the relationship between organizational commitment and employees' of the Ministry of Education's performance with the mediating role of organizational happiness as the following model:



**Figure 1.** The research's conceptual model of Chen et al. (2005), organization commitment (Alan and Meyer, 1991) and Riyaz Khan (2010)

## METHODOLOGY

Since nowadays, education, as a social institution responsible for educating people in the community, has been emphasized by the community of people, authorities and scholars. They all believe that the development of a country depends on the cultivation of knowledgeable and responsible people (Johnson, 2003). On the other hand, research has shown that

organizational commitment has a positive relationship with performance (Shiuan et al., 2003). This issue is of utmost importance in organizations such as the Ministry of Education, which has many responsibilities and referees. According to the abovementioned explanations in relation to the sample and the method of the present research's sampling, it should be said that: in the present study, the statistical population included Ardabil's Educational employees working in the two regions of 1 and 2, whose overall employees include almost 7000 individuals. As the subject of the research was investigating official employees of these regions, the statistical population of the study included 280 individuals, which were provided to the researcher through staff department of the organization. Due to the smallness of the statistical population, and the fact that it was possible to investigate the population, rather than sampling method, census method was utilized. Methodologically, this research was descriptive-analytical and correlational, which is placed in field studies research in respect to its observance and control degree. Since the researcher explored the variable in their normal way, this research was applied in terms of its purpose. Data collection was also carried out through library and filed methods. Regarding field method, a questionnaire was utilized for completing the data. The research questionnaire consisted of two main sections: the first section included questions about some of the most important demographic features including gender, age, education and years of service records. The second section was derived from standard questionnaires (Allan and Meyer's Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ)) and the performance questionnaire of Chen et al. as well as the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ) developed by Oxford University. Table 1 shows the arrangement of questions of the research questionnaire.



**Table 1: The arrangement of the questions in the research questionnaire**

	Variable	Number of questions	Resource
Commitment	Affective	6	OCQ
	Normative	8	OCQ
	Constant	8	OCQ
Employee's performance		2	OCQ
Organizational happiness		6	OHQ

After completing the designed questionnaire based on the 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree, agree, no idea, disagree, and strongly disagree; and applying a series of amendments done by faculty members, content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed. In the next step, obtaining the necessary permits from the educational organization, the participants were asked to complete the questionnaire. The method used to analyze the data was quantitative methods in the form of descriptive and inferential statistics. The next step was to analyze the data using the method of structural equation modeling. Data analysis in this study was done with the help of LISREL software and structural equation modeling. In this study, two convergent and divergent validity criteria were used to examine the validity of the questionnaire. If the correlation between factor loadings be high, the questionnaire would have convergent validity. If the correlation between tests that measure different attributes be low, tests would have divergent validity. In the divergent narrative, the difference between the

indices of a structure and other construct indexes has been compared in the model. (Bulut et al., 2017)

## FINDINGS

Before evaluating the validity and reliability of the questionnaire and testing the conceptual model of the research, an analysis of the demographic characteristics of the respondents was presented in this section. Among the 280 participants of the study, 82.1 % of the respondents (230 individuals) were male and 17.9 % (50 individuals) were female. People having 31 to 40 years of age and below 20 years, respectively constituted the majority and minority of the respondents with 52.5 % and 0 %. 60% of the respondents had BA/BS degrees, while PhD respondents were only 1.1% of the total number. Largest and smallest experience groups had 11-20 years with 48.9% and less than 5 years with 6.4%, respectively.

Before using correlations tests, the normality of the data distribution had to be assured. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to analyze the normality of data distribution. In case of normality, parametric tests were used, otherwise nonparametric tests should be applied. The results indicated that the significance level of all variables were more than 0.05. Thus, it could be concluded that variables had normal distribution. This means that parametric tests were utilized.

As it was mentioned in the research methodology section, the validity and reliability of the research questionnaire should be evaluated before testing the model, drawing conclusions, and confirming or rejecting the hypotheses. There are various methods to evaluate the fitness of the measurement model. However, the most comprehensive method involves the use of partial least squares (PLS), in which the fitness of measurement models are evaluated based on three criteria of construct validity, discriminant validity, convergent validity, and reliability. Table 2 shows the results of this test, including factor loadings and t-student statistic values. In order to ensure content validity, every question was prepared by studying various information sources and then was adjusted using the opinions of the supervisors and research consultants and several other professors being expert on the subject of validity.

**Table 2. Results of confirmatory factor analysis**

Main variable	Observed variable/ Question	Standard coefficient	T statistic	Factor Loadings
Organizational commitment	Emotional commitment	0/44	6/15	0/47
	Normative commitment	0/55	9/03	0/86
	Consistent commitment	0/69	8/75	0/84
Organizational happiness	I would be happy to spend the rest of my career in this organization	0/96	2/81	0/49
	I enjoy talking to other people about the organization where I work.	0/65	9/63	0/60
	I really feel that this organization's problems are my own.	0/49	11/94	0/72
	I think I can easily find interest in another organization as much as I like this one.	0/43	12/64	0/75

	In the organization where I work, I do not feel myself as a “family” member.	0/86	5/84	0/48
	I do not have much emotional attachment to this organization.	0/85	6/02	0/49
	This organization means a lot to me personally.	0/78	7/34	0/47
Employees' performance	I feel that all aspects of life are under my control.	0/94	2/12	0/64
	My time is arranged in a way that I can do anything that I want.	0/80	2/16	0/45

Therefore, all items of the questionnaire for this research were evaluated by exploratory factor analysis. Factor loading coefficients confirmed that the variance between the construct and its measures was greater than the variance of the error in measuring the construct and the reliability of that model was acceptable. Two values of 0.4 (Hulland, 1999) and 0.5 (Rivard and Huff, 1988) have been proposed for accepting factor loadings. In this study the standard value for factor loading was considered equal to 0.5. The results of Table 2 showed that for all items, factor loading values were greater than the standard level of 0.5 and the values of the Student's t statistic were greater than 1.96 at 95% confidence level. Therefore, considering the reported values, the appropriateness of the questions and their ability to measure the variables of the research was confirmed and it can be claimed that the items in the research questionnaire had construct validity. In addition to construct validity, discriminant validity has also been investigated. In addition, reliability was also examined by Cronbach's alpha coefficient. In this study, composite reliability was used to measure convergent validity. The results of evaluating different measures of validity and reliability have been shown in Table 3.



**Table 3. Discriminant Validity, Convergent Validity, and Reliability**

Variable (construct)	Average of the Variance Extracted (AVE)	Composite Reliability Coefficient (CR)	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient
Organizational Commitment	0/62	0/83	0/76
Organizational Happiness	0/75	0/80	0/80
Employee Performance	0/77	0/79	0/82

According to Table 3 and the standard values of the intended measures, it can be concluded that discriminant validity, convergent validity, and reliability have been established for all the research variables and the research measurement models were desirable. According to Table 3, the AVE value was greater than 0.5. Therefore, the research measures had good construct validity and the composite reliability coefficient was also greater than 0.6, indicating strong reliability.

In this stage, the AVE criterion was specifically used to evaluate the convergent validity (CV), which were acceptable when compared with values. This showed an appropriate validity of the results. After confirming the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, to investigate the relationship between variables, structural equation model was utilized. The results of estimating the model and testing research hypotheses have been displayed separately in figures 2, 3 and table 4.

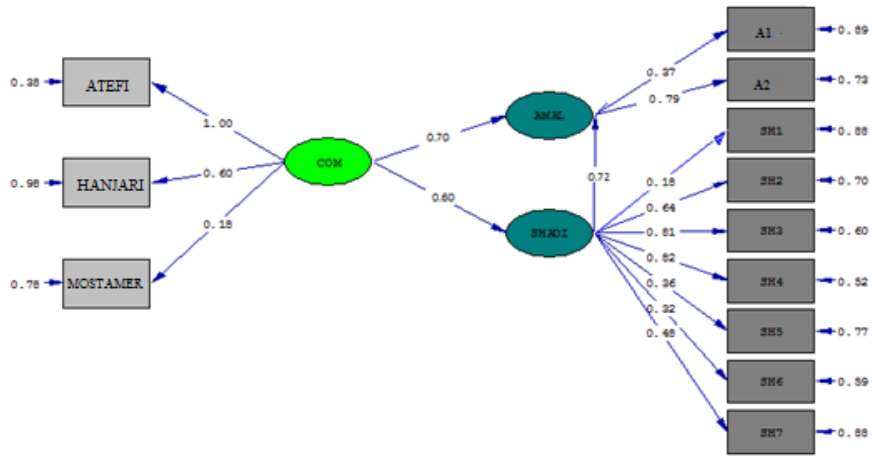


Figure 2. Standard path coefficient values

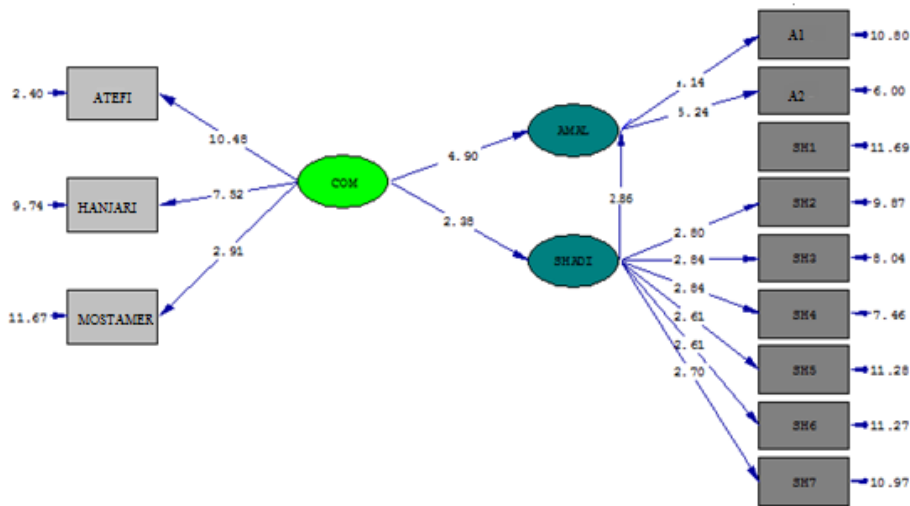


Figure 3. Student's t-statistic values

The results of testing research hypothesis have been shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Testing research hypothesis

Hypothesis	Independent variable	Dependent variable	P value	Student's t	Path coefficient	Hypothesis status
H <sub>1</sub>	Organizational commitment	Employee performance	0/000	4/90	0/70	confirmed
H <sub>2</sub>	Organizational commitment	Organizational happiness	0/000	2/36	0/70	confirmed
H <sub>3</sub>	Organizational happiness	Employee performance	0/000	2/86	0/72	confirmed

The results of table 4 indicated that the value of path coefficient in the first hypothesis was 0.70, indicating the positive effect of organizational commitment on employees' performance. The value of t-statistics equaled to 4.90, which was more than the limit value of 1.96. As a result, it can be assumed with at least 95% confidence that organizational commitment had a significant effect on employee performance. In the second hypothesis, in which the relationship between organizational commitment and organizational happiness has been investigated, the standard path coefficient was equal to 0.60, which indicated the positive effect of organizational commitment on organizational happiness. It can be seen that the value of the t statistic was approximately 2.36, which was more than the 1.96 limit value. As a result, it can be assumed with at least 95% confidence that organizational commitment had a significant effect on organizational happiness. In the third hypothesis, the relationship between organizational happiness and employee performance have been examined. The values of the standard path coefficient was equal to 0.72 which indicated the positive effect of organizational happiness on employee performance. It can be seen that the value of t statistic was approximately 2.86, which was greater than the 1.96 limit value. As a result, it can be assumed with at least 95% confidence that organizational happiness had a significant effect on employee performance. The fourth hypothesis examined the effect of organizational commitment and employee performance as a mediator on organizational happiness. To test this hypothesis, direct and indirect effects have been utilized. The results have been indicated in table 5.

**Table 5. Direct and indirect effects**

Hypotheses	Direct effect	Indirect effect	t
Effect of commitment of performance through happiness	0/70	0/60*0/72	4/90
Effect of commitment on happiness	0/60	-	2/36
Effect of happiness on performance	0/72	-	2/86

As it was shown in previous hypotheses, organizational commitment variable having the standard path coefficient of 0.60, had a significant positive effect on the organizational happiness variable. Given the significance of effect of direct path of organizational happiness on employees' performance, it could be accepted that organizational happiness variable act as a relative mediator variable when investigating the effect of organizational commitment on employees' performance.

In this study,  $X^2$ , Root Mean Square of Residuals (RMR), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), and the very important measure of Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) were used in order to assess the fitness of the structural part. The ratio of Chi-square over the degree of freedom ( $\chi^2 / df$ ) was highly dependent on the sample size, and for large samples the Chi-square quantity increased more than it can be attributed to the falsity of the model. The root square index is an approximation. In good models, this index is 5% or less. A model with a 10% or higher index is poorly fitted. The GFI and AFGI criteria represent a measure of the relative amount of variances and covariances explained by the model. Both of these criteria vary between zero and one, whereas values closer to one indicate a better goodness of fit for the model. The GFI and AFGI values for this model were 0.98 and 0.86 (greater than 0.8), which confirmed the results of the Chi-square test. Root Mean Square



of Residuals indicated that the difference between the elements of the matrix observed in the sample group and the elements of the estimated or predicted matrices, assumed the correctness of the model. RMR values closer to zero indicated a better fitness for the model. The RMR value in this research was equal to (0.045), which indicated the proper explanation of covariance. To assess whether a particular model was good in comparison with other possible models for explaining a set of observed data, Normed Fit Index (NFI), Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) were used. In this model, their values were 0.88, 0.92, 0.88, and 1, respectively, which suggested a fairly good fitness for the model. Finally, to determine if the model combined fitness and efficiency, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was used as a very powerful indicator, which was zero percent for this model, indicating the proper fitness and good research design.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Education as a governmental organization provides various services including the improvement of educational system's role, development of educational communications, constant educational activities, development of learning knowledge, increasing skills and others. Therefore, analyzing the job performance of employees can set the ground for increasing their effectiveness and productivity. The aim of the current study was investigating the effect of organizational commitment on employees' performance with the mediating role of organizational happiness among those working in the main office of the Ministry of Education. Accordingly, the relationship between organizational commitment and employees' performance was investigated. In the first hypothesis, in which the relationship between organizational commitment and employee performance was addressed, the first hypothesis was confirmed. Therefore, the results of the present study confirmed the results of the research by Riyaz Khan (2010). The results of the present study ultimately showed that only the dimensions of emotional and normative commitment could explain the performance. The results of this study were also consistent with the findings of Orovin et al. (1990), Ilz and Soleiman (2000), Olivia et al. (2010), Bunchu et al. 2014), Bahremandi and Nazari (2015), as well as Rahman et al. (2015). It seems that by creating special conditions for individuals and by applying learning theories, one can influence productivity, absenteeism, staff delays, quality of work and, in general, employee performance.

In the second hypothesis, the relationship between organizational commitment and organizational happiness was investigated. Thus, this hypothesis was also confirmed. This was consistent with the results reported by Bagheri, Tulayi (2011), Vedadi et al. (2013), Borujeni and Asadi (2014) and Moeini (2016). These research findings showed that happy people performed better than others, mentally and physically. Therefore, the adoption of policies to increase employee happiness could increase organizational commitment and improve organizational performance.

Regarding the third hypothesis, the relationship between organizational happiness and employee performance was examined. Therefore, the third hypothesis was also confirmed. This finding was consistent with the results of the studies by Shamsoddini and Mohammad Jani (2014), Molazehi (2014) Hosseinpour, Esmaili (2015), Allameh (2016). Researchers have identified happiness as an effective factor in the organizational productivity of managers.



The fourth hypothesis examined the effect of organizational commitment and organizational happiness as mediator on employee performance. This hypothesis was also confirmed, which was in line with the findings reported by Feldman (2011), Field (2011), Lachandar, Rajib (2015) Araújo, Lopes (2015), Kundu (2017), Arménio et al. (2017). Since the direct path of influence of organizational happiness variable on employee performance was significant, it can be concluded that the organizational happiness variable mediated the effect of organizational commitment variable on employee performance.

It is suggested that organizations especially the Education and Training Administration create a sense of competition among their employees through performance appraisals and feedbacks, by encouraging outperforming employees. It was observed that emotional commitment had a direct relationship with performance, thus organization should take steps toward developing the current status and should try to increase the emotional commitment. Employees involvement in organizational purposes makes them more emotionally committed. Regarding the normative commitment dimension, organizations could increase employee loyalty by consistent encouragement and rewarding. Based on the results of the commitment dimension, it is recommended that organizations increase employee attachment by offering various programs. Education and Training Administration staff have a modest sense of happiness in their organization. Since it has been observed, organizational happiness is directly related to commitment. Increasing organizational happiness may be achieved by creating happier spaces with more room, as well as by giving dignity to employees, which is an aspect that has unfortunately been neglected in recent years. On the other hand, the present study showed that attention to performance was in a favorable state, however. To increase the organizational commitment and subsequently improve performance using the role of happiness as mediator, the following suggestions have been presented:

1. Using job enrichment methods
2. Transparent organizational promotion of the employees
3. Creating a sense of trust between employees and organizations through transparency about organizational procedures and processes.
4. Establishing face-to-face communication between managers and staff
5. Rewarding and encouraging family members of staff, for example outperforming students.

In this section, the limitations and constraints that the researcher encountered during the research process have been mentioned that were identified during conducting the research, and could be the basis for future research by other researchers. It is suggested that further research be carried out about the relationship between organizational commitment and different leadership styles. Since the present study faced limitations such as small sample size, it is suggested that a larger sample size be investigated. In this research, only 2 items were used to measure performance, hence it is suggested that more items be used to measure this variable. Among the limitations of this research the followings are also included: the limitation of findings to the Education and Training Administration in Ardebil province and the lack of generalizability to other education departments, the existence of uncontrolled variables and their possible effects on the results cannot be refuted. Variables such as political, economic,



and cultural conditions of the society, personality traits, education, and employee experience are some of the variables that may have influenced the results.

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