



## **Personality traits predicting job burnout among staff (Case Study: Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this study is to investigate the effects of personality traits on burnout among staff at the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The present study is applied and survey-descriptive from aspect of aim and data collection, respectively. The statistical population of the study was all employees of the Central Bank, of which 348 persons were selected by simple random sampling method. Research tools were NEO questionnaire of personality traits, Maslach and Jackson Burnout Inventory (1981). Cronbach's alpha to evaluate the reliability of questionnaires was obtained 0.734 and 0.716, respectively. Data collected were analyzed using structural equation modeling software in Lisrel environment and regression and Pearson's correlation tests in SPSS software. The findings of the study show that there is a significant relationship between five dimensions of personality traits (neuroticism, extraversion, Experience-taking, consistency and loyalty) with burnout. The results showed that people with the neuroticism personality trait and more consistency have been more prone to job burnout. Other results also showed that the neuroticism, extraversion, consistency and loyalty personality traits are good predictors of job burnout variable.

**Keywords:** Personality traits; Burnout; Staff

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Human resource development is considered as one of the concerns of planners of manpower in modern management and efforts should be done in addition to the selection

and favorable placement, to provide a suitable ground to keep it. The existence of manpower obligated to the organization can not only reduce absenteeism, delays and displacements but also cause a dramatic increase in performance of the organization, mental freshness of the staffs and manifesting both organizational admirable targets and achieving personal goals (Bahrami et al., 2010; quoted by Kordtamini and Kouhi, 2011: 129-144).

Stress-related diseases, such as job burnout, increased in the past decade significantly and this increase occurs while all the people who work in a work environment, have no signs of wear and tear; It means personality traits may affect this phenomenon (Magnano, Paolillo & Barrano et al., 2015: 10-19). Personality traits predispose human different types of behavior in certain situations. These behaviors not only are influential in organizational performance, but also affect interpersonal relations and cooperation spirit of staff (Kish et al., 2012: 3).

Today, the organizations pay much attention to personality traits, because researchers have long believed that these features can be used in selection of employees, matching people with jobs and guiding decisions to career development. Since the central bank has been economically important organization for the country and also it as a supervisory organization on banks and credit institutions has important role to play, it appears attention to personal characteristics causes job burnout to be specially paid attention in relations of human resource management to create a comprehensive system of attracting, recruiting, retaining and developing human capital with scientific approaches of human resource management and talent management. Attention to human beings as a complex species, his/her consistency with complex relationships, facilities, changes in the general instructions and totally job workplaces in an organization are different from the past and the present human is forced to bear the constraints and pressures in the process of adaptation to the social environment and his/her own job. Therefore, a satisfactory job and job adjustment, over time, may be a source of dissatisfaction and lack of compatibility causing a person to be removed from his/her normal routine and undergone wear and tear (Saatchi et al., 2011).

People based on personality traits (such as personality and attitude), show different responses to job burnout and it more or less, facilitates their compliance to the environment (Leiter & Maslach, 2004: 20). Today, one of the most important factors in reducing productivity and losing human resources, is employee burnout. Burnout is primarily associated with environmental factors, however, studies show that people act the same in different working conditions and as a result, the role of personality and personality traits is referred in this disorder (Alarcon et al., 2009: 63-244; Gundel & Dammann, 2012; Schaufeli & Buunk, 2002; Swider & Zimmermann, 2010).

In studies have been already done on job burnout, generally effects of organizational factors on this phenomenon have been investigated which are much important-but the relationship between burnout and personality can not be ignored (Magnano, Paolilo and Barrano, 2015). Our character shapes our behavior, so, if we want to better understand the behavior of someone in an organization, obtaining information about his/her character in this field will help us.

Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran as the only regulator in charge of monetary and credit system with multiple and sensitive tasks aims to provide conditions conducive to the economic development of the country by conducting monetary and credit policies and support the government in the implementation of various programs, including programs of stabilization and economic development.

In this way, maintaining value for money and balancing payments with the continuous growth of the economy through the conduct of monetary policies are of important purposes. regarding the central bank staff are concerned with various, sensitive and important tasks and activities of monetary and credit system of the country, one of the concerns of senior management and other managers at different organizational levels of the central bank is that how to use personality tests for screening candidates of their sensitive and needed jobs to increase job performance of staff and in overall help to achieve organizational goals. Researcher's observations proves that in personality characteristics of most employees of the Central Bank, there is not deep desire for job improvement or educational upgrade (MA and Ph.D.). And the provision of appropriate financial support by organization has also led staff do not make effort to achieve any improvement in working life and to update the knowledge and education.

They are also interested in job independence in the assigned job tasks and activities with delegated approach and sometimes, they neglect their duties and responsibilities. In some cases, it can be seen that despite many efforts, employees remain in a job level and exhibit no motivation for the promotion of employment and education. They are converted into reclusive and isolated staff in the organization. It seems job opportunities are not fit with their personality traits causing different behaviors and if the characteristics of occupations in the bank do not match with personality traits at the beginning and during the service, thus, according to the ambiguities and problems expressed in this research, targeted researcher seeks to answer this question that what relationship between personality characteristics and burnout is there among staff of the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran?

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Burnout and personality**

A large number of scientific research indicate that burnout is related to personality characteristics. Some researcher (Jacobs and Dodd, 2003; Rostami, Abedi and Schaufeli 2012) have found that extraversion is related with emotional exhaustion and reduced sense of personal accomplishment (Morgan and de Bruin, 2010; Zellars), on the contrary, found that extraversion is related with depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. The reasons why personality traits could be considered as moderators of burnout are:

- 1) in experiencing burnout, people respond to work settings in their own unique individual way (Maslach et al. 2001), so people may perceive specific aspects of a situation as more or less stressful and will react differently to situations, according to their personality characteristics (Vollrath, 2001; Suls and Martin, 2005);
- 2) personality plays a role in the stress experience, in the perception of threat and in the concomitant emotional and physiological reactions (Chung and Harding, 2009).

Other studies (Zellars et al. 2000), focusing on staff working with clients or patients without intellectual disabilities, highlighted that neuroticism is a positive predictor of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization; extraversion, agreeableness and openness negatively predicted depersonalization; and extraversion and openness positively predicted personal accomplishment. These results support the hypothesis that personality traits predict burnout components in different ways. More recently, Gustafsson et al. (2009), have investigated the role of personality traits in a group with burnout syndrome, compared with a

control-group, and found that emotional stability, mental alertness, confidence and power, are the predictor/precursors of burnout; Alarcon et al. (2009), in a meta-analytic study, found that many personality characteristics were consistently related to the three dimensions of burnout. Specifically, self-esteem, general self-efficacy, internal locus of control, emotional stability, extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, positive affectivity, negatively affectivity, optimism, proactive personality, and hardiness were each related to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. THE BIG FIVE MODEL Much of the recent research on personality has been based on the Five Factors-Model, which organizes personality traits under five broad dimension: emotional stability, extraversion conscientiousness, agreeableness and openness (Costa and McCrae, 1992).

Caprara, Barbaranelli, Borgogni and Perugini, (1993), and Caprara, Barbaranelli and Guido, (2001) identified a general structure composed of only five broad personality dimensions/traits, so-called “Big Five Factors”.

They are:

- 1) Energy/Extroversion, the preference for social interaction and for activity;
- 2) Agreeableness, the orientation toward compassion and caring about others, away from antagonism;
- 3) Conscientiousness, the preference for goal-oriented activity;
- 4) Emotional Stability, the ability to cope effectively with negative emotions; and
- 5) Openness, the tolerance for new ideas and new ways of doing things, experientially oriented.

The five domain are composed by two subdomain each, giving a description of the personality by ten facets: energy (dynamism and dominance facets), friendliness (cooperativeness and politeness facets), conscientiousness (scrupulousness and perseverance facets), emotional stability (emotion control and impulse control facets), and openness (openness to culture and openness to experiences facets) (Caprara, Barbaranelli and Bermudez, 2000).

**ENERGY OR EXTROVERSION** Energy is referred to Extroversion (McCrae and Costa, 1987) or Surgency (Goldberg, 1990), the ability to cope problems positively as well as a high frequency to establish social relationship (Caprara and Cervone, 2000). This dimension includes two sub-dimension, dynamism and dominance. Dynamism is referred to the energetic and dynamic behavior; this factor is decisive, ultimately, for implementation of coping strategies. Dominance refers to the ability to impose oneself, to assert the influence on other. A large amount of research has shown the negative relationship between energy and burnout (GonzalezRoma´, Schaufeli, Bakker and Lloret, 2006; see also Sonnenschein, Sorbi, van Doornen, Schaufeli and Maas, 2007); however the results about the direction of this relationship are not definitive: while the research conducted by Gustafsson et al. (2009) found that the energy or extraversion is a stable predictor of burnout, Francis, Loudon and Rutledge (2004) and Zellars et al. (2000), found a negative association between extroversion and depersonalization; Eastburg, Williamson, Gorsuch and Ridley (1994), and Francis et al. (2004), have consistently found a positive association between extroversion and personal accomplishment.

**Agreeableness or Friendliness** It is characterized by good-naturalness, cooperativeness, and trust. While this factor is more commonly called agreeableness, it can also be seen as a combination of friendliness and compliance. Persons who show high scores on this dimension

tend to describe themselves as very cooperative, friendly, altruist, generous and empathic. This dimension is defined by two sub-dimension, respectively, cooperativeness and politeness: the first is related to the ability to cooperate effectively with other, the second measures aspects of affability, trust and openness towards others. Piedmont (1993) showed that agreeableness is negatively related with emotional exhaustion and positively with personal accomplishment. Zellars et al. (2000) highlighted that higher levels of agreeableness appear to reduce the tendency to depersonalization. Bakker et al. (2006) found a negative relationship between agreeableness and emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, positive relationship with the personal accomplishment. More recently, confirming Bakker et al.'s study, Alarcon et al. (2009), found a negative relationship between agreeableness and emotional exhaustion.

**Conscientiousness** It is characterized by orderliness, responsibility, and reliability; this factor is sometimes associated with problem solving and efficacy in coping (Watson and Hubbard, 1996). People who get high score in this dimension tend to describe themselves as very thoughtful, meticulous, tide, accurate and very persevering. This dimension is composed by two subdimension, respectively, scrupulousness and perseverance: the first concerns the caution, reflexivity, orderliness, and attention to details, while the second concerns aspect that relate to the persistence and tenacity in achieving the goals and completing undertaken activities. The literature about the influence of this dimension in burn-out is not definitive: as reported by Bakker et al. (2006), Piedmont (1993), Deary, Blenkin, Agius, Endler, Zealley and Wood (1996), and Deary, Watson and Hogston (2003), there is a positive relationship between conscientiousness and personal accomplishment.

Deary et al. (2003), in a longitudinal analysis of burnout in nursing students, indicated a positive relationship between conscientiousness and depersonalization. Then, LePine, LePine and Jackson (2004) found a negative association between conscientiousness and emotional exhaustion. We expect, **Emotional Stability** It is referred to the ability to cope effectively with negative emotions. People that are emotionally stable are able to tolerate the day to day strains and stresses, are able to manage effectively their emotions, without anxiety or anger. Emotional instability is considered close to neuroticism and is described as a tendency to experience negative, distressing emotions and to possess associated behavioral and cognitive traits; the traits that characterize this dimension are fearfulness, irritability, low self-esteem, social anxiety, poor inhibition of impulses, and helplessness (Costa and McCrae, 1987).

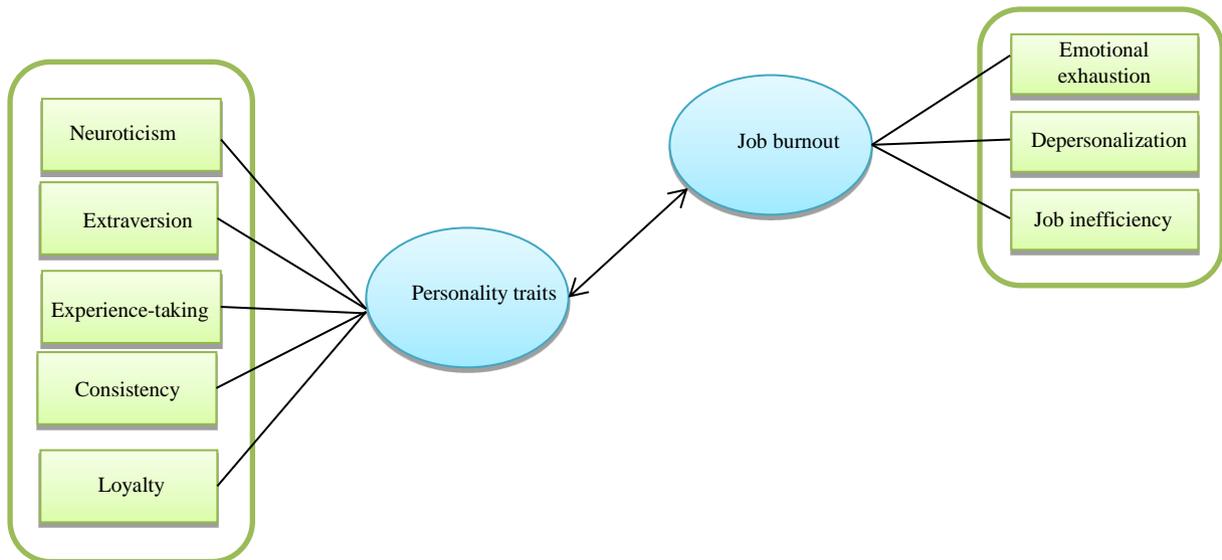
This dimension is characterized by two cluster of traits: emotion control and impulse control. Emotion control includes the control of the states of tension related to emotional experience; impulse control is related to the ability to keep control of the own behavior, even in difficulty situation, conflict and danger. As reported by Bakker et al. (2006), many studies (e.g., Deary et al., 1996; Hills and Norvell, 1991; LePine et al., 2004; Lingard, 2003; Zellars et al., 2000) on the relationship between emotional instability and burnout have typically shown that individuals who are high in emotional instability are more likely to report feelings of emotional exhaustion, to report lower levels of personal achievement, and – if health care providers – to dehumanize their patients (depersonalization). In a study of intensive-care nursing staff, Buhler and Land (2003) found that individuals who were higher in neuroticism experienced higher levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

**Openness** It refers to originality, curiosity, and ingenuity; this factor is sometimes referred to intellectualism and independence of mind. This dimension is defined by two sub-dimension: openness to culture and openness to experience. The first tends to include the

interest to be informed, and to acquire knowledge. The second is referred to the favorable disposition toward innovation, to the ability to consider everything from multiple perspectives, openness to different ways of life and different cultures. In addition, openness to experience has been related to the use of humor as a way of dealing with stress (McCrae and Costa, 1987). Smith and Williams (1992) posited that this factor may be associated with stress reduction because situations are appraised as less threatening by individuals who score high on this factor. Bakker et al. (2006) found that the relationship between openness and burnout is generally weak, such as Deary et al. (1996), which found a modest but significant positive relationship between openness and personal accomplishment. Zellars et al. (2000) also reported a positive relationship between openness and personal accomplishment and, in addition, found a negative relationship between openness and depersonalization. Other research (Morgan and de Bruin, 2010) found a positive relationship between openness and professional efficacy.

### **3. THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF RESEARCH**

Conceptual model of the research shows variables, dimensions and their relationship in an integrated forms the basis of the research. According to the theoretical framework, the conceptual model of the research has been derived from references of (Costa and McCrae, 1990) and (Maslach, 1993).



### **4. METHOD**

This research is an applied study in terms of purpose is correlational descriptive in terms of the data method. Also, the methodology is survey. The statistical population in this study is all official employees working in the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. According to the latest statistics provided by the recruiter, the number was 3679 people which

based on Cochran's formula 348 of them as sample were randomly chosen. The questionnaire used in this study is standard and consists of two types of questionnaires as follows:

• **Personality traits 5-factor questionnaire (Costa and McCrea, 1987)**

This questionnaire as shortened form of NEO-FFI is one of the valid tools in assessing personality which has been built based on factor analysis, by McCrae and Costa (1980) and its reliability and validity have been confirmed in scientific communities of different countries. It contains 5 domains (neuroticism, extraversion, Experience-taking, consistency and loyalty) and 60 questions (12 questions for each area) that despite checking the items in such a way they have necessary clarity and simplicity, were localized in the organization. Scoring the responses was done on a 5-degree Likert scale from (1) completely disagree to (5) completely agree. Because the questionnaire was standard there was no need to re-examine its validity and the reliability coefficient was only calculated with Cronbach's alpha and it was 0.734 showing an acceptable reliability for the questionnaire.

• **Job burnout Inventory (Maslach, 1993)**

Maslach Burnout Inventory is the most common tool to assess job burnout and its reliability and validity have been confirmed in the scientific community of different countries and has 22 questions. It contains emotional exhaustion (9 questions), depersonalization (5 questions) and occupational dysfunction (8 questions) that despite checking the items in such a way they have necessary clarity and simplicity, were localized in the organization. Because the questionnaire was standard there was no need to re-examine its validity and the reliability coefficient was only calculated with Cronbach's alpha and it was 0.716 showing an acceptable reliability for the questionnaire. After determining the distribution of variables using Smirnov-Kolmogorov in population level and description of data, the researcher has used inferential statistics, modeling structural equations in LISREL Software environment, Pearson's correlation factor, and regression test in SPSS Software environment for fitting test, the appropriateness of the theoretical and proposed model, calculation of correlation factors, and analysis of test effect on coefficients, respectively.

Findings: In this study, 348 employees of the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran were studied.

## **5. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Table 1 shows that among the dimensions of personality traits, loyalty dimension with an average of 3.896 has the highest average and Neuroticism with an average of 2.448 has the lowest average and is in last place. The obtained average for job burnout indicates that the ineffectiveness of job burnout has the highest average (3.467) and depersonalization has the lowest average (1.501). So, because the data are normal, Pearson correlation coefficient can be used. The main hypothesis: there is a relationship between personality characteristics and staff job burnout as well as deviant behaviors. With a significance factor  $z$  (0.65), the path between the two variables of personality characteristics and job burnout is obvious that there is a strong positive significant relation between personality traits with job burnout of the staff at the Central Bank. Also, standardized coefficient of path of personality traits and job

burnout is 0.65 and shows that the variable of personality traits determines 65% of variables of job burnout in a direct path. So at confidence level of 95% and according to the results given in Table 3 and given that the t-statistic is greater than 1.96, so it can be said the main hypothesis is accepted.

**Table 1.** Descriptive indicators of research variables.

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Sample volume</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>standard deviation</b>
<b>Neuroticism</b>	347	2/448	2/375	0/492
<b>Extroversion</b>	347	3/164	3/167	0/336
<b>Experience-taking</b>	346	3/256	3/250	0/447
Consistency	334	3/091	3/111	0/394
<b>Loyalty</b>	334	3/896	3/889	0/528
<b>Emotional exhaustion</b>	346	1/677	1/600	0/653
Depersonalization	346	1/501	1/400	0/579
<b>Occupational dysfunction</b>	346	3/467	3/500	0/875
<b>Personality traits</b>	347	3/161	3/167	0/257
<b>Job burnout</b>	346	2/215	2/167	0/352

**Table 2.** Results of test of Kolmogrov-Smirnov.

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Smirnov-kolmogorov statistics (z)</b>	<b>Significance level (sig.)</b>	<b>Result</b>
<b>Neuroticism</b>	1/274	0/078	Normal
<b>Extroversion</b>	0/756	0/616	Normal
Experience-taking	0/710	0/694	Normal
<b>Consistency</b>	0/794	0/553	Normal
Loyalty	1/195	0/115	Normal
Job burnout	1/481	0/063	Normal

**Table 3.** Results of test of main hypothesis.

Main hypothesis	Path coefficient	Statistics t	Standradized coefficient	Correlation type	T value	Result
There is a relationship between personality characteristics and job burnout of staff.	0.65	14.76	0.65	Polychoric	$t > 1/96$	Acceptance of the hypothesis

**Table 4.** Correlation of personality traits with job burnout.

Job burnout	Correlation factor	Significance level (sig.)
Neuroticism	0.491	$P < 0.001$
Extraversion	-0.533	$P < 0.001$
Experience-taking	-0.316	$P < 0.001$
Consistency	-0.430	$P < 0.001$
Loyalty	-0.404	$P < 0.001$

As shown in Table 4, there is a significant negative relationship between neuroticism and job burnout.

This finding is in agreement with the results of Babaye Khakian et al. (2015), Esmaili Givi (2013), Moharramzadeh et al. (2012), Naseh, Jalilvand and Vahdani (2012), Vahdani et al. (2012), Saatchi (1389), Magnano, Paolillo and Barano (2015), Alarcon et al. (2009), Shimizotuni et al. (2008), Kokinus (2007), and Ghorpade et al. (2007).

The results showed that the more extroversion of bank employees, the less incidence of burnout. The obtained results are in agreement with the results of Babaye Khakian et al. (2015), Babamiri et al. (2015), Esmaili Givi (2013), Vahdani et al. (2012), Magnano, Paolillo and Barano (2015), Swider (2010), Azeem (2010), Shimizotuni et al. (2008), Hoi Liao, Achiachang, and Joushi (2008), Kokinus (2007), and Ghorpade et al. (2007).

The results showed that the staff had a great passion for taking new experiences and can continue their jobs for a long time with interest and staff burnout decreases with increasing features of experience.

The results of this hypothesis are in agreement with the results of Babaye Khakian et al. (2015), Babamiri et al. (2015), Esmaeili Givi (2013), Vahdani et al. (2012), Magnano, Paolillo and Barano (2015), Swider (2010), Azeem (2010), Shimizotuni et al. (2008), and Kokinus (2007).

**Table 5.** Regression test

Dependent variable	Model	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean squares	Frequency (statistics t)	Significance level (Sig)	Coefficient of determination (R <sup>2</sup> )
Job burnout	Regression	105.871	5	21.174	36.872	P<0.001	0.404
	Remaining	105.200	272	0.574			
	Total	262.070	277				

**Table 6.** Results of regression analysis to determine the Significance of coefficients

Dependent variable	Model	Non-standard coefficients		coefficient	Statistics t	Significance level (sig.)
		B	Standard error	Beta		
Job burnout	Factor	0.00606-0	0.046		0.121-	9030/
	Neuroticism	0.236	0.054	0.243	4.393	P<0.001
	Extroversion	0.223-	0.060	0.241-	3.904-	P<0.001
	Experience-taking	0.040-	0.051	0.041-	0.786-	0.433
	Consistency	0.220	0.053	0.223	4.187	P<0.001
	Loyalty	0.117	0.058	0.113-	2.017	0.045

According to the Table 5, the significance level is lower than acceptable error (0.05) and it can be said that regression is significant and at least one dimension or more than five dimensions of personality traits have effect on job burnout variables that the extent of this impact is shown in Table 6.

As seen in Table 6, personality traits of neuroticism, extraversion, consistency and loyalty have influential role in predicting burnout of central bank's staff. The significance level for these traits is less than the accepted error (0.05) and it can be said that these traits have positive or negative significant impact on job burnout variable that according to beta values, traits of neuroticism ( $\beta = 0.243$ ) and extroversion ( $\beta = -0.241$ ) have the most positive and the most negative effects on burnout, respectively.

The results showed that bank employees have high tendency to respect others, agreement and coordination with other employees, while these people had trouble in processing their feelings and faced with difficulties in interpersonal relationships that all of these factors caused the working environment became dull underlying job burnout. These results are in agreement with the results of Magnano, Paolillo and Barano (2015), Hoi Liao, Achiachang, and Joushi (2008). Results showed that by increasing the loyalty features of bank employees, burnout are significantly reduced.

This finding is in agreement with the results of Esmaeili Givi (2013), Magnano, Paolillo and Barano (2015), Ghorpade et al. (2007), Swider (2010), and Azeem (2010). Given that this study examines the relationship between personality characteristics with job burnout and staff and in this regard many confounding variables such as organizational culture, employee education level, age, gender and marital status of employees can play different roles in this field. The research tool was a questionnaire that examined the attitudes of respondents. Thus, this research is associated with inherent limitations, because the interests of respondents affect the reliability of results and generally respondents do not have necessary cooperation and some of them are distrustful of such researches.

Periodical examinations (at least once a year) are done in occupations that the probability of the occurrence of job burnout in them are more. Assignment of a percent of the cost of healthcare to sport exercise has an important role in controlling positive or negative emotions of staff. Creating a good working environment both mentally and physically and independence of employees to decide are proposed. By taking advantage of all the power and potential intelligence of employees in performing job duties, the bed for more creativity of employees is provided, because people with high levels of experience will be nice to be able to fulfill their pledges of future work situations and with embracing new ideas tend to achieve success in their personal affairs.

Bank senior managers emphasize on leadership styles in different parts of the bank by the direct supervisor of each department and with selection of the appropriate leadership reduce the probability of deviation behaviors of staff through team work and emphasize on the organizational norms and social values.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

The results showed that neuroticism trait has the most positive impact on the incidence of burnout central bank employees. People with these characteristics tend to focus on the negative aspects of a situation and are experiencing depersonalization. Negative and uncertain

attitude of these people causes they have negative assessments of the level of their authority and this reduces the individual successes and effects of burnout gradually emerge in them and whatever this trait increases, the burnout also increases.

Based on the findings of research it is suggested that the managers of the organization reduce areas of disappointment and advent of negative emotions in the workplace that fair behavior (distributive, procedural and interactional justice) will significantly help in this matter. By creating a healthy environment and appropriate institutional space away from institutional discriminations amplify the spirit of cooperation and benefiting from the experience among staff, because when colleagues support each other, they become more confident in their own skills. And with the increase of self-efficacy, employees show more insistent on their positive behaviors. Senior managers of the Central Bank should promote an equitable distribution of rewards and merit-based staff and putting the right person in the right place, to encourage compliant staff to the harmony and replace spirit of cooperation with their competitive morale.

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