Relationship between Emotional Exhaustion and Deviant Behaviors: Moderating Role of Big Five Personality Traits

Mohsen Golparvar¹*, Safoura Dehghan², Ali Mehdad³

¹Faculty Member, Department of I/O Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Esfahan Branch (Khorasgan), Iran
²MA in I/O Psychology, Department of I/O Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Esfahan Branch (Khorasgan), Iran
³Faculty Member, Department of I/O Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Esfahan Branch (Khorasgan), Iran
*Corresponding Author: drmgolparvar@gmail.com

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Abstract. Personality traits are very important factors for research and theory and also for understanding various employees’ behavior at work settings. The aim of the current inquiry was to investigate the relationships between emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors with consider moderating effects of big five personality factors among employees of an public sector organization in Tehran, Iran. Using a simple random sampling method, a sample of two hundred and sixty five employees responded the emotional exhaustion, deviant behaviors, and big five personality traits questionnaires. The results revealed that extroversion, agreeableness and neuroticism moderate the relationship between emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors. That is, in high extroversion and agreeableness, emotional exhaustion not significantly related to deviant behaviors, while in high neuroticism, emotional exhaustion positively and significantly related to deviant behaviors. Result of the current investigation showed that agreeableness and extroversion are two protective personality traits, and neuroticism is a personality risk factor in the relationship between emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors.

Keywords: emotional exhaustion, deviant behaviors, big five personality traits.

1. INTRODUCTION

Burnout is a variable that has hugely attracted attention of scholars and researchers in recent years (Bresó et al., 2007; Alarcon, 2011; Banks et al., 2012). Generally, job burnout is a negative reaction or response to work induced by long and continuous exposure to stressful factors (Diestel and Schmidt, 2010; Fichter, 2011). The importance of this phenomenon is not just because of the poor health and well-being of people at work, but because of its relationship with employees’ behavior, attitude and health (Henkens and Leenders, 2010; Ivie and Garland, 2011). Among components of burnout, emotional exhaustion has been rated the most important in many studies (Kim et al, 2007; Mulki et al., 2006; Golparvar et al., 2008; Ahola et al, 2010; Toppinen-Tanner, 2011). This dimension of burnout involves feeling emotionally drained and indifference together with psychological and emotional avoidance of the job and assigned duties (Mulki et al., 2006; Ozler and Atalay, 2011). According to available evidence, emotional exhaustion is associated with a wide range of behaviors at work. One of the most challenging of these behaviors is deviant behavior.

2. LITERATURE REVIEWE

2.1. Emotional Exhaustion and Deviant Behaviors

Behaviors that aim to harm the organization or its members are considered deviant behaviors (Berry et al., 2007; Bowling and Gruys, 2010). This collection of behaviors include theft, resisting superior’s orders, impeding works, sabotage, absenteeism, unplanned and uninformed delays, verbal and non-verbal aggressive behaviors, ridiculing and harassing others (Chirasha and Mahapa, 2012; Cortina et al., 2013). Annually, deviant behaviors can impose huge sums on the organization, and seriously endanger efficacy, health, and performance of the organization and its employees (Deery et al., 2011). Many different categories of deviant behaviors have been presented so far. The most famous ones are the two categories of deviant behaviors toward the organization and deviant behaviors toward individuals (Farhadi et al., 2012).

As the names suggest, deviant behaviors toward organization aim to harm the organization (such as destruction of property and facilities, theft, withholding efforts) and deviant behaviors toward individuals target other people (including colleagues...
and customers) with behaviors like theft, aggression (verbal and non-verbal), ridicule, and bad treatment (Gor, 2007; Kura et al., 2013). This study focuses on deviant behaviors toward organization. So far, many antecedents have been identified and proposed for this type of behavior by researchers in different countries, including authoritarian leadership styles, abusive supervision, injustice, dissatisfaction, job stress, burnout, positive and negative emotions, personality characteristics, organizational climate and culture (Spence et al., 2009; Rashid et al., 2012). Among these factors, previous studies have repeatedly shown association of emotional exhaustion with deviant behaviors (Golparvar et al., 2008; Boersma and Lindblom, 2009; Rodel and Judge, 2009; Schaufeli et al., 2009; Thomas and Lankau, 2009).

Many theoretical approaches have also attempted to explain the underlying theoretical rationale of association of emotional exhaustion with deviant behaviors. Most of these approaches consider exhaustion a factor in experiencing negative emotions as well as in cognitive, emotional, and behavioral imbalance, and have declared these emotions and imbalances the main mechanism in the link between emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors (Golparvar et al., 2008; Darr and Johns, 2008; Swider and Zimmerman, 2010; Sudha and Khan, 2013). Beyond what has been said about the link between emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors, the central question is whether the relationship between emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors is affected by personality traits or not. More clearly; does anyone with any personality characteristics turn to deviant behaviors when emotionally exhausted?

2.2. Big Five Personality Traits, Exhaustion, and Deviant Behaviors

Research evidence indicates that people with any personality type do not turn to deviant and aggressive behaviors when exposed to emotional exhaustion (George and Jones, 2008; Zimmerman, 2008; Alarcon et al., 2009; Armon et al., 2010; Kaifi, 2013; Golparvar et al., 2013a). Among approaches to personality traits, the big five personality traits, including neuroticism (N), extraversion (E), openness to experience (O), agreeableness (A), and conscientiousness (C) have provided considerable research and explanatory opportunities for researchers interested in workplace personality characteristics (Bakker et al., 2002; Basim et al., 2013). The association of personality traits with emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors has been confirmed in many studies conducted in different regions and cultures (Brewer and Shapard, 2004; Tasa et al., 2011; Salami, 2011; Shahzad and Mahmood, 2012; Childs and Stoebcr, 2012; Gholami Dargah and Pakdel Estalkhbijari, 2012; Hsieh and Wang, 2012; Golparvar et al., 2013b; Sudha and Khan, 2013). The meta-analysis by Berry et al. (2007) showed that there is a significant relationship between the big five personality traits and emotional exhaustion and organization-based and colleague-based deviant behaviors. Darr and Johns (2008) meta-analysis also shows that stress and exhaustion are among stable antecedents of deviant behaviors such as absenteeism and resignation. The noteworthy point about role of personality in relation to emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors is the focus on basic characteristics in each of the five traits and cognitive and behavioral roles and functions of these five traits (Ilies et al., 2011; Unaldi et al., 2013). Each trait in the big five personality traits involves influential features that can prepare the grounds for their moderation in relation to emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors (Brewer and Shapard, 2004; Tasa et al., 2011; Salami, 2011; Shahzad and Mahmood, 2012; Childs and Stoebcr, 2012).

2.2.1. Neuroticism, Emotional Exhaustion, and Deviant Behaviors

In terms of basic characteristics, neuroticism is entangled with anxiety and depression (Bakker et al., 2002; Basim et al., 2013). Available evidence shows that depression, anxiety, frustration and growing concern can lead to use of ineffective emotional coping styles in stressful circumstances by disrupting behavior options of the person (Connor-Smith and Flachsbart, 2007; Carver and Connor-Smith, 2010), and in the long term, exposes people to experiences of emotional exhaustion (Zimmerman, 2008; Alarcon et al., 2009; Armon et al., 2010). Some past studies argue that highly neurotic people tend to use ineffective coping methods, are inclined to personal isolation, use avoidance instead of trying to resolve problems, blame themselves, use fantasy-based escapism to avoid facing reality, are passive and indecisive in choosing, and pessimistic in explanatory style (Penley and Tomaka, 2002; DeLongis and Holtzman, 2005; Tasa et al., 2011; Ilies et al., 2011). This means that neurotic people are often in difficulty; on the one hand they experience feelings of psychological weakness and inability, and on the other, expect the worst events and outcomes (Ilies et al., 2011). That is why highly neurotic people, when exposed to emotional exhaustion turn to deviant behaviors because of their weakness in processing personal capabilities and selection of effective behaviors.
2.2.2. Extroversion, Emotional Exhaustion and Deviant Behaviors

Extroversion as the second personality trait is inextricably linked with experience of joy and energy, and spirit of solidarity with the environment, especially socialization with other people (Bakker et al., 2002; Golparvar and Javadian, 2012; Basim et al., 2013). Each of the above mentioned attributes somehow increase the ability to cope with emotional exhaustion in extrovert people (DeLongis and Holtzman, 2005; Roesch et al, 2006; Carver and Connor-Smith, 2010). Some evidence shows that extroverts increase their basic energy level when exposed to stress by attracting other people’s support (owing to their extensive social relationships), and succeed in fighting pressure and exhaustion through effective and useful coping strategies (Bakker et al., 2002; Roesch et al., 2006; Darr and Johns, 2008). In other words, extroverts can easily manage their emotional exhaustion through joyful relationship with others (Alarcon et al., 2009; Gholami Dargah and Pakdel Estalkhbijari, 2012). Hence, it is less likely that they should turn to deviant behaviors when exposed to emotional exhaustion.

2.2.3. Openness to Experience, Emotional Exhaustion and Deviant Behaviors

Among the big five personality traits, openness to experience include being imaginative, cultured, curious, original, broad minded, intelligent, having a need for variety, aesthetic sensitivity, and unconventional values (Golparvar and Javadian, 2012). The relationship between openness to experience and emotional exhaustion is not clear in previous studies. Many of past studies have not reported a significant relationship between emotional exhaustion and openness to experience, or else have reported a very poor relationship between the two (Salami, 2011; Shahzad and Mahmood, 2012; Childs and Stoebier, 2012; Gholami Dargah and Pakdel Estalkhbijari, 2012; Hsieh and Wang, 2012; Unaldi et al, 2013). Poor relationship or lack of relationship has made drawing conclusion about moderating effect of openness to experience in relation to emotional exhaustion with deviant behaviors ambiguous and difficult. Accordingly, it is very likely that openness to experience does not have a moderating role in the relationship between emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors.

2.2.4. Agreeableness, Emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors

The fourth trait, that is agreeableness, can play a serious role in the relationship between emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors. Altruism, nurturance, caring as opposed to hostility, indifference to others, other-centeredness, and compliance with others characterize agreeableness (Bakker et al, 2002; Golparvar and Javadian, 2012; Hsieh and Wang, 2012). In the first place, agreeableness is a trait in using adaptive and flexible coping strategies, and a preventive factor in limiting relationships with others (Penley and Tomaka, 2002; Kim et al., 2007; Ilies et al., 2011; Hsieh and Wang, 2012). Also, agreeable people have the ability to use humor, and consider new experiences as a factor for personal growth in the context of new challenges (Shahzad and Mahmood, 2012; Swider and Zimmerman, 2010; Farhadi et al., 2012). Hence, agreeableness can moderate the relationship between emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors by emphasizing tendency to use effective and flexible coping styles.

2.2.5. Conscientiousness, Emotional Exhaustion and Deviant Behaviors

Finally, conscientiousness is proposed as the last personality trait. Perfectionism, goal-orientation, high motivation for achievement, discipline and plan-orientation for performing duties and responsibilities, and persistent effort are attributes of highly responsible people (Tasa et al, 2011; Hsieh and Wang, 2012; Unaldi et al, 2013). Based on these attributes, in the first place, it is highly likely that conscientious people should avoid accepting new responsibilities without proper planning, and second, dutiful people have gained their pride and excellence through serious effort and resolve in problems they have to face, so they are highly efficient (Bakker et al, 2002; DeLongis and Holtzman, 2005; Roesch et al, 2006; Darr and Johns, 2008; Carver and Connor-Smith, 2010). That is why, when conscientious people are encountered to emotional exhaustion, instead of turning to ineffective behaviors like deviant behaviors, will adapt effective and problem-oriented strategy to cope with exhaustion (Shahzad and Mahmood, 2012; Swider and Zimmerman, 2010).

2.3. Research Theoretical Implications

The moderating role of big five personality traits in relation to emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors has serious and important implications and applications. Thus, in this study, attempts have been made to investigate the roles of neuroticism,
extroversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness in emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors in an Iranian sample. The importance of this study is firstly in identifying who and with what personality trait turns to deviant behaviors when exposed to emotional exhaustion (or who with what personality trait does not turn to deviant behaviors when exposed to emotional exhaustion). Finding answers to these questions will provide the possibility of presenting strategies for recruitment, placement, and job rotation of those with personality traits that make them turn to (or not turn to) deviant behaviors, when exposed to emotional exhaustion. Given all the above, study conceptual model and research hypotheses are presented as follows.

2.4. Research Conceptual Model

![Fig. 1: Research Conceptual and Theoretical Model]

3. HYPOTHESIS

H1: The big five personality traits (neuroticism, extroversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness) are associated with emotional exhaustion.

H2: The big five personality traits (neuroticism, extroversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness) are associated with deviant behaviors.

H3: Emotional exhaustion is positively associated with deviant behaviors.

H4: The big five personality traits (neuroticism, extroversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness) moderate emotional exhaustion association with deviant behaviors, so that, when any of the personality traits is at a high level, compared to when they are at a low level, the relationship between emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors is different.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Procedure and Participants

The study employed a co-relational design. Co-relational design is suitable to study the relationship between predictors, moderators and criterion variables. This investigation was conducted in a public sector organization in Tehran, Iran. Among two hundred and eighty distributed questionnaires, two hundred and sixty five participants completed the questionnaires (The response rate was 94.64%). This response rate is very much acceptable in behavioral science researches and in hierarchical moderated regression analysis (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970; Aiken and West, 1991). Of valid responses, the 83.8% of the participants were males and 8.3% were females. 64.2% of sample was married, and with regard to the educational level, 60.4% had secondary studies or diploma, and the others had university studies. The mean age of the respondents was 33.67 (SD = 8.24), and the mean tenure of them was 9.05 years (SD = 6.91).

4.2. Measures

4.2.1. Big-Five Factor Markers

The Goldberg’s “IPIP” Big-Five factor markers (Goldberg, 1992) were employed to assess the five factors of personality. The questionnaire is comprised fifty items and has five subscales (neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, each of subscales with 10 items). Each item was answered via a five-point Likert scale (1= very inaccurate, 5= very accurate). This questionnaire has suitable validity and reliability in previous studies. For instance, Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for subscales of this questionnaire, were found to be between “0.72 to 0.9” (Gow et al, 2004), and between “0.82 to 0.9” (Garcia et al, 2004). Iranian version of the questionnaire was carried out and validated by Golparvar et al (2013a). In an Iranian sample, Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were found to be 0.75 for neuroticism, 0.83 for extraversion, 0.7 for openness to experience, 0.74 for agreeableness and 0.72 for conscientiousness.
In current investigation, furthermore of exploratory factor analysis (EFA, KMO= 0.94, Bartlett’s test= 4589.45, p<0.001), we conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with AMOS-16. As a result, goodness of fit index was found as χ²=2.62, df=3, χ²/df=0.87, RMSEA=0.000, CFI=1, GFI=0.99, RMR=0.006, IFI=1, NFI= 0.99, and TLI=1. These results revealed that the questionnaire fitted the data. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient in current research was 0.79 for neuroticism, 0.71 for extraversion, 0.84 for openness to experiences, 0.76 for agreeableness, and 0.7 for conscientiousness.

4.2.2. Emotional Exhaustion

Emotional exhaustion subscale was taken from Maslach Burnout Inventory (cf, Mulki et al, 2006) to assess the level of emotional exhaustion of participants. The questionnaire consists of nine items, and questionnaire was carried out and validated in Iranian workplace by Golpatvar et al (2008). Items were rated from 1 (never) to 7 (always). Previous researches in Iran have supported the reliability and validity of this questionnaire (Golparvar et al, 2008 and 2013). For instance, construct validity of the questionnaire was confirmed in Iranian work setting in previous studies, and the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient in two previous studies was found to be 0.91 and 0.93 (Golparvar et al, 2008 and 2013). In order to reveal the construct validity of the scale, we conducted one factor confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). As a result, goodness of fit index was found as χ²=45.59, df=19, χ²/df=2.39, RMSEA=0.07, CFI=0.97, GFI=0.96, IFI=0.97, NFI= 0.95, and TLI=0.95. These results revealed that the questionnaire fitted the data. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient in current study was 0.93.

4.2.3. Deviant Behaviors

Deviant behaviors of participants were assessed with eight items self-reported questionnaire taken from Bennett and Robinson (2000). Each item was responded via a seven-point Likert scale (1= never, 7= always). This questionnaire also was conducted and validated in Iranian workplace by Golpatvar et al (2008). Construct validity of the questionnaire was confirmed in Iranian workplace in previous studies, and the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient in two previous studies was found to be 0.85 and 0.92 (Golparvar et al, 2008 and 2013b). In order to reveal the construct validity of the questionnaire, we conducted one factor confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). As a result, goodness of fit index was found as χ²=24.57, df=19, χ²/df=1.29, RMSEA=0.03, GFI=0.98, RMR=0.08, GFI=0.98, IFI= 0.98, NFI= 0.93, and TLI=0.97. These results revealed that the questionnaire fitted the data. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient in current study was 0.89.

5. RESULTS

Data were analyzed with using SPSS-18. A three-stage hierarchical moderated regression analysis was used to test the forth current research hypothesis (H4), about the moderating effects of big five personality traits in the relationship between emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors. In Model 1, emotional exhaustion was entered as predictor of deviant behaviors. In Model 2, the big five personality traits were entered as predictors of deviant behaviors. In Model 3, the interaction between emotional exhaustion and big five personality traits was entered. According to Aiken and West’s (1991) suggestions for moderated hierarchical regression analysis with interaction terms, all the variables centralized and then entered in the regression equation. The forth hypothesis (H4) were tested by examining the significance of the interaction terms and the F-ratio associated with the variations in ΔR² of the equations in the Model 3. Means, standard deviations and correlation matrix are presented in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>deviant behaviors</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emotional exhaustion</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>0.51**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extraversion</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>-0.27**</td>
<td>-0.26**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neuroticism</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.27**</td>
<td>0.42**</td>
<td>-0.41**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conscientiousness</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>-0.43**</td>
<td>-0.34**</td>
<td>0.37**</td>
<td>-0.52**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agreeableness</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>-0.28**</td>
<td>-0.24**</td>
<td>0.26**</td>
<td>-0.44**</td>
<td>0.52**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| openness to experience | 3.58| 0.55| -0.05 | -0.11| 0.34**| -0.16*| 0.27**| 0.23*| (0.84)

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01, Cronbach’s alpha coefficient are presented on the diagonal.

As shown in Table 1, deviant behaviors related positively to emotional exhaustion (r =0.51, p<0.01) and neuroticism (r =0.27, p<0.01), and negatively related to extroversion (r = -0.59, p<0.01), to
conscientiousness \((r= -0.34, \ p<0.01)\) and to agreeableness \((r= -0.29, \ p<0.01)\). Emotional exhaustion related positively to neuroticism \((r= 0.42, \ p<0.01)\), and related negatively to extroversion \((r= -0.26, \ p<0.01)\), to conscientiousness \((r= -0.34, \ p<0.01)\) and to agreeableness \((r= -0.24, \ p<0.01)\). Openness to experience has not significant relationship with deviant behaviors and emotional exhaustion. The results presented in Table 1, supported H1, H2, and H3 (Except the relationships between openness to experience with deviant behaviors and emotional exhaustion). Moderated hierarchical regression analysis was used to test the moderating effect of big five personality traits in the relationships between emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors. Table 2 presents the result of the hierarchical moderated regression analysis.

### Table 2: Hierarchical moderated regression analysis of big five personality traits, emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Deviant behavior</th>
<th>Model1</th>
<th>Model2</th>
<th>Model3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deviant behavior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Exhaustion</td>
<td>0.51**</td>
<td>0.42**</td>
<td>0.46**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extroversion</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.12*</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neuroticism</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conscientiousness</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.3**</td>
<td>-0.31**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agreeableness</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>openness to experience</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Exhaustion × extroversion</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.12*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Exhaustion × neuroticism</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.17*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Exhaustion × conscientiousness</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Exhaustion × agreeableness</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.11*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Exhaustion × openness to experience</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ R^2 = 0.257** \]
\[ ΔR^2 = 0.045 \]
\[ F = 91.13** \]
\[ ΔF = 3.76** \]

Note: \(* p<0.05\); **p<0.01, Model1 = main effects of emotional exhaustion, Model2 = main effect of big five personality traits, and Model3 = interactive effects of emotional exhaustion and big five personality traits.

As shown in Table 2, emotional exhaustion \((β=0.51, 0.42 \text{ and } 0.46 \text{ for model 1 to 3, } p<0.01)\) related significantly to deviant behaviors. In model 2 (Table 2), among the big five personality traits, conscientiousness \((β= -0.3, p<0.01)\), and extroversion \((β= -0.12, p<0.05)\) related significantly to deviant behaviors. In model 3, our results (Table 2) revealed that extroversion \((β= -0.12, p<0.05)\), neuroticism \((β= -0.17, p<0.05)\), and agreeableness \((β= -0.11, p<0.05)\) has been moderate emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors relationship \((ΔR^2 = 0.045, ΔF = 3.76, \text{ and } p<0.01)\). To detecting the form of the interactions, the equation at the high and low level of extroversion, neuroticism, and agreeableness (one standard deviation above the mean or +1SD, and one standard deviation below the mean or –1SD) was computed. Figure 2, 3, and 4 presents the results of simple slope analysis.

![Fig. 2: Simple slopes of emotional exhaustion on deviant behaviors for high and low extroversion](imageURL)
As it can be seen in figure 2, in low extroversion group ($\beta=0.38$, $R^2=0.131$, n.s), rather than high extroversion group ($\beta=0.27$, $R^2=0.075$, n.s), there is a stronger relationship between emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors.

![Emotional Exhaustion](image1)

**Fig. 3:** Simple slopes of emotional exhaustion on deviant behaviors for high and low neuroticism

As it can be seen in figure 3, in high neuroticism group ($\beta=0.43$, $R^2=0.186$, $p<0.01$) rather than low neuroticism group ($\beta=0.378$, $R^2=0.143$, n.s), there is strongest a relationship between emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors.

![Emotional Exhaustion](image2)

**Fig. 4:** Simple slopes of emotional exhaustion on deviant behaviors for high and low Agreeableness

As shown in figure 4, in low agreeableness group ($\beta=0.71$, $R^2=0.51$, $p<0.001$), rather than high agreeableness group ($\beta=0.33$, $R^2=0.112$, $p<.05$), there is a stronger relationship between emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors.

6. DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to determine personality risk and protective factors in the relationship between emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors. Results showed that other than openness to experience which had insignificant relationship with emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors, the remaining personality traits had significant relationships with emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors. The positive and simple correlation between neuroticism and emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors, and negative correlations of extroversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness with emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors correspond with results of previous studies like meta-analysis by Berry et al. (2007) and meta-analysis by Darr and Jones (2008). Also, correlations found between personality traits and emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors are in line with explanations proposed for each of the big five personality traits (Bakker et al., 2002; George and Jones, 2008; Zimmerman, 2008; Alarcon et al., 2009; Armon et al., 2010; Tasa et al., 2011; Salami, 2011; Shahzad and Mahmood, 2012; Childs and Stoeber, 2012; Golparvar and Javadian, 2012; Kaifi, 2013; Golparvar et al., 2013a; Basim et al., 2013).
Results firstly show that three personality traits of conscientiousness, extraversion, and agreeableness are in conflict with experience of emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors. Conversely, neuroticism has the tendency to act in line with emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors. Every human personality trait causes many styles of explanation and interpretation, coping and behavioral patterns (Gholami Dargah and Pakdel Estalkhbijari, 2012; Hsieh and Wang, 2012; Sudha and Khan, 2013). Hence, when a person is exposed to experiences that pressure them, their decision making and reactions are based on their personal characteristics (Ilies et al., 2011; Unaldi et al., 2013). For instance, when a highly neurotic person is exposed to signs of emotional exhaustion, instead of adapting efficient decisions to manage exhaustion, they respond emotionally with growing worry and anxiety, making the exhaustion problem lingers even more and they advance to breaking down and emotional drain in their job, which is the very emotional exhaustion (Zimmerman, 2008; Alarcon et al., 2009; Armon et al., 2010).

Conversely, when a person has extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness traits, instead of emotional coping and concern, they are more likely to rely on supportive focused behavior patterns (to receive help from associates and social facilities) and on problem-focused, and will utilize all their effort to manage emotional exhaustion even more properly (Penley and Tomaka, 2002; DeLongis and Holtzman, 2005; Connor-Smith and Flachsbart, 2007; Carver and Connor-Smith, 2010; Tasa et al., 2011; Ilies et al., 2011). In the area of insignificant relationship between openness to experience and emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors, results obtained in this study are in line with findings of other researchers. According to the findings of this and previous studies, it can be argued that most probably openness to experience does not play much of a role in the workplace in emotional experiences like emotional exhaustion and behavioral experiences like deviant behaviors (Salami, 2011; Shahzad and Mahmood, 2012; Childs and Stoeber, 2012; Gholami Dargah and Pakdel Estalkhbijari, 2012; Hsieh and Wang, 2012; Unaldi et al., 2013).

The second part of findings of present study focused on the moderating role of the big five personality traits in the relationship between emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors. Results of this section showed that high agreeableness and extraversion are two characteristics that weaken the bond between emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors. Conversely, high neuroticism, as a risk factor, strengthens relationship between emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors. In explaining moderating roles of agreeableness and extraversion in the relationship between emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors, the emphasis on activation of behavioral and coping patterns through agreeableness and extraversion is extraordinarily important (Golparvar and Javadian, 2012; Hsieh and Wang, 2012). Extroversion as a personality trait seriously causes experience of joy and energy through extensive social relationships (Bakker et al., 2002; Golparvar and Javadian, 2012; Basim et al., 2013). Each of these traits enhances the ability to cope with emotional exhaustion for the extrovert people. Research evidence shows that, to cope with stress, extroverts turn to attracting other people’s support.

It can therefore be argued that extroverts are highly likely to use support-oriented social coping tendencies, and if exposed to isolation and limits in their relationships, they face difficulty in coping with exhaustion. Alongside extraversion, agreeableness is a personality trait that uses adaptive and flexible coping strategies, as well as establishing adaptive relationships with others (Penley and Tomaka, 2002; Kim et al., 2007; Ilies et al., 2011; Hsieh and Wang, 2012). In addition, agreeable people are highly humorous, and consider experience of pressure and stress in line with personal growth. Hence, high agreeableness, with emphasis on tendency to use effective and flexible coping methods when experiencing emotional exhaustion can cause activation of capacity for humor, flexible coping, and receiving support of others, and thus prevent exhaustion leading to deviant behaviors. It can be seen that coping behavior of agreeable people can be flexibility-based and support-based social coping.

Neuroticism and explanation of its moderating role in relation to emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors has been explained more than other personality traits. Neuroticism, which is based on emotional instability, seriously predisposes people to depression, anxiety, frustration, and concern, and imposes ineffective and emotional behavior options on people (Penley and Tomaka, 2002; DeLongis and Holtzman, 2005; Tasa et al., 2011; Ilies et al., 2011). Neurotic people are indecisive in selection and have negative interpretation of themselves in the events around them (Golparvar and Javadian, 2012). In difficult situations, neurotic people often feel psychological weakness and inability, and expect the worst in any situation (Bakker et al., 2002; Basim et al., 2013). So, quite naturally, when they are exposed to emotional exhaustion, due to the weakness in processing personal capabilities and effective behavior options, they choose deviant behavior solution. In fact, when exposed to emotional exhaustion, highly neurotic people seriously become predisposed to committing deviant behaviors due to imbalances in personality imposed on them by their...
neuroticism, which is a form of emotional imbalance imposition due to exposure to pressures at work, in a strong alignment between emotional exhaustion and intensifying personality characteristics.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The current investigation has extended our understanding of the effect of big five personality traits on the relationship between emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors. Result of the present study showed that agreeableness and extroversion are two protective personality traits, and neuroticism is a personality risk factor in the bond between emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors. The share of this study, in relation to previous studies in human body of knowledge was to show role of three personality characteristics of agreeableness, extroversion, and neuroticism in the relationship between emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors. The applied recommendation of this study is that in the process of recruiting people for jobs that rapidly advance people toward emotional exhaustion, organizations should evaluate high agreeableness and extroversion against low neuroticism, and recruit people for these jobs with high levels of agreeableness and extroversion as much as possible. The next applied recommendation is that people with high levels of neuroticism often do not have the ability to cope with emotional exhaustion; hence, it is necessary for these people to participate in training courses for effective coping skills.

In generalization and interpretation of results, study limitations should be considered. The first limitation was that the study subjects were employees of a public organization. Thus generalization of results to other organizations is not logical until research is repeated for that organization. Next limitation is that results obtained were based on correlation, thus, cause and effect interpretation of results is not rational. The final limitation was that deviant behaviors and other study variables were assessed on self-report basis. This measurement method can lead to common variance and inflate the results. Thus, in future studies, it is necessary that other-report (like supervisors, spouses, and colleagues) also be used to assess deviant behaviors, personality traits, and even emotional exhaustion.

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Golparvar et al.
Relationship between Emotional Exhaustion and Deviant Behaviors: ¬Moderating Role of Big Five Personality Traits


Mohsen Golparvar: Mohsen Golparvar holds a Ph.D. in Psychology and he is a Faculty Member of Department of I/O Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Esfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Iran. His areas of interest include positive and negative behaviors, along with justice and ethics at workplaces.

Safoura Dehghan: She is M.A graduated in Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Department of I/O Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Esfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Esfahan, Iran in 2013.

Ali Mehdad: Ali Mehdad holds a Ph.D. in Industrial and Organizational Psychology and he is a Faculty Member of Department of I/O Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Esfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Iran. His areas of interest among other subjects include job and professional attitudes, organizational citizenship behaviors and counterproductive behaviors at workplaces.