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Investigating the relationship between social capital and psychological empowerment of employees of the Sports and Youth Department of Khorasan Razavi by considering the moderating role of professional ethics

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Abstract: This study investigates the relationship between social capital and psychological empowerment of employees, by considering the moderating role of professional ethics. In terms of purpose, this is an applied study and in terms of methodology, this is considered as descriptive study. The study population consists of 240 employees of the Sports and Youth Department of Khorasan Razavi province and 150 subjects were selected using random sampling method and Cochran formula. Data were collected using three standard questionnaires, including: social capital questionnaire (Napahit and Kushal, 1998), psychological empowerment (Spreitzer and Mishra, 1992) and professional ethics questionnaire (Gregory C. Petty 1990). The content validity of the each of the questionnaires was confirmed based on the opinions of professors and experts and their reliability was measured using Cronbach's alpha coefficient and values 0.911, 0.832 and 0.880 were obtained. Data analysis by using structural equation modeling and AMOS software shows that social capital and its aspects have a significant impact on psychological empowerment of employees. Moreover, professional ethics has a moderating role in the relationship between variables of social capital and psychological empowerment of employees.

Keywords: Social capital, psychological empowerment, professional ethics.

I. Introduction

Human resource is the most important element in the survival and success of any organization. In today's organizations that permanent transformation and influence by the environment has been accepted as an unavoidable necessity, possessing capable human capital is considered as a fundamental advantage (Barati, Tabiie and Sharif Zadeh, 2014, p. 248). Management scholars believe that change and transformation in the human resource is the root of all organizational successes and employee empowerment can help managers in this area. Empowerment is a modern approach for the survival of leading organizations in the competitive environment (Wood & Desmond, 2004). In addition to economic, cultural and human capital, today another capital is presented that is called social capital. This concept refers to the relationship between members of a network as a valuable resource that leads to the realization of members' goals through creating norms and mutual trust (Tanhaie and Hazrat, 2009, p. 30). The base of employee empowerment is increasing his responsibility to create professional ethics in the organization and to improve the quality of his life. Ethics is very important in human life; it regulates the relationship between human beings and their behaviors and as a kind of internal system, it guarantees those practices which comply with human values. The more a society approaches it, the greater it will be compared to other societies. In such a society, people prefer the benefit of the society over their personal benefit and they see their own benefit within the benefit of the society (Momeni, 2015, p. 17). From the beginning of the creation of mankind, he has felt his need for ethics. Heavenly religions have all sought growth and development of moralities. Each career has a complicated set of knowledge, standards and ethics associated with its professional mission and needs public trust. Professional ethics is a branch of ethics which investigates moral duties and ethical issues of a career and seeks to provide methods and procedures to determine the duties of individuals and professional groups (Zare and Afshar, 2014).

Today, the importance of human resource is considerably higher than new technologies and financial and material resources. Efficient, competent and knowledgeable human resource has an undeniable role in the realization of organizational goals. Human resource is considered as the most important and the most valuable asset of an organization and empowered human resources create powerful organizations. A powerful organization is an environment in which employees cooperate in different groups to perform their activities. Today, there are two approaches toward employee empowerment; the first approach or the mechanical approach says that empowerment is delegation of decision-making power to lower-level of an organization. According to the second

approach or the organic approach, empowerment is a multi-faceted concept that considers employees' perceptions of their role in job and in the organization in order to define processes for increasing the intrinsic motivation of employees in performing their duties. Employees will feel empowered, when organization provides necessary grounds and conditions for them. Empowering is not an individual process; but it is the process of interaction between individuals and people can increase each other's knowledge and skills through collective performance. Therefore, social capital can provide a suitable ground to empower people in the organization (Baroot Koob and Sharifabadi, 2014).

Social capital contains different entities, all of which are common in two elements; meaning that all of them possess an aspect of social structure and facilitate a certain reaction of actors within this structure. Therefore, social capital has a crucial role in the empowerment of employees of an organization. The basis of empowerment is increasing employees' responsibilities in order to create professional ethics and to promote their position. Induction of this sense to employees promotes their confidence and motivates them. Employee empowerment and ethics-orientation in interaction with clients are among the major elements which create the existential philosophy of organizations and their observance by organizations -within the framework of social identity theory- may enhance organizational commitment, increases satisfaction of external stakeholder and legitimizes the organization, as well. In other words, having an excellent and pioneer organization requires empowered workforce with professional ethical standards (Paktinat and Fathizadeh, 2008). Several studies have investigated the relationship between social capital and psychological empowerment. However, the mediating role of professional ethics has rarely been studied, in this regard. Thus, the main research question is that whether the professional ethics plays a role in the relationship between social capital and psychological empowerment or not?

II. Research literature

Social Capital: In the last few decades, discussion and research on social capital has attracted the attention of many researchers in social, political and economic areas. Contemplation on social capital has a long history; however, the term was raised in the early twentieth century. Based on the social capital theory, high levels of capital such as trust, mutual relationship and sociability at work promote teamwork (Read & Laschinger, 2015). The basic idea of so-called social capital -considering social interactions as valuable and positive- can be traced back to the views of classical sociology scholars. Adam Smith has emphasized on the importance of network density and trade associations as the main channels for transmission of reputation and reliability -even in line with personal interests- and has somehow approved the role of social ties (Anderiani, 2013). Social capital theory is new conceptual innovation that has attracted a lot of attention in recent years. As in the 1990s, we have witnessed rapid expansion of this concept through college communities. This concept was first used in 1916 by Hanifan an employee of Virginia Department of Education. According to Hanifan, social capital includes assets such as understanding, comradeship & friendship and sympathy which flow throughout daily life (Sharifan Sani, 2001, p. 67). His theory was silent for half a century; finally in 1961, Jacobs in his book called "The Death and Life of Great American Cities" raised the discussion of social capital and discussed its role in maintaining cleanliness and in dealing with street crime in urban and suburbs areas (Alwani and Naghavi, 2002, p. 16). Social capital is a combination of intangible resources and social ties and it is accessible only through these communications and gaining skills and social guidance (Barown, 2009). Social capital includes useful material or spiritual resources available to actors that are achieved through their social relationships (Coleman, 1998, p. 465) and allow an individual or group to enjoy a stable network of more or less institutionalized mutual acquaintances and understandings (Field, 2007, p. 31).

Table1. Social capital in the views of experts

Benefits	Analysis Level	Goals	Definition	Theorist
Private (individual and team)	People in class competitions	Providing economic capital	Resources that provide access to team goods	Bourdieu
Public and private (personal and team)	People in family and social areas	Providing human capital	They all have two common characteristics; first, they all possess an aspect of social structure and second, they facilitate a certain reaction of actors within this structure.	Coleman
Public	National and international areas	Providing functioning democracy and economic development	The ability of people to collaborate and cooperate with each other within groups and organizations for common goals.	Fukuyama and Putnam
Private (personal)	People in social networks and structures	Supplying resources which lie in relationships and maintaining interests	Access and use of resources which lie in social networks	Lin

The social capital theories can be categorized into four major perspectives; 1. Communitarianism perspective: according to which local organizations such as clubs, organizations and civic groups are the contexts for creation of social capital. 2. The network perspective: it focuses on the importance of horizontal and vertical relationships between people and internal and external relationships between institutions and social groups. 3. Institutional perspective: According to this perspective, the vitality of social networks and civil society largely results from political, legal and institutional atmosphere within a society. 4. Synergistic perspective: it tries to integrate robust works arising from network and institutional perspectives (Akbari, 2004, p. 19). Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) describe social capital as total available and accessible actual and potential resources and those resulting from the network of relationships of a person or a social unit which is obtained from a set of cognitive, communicative and structural elements. The structural aspect refers to the overall pattern of contacts between people, meaning that to whom and how does the person access? In fact, this aspect represents the general pattern of communication observed in all organizations. The cognitive aspect is related to the common understanding or vision of employees in a social network. The communicative aspect describes the type of personal relationships that people establish because of their interactions and it is related to the nature of solidarity between people in the organization (Moghimi and Ramezan, 2011).

Psychological empowerment: A major prerequisite for any organization to achieve its goals is presence of employees who in addition to their special abilities and skills have commitment towards their job and their organizations and feel satisfied by performing their duties. So, managers can empower human resources in order to increase their abilities, to motivate them and this increases the quantity and quality of production and this path will enhance the efficiency of organizations, employees, customers and the entire society (Narimousaie, 2012, p. 4). The concept of empowerment was first introduced in the 80s. Some believe that empowerment is giving power to employees. Others reject this idea and believe that since employees are assets of knowledge and motivation, so, they have themselves enough power to do great job and accordingly, they define empowerment as providing grounds to release this potential power (Blanchard, Carlos and Randolph, 1999, p. 69). Employee empowerment means enabling employees to develop all of their abilities and knowledge and to utilize them in order to achieve their objectives (Keshavarzi *et al.*, 2012, p. 335). In 1997, Quinn and Spreitzer offered two perspectives of empowerment. Most of management professionals have a mechanical perspective towards empowerment. According to this view, empowerment means delegating authority to subordinates. Empowerment is a process by which the senior management develops a clear vision and specifies certain plans and tasks to achieve it (Abdulahi and Nave Ebrahim, 2006, p. 49). However, in the organic approach, empowerment shouldn't necessarily be performed by managers; but it is the attitudes and perceptions of employees about their role in their job and their organization. Yet, managers can provide necessary context and opportunities in order to empower employees. Empowerment can be considered as a communicative, motivational and cognitive structure. From communicative perspective, empowerment is a process through which a leader or manager tries to share his power among his subordinates (Canger & Kanungo, 1988). Empowerment is a tool which lets employees to freely do what they think is "the best option" without fear of being vetoed by their chiefs (Korakonda, Weston & Rajkumar, 1999). However, from the motivational perspective, empowerment enables employees to understand their duties well before someone tells them what to do (Savery & Luks, 2001). However, the cognitive perspective considers empowerment as a multi-dimensional concept and defines it as the process of increasing internal motivation to perform a specific task. When managers develop aspects of cognitive empowerment in others, not only they will perform their tasks, but they will think about themselves differently, too (Whetten and Cameron, 2002, p. 24). Psychological empowerment was first introduced by Thomas & Velthouse (1990). According to them, psychological empowerment includes 4 aspects of: sense of competence, impact, significance and choice. Based on a research by Mishra (1992), Whetten and Cameron (1998) added the aspect of trust to psychological empowerment.

Professional Ethics: Ethos forms the root of ethikos (ἠθικός), meaning "moral, showing moral character" and ethics is the science of study and evaluation of moods and human behavior (Salajegheh and Soghra., 2015, p. 104). Ethics has an important and decisive role in performances, behaviors, decisions, choices and in communications. So, today, it has become one of the major discussions in the field of management (Beikzadeh *et al.*, 2012, p. 57). Ethics is very important in human life. It regulates relationship between human beings and their behaviors and as an internal system, it guarantees performances complying with human values without the requiring any external lever. The more a society approaches it, the greater it will be compared to other societies. In such a society, people prefer the benefit of the society over their personal benefit and they see their own benefit within the benefit of the society (Momeni, 2015, p. 17). Professional ethics refers to a set of rules that a person must adhere to voluntarily and based on the voice of conscience and his nature, without external obligation or legal penalties in the case of violation (Moberg & Seabright, 2000).

Professional ethics is in fact a structural and functional system which attempts to identify potential contradictions and provides suitable solutions to fix those contradictions (Campbell & Thiessen, 2010). Professional ethics is very important in human social life. Any improvement in professional ethics can improve its consequences – including social responsibility and individual accountability- so that some scholars believe that professional ethics

is the prerequisite of organizational management and management is meaningless without observing values and moral issues. Ethics has a significant impact on human activity and it is essential for proper performance, commitment and responsibility (Momeni, 2015, p. 18). Characteristics of a person with professional ethics can be described as follows: He is accountable and accepts the responsibility of his decisions; he is an exemplar for others; he is sensitive and righteous, he cares for honesty and reputation in his job; tries to fulfill his duties and when he undertakes a responsibility, he does the job very sincerely (Ghasemzadeh *et al.*, 2014, p. 2). Professional ethics is an issue that has received considerable attention in recent years in our country. Many books and articles have been compiled in this area and this indicates the increasing importance of this issue in different careers. Most professionals are seeking to develop their professional code of ethics and have realized the necessity and importance of this issue. Gregory C. Petty's model has been used in several studies to measure professional ethics (1990). This model measures four aspects of professional ethics; including attachment to job, perseverance and diligence, humane relations at work and participation in the job.

III. Previous Researches

Considering library studies conducted on this subject, no study has so far directly investigated the relationship between these three variables. In the following paragraphs, we will review some studies in which these variables have been studied. The impact of social capital on empowerment enhances through trust-building and participation of group members (Nega *et al.*, 2009). Social capital is regarded as a source that individuals, groups and communities utilize to achieve optimal results. Also, environmental changes and increasing global competition have directed the attention of managers toward the issue of employee empowerment; because by possessing empowered, committed, skilled and motivated employees, organizations can better adapt to changes and compete. Empowerment is the healthiest way of sharing power among employees (Paktinat and Fathizadeh, 2008, p. 35). Studies show that interaction of people, their communications and social networks affect their empowerment process. Moradi, Sharif and Jolodar (2015) investigated the relationship between social capital and psychological empowerment of employees of Ardabil Department of Education. In this study, psychological empowerment and social capital questionnaires were used to assess the variables. Turabi, Kanjin and Rezaei (2014) in a study entitled "investigating the relationship between social capital and psychological empowerment of employees of Yazd province Police Department" showed that there is a significant relationship between social capital aspects and psychological empowerment. Vise, Pirzadian and Namdar Jovimi (2014) investigated the relationship between social capital and psychological empowerment of employees of Telecommunication Company of Ilam. Results showed that there is a quite poor relationship between social capital and psychological empowerment. Taheri, Nikzad and Raufi (2012) in a study entitled "investigating the impact of social capital on empowerment of employees of Ports and Maritime Organization of Iran" investigated the relationship between social capital components, including: social trust, social cohesion and social inclusion and the variable of employee empowerment. Results showed that social capital components are effective in empowering human resource. Keshavarzi *et al.* (2012) in their study entitled "investigating the relationship between social capital and psychological empowerment of employees of Qom governorship" showed that there is some kind of correlation between structural, cognitive and communicative dimensions of social capital and employee empowerment. Fewer *et al.* (2013) in their research entitled "the strategy of economic empowerment for young girls" present social capital as a key factor in the area of economic empowerment of girls. According to them, social capital includes social networks, friends, mentors and family members. Mitra and Kundu (2012) in a study entitled "estimation of empowerment through social capital" concluded that social capital plays an important role in the empowerment of rural women. Nega *et al.* (2009) in a study entitled "Gender, social capital and empowerment in the northern Ethiopia" argued that those institutions, networks and norms which constitute the social capital affect empowerment, both directly and indirectly (Charmchian Langroodi, 2016, p. 6). Social networks reinforce linkages and interpersonal trust and provide grounds for employees to increase their knowledge and self-efficacy. Increased self-efficacy by boosting self-esteem creates a self-organized person and improves decision-making skills and the person will feel that he is involved in organizational decisions.

The theory of professionalism as a subset of social theory, emphasizes on the necessity of communication of people and institutions (2006, Dean & Beggs). In its general sense, professionalism requires a deep knowledge, insight, commitment, responsibility and accountability, especially in social interactions and it mostly relies on emotional intelligence compared to IQ. Four dimensions of professionalism include ethics in criticism, ethics in judgment, ethics in social service provision and ethics in career (Panahi and Sarboland, 2015). Resnick with a sophisticated argument expressed that social capital is a vital component in the formation of professional ethics in a particular scientific community. Social capital refers to existence of relations between institutions and people and norms which arise from these relations and it reflects the quantity and quality of social interactions and plays the most important role in economic development and human resource development and in any development program. A scientific community consisting of qualified and professional human resources who are isolated and separated from each other lacks social capital (Ghaneie Rad, 2006). Few studies conducted on the relationship between social capital and professional ethics reveal the positive relationship between these two variables. Panahi

and Sarboland (2015) investigated the relationship between social capital and professional ethics. Results showed that there is a significant positive relationship between social capital and its dimensions with professional ethics among faculty members. Hejabi, Mahdizadeh and Besharat (2015) conducted a study entitled "the Role of social capital and professional ethics in development". Results indicate the relatively strong impact of professional ethics and social capital on the success of organizations and communities. Dehghan Menshadi (2011) in his study identified and ranked factors affecting professional ethics with regard to the social capital components. Findings showed that all four categories of attachment to job, perseverance and diligence, healthy and humane relations at work and the spirit of collective participation in the workplace affect the professional ethics of employees in the organization. Nizam *et al.* (2016) in a study entitled "the impact of Islamic work ethics on organizational commitment" investigated the impact of these two components on each other and their impact on organizations. In this study, Islamic work ethics is presented as an ethical concept that is observed in Islamic teachings frequently and relies on faith. Capital by creating a trust-based atmosphere provides the ground for employees to be attached to their work place and by ensuring absence of any indolence and evasion of work it strengthens the spirit of collective participation and persistence and diligence and establishes healthy relationships in the workplace. Undoubtedly, presence of empowered and capable workforce is crucially important for today's organizations and managers always intend to compete at the international level and utilize their efficient human resources to improve organizational performance. Therefore, modern management strategies –such as implementation of organizational relationships and organizational culture on the basis of proper ethical and behavioral principles and integration of ethics-oriented management- can be utilized in order to promote the level of existing capabilities and abilities (Mayer's *et al.*, 2012). Mahmoudi and Abdollahmohammadi (2015) in a study investigated the relationship between employee empowerment and professional ethics in Ilam province's welfare organization. The aim of this study was to describe the relationship between professional ethics and employee empowerment and their findings confirmed the relationship. Asadian *et al.* (2014) in a study investigated the relationship between professional ethics and organizational trust with psychological empowerment of teachers in the city of Tabriz. Results showed that there are significant differences between male and female teachers regarding the variables of responsibility, honesty, justice, loyalty, competitiveness, respect for others, empathy with others and organizational trust. However, there is no significant difference in terms of observing social values and norms and psychological empowerment. Shelton (2002) in his doctoral thesis entitled "employees, supervisors and psychological empowerment" investigated dimensions of empowerment in public sector organizations. He found that there is a strong relationship between employees' perceptions of psychological empowerment and their trust in managers (Hanif and karamali, 2013, p. 104). Wallace and Storm (2002) by presenting a model found that four factors of organizational learning, organizational structure, leadership style and participation are involved in employee empowerment (Nik Pour, Pourkiani and Chamani Fard, 2013, p. 3). Spirit of cooperation and participation by strengthening personal and organizational knowledge promotes employees' competencies and their self-efficacy. Also, healthy relationships and attachment to the workplace affect interpersonal trust. Such an environment is desired by all employees; in other words, it is consistent with employees' value system and reinforces the component of significant.

Given the impact of social capital on psychological empowerment and the impact of social capital on professional ethics and the impact of professional ethics on psychological empowerment; this question comes to mind that whether ethics can moderate the relationship between these two variables or not? In other words, whether social capital can promote level of psychological empowerment through strengthening professional ethics?

Considering the research literature, research conceptual model is illustrated as below;

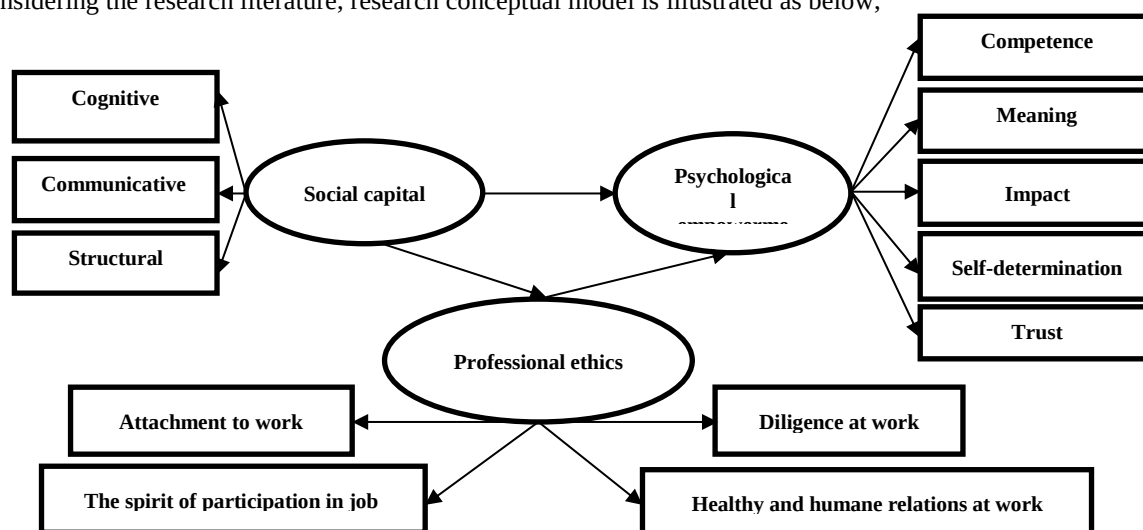


Figure 1: The conceptual model

Accordingly, research hypotheses include:

The first hypothesis: Social capital has a significant positive impact on psychological empowerment of employees.

The second hypothesis: Social capital has a significant positive impact on professional ethics.

The third hypothesis: Professional ethics has a significant positive impact on psychological empowerment of employees.

The fourth hypothesis: Professional ethics -as the moderating variable- plays a significant positive role in the relationship between social capital and psychological empowerment.

IV. Methodology

This is an applied research in terms of purpose; because results can be used by managers to access needed information and to make decisions in order to solve problems. In General terms, it is a descriptive study; because research variables are not manipulated and conditions are not artificially created. Data are collected using field study method. Also, the main purpose is to determine the relationship between two variables; thus, it is a correlational research. The main variables include social capital, psychological empowerment and professional ethics. Nahapiet and Ghoshal's model was used to measure social capital. This model with its organizational approach, divides different aspects of social capital into three categories: cognitive, communicative and structural categories. Also, to measure psychological empowerment, Spritzer and Mishra's model -including sense of competence, meaning, impact, self-determination and sense of trust in others- was used. Finally, to assess professional ethics, Gregory C. Petty's model -including attachment to job, perseverance and diligence, humane relations at work and participation in the job- was used. The study population consists of 240 employees of the Sports and Youth Department of Khorasan Razavi province and 148 subjects were selected using random sampling method and Cochran formula. After distributing a few more questionnaires and omitting unusable questionnaires, 150 questionnaires analyzed. The content validity of the each of the questionnaires was confirmed based on the opinions of professors and experts and their reliability was measured using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. SPSS and Amos software were used to analyze research data. Results of measurement of reliability and analysis of descriptive data are presented in Table 2.

Table 1: The mean, standard deviation, Cronbach's alpha and correlation between variables

Cronbach's alpha	Sd	mean	Variable
0/880	0/44	3/91	Professional ethics
0/832	0/42	3/90	Psychological empowerment
0/911	0/37	3/97	Social capital

V. Findings

Analyzing demographic characteristics of respondents showed that about 57 percent of them are male. About 45 percent are aged between 31 and 40 years and about 27 percent are aged between 41 and 50 years. In terms of education, most subjects have bachelor and associate degrees which are 31 and 27 percent, respectively. In terms of work experience, people with experiences between 6 and 10 years and those between 11 and 15 years -46 percent totally- have the highest percentage of sample.

In the next step, research hypotheses were tested. However, before fitting the structural model, it is necessary to examine the measurement model (including relations between visible and hidden factors). The overall fit of model is measured through using confirmatory factor analysis. Poor fit of a model at this step indicates that the measurement model must be refined and the structural model should not be analyzed when it contains hidden variables (Sadeghpour and Moradi, 2010, 242). After fitting the measurement model, it was found that the component of "meaning" in psychological empowerment was not significant ($P > 0/05$) and therefore, this component was removed. After removing this component and re-implementation of the model, all the remaining components were significant ($P < 0/05$). Also, the entire model fit indices confirmed goodness of fit of the model (Table 2). Thus, according to the results, the fit of the measurement mode is acceptable and the structural model can be examined in later steps. Structural model represented in Figure 2 was used to test the hypotheses. This model fits the research hypotheses.

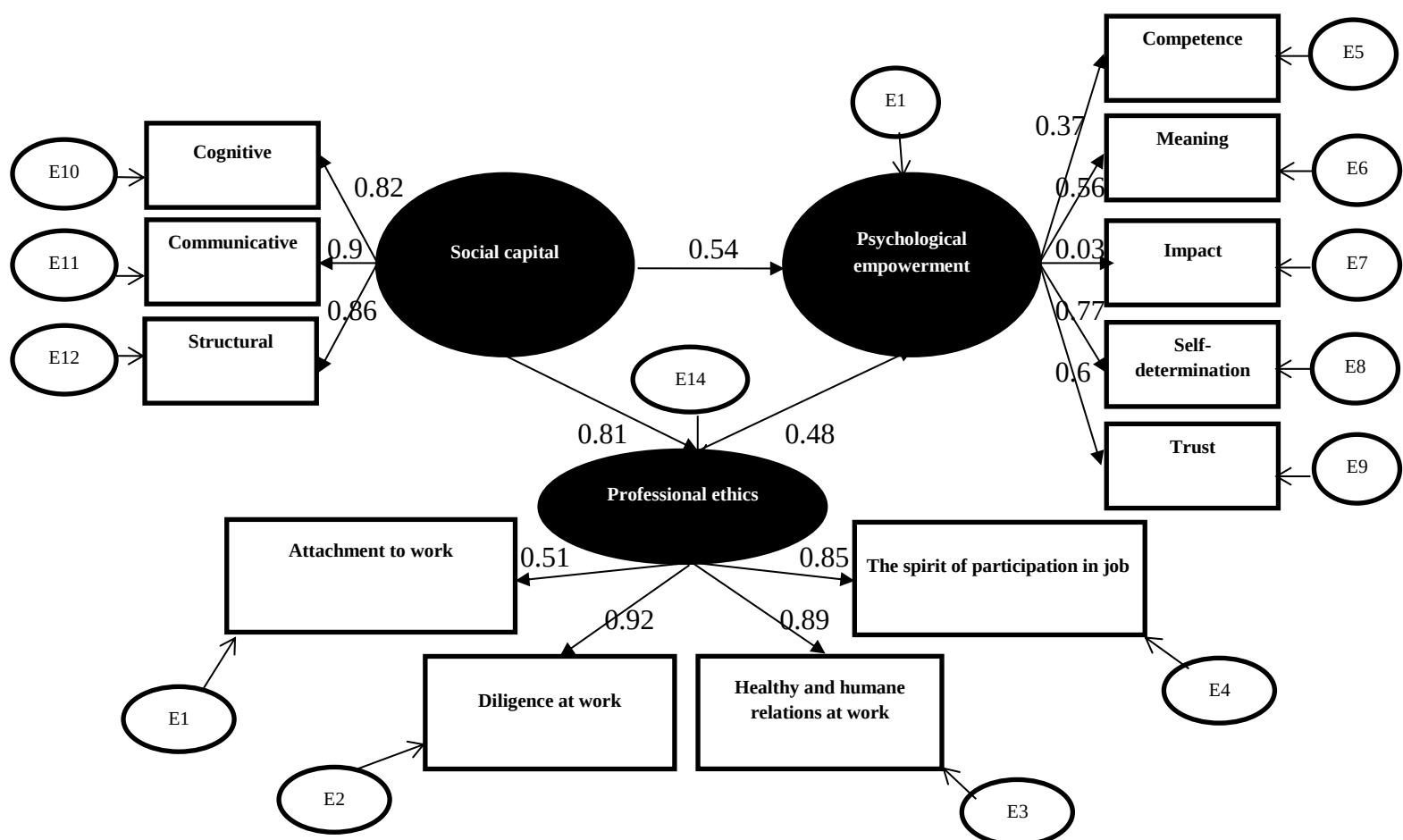


Figure 2: The structural model

In the structural model of Figure 2 too all components are significant and according to Table 3, the entire model fit indices all have acceptable values. Therefore, results of this model can be used to assess the hypotheses.

Table 3: Model fit indices

Maximum allowable value	Value in the structural model	Value in the measurement model	Parameter
Less than 3	1/38	1/38	Chi-square to the degree of freedom
Less than 0.08	0/051	0/051	The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)
Higher than 0.9	0/94	0/94	Normalized fit index (NFI)
Higher than 0.9	0/98	0/98	Comparative fit index (CFI)
Higher than 0.9	0/97	0/97	Tucker-Lewis fit index (TLI)
Less than 0.1	0/048	0/048	Standardized root mean square residual (SRMSR)

Table 4 shows the results of structural part of model shown in Figure 2 (including relations between hidden variables).

Table 4: Results of testing the hypotheses

Result	P	Level of significance	Description of hypotheses	No.
Confirmed	0/024	0/54	Psychological empowerment (direct) ← Social capital	1
Confirmed	0/001<	0/81	Professional ethics ← Social capital	2
Confirmed	0/043	0/48	Psychological empowerment ← Professional ethics	3
Confirmed	0/013	0/39	Psychological empowerment (indirect) ← Social capital	4

According to the results presented in Table 4, the first hypothesis that examines the impact of social capital on psychological empowerment –with significance factor of 0.56- is confirmed ($P = 0.024 < 0.05$). Regarding the second hypothesis that examines the impact of social capital on professional ethics, the significance factor is 0.81 ($P < 0.001 < 0.05$); so this hypothesis is confirmed, as well. In the third hypothesis that examines the impact of professional ethics on psychological empowerment, the significance factor is 0.48 ($P = 0.043 < 0.05$); so this hypothesis is confirmed, too. Finally, the fourth hypothesis examines the mediating role of professional ethics in the relationship between social capital and psychological empowerment. In fact, it studies the indirect impact of social capital on psychological empowerment through professional ethics. According to Table 4, the value of this indirect impact is 0.39 ($P = 0.013 < 0.05$); so the fourth hypothesis is confirmed.

VI. Discussion and conclusion

This study investigates the relationship between social capital and psychological empowerment of employees, by considering the moderating role of professional ethics. According to the findings of the study, social capital affects the psychological empowerment. The direct significance factor between social capital and psychological empowerment is significant and positive (with a value of 0.54); thus, social capital has a positive impact on psychological empowerment. In other words, increasing social capital will directly promote the level of psychological empowerment. Cognitive, structural and communicative aspects play an important role in the promotion of employee empowerment and they can help organizations to foster staff with higher levels of qualifications and capabilities. This result corresponds with findings of studies conducted by Moradi *et al.* (2015), Turabi *et al.* (2014), Viseh *et al.* (2014), Taheri *et al.* (2012), Keshavarzi *et al.* (2012), Fewer *et al.* (2013) and Mitra and Kundu (2012).

The significance factor between social capital and professional ethics is significant and positive (with a value of 0.81); thus, increasing social capital will directly promote the level of professional ethics. This result corresponds with the findings of Panahi and Sarboland (2015), Hejabi *et al.* (2015) and Dehghan and Menshadi (2011). Also, the significance factor between professional ethics and psychological empowerment is significant and positive (with a value of 0.48); thus, increasing professional ethics will promote the level of psychological empowerment. In other words, by increasing components of professional ethics, including: attachment to job, perseverance and diligence, humane relations at work and participation in the job, the level of psychological empowerment of employees promotes, as well. Findings correspond with the findings of Mahmoudi and Abdollahmohammadi (2015) and Asadian *et al.* (2014). Finally, in the fourth hypothesis, the indirect significance factor between social capital and psychological empowerment was 0.39. This shows that increasing social capital through professional ethics promotes the level of psychological empowerment. Regarding research findings, authorities can consider the following suggestions;

A. Strengthening social capitals through;

- Considering people and capacities and characteristics associated with this type of capital at the time of recruitment.
- Using collective encouragement mechanisms (rewarding the performance of teams and groups).
- Development of training programs to facilitate interpersonal relations and communication networks.

B. Strengthening psychological empowerment through;

- Establishment of a proper authority delegation mechanism in the organization.
- Using job rotation system.
- Continuous trainings to learn new skills and knowledge.
- Developing a sense of trust and open communications, transparency and free flow of information.

C. Strengthening professional ethics through;

- Creating the opportunity of participation in the organization and work processes for all employees.
- Considering interests and characteristics of people at the time of recruitment and conducting tests to examine the proportionality of people and jobs.
- Developing justice in organization, through putting everything and everyone in the right place.
- Paying attention to feelings, emotions and lives of people outside the organization and considering all aspects of their lives.

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