

# Moral Licensing: Causes and Consequences in Public Administration

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**Purpose:** *Voluntary deviation from self-controlling which is known as moral licensing, individuals justify their immoral and counterproductive behavior depending on past creditable behaviors, without worrying about the loss of their reputation and esteem. The aim of the study is to identify the causes and consequences of moral licensing.*

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** *The paradigm of the study is interpretive; its approach is qualitative and its strategy is grounded theory with emergent approach. In this regard, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with managers and employees of public administration in northeastern Iran.*

**Findings:** *The result of analysis of 17 interviews showed 119 codes, 63 concepts, 14 classes and 6 categories which finally obtained the final research model which has contributed to an extension of literature on moral licensing.*

**Research limitations/Implications:** *The study is limited by the context, as well as the research method to qualitative method. Due to structural differences between the private sector and the sector government, conducting the research in the private sector, can provide a broader understanding of this phenomenon, as well as using quantitative methods can let examine the accuracy of the relationships between the various categories.*

**Originality/Value:** *The study is developing the theory on moral licensing by comprehensive understanding of moral licensing and the discovery of the causes, factors and consequences of moral license in public administration.*

**Keywords:** moral licensing, counterproductive work behavior, grounded theory.

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## Licencjonowanie moralne: przyczyny i konsekwencje w administracji publicznej

**Cel:** *dobrowolne odstępstwo od samokontroli, znane jako licencjonowanie moralne, zachodzi wtedy, gdy jednostki usprawiedliwiają swoje niemoralne i nieproduktywne zachowanie w zależności od wcześniejszych poprawnych zachowań, nie zwracając uwagi na konsekwencje w postaci utraty reputacji i szacunku. Celem badania jest identyfikacja przyczyn i konsekwencji licencjonowania moralnego.*

**Projekt/metodologia/podejście:** *paradygmat badania jest interpretacyjny; jego podejście jest jakościowe, a jego strategią jest teoria ugruntowana z podejściem emergentnym. W związku z tym przeprowadzono pogłębione, częściowo ustrukturyzowane wywiady z menedżerami i pracownikami administracji publicznej w północno-wschodnim Iranie.*

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**Wyniki:** wynik analizy 17 wywiadów wykazał 119 kodów, 63 koncepcje, 14 klas i 6 kategorii układających się na ostateczny model badawczy, który przyczynił się do rozszerzenia literatury na temat licencjonowania moralnego.

**Ograniczenia/wnioski z badań:** badanie jest ograniczone przez kontekst, a także metodę badawczą do metody jakościowej. Ze względu na różnice strukturalne między sektorem prywatnym a sektorem rządowym, przeprowadzenie badań w sektorze prywatnym może zapewnić szersze zrozumienie tego zjawiska, a zastosowanie metod ilościowych może pozwolić na zbadanie dokładności relacji między różnymi kategoriami.

**Oryginalność/wartość:** badanie rozwija teorię na temat moralnego licencjonowania poprzez kompleksowe zrozumienie moralnego licencjonowania oraz odkrycie przyczyn, czynników i konsekwencji moralnego licencjonowania w administracji publicznej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** licencjonowanie moralne, nieproduktywne zachowania w pracy, teoria ugruntowana.

**JEL:** Z00

## 1. Introduction

The study, detection, and prediction of behavior, especially deviant behavior in organizations, has always been of great importance to management and the organization because the manifestations and reflections of the behaviors can be observed not only in the organization but also at various levels of society. Therefore, the predictions of causes and factors that lead to the emergence of deviant and counterproductive behaviors are of particular importance. Sometimes the causes and roots of deviant behavior in an organization are easily identifiable and can be placed in the existing categories of deviant behavior, but sometimes factors that are even negatively associated with deviant behavior can lead to the emergence of deviant work behavior in the organization (Spector & Fox, 2002). One of the factors is called moral licensing and can be seen as a hidden cause of deviant and counterproductive work behavior.

Indeed, moral licensing shows that people are permitted to perform an action or express a thought without fear of discrediting themselves (Bicchieri, 2006; Kuran, 1997; Miller & Prentice, 1994).

Counterproductive or deviant work behaviors has always been problematic in organizations (Hsi, 2017), but the negative behaviors that form after moral license impose far greater psychological and economic costs on organizations and their employees. When employees recall past admirable behaviors and actions, they feel more comfortable to engage in deviant or

immoral behaviors. It provides employees with the opportunity to engage in deviant and immoral behaviors that are contrary to group and organizational norms without fear of being discredited. In fact, moral license can be viewed as a process that removes deterrents to deviant behavior and allows individuals to act more freely and in accordance with their inner feelings, preferences, and desires, regardless of social and cultural norms and even the rules of conduct (Miller & Effron, 2010), so that in some cases moral licenses give a person a special right – beyond legal rights – that sets the stage for the creation of an unhealthy work environment and can go so far that nothing and no one is in its place, immorality becomes pervasive, and distrust dominates relationships.

The prior research only considered the previous good and virtues behavior such as organizational citizenship behavior, participation in social responsibility and innovation as the sole source of moral license and as the only factor which takes the perspective of the wrongdoer or even third party to identify why they license to problematic behaviors and much less research has considered other factors that cause license misdeeds by wrongdoer and observers. In this regard and with the initiative of Polman and his colleagues (Polman et al., 2013), the effect of social status for moral license – which is indeed a social acceptance for violation of ethical and social norms – have been addressed and led to a new orientation in the former literature.

According to the issues, the main purpose of the study is developing the the-

ory on moral licensing by comprehensive understanding of moral licensing and the discovery of the causes, factors and consequences of moral license in public administration.

In these regards, the questions of study have been designed:

- What are the **constituent elements** of the moral licensing phenomenon in public administration?
- What are the **precedents and underlying factors** for moral licensing in public administration?
- What are the **consequences** of obtaining a moral license in public administration?

## 2. Theoretical Foundations and Research Background

In the moral licensing theory, as based on moral balance theory and being a form of cognitive bias, views normative and moral actions and behaviors as excuses for deviant and immoral actions (Simbrunner & Schlegelmilch, 2017). In behavioral psychology, cognitive bias refers to a systematic pattern of deviation from the norm or rationality in judgment. Cognitive biases can be caused by factors such as memory or attention (Haselton, Nettle & Andrews, 2005). In moral licensing, memory plays a special role because the way in which some past events are associated and recalled may be so biased that it can subsequently lead to biased thinking and decision-making and behavior. Indeed, a sense of moral license allows one to distance oneself from practice and norms by providing evidence of one's virtues without fear of being discredited (Baumeister & Juola Exline, 1999; Tenbrunsel et al., 2010).

The moral license to engage in deviant or immoral behavior after a moral practice or action seems a bit surprising and at odds with many psychological theories that emphasize adaptation and continuity of behavior (Blanken, Van de Ven & Zeelenberg, 2015). For example, according to the theory of self-perception, people perceive their attitude by observing their behavior, which ultimately affects their behavior (Bem, 1972). According to the theory, people who perform good deeds consider themselves to be of good and moral character, it leads to the next moral behavior; or, according to the foot-in-the-door effect theory, when individuals, as a result

of obeying a first request, notice their own behavior and realize that their behavior was moral, helpful, and cooperative to others, decide to continue being helpful and fulfill a second the larger request (Goldman et al., 1982; Freedman & Fraser, 1966); But reality shows the potential and undeniable capacity of human beings to engage in positive and negative behaviors in different environments, especially in organizations, which can develop simultaneously or independently at a given time, therefore transform ethical behaviors into deviant and immoral behaviors, and the occurrence of such diverse behaviors may indicate moral license (Miller & Effron, 2010), since the theory of moral licensing reflects an individual's willingness to weigh moral and immoral behaviors in order to achieve moral balance.

But how can a person avoid being discredited by their past behavior? There are two basic mechanisms of moral credit and moral credentialing that, by guiding discriminatory and biased judgments, result in individuals not being charged or punished for committing a deviant or immoral act or conduct (Miller & Effron, 2010).

The moral credit model is viewed as a bank account and postulates that individuals accumulate credit through positive and moral behavior that can be used to pay for future immoral behaviors (Lasarov & Hoffmann, 2018; Blanken, van de Ven & Zeelenberg, 2015). Moral credentials, by removing the least possible incentives for flattering and immoral behavior, can change those motivations in the individual's favor or even provide the most legitimate and credible behavioral motivation (Monin & Miller, 2001a).

Since the first study on moral licensing conducted by Monin and Miller in 2001, numerous studies have been conducted in the area (Monin & Miller, 2001a), they show that often previous admirable behaviors such as organizational citizenship or social responsibility participation have been considered as the only source of moral licensing, taking the perspective of the offender or even third parties to find out why they allow problematic behaviors. In this regard, it is very important to identify the causes and consequences of moral licensing that remove the deterrent forces for deviant behavior to engage in deviant and immoral behavior in a way that simul-

taneously preserves the person's reputation as well as its consequences in public organizations.

### 3. Methodology of the Research

The paradigm of the study is interpretive, its approach is qualitative and its strategy is grounded theory with emergent approach. The strategy of the study is based on grounded theory, as grounded theory is believed to transcend all descriptive methods due to its conceptualization of social patterns (Glaser, 2002).

Grounded theory is a widely used methodology whose stated goal is to develop a middle-range theory that helps researchers develop theory from rigorous analyzes of empirical data (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2019). Since the phenomenon of moral license and its implications in the organization desirable for the study, the grounded theory strategy is compatible with this study. Grounded theory methodology is used by different approaches. The present study follows the emergent approach (Glaser) and attempts to pursue its objectives.

The scope of the present study was selected from managers and employees of government organizations subordinate to ministries in northeastern Iran due to the diverse and special conditions that apply to the organizations and the citizens' expectation of the organizations to follow the rules, regulations, and ethics, any moral misstep or violation of the laws and subsequent justification of the matters with moral license may lead to a loss of public trust in the government and service organizations. In this context, seventeen managers and employees of public organizations in the northeast of Iran were selected on the basis of purposive sampling and on the basis of experience, education and other criteria showing their rich information in the field of study.

In the study, data collection was conducted using semi-structured interviews and the data was analyzed based on the emergent (Glaser) approach in grounded theory. The two main coding processes in the emergent (Glaser) approach are: (1) real coding (including open coding and selective coding), (2) theoretical coding. It is worth mentioning that MAXQDA software was used to code the data in two stages of open and selective coding.

## 4. Findings

As mentioned earlier, the Glaserian or emergent approach, with its three main coding: steps-open coding, selective coding, and theoretical coding-guides the researcher toward a data-based theory. The individual coding steps are described below.

### 4.1. First Step: Open Coding

Following the emergent approach, open coding continues until the implications of the emergence of the core category are drawn. Thus, in the next step, i.e., the selected coding stage, coding is guided on the basis of the core category (Glaser, 1978). In the study, and following Glaser, the effects of the core category emerged after the fourth interview was coded, so it was labeled as a voluntary deviation from self-control. However, the key point is that the naming of the core category can change during coding to make it more appropriate. In the study, the core category was renamed moral licensing at the selective coding stage, which refers to the conditions under which individuals feel more comfortable to engage in deviant behavior and voluntarily engage in deviant behavior without worrying about discredit or loss of reputation.

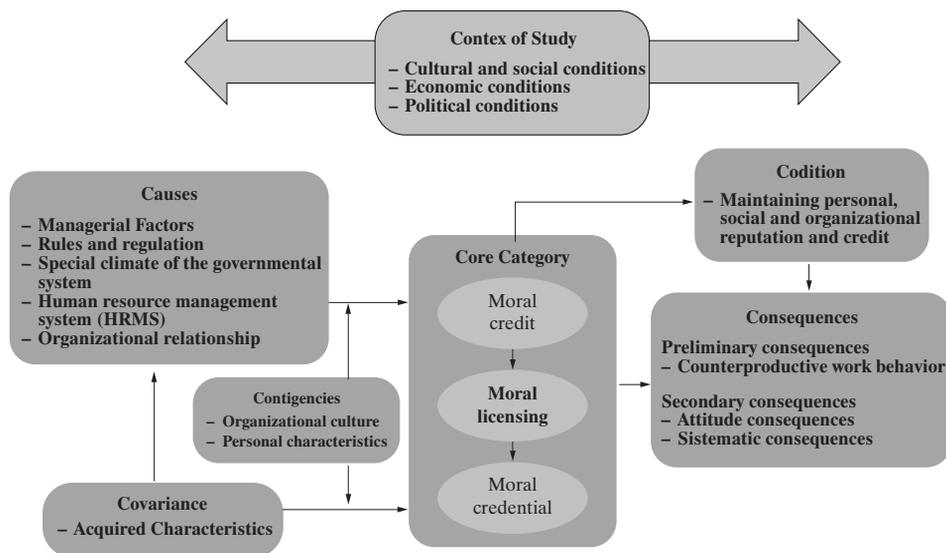
### 4.2. Second Step: Selective Coding

In the stage, selective coding begins with the core category. This means that the researcher conducts coding around the core. By continuing the process, 119 primary codes were identified in the phase of open coding. In the selective phase, the codes obtained from open coding were changed into 63 secondary codes and the set was classified into 14 classes.

### 4.3. Third Step: Theoretical Coding

Theoretical codes, in order to integrate a theory by data-driven theorizing method, try to create conceptualization and possible relations between real codes. Theoretical coding means that the researcher applies a theoretical model to the data. As I mentioned and according to Glaser's approach with emergent approach, there are different ways to show the relationship between concepts and categories based on core category. In the study, six Cs family was used due to its ability to integrate concepts and categories in the best possible way. In the

Figure 1. Final conceptual categories



case, the codes obtained from the phase of substantive coding were integrated based on six Cs family.

The elements present in the model of the study, are 6 categories and one core category put in six Cs family including causes, covariance, contingencies, condition, consequences, context (Kan & Parry, 2004).

## 5. Conclusions

The present study, through a qualitative approach and by identifying the causes of formation and consequences of ethical licensing in public sector organizations to develop the theory of ethical licensing, has achieved significant results that can provide a broader understanding of the concept in the literature of organization and management and eliminate the gaps and ambiguities associated with it to a large extent.

This way, in most early research in the field of moral licensing, good past practices and past ethical behaviors – especially in organizations, the emergence of organizational citizenship behaviors is considered the only source and reference for obtaining moral licenses. While the causes and factors that lead to the formation of deviant behaviors in the organization without compromising the reputation, credibility, and reputation of the person and the person are not considered wrong from the point

of view of others (moral license), it is much broader than previously thought.

In response to the first question of the study on the constituent elements of moral licensing, it is noted that, the mental processes which take place in the minds of the wrongdoer as well as the observers can be identified in three stages: cognitive bias and deviation from correct judgment, justification of mistakes and deviations, preservation of prestige and reputation, which provides the formation of deviant behaviors in the organization without damaging the reputation. The set of well-known features together form a moral license that distinguishes it from other similar concepts.

The preconditions and factors that underlie the emergence of moral license in public sector organizations and cause the offender to be out of the potential state and engage in deviant behaviors, are the results that are shown in response to the second question of the study; which explains moral licensing in a broader context than has ever been identified.

### 5.1. Causes

Management factors, rules and regulations, the special climate of the governmental system, human resource management system and organizational communications, which depends on the desire of observers, giving credit to wrongdoers can be effective.

## 5.2. Managerial Factors

Managerial factors in the occurrence of the moral licensing phenomenon, mainly related to the role of managers in the formation of the moral licensing phenomenon, which based on the findings of the study, including managers' irresponsibility, indecisiveness of managers in dealing with wrong behaviors, management style, infirmity of pressure levers available to managers and reliance on the strength of the management position. The known cases in the category of overlaps with some of the known factors in previous research that have played a role in the occurrence of the phenomenon of moral authorization have overlaps that can be compared in the area. For example, Polman and his colleagues (Polman et al., 2013) in their study examined the impact of social status and status to obtain moral licensing, which is a social acceptance for violating moral and social norms. They found that offenders with high social status, such as politicians and managers (through the ethical credentials mechanism), as well as offenders with low social status (through the credit mechanism, pity, and compassion), as a justification for their deviant behaviors, are able to the acquisition of the moral license, which in this study also overlaps with the factor of "reliance on the power of management position", identified in the category of managerial factors affecting the formation of moral license.

Although the role of other managerial factors in the occurrence of deviant behaviors has been studied in several studies (Yen et al., 2013; Bibi et al., 2013), but rarely has the impact of the factors in the formation of moral license been studied and subsequently it deals with the formation of deviant behaviors.

The second category of identified causes for the formation of moral authority are laws and regulations. Cornelissen and his colleagues (2013) found in their study that the moral mentality of individuals, depending on whether it is outcome-oriented or law-oriented, moderates the effects of an ethical act or an immoral act on the formation of moral or immoral behaviors. Accordingly, if the moral mentality of individuals is result-oriented, they are more likely to form a moral license, but if the moral mentality of individuals is law-oriented, they are more likely to continue

the previous moral behaviors. By generalizing the results of the study to the level of the organization, it is assumed that, if the goals and organizational processes are also law-oriented as opposed to result-oriented the possibility of forming a moral license will be reduced.

Ambiguity in laws due to creating grounds for inferring two or more meanings and results from laws or inadvertent silence of law in some cases, as well as excessive inflation and sometimes contradiction of laws with each other, lack of proper platform for law enforcement and the existence of laws by creating bias and deviation from correct judgment, the unwritten in the organization, provide the possibility of justifying mistakes and escaping from the law for violators and law-breakers without destroying their reputation.

The third category of identified causes that lead to the formation of moral licensing is the specific climate of the government system. The factors identified in this category, such as delegating authority and trust in the opinion of experts and the appointment of incompetent people in organizational positions or in other words, lack of meritocratic, explain a new approach using the moral licensing mechanism in previous findings. On the one hand, according to theories of power and position (Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Fragale et al., 2011), people with high social status or power due to expertise have the possibility of receiving approvals, social and attribution to positive traits and consequently increase the likelihood that their deviations and violations will be ignored (Fiske et al., 2002; Fragale et al., 2011).

Uncertainty about the exact output of employees' duties causes employees to use ambiguities and express ignorance to obtain ethical permission, which in this regard, as Miller and Effron (2010), found in their study, results in the statement of ignorance, the ground for a positive interpretation and optimal behaviors and sometimes ambiguous violations are provided. Also, Polman and his colleagues (2013), found in their study that observers observed deviant behaviors of violators with lower status such as employees by expressing sympathy to them, moral credit, in other words, moral licenses.

Corruption and mafia structures are other special conditions of the government

system that provide the basis for the formation of moral licensing.

The fourth category of identified causes that lead to the formation of ethical licenses is the mode of operation and policies governing the human resource management system. In the field of human resource management, in several studies, the impact of factors such as the weakness of the service compensation system (Gläser et al., 2017), the incompatibility of working skills with job requirements (Mumtaz et al., 2015), the impact of monitoring and evaluation system (Tuzun & Kalemci, 2018) on the occurrence of deviant behaviors in the organization, but the factors and other factors identified in the study, such as formal employment, lack of an effective system to follow the criticism and suggestions leading to the formation of ethical licenses and maintenance reputation and credibility when engaging in deviant behaviors are not mentioned.

The disregard for honest service of employees (good work not appreciated), as one of the factors in the formation of moral licenses overlaps with the findings of Skyvington (2014), because it was found in his study that employees deviate despite the anticipated sanctions and punishments, and to explain this relationship, it is stated that the positive and constructive actions and services of employees, the negative voluntary and deviant behaviors of employees that form follow the abusive behaviors of supervisors – such as underestimation of services honest staff – they adjust.

Also, in relation to the weakness of the service compensation system and the incompatibility of working skills with job requirements, which in some way refers to injustices and inequalities and waste of employees' rights in the organization, with the findings of Spector and Fox (2005), based on those employees may engage in organizational citizenship behaviors and deviant and counterproductive behaviors as a way to address organizational injustice.

The last category of identified causes that lead to the formation of moral licenses is organizational communication. The causes include the primacy of the relationship over discipline, the interference between the job and friendship, membership in specific and influential groups, and contact with power bases, they lead to obtaining ethical licenses in the organization. Bradley and his colleagues (2010), in their study found that

having a positive interaction with a member of a minority group (such as a religious or racial minority) led to a moral justification for future prejudice against such groups (minority groups).

### 5.3. Covariance

The second known category is the category of covariance, which includes acquired characteristics in the study. In this regard, Blanken and his colleagues (2010) in their study, through a meta-analysis, by examining several independent variables that lead to skillful conduct of licenses, also identified the dependent variables or their consequences. For example, remembering good traits leads employees to tend to pretend to be sick at work in a hypothetical scenario in which they do not attend a meeting (Blanken, Van de Ven & Zeelenberg, 2012) or reflect on things they have volunteered to do. They have shown the extent to which individuals have exceeded the level set in the general budget (Clot et al., 2013b) as well as individuals who have high levels of creativity and creative behaviors in their behavior have received lower scores on personality traits such as honesty and modesty (Vincent & Polman, 2016). Possession of exclusive skills and expertise, a history of self-sacrifice (combative past) are other known traits and acquired distinctions in the study, although the factors are less specifically mentioned in the reviewed studies in the area of moral licensing; but voluntary action is another known factor in the category of acquired traits and distinctions, which is naturally associated with organizational citizenship behavior in the results of several studies such as Skyvington, 2014; Bolino & Klotz, 2015; Yam et al., 2017; Klotz & Bolino, 2013, it is consistent.

### 5.4. Contingencies

The third known category concerns the moderating factors in the relationship between causes and the central category (contingencies), which includes factors such as organizational culture and personal characteristics.

Previous research has placed great emphasis on the role of intercultural differences in shaping moral licensing. According to the theory of moral self-regulation, the intensity of the effects of moral license is rooted in one's moral self-concept. This self-concept, in turn, is based on an under-

standing of ethics derived from one's cultural background. Ethical standards are primarily acquired through socialization processes and therefore depend on the cultural environment in which one grows and interacts throughout one's life (Simbrunner & Schlegelmilch, 2017). Therefore, the cultural background can be considered as an important and influential factor in issuing moral licenses. For example, to what extent, the culture of organizational silence prevails in the organization, and employees ignore problems and deviations, how to deal with violations and deviant behaviors, and the possibility of the phenomenon of deprivation (frog principle or bicycle effect) in an organization, ignoring mistakes due to belief in Islamic kindness or out of compassion and forgiveness, hesitation and instability of values and the tendency to turn values into anti-values, which are all considered as a kind of cultural dimension of an organization.

### **5.5. Personality Traits**

Personality traits are another moderating factor. Jealousy and emulation, lack of commitment and conscientiousness, weak moral identity and pretense of religiosity increase the likelihood of abuse of acquired licenses and subsequent deviant behaviors are taken as personality traits. According to the theory of moral identity, people who attach great value and importance to morality, more than others, maintain their moral consistency and originality over time. Regarding the pretense of religiosity in the previous studies of Simberoner and Ashlgamlash (2017), they believe that considering oneself as a believer and a religious person is one of the factors that give people moral permission. Stangel (2020) also stated that religious people may interpret their beliefs as an achievement.

### **5.6. Contextual Factors**

The fourth known category is the contextual factors that refer to the macro-level factors influencing the formation of moral authority which including social and cultural conditions, economic conditions and political conditions. Although most studies in the field of moral licensing focus on the "individual" and focus less on contextual factors.

However, Simberoner and Ashlgamlash (2017) elaborate on the moderating role

of culture to form a moral license. According to their findings, different cultures in different parts of the world have different views on moral issues. For example, very few Europeans value the role of religion in life as a determining factor, while in other parts of the world, such as North America or Southeast Asia, the role of religion in life is of particular importance. Also, Lazaro and Hoffman (2018), in their study, have examined the impact of the social environment on moral licensing. Considering all the shown effects of moral licensing in different regions with different cultural backgrounds can be different.

In previous studies, the role and impact of underlying factors such as economic and political conditions in the field of moral licensing have been less mentioned, however, in the field of moral licensing, the role of the factors is prominent, which should be considered as unfavorable economic conditions, inflation, unemployment, job insecurity, disproportionate wages and benefits to the cost of living, and distancing oneself from the simplistic culture of promoting luxury culture and raising expectations, providing the ground for obtaining moral licensing.

Furthermore, there are political conditions such as corruption in the judiciary, lack of complete independence of the judiciary, the influence of the executive branch and on the supervisory and inspection apparatus, pressure from influential groups. Inside and outside the organization, there are disproportionate punishments, espionage, and rioting, advice to protect offending managers from punishment, inefficient administrative organization, the complexity of laws, regulations and the number of administrative directives and instructions, ineffective managers, lack of meritocracy and the existence of discrimination in the field of employment and promotion of people, inadequacies in the system of encouragement and punishment and the system of supervision and evaluation, etc., they have created a turbulent political, legal, and governmental environment that often gives individuals a moral license to exploit available resources to realize their violated rights.

### **5.7. Conditions**

Based on the results and based on the central theme of the research, it can be said

that the consolidation of the reputation and social and organizational credibility of the individual is considered as a mediating factor in relation to moral authorization and its consequences. So that when a person ensures the preservation of reputation, prestige, personality and social and organizational popularity, maintaining their social and organizational status, subsequent consequences, classified as primary outcomes, or deviant work behaviors, and secondary outcomes, or attitudinal and systemic consequences, are represented.

### 5.8. Consequences

Deviant work behaviors, as the first consequence of moral authority, causing individuals to invoke past positive and admirable works or to have special or rare specialties or attributes are considered a special right for themselves to act according to their own wills and preferences and to be involved in deviant behaviors.

In the study, interviewees referred to various deviant behaviors – as primarily consequences – in a wide range of dimensions, including symbols of work, under-employment, theft, personal use of government property, circumvention of the law, abuse of colleagues, subordinates, particularly newcomers to the organization, embezzlement, etc. In previous studies, although deviant behaviors caused by moral authority have been mentioned, but rarely the type of deviant behavior has been exactly mentioned, as in Klotz and Bolino (2013) or Yam and his colleagues (2017) who generally refer to deviant and immoral behaviors resulting from moral authorization. Among them, Lin, Ma and Johnson (2016) in their study referred to the abusive behaviors of leaders towards their followers due to emotional fatigue and mental analysis, as well as the moral licenses and credentials that they have gained through previous moral behaviors.

The combination of the factors has led to the creation of misconceptions in society and organizations, as a result of which violations and deviations appear to be normal and will have secondary consequences such as attitudinal and systemic consequences.

Attitude consequences have been identified in the study, such as attitude bias, loss of trust among employees, loss of motivation of employees to serve honestly, and loss of values and beliefs. Along with, the

systemic consequences of obtaining and granting ethical licenses in the organization, deviation from lofty goals, promoting a culture of circumventing the law or justifying mistakes and deviations, violating employees' rights and reducing job satisfaction, incorrect appointments in organizational positions and jobs, elimination and the dismissal of efficient, elite, and professional individuals, they have led to the fact that the known consequences in the study are somewhat in line with some of the consequences that researchers have identified in various studies of deviant behaviors. For example, Duffy and his colleagues (2006) point to three behavioral outcomes, health and well-being, and the behavioral consequences of social wear, which are consistent with some of the consequences identified in the study.

It should be noted that some of the consequences of identifying the phenomenon of ethical licenses, such as attitudes bias, loss of motivation of employees to perform honest service, injustice and abuse of employees' rights, can themselves be the necessary basis for the formation of licensing phenomenon. Providing a moral, it can be concluded that there is a kind of reciprocal relationship between some of the consequences and causes of moral authorization. Based on the argument, it can be said that the model presented in the study is somewhat dynamic in the sense that the model resulting from the analysis and interpretation of data is not interrupted by achieving results and consequences and opens to other categories of research. Hence, this model is dynamic in terms of rotation but is not static.

### 5.9. Implications

According to the results of the study, laws and regulations are among the reasons that provide the basis for issuing moral licenses in government organizations. Therefore, paying attention to the issue and enacting practical laws following the facts and organizational needs, enacting strong laws that reduce the possibility of interpretation to a minimum, also in some cases deregulation is of particular importance and it can be very instructive. On the other hand, unfortunately, the cost of committing violations in our country and especially administrative violations in government organizations, is very low, which has redu-

ced the deterrent power of punitive measures and fines, so measures should be taken to ensure that punishments for violations should be considered. In addition, what is of particular importance is the principle of equality of all before the law, therefore, it is necessary to decide for the effective implementation of laws and regulations to be taken for all.

Due to the costly nature of regulatory methods, it highlights the need to pay attention to improving culture. Educating and strengthening the culture of self-control are one of the most basic measures to counter the formation of moral authority. Another important step is to correct the behavior of top managers and officials as a model for employees in the organization and individuals in the community, they sometimes abuse their power or access to communication channels, have allowed themselves to use the privileges that that they never been legally allowed to use. In this case, the possibility of fair criticism is provided for the critics by stating the reasons and avoiding the destruction of character.

Another important solution to prevent the formation of a moral license is transparency. Although the phenomenon of whistleblowing and the growth of cyberspace and the media have greatly contributed to information transparency if the work procedures are precise and clear and the work is based on a logical system (electronic citizen) and contracts are transparent.

The importance of leadership style and management of managers impact on the performance and behavior of employees and preventing the occurrence of ethical licenses is not hidden from anyone. When the leadership style is dictatorial and there is no right to express an opinion, opposition, or even dare to ask the manager, constructive interactions between managers and employees will certainly disappear and signs of injustice and feelings of abuse and subsequent moral authorization will be occurred. Therefore, it can be said with certainty that the era of authoritarian management is over, and participatory and paternalistic management styles should be used by managers and supervisors because only in this case, organizational silence is left aside and people can raise.

The important principle should also not overlook that to have a healthy society

and especially a healthy organization, it is necessary to have individuals and employees who are physically and mentally healthy, so according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, if the basic needs are fulfilled Justice will be provided, naturally, the needs of higher levels will be formed, and if people are still involved in the needs of lower levels, one can never expect morals and correct behavior from people, so fair compensation system and payment commensurate with the merits of individuals as well as economic conditions will take place. It is of special importance.

The existence of precise criteria for recruitment, evaluation of employees' performance as well as the promotion of employees constitute a set of factors that can lead to the formation of ethical licenses; therefore, such criteria should be specified accurately and expertly and at their discretion. And personal opinions are distanced, the possibility and possibility of acting based on personal motives and circumventing the rules and norms and organizational do's and don'ts will be reduced.

#### **5.10. Future Research**

The study was conducted in the spatial territory of government organizations in Mashhad, and since the model of the study is based on the context and context is to overcome the limitation and due to structural differences between the private sector and the sector government, it is suggested that the research be conducted in other sectors and areas, especially the private sector, as it can provide a broader understanding of the phenomenon and the possibility of a comparative comparison between the study and the studies conducted, to enable conducting it in different areas and sectors.

The present study has been done only in the quality method, so it is suggested that the model presented in the study be tested quantitatively in public sector organizations and to examine the accuracy of the relationships between the various categories.

Future research is also suggested to concern other concepts such as social filth and moral indifference as social psychological phenomena that both emphasize the concept of reducing the sense of responsibility for avoiding moral transgressions and deviations and are very similar to the concept of moral authorization.

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