



Presenting A Model of the Social Factors Effective in the Service Quality of the Municipalities of Mazandaran

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Abstract

As urban management, municipalities have a key role in the process of city management and organization. Certainly, to reach this performance, municipalities must have a proper management structure based on attracting the institutional participation of the people. Thus, the purpose of the study was to provide a model of social factors affecting the quality of services in the municipalities of Mazandaran. The study was applied in terms of purpose and survey concerning the method. The population was the experts familiar with the field of service quality (n = 15), employees working in the municipalities of Mazandaran (n = 356) and all clients of municipalities in Mazandaran (n = 712). The study used model design and approval questionnaire, the questionnaire of social factors affecting service quality with 75 questions and the service quality questionnaire with 22 questions to collect data. Content Validity Ratio (CVR) of the social factors affecting service quality and service quality questionnaire was calculated as 94.9% and 93.8%, respectively. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of variables was estimated to be higher than 0.7 and the reliability was confirmed. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used with the help of LISREL software to analyze the data. According to the results, the power of the relationship between social factors and service quality was 0.51, showing that the correlation is strong and desirable. The t-test was larger than 5% error level that is 1.96 and showed a significant correlation. Moreover, the fit indices of the model showed that the proposed model was appropriate. According to the results, the managers of municipalities in Mazandaran are recommended to pay attention to employee behavior, employee competence and skills, innovation in service delivery, organizational coordination and accountability, organizational trust, organizational performance, social responsibility, employee work values to enhance service quality.

Keywords: Client, Employees, Municipality, Social factors, Service quality.

Introduction

Now that urban management has evolved, the cities are managed for citizen welfare and comfort. Regarding this, comprehensive and sustainable urban management will be implemented when citizens are satisfied with

the quality of municipal services. This is because citizen satisfaction with the municipality service quality is a key principle in the continuous improvement of the process of the tasks done to increase the efficiency and improve the quality of the

comprehensive urban management. This has made using facilities and resources more effective and improving urban service quality cities more and inevitable. Overall, identifying people's needs and awareness of their needs has a decisive role in determining management priorities and making the urban management system efficient (Kamandari & Ajza-Shokouhi, 2015).

As an urban management, the municipalities have a key role in the process of managing and organizing cities, to realize which municipalities must have an appropriate management structure based on attracting the institutional participation of the people where the most important principles for attracting public and client are presenting quality services and social factors affecting service quality in municipalities (Mousavi et al., 2013).

Service quality is a function of the relationship between customers' main expectations and their experience and understanding of the services they received when and after receiving the services. Customer satisfaction with a service can be defined by comparing their expectations of the service with their perception of the services provided. When the customers' expectations of the services match their perceptions of the services provided, it is the quality of the services provided (Aidin Namin, 2017).

In any private organization, improving services is not providing social products (presenting services to the community), but improving the profit and loss account and creating long-term profit and sustainability

for itself. Thus, investing in improving service delivery processes in the private sector is worth examination and evaluation through some factors (Malekzadeh et al., 2015). On the other hand, the clients of private companies are known. However, among the customers or stakeholders of government services are the representatives of the people who use government services like the people on the one hand, and are responsible for allocating resources and approving the tasks and missions of government organizations on the other. Therefore, this diversity of customers causes the agencies to be forced to consider the expectations of all stakeholders in providing services (Nowruz Kouhdasht et al., 2013). Despite the long time passed from the discussion of service quality and methods of measuring and evaluating it, it has not only been ignored, but its role has become increasingly important given the significance of services in the economies of countries, especially modern advanced economies. Quality evaluation in service organizations like municipalities is a measure of the extent to which the service provided meets customer expectations. Awareness of the concept of service quality and efforts to improve it, has led to the provision of quality services and through increasing, the level of service quality can be expected to increase customer satisfaction (Niaz Azari et al., 2013). Improving the process of providing services is of the necessary and important points in these organizations, as improving the service delivery process in an organization is not just a specific program, but also the quality



of a permanent program. Quality actually starts by recognizing the people that institutions and organizations need to improve the service delivery process and is maintained by managers in such an environment. Strengthening service quality and enhancing its delivery processes in a more general sense, managing processes related to service quality is, in fact, a strategic plan that needs the constant attention of senior managers in public and private institutions, especially in municipalities (Mirzazadeh et al., 2013). Citizen satisfaction with the city environment and the services provided by municipalities is a significant factor in creating motivation for people to participate in urban development and improving the quality of their homes. Moreover, citizen satisfaction with the quality of municipal services encourages them to cooperate with urban institutions to perform their duties and provide services in the city better (Yahyapour & Hashemi, 2011). Hence, one can state that measuring social factors affecting service quality in municipalities, especially in Mazandaran, can be a significant step in designing appropriate mechanisms to identify and understand how people view performance and provide quality services by municipalities and their level of satisfaction with the provision of municipal services (Pourahmad et al., 2013).

Methods

The study was applied in terms of purpose, descriptive regarding nature of correlational type and survey regarding method. The

population was three groups: 1) experts familiar with service quality, the number of which was unknown scattered throughout the country. Their inclusion criteria were having characteristics like knowledge and experience in the subject, willingness, enough time to participate and effective communication skills (Ahmadi, 2009), scientific studies and papers related to the research subject, availability, experience, suitability of the field of study, doctoral degree, and teaching at the university. Fifteen people were selected using non-random sampling method. 2) The second group was all employees working in the municipalities of Mazandaran ($n = 4810$), 356 of them were selected as a sample using stratified random sampling method according to Cochran's formula. 3) The third group was all clients of Mazandaran municipalities, the number of whom was unlimited. To determine and select the sample size of the paired data method, i.e. for each employee (two of the clients) the same municipal employee was considered, the number of who was 712 people.

A questionnaire was used to collect the required data in the study:

Model design and approval questionnaire: The questionnaire has 36 five-option questions in the discussion of social factors affecting service quality. Moreover, seven questions were developed about service quality, the number of items of social factors affecting service quality reached 33 after obtaining the opinion of experts, and the service quality questionnaire changed to 5 items.

The questionnaire of social factors affecting service quality: This questionnaire, answered by the employees, has 75 five-option questions (Table 1).

Table 1. Specifications of the social factors questionnaire affecting the quality of services

Row	Aspects	Components	Construct	Operational criteria of the constructs
1	Social factors affecting quality	Employee behavior	Employee commitment and conscientiousness	Indices (1-3)
			Willingness to help and respond to the client	Indices (4-6)
			Mastering negotiation and providing information to the client	Indices (7-9)
		Employee competence and skills	Employee professional knowledge and skills	Indices (10-12)
			Employee control over work	Indices (13-15)
			Employee politeness and ability to build trust and confidence in the client	Indices (16-18)
		Innovation in service delivery	Reducing the use of written and manual documents	Indices (19-21)
			Development of technological and electronic services	Indices (22-24)
			Providing detailed information to the client by a knowledgeable and informed person	Indices (25-27)
		Organizational coordination and accountability	Dividing the tasks among the employees	Indices (28-30)
			Interaction and coordination between administrative units	Indices (31-33)
			Employee social participation	Indices (34-36)
		Organizational trust	Lateral trust	Indices (37-39)
			Vertical trust	Indices (40-42)
			Institutional trust	Indices (43-45)
		Organizational performance	Efficiency	Indices (46-48)
			Performance	Indices (49-51)
			Effectiveness	Indices (52-54)
		Social responsibility	Economic responsibility	Indices (55-57)
			Legal responsibility	Indices (58-60)
			Moral responsibility	Indices
Optional and voluntary responsibility	(61-63)			
Employee work values	Job satisfaction	Indices		
	Organizational commitment	(64-66)		
	Strong desire to participate in affairs	Indices		

Service quality questionnaire: This questionnaire, answered by the client, has 22 five-option questions (Table 2).



Table 2. Details of service quality questionnaire

Row	Aspects	Construct	Operational criteria of the constructs
1	Service quality	Tangible factors	Indices (1-4)
		Reliability	Indices (5-9)
		Accountability	Indices (10-13)
		Peace of mind	Indices (14-16)
		Sympathy	Indices (17-22)

CVR method was used to measure its content validity. The formula of this method is as follows:

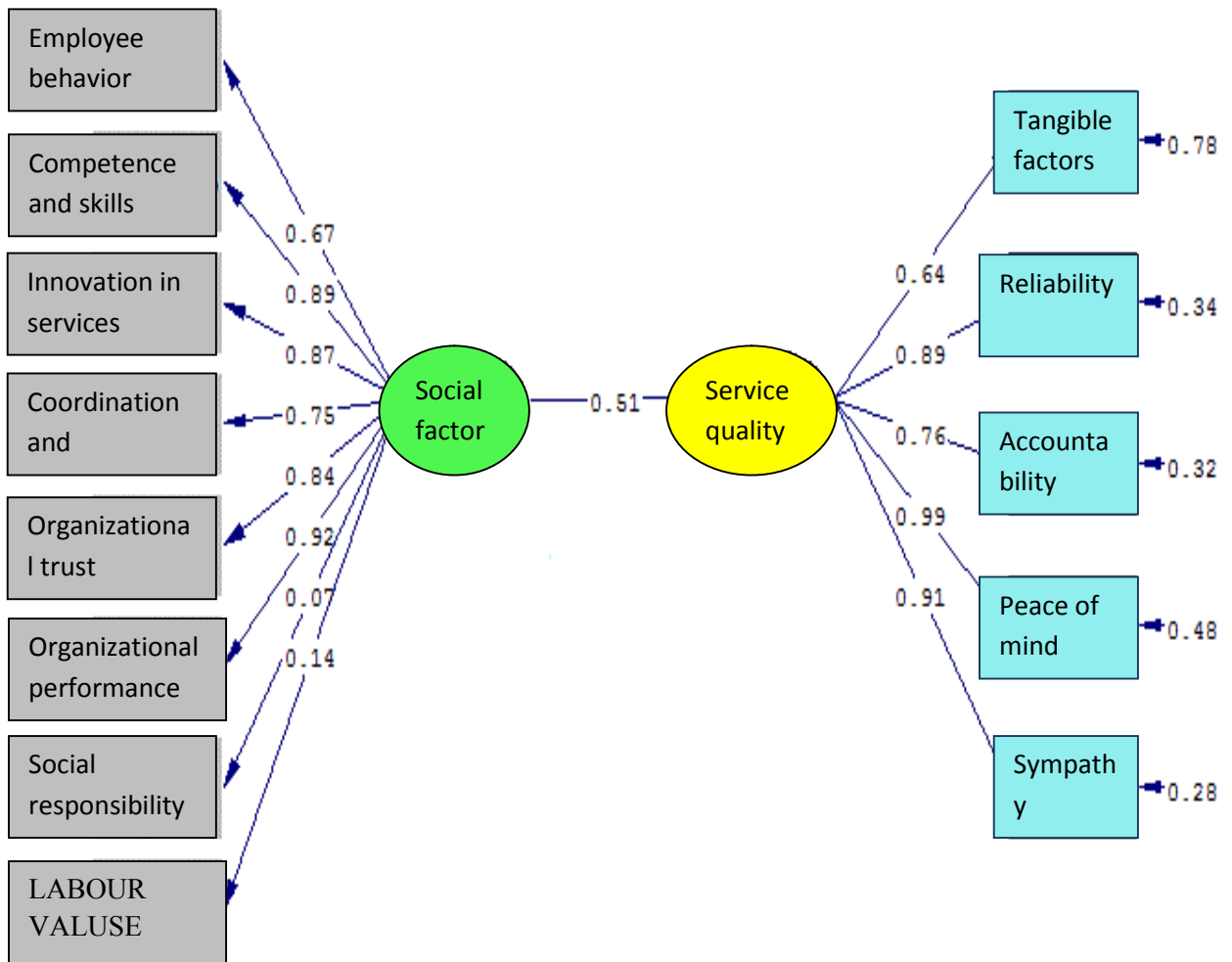
$$CVR = \frac{n_e - \frac{N}{2}}{\frac{N}{2}}$$

As CVR value is closer to one, it will show more respondents' identifying the item as appropriate. The questionnaire of social factors affecting services quality and the quality of services were determined by 15 experts and university professors, whose validity values were calculated as 0.94% and 93.8%, respectively. Cronbach's alpha

coefficient of variables was estimated to be higher than 0.7, showing the internal coordination of the items and confirmation of reliability. SEM was performed using LISREL software to analyze the data.

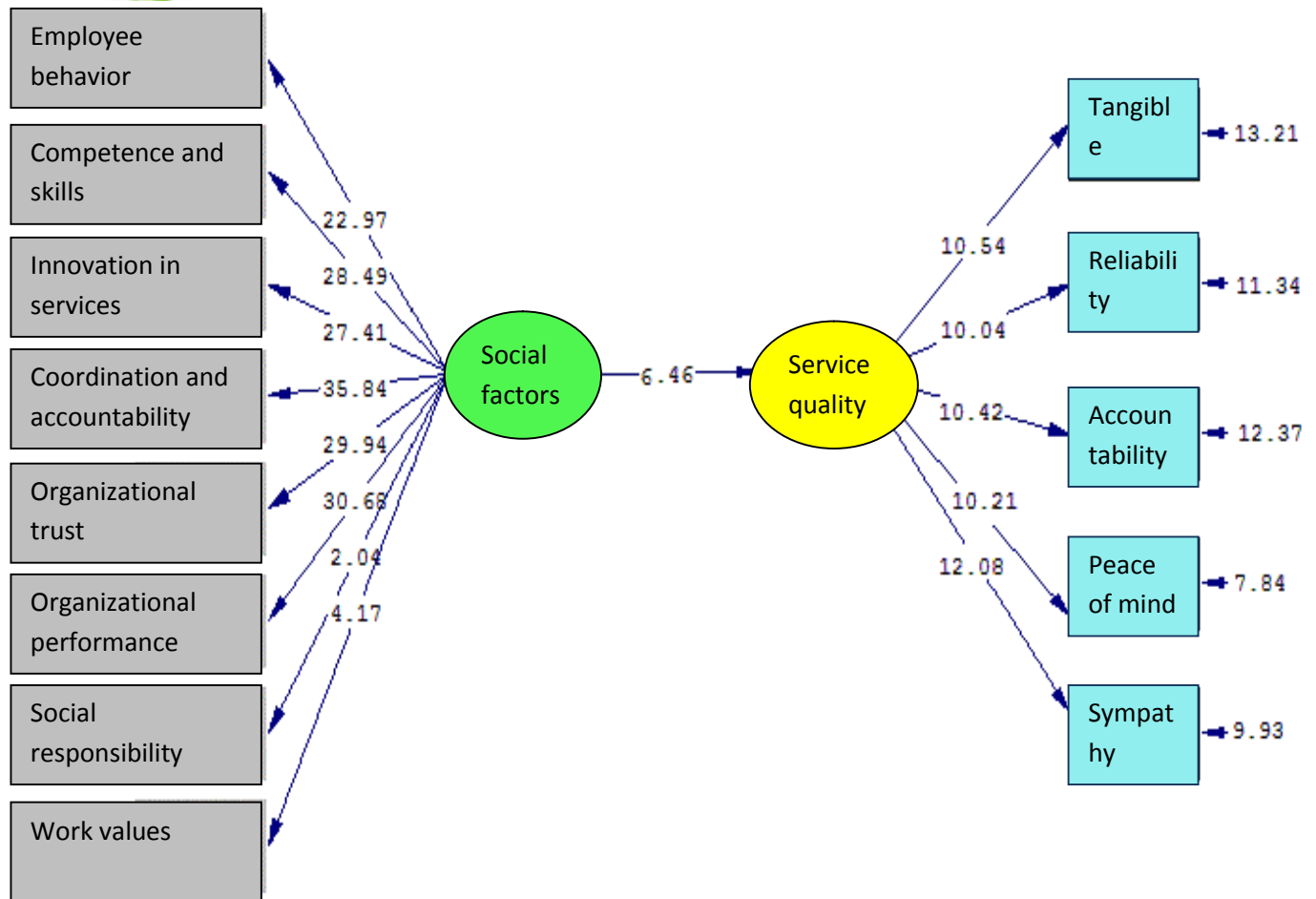
Results

Examining the relationship between social factors affecting the quality of services and the quality of services questionnaires is shown in (Figures 1 and 2).



Chi-Square=1167.24, df=574, P-value=0.06514, RMSEA=0.014

Figure 1. The results of confirming the final model of the relationship between the main components of the study



Chi-Square=1167.24, df=574, P-value=0.06514, RMSEA=0.014

Figure 2. T-value statistics: the results confirm the final model of the relationship between the main components of the study

The output of LISREL software is indicative of the suitability of the proposed research model, so that according to (Table 3) the value of root mean square error of

approximation (RMSEA) is 0.014, the value of the normed chi-square (CMIN / DF) is equal to 2.033 and the value of goodness of fit index (GFI) is 0.97.

Table 3. Fitness indices of the main model

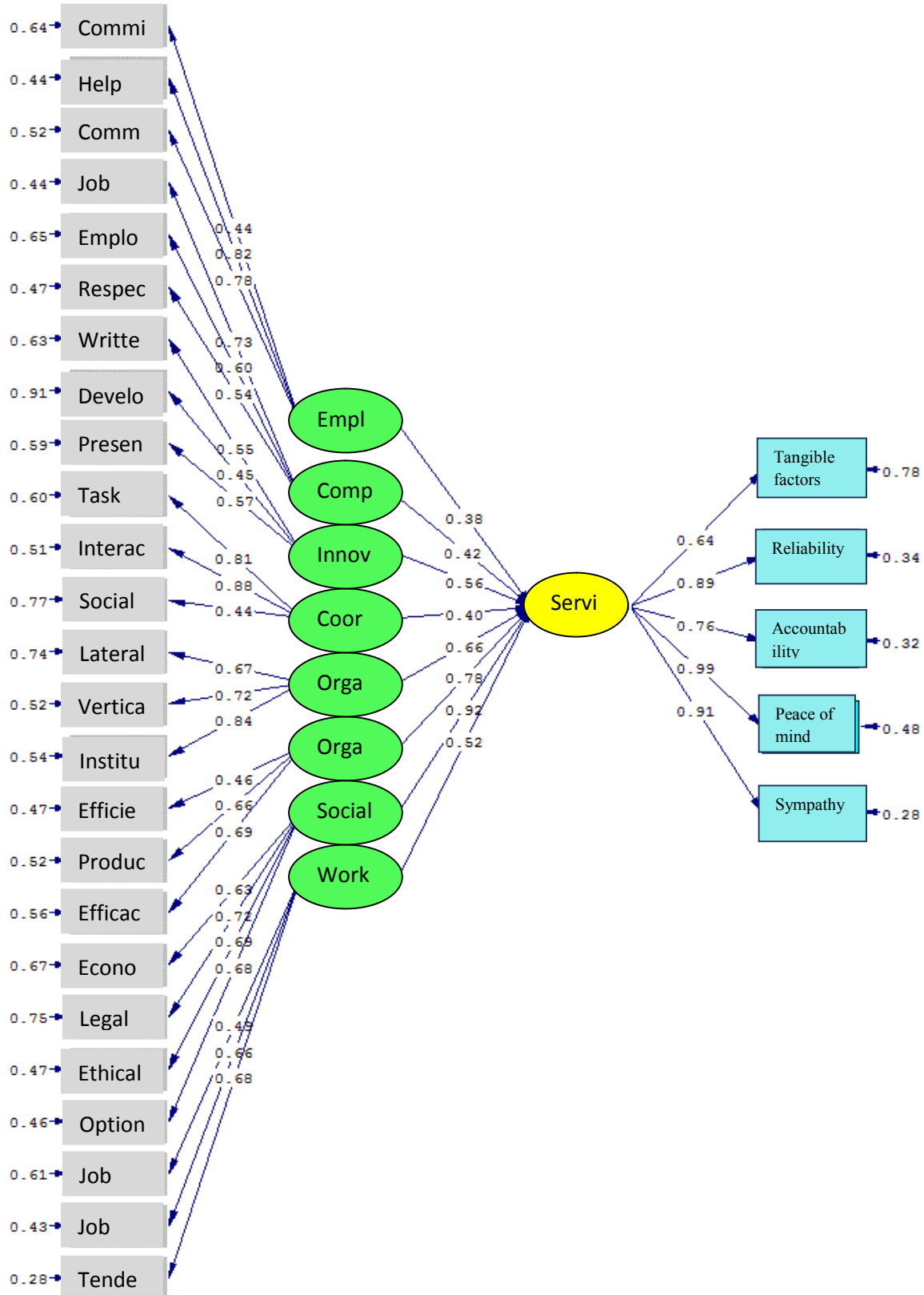
Index	Reported value	Acceptable value
RMSEA	0.014	Equal to or smaller than 1
Normed hi square (CMIN/DF)	2.033	Equal to or smaller than 3
Goodness of fit index (GFI)	0.97	Equal to or greater than 0.9
Adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI)	0.96	Equal to or greater than 0.9
Comparative fit index (CFI)	0.98	Equal to or greater than 0.9
Normed fit index (NFI)	0.96	Equal to or greater than 0.9
Tucker–Lewis index (TLI)	0.96	Equal to or greater than 0.9
Incremental fit index (IFI)	0.97	Equal to or greater than 0.9

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between the social factors affecting the quality of services in the municipalities of Mazandaran.

According to Figures 1 and 2, the power of the relationship between social factors and service quality is calculated as 0.51, showing that the correlation is strong and desirable. The t-test statistic is 6.46, which is

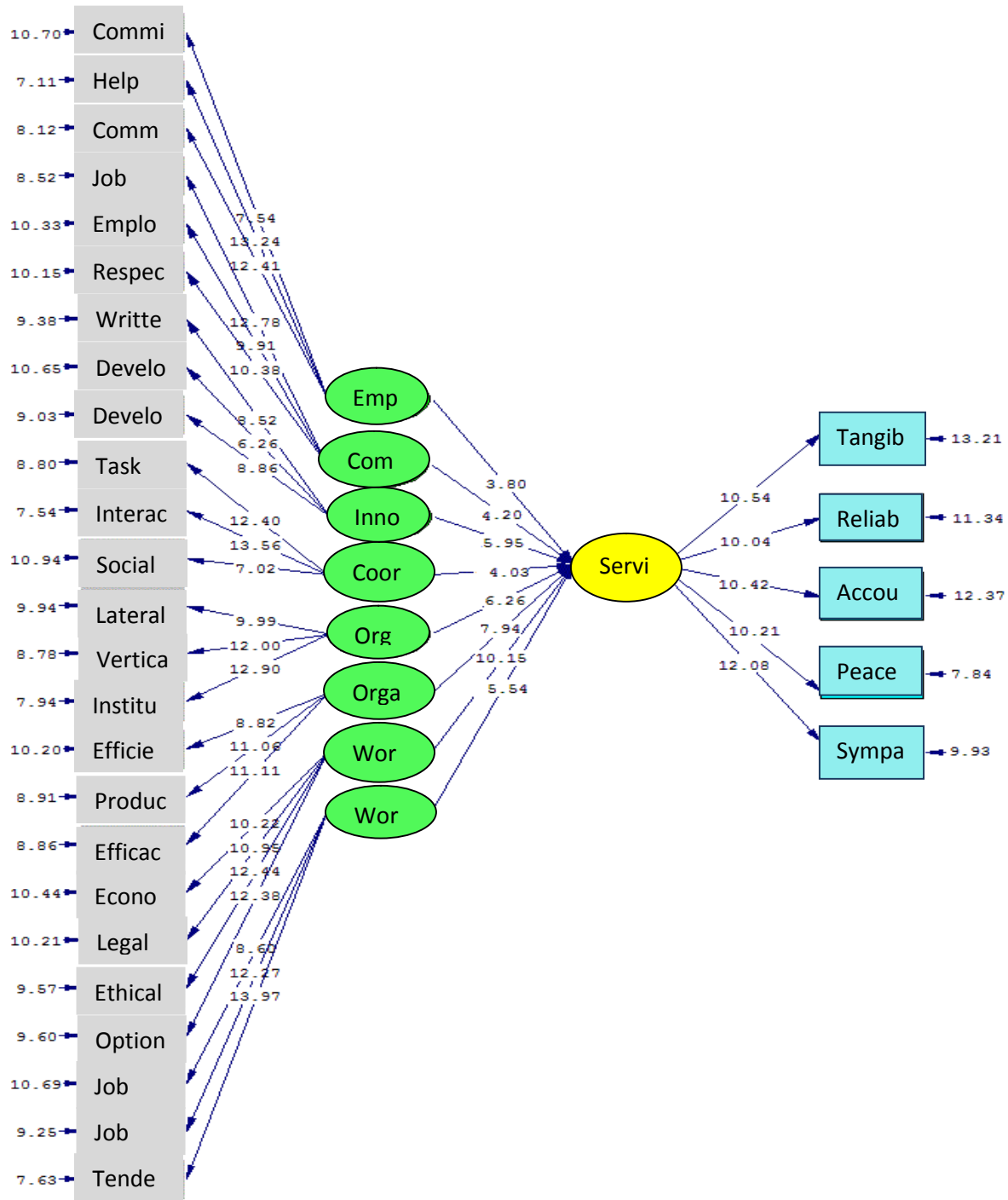
greater than the critical value of t at the error level of 5%, i.e. 1.96, indicating that the observed correlation is significant. Thus, Hypothesis 1 is confirmed.

Examination of the relationship between the components of social factors affecting service quality and service quality is shown in (Figures 3 and 4).



Chi-Square=818.64, df=378, P-value=0.05807, RMSEA=0.036

Figure 3. The results of confirmation of the final model of the relationship between the components of social factors affecting service quality and service quality



Chi-Square=818.64, df=378, P-value=0.05807, RMSEA=0.036



Figure 4. T-value statistics: The results of confirming the final model of the relationship between the components of social factors affecting the quality of services and quality of services

According to (Table 4), RMSEA is 0.036, the value of CMIN / DF is 2.165, and the value of GFI is 0.96.

Table 4. Examining the fit indices of the proposed research model

Index	Reported value	Acceptable value
RMSEA	0.036	Equal to or smaller than 1
Normed hi square (CMIN/DF)	2.165	Equal to or smaller than 3
Goodness of fit index (GFI)	0.96	Equal to or greater than 0.9
Adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI)	0.95	Equal to or greater than 0.9
Comparative fit index (CFI)	0.97	Equal to or greater than 0.9
Normed fit index (NFI)	0.96	Equal to or greater than 0.9
Tucker–Lewis index (TLI)	0.96	Equal to or greater than 0.9
Incremental fit index (IFI)	0.95	Equal to or greater than 0.9

Sub-hypotheses were tested based on (Tables 2 and 3):

Hypothesis 1-1: There is a significant relationship between employee behavior and service quality in Mazandaran municipalities.

The strength of the relationship between employee behavior and service quality is calculated as 0.38, indicating that the correlation is strong and desirable. The t-test statistic is 3.80, which is greater than the critical value of t at the error level of 5%, i.e. 1.96, showing that the observed correlation is significant.

Hypothesis 1-2: There is a significant relationship between employee competence and skills with the quality of services in the municipalities of Mazandaran.

The strength of the relationship between employee competence and skills variables with service quality is calculated as 0.42, indicating that the correlation is strong and desirable. The t-statistic of the test is 4.20, which is greater than the critical value of t at an error level of 5%, i.e. 1.96, indicating that the observed correlation is significant.

Hypothesis 1-3: There is a significant relationship between innovation in service delivery and service quality in the municipalities of Mazandaran.

The strength of the relationship between innovation and service delivery variables with service quality is calculated as 0.56, indicating that solid correlation is strong and desirable. The t-test statistic is 5.95, which is greater than the critical value of t at the error

level of 5%, i.e. 1.96, and shows that the observed correlation is significant.

Hypothesis 1.4: There is a significant relationship between organizational coordination and accountability with the quality of services in the municipalities of Mazandaran.

The strength of the relationship between organizational coordination and accountability variables with service quality is calculated as 0.40, showing a strong and desirable correlation. The t-statistic of the test is 4.03, which is greater than the critical value of t at an error level of 5%, i.e. 1.96, indicating that the observed correlation is significant.

Hypothesis 1-5: There is a significant relationship between organizational trust and service quality in Mazandaran municipalities.

The strength of the relationship between organizational trust and service quality variables is calculated as 0.66, indicating that the correlation is strong and desirable. The t-statistic is 6.26, which is greater than the critical value of t at the level of 5% error, i.e. 1.96, indicating that the observed correlation is significant.

Hypothesis 1-6: There is a significant relationship between organizational performance and service quality in municipalities of Mazandaran.

The strength of the relationship between organizational performance and service quality variables is calculated as 0.78, showing that the correlation is strong and desirable. The t-statistic of the test is 7.94, which is greater than the critical value of t at

an error level of 5%, i.e. 1.96, and shows that the observed correlation is significant.

Hypothesis 1-7: There is a significant relationship between social responsibility and service quality in the municipalities of Mazandaran.

The strength of the relationship between social responsibility variables and service quality is calculated as 0.92, indicating that the correlation is strong and desirable. The t-statistic is 10.15, which is greater than the critical value of t at the error level of 5%, i.e. 1.96, and shows that the observed correlation is significant.

Hypothesis 1.8: There is a significant relationship between employee work values and service quality in the municipalities of Mazandaran.

The strength of the relationship between the variables of employee work values and service quality is calculated as 0.52, showing that the correlation is strong and desirable. The t-test statistic is 5.54, which is larger than the critical value of t at the error level of 5%, i.e. 1.96, and shows that the observed correlation is significant.

Discussion and conclusion

According to the results, it was found that the correlation and strength of the relationship between social factors affecting the quality of services in the municipalities of Mazandaran is desirable and these results are in line with those of (Kashif et al., 2015). One of the factors involved in client satisfaction is providing services with high quality. One of the characteristics of service affairs is the inseparability of the service from its provider, and this feature shows that



in most cases, the consumer cannot and does not want to separate the service from its provider, the status and conditions of receiving services. According to this, one can state that the quality of public services in the public sector are in line with the service delivery processes that lead the customer to receive better services from the organization.

According to the results, it was shown that the correlation and strength of the relationship between employee behavior and service quality in Mazandaran municipalities is desirable and these results are in line with those of (Mirzazadeh et al., 2013). Using regular and positive employee behavior in organizations promises fundamental change in all areas. As today world cannot be guided and led without good planning, in the organizational world, the success of the organization and the provision of quality services to the customer cannot be imagined without the positive behaviors of employees. In today's world, employee positive behaviors have made usefulness and efficiency of organizations possible, especially service sector organizations and using this has caused a wide change in administrative affairs, so that the possibility of success of organizations and development of quality services is provided. According to this, one can state that the positive behavior of employees is the base for providing quality services in all organizational sectors. According to the results, the correlation and strength of the relationship between competence and skill of employees with service quality in Mazandaran municipalities

is desirable, which is in line with the results of (Hsiu-Yuan et al., 2008) and (Karimi et al., 2013). Efficient, motivated, skilled and competent human resources have a significant and fundamental role in increasing the effectiveness of any organization. Knowing the employees' level of job satisfaction helps managers develop and improve the productivity of human resources. According to the existing studies, different factors affect job satisfaction. These factors differ in the organizations depending on the size, culture, compensation system, job promotion system, production type and other environmental conditions of the organization.

According to the results, the correlation and strength of the relationship between innovation in providing quality services in the municipalities of Mazandaran is desirable, which is in line with the results of (Taheri & Mortazavi, 2013). Generally, innovation in services (given their intangibility) is more difficult than innovation in products (given their tangibility). Currently, innovation is not specific to a particular class, industry or group and covers all existing businesses. This process is seen as the most important and effective factor in creating a competitive advantage over competitors. Finding creative methods, responding to today's turbulent environment and success requires using new techniques and attitudes towards the organization, what ensures the survival, and continuity of the activities is providing desirable, safe, fast and cheap services. Thus, besides meeting the expectations and

demands of customers, they can attract their satisfaction and loyalty as well.

According to the results, the correlation and strength of the relationship between coordination and accountability with service quality in the municipalities of Mazandaran is desirable, which is in line with the results of (Rasooli et al., 2018) and (Almasi, 2019). When we understand that our customers are our business partners and that the survival and failure of our business depends on the business partners, the focus on their needs becomes a priority. Customers are no longer ordinary customers now; they are knowledgeable customers who want the highest quality and the most update product portfolio and services. Nowadays, given the rising level of customer expectations and the ability to analyze the brands and given the variety of tools, especially the Internet, the customer loyalty is declining day by day, making it harder for banks and companies.

According to the results, correlation and the strength of the relationship between organizational trust and service quality in Mazandaran municipalities is desirable and these results are in line with the results of (Mohammad Beigi, 2019) and (Smith, 2020). Creating a customer-oriented organization is one of the cornerstones of current businesses and innovation is the pillar of these organizations. Regarding the banks, offering loans, profits, attracting deposits, and offering various duplicate plans that differ only in the name of the plan are no longer attractive to customers, and on the corporate side, similar duplicate services on the sales terminal will not meet the needs of current and future customers. Thus, one

can state that organizational trust is one of the factors that can guarantee the organization quality of services.

According to the results, correlation and the strength of the relationship between organizational performance and service quality in the municipalities of Mazandaran is desirable, which is in line with the results of (Tushman & O'Reilly, 2020). At the beginning of the 21st century, the role of customer orientation in customer satisfaction becomes significant, with much attention paid to this structure and significant progress made in the last two decades. Concerning the economic activities in the world, customer-oriented attitudes are considered the main principles of business, and if goods and services meet customer expectations, they feel satisfied and by repurchasing and encouraging others to purchase, the company survives. On the other hand, if the quality of goods or services does not meet the level of customer expectations, it will lead to dissatisfaction. Evaluation of customer satisfaction should be done in a proper and coherent way. Customer satisfaction makes customers loyal to the organization and less affected by competitors, and less sensitive to price increases. Moreover, it increases the credibility and reputation of the organization and of course, causes increase in market share is more important because retaining the customer is the key to the profitability and effectiveness of the next purchase intention.

According to the results, the correlation and strength of the relationship between social responsibility and service quality in the



municipalities of Mazandaran is desirable, which is in line with the results of (Shahin & Abolhassani, 2010) and (Torabi & Mahmoudi, 2016). As organizations today try to find ways to compete more effectively in emerging markets, and in-house services have an undeniable role in orienting competition between organizations, managers' attention is drawn to in-house services that provide competitive advantages for the organization to follow. One of these types of services is information technology (IT), which accounts for a significant cost of the total costs of the organization. IT can play a critical role in the quality of government organizations as well as customer satisfaction.

According to the results, the correlation and strength of the relationship between employee work values and service quality in Mazandaran municipalities is desirable, which is in line with the results of (Afghanpour & Aghapour Hassiri, 2013). Nowadays, services are of the basic components of the global economy. The growing service economy accounts for more than 70% of employment in most developed countries. Service quality is a key factor for the growth, success and sustainability of service organizations. Organizations that take advantage of the needs, opinions and reactions of customers in the competitive environment attract important advantages, but to do so must have hard-working employees, and if the employees are happy with their job, they can provide quality services to customers and reach a competitive advantage.

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