

# A Survey of Relationship between Islamic Tolerance of Managers and Organizational Health

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## Abstract

The present study is an attempt to survey the relationship between the manager's tolerance and organizational health. The concept of tolerance, within the scope of this paper is a directional and moderate action to deal with controversial and opposite directions. The aspects of Islamic tolerance include ontological, anthropological, epistemological, and axiological foundations. The elements of organizational health are institutional unity, initiating structure, consideration, and resource support, moral and academic emphasis. Study population was comprised of 45 employees of Esfarayen University of Technology and Engineering. Research tools were a standard questionnaire of organizational and researcher-designed management's tolerance questionnaire. Data analyses were carried out using correlation and simple regression tests. The study results indicated a significant relationship between organizational health and Islamic tolerance. It was concluded, thereby, that observation of principles of tolerance in the organization boosts organizational health. In addition, maximum mean point was obtained among descriptive indices of organizational health by consideration and initiating structure and by anthropology among elements of tolerance

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## Introduction

Doubtlessly the modern world is the world of humans and those in charge of human organizations. Organizations without human are empty of meaning and cannot be managed (Behnia, 2009).

The main factor in success or failure of an organization is the management, which is in charge of guiding through current state of affairs to the desired condition. The management permanently tries to create better future. To reach the ultimate goals of the organization, the manager employs facilities and resources available. Human resource (HR) is one of these resources, which is of great importance for organizations. Decent relationships between the management and employees fill in a notable role in development and growth of the organization. Keeping and motivating the employees to stay in the organization is a key issue. Additionally, mental nature of work environment and effects of the managers' behavior on mental health of the employees are crucial factors in work environment health. Many authors now believe that health and welfare of the employees notably depends on how they are treated by the managers. Furthermore, the manager's behaviors are considered by the employees as the norm of behavior in the organization. Tolerance is one aspect of personal behavior of the managers with considerable effect on organizational health. Tolerant manager tend to have optimistic attitude toward the environment and people. Thus, there is more likelihood that they could manage negative emotions and create healthier organization.

Nowadays, we need tolerance and forbearance more than ever as the time we are living in is ample with challenges such as global economy, communication, mutual dependence, large scale

Migration, development of urbanism, and changes of social behavior norms. As different regions of the world have their own specific features and diversities, intolerance to other cultures and groups of people threatens stability. Organizations leaders have to deal with a wide and vibrant world of information, organizational complexities, and uncertainties. Mastery in dealing with such hardships is part of a successful manager or leader (Lane et al. 2004). To realize the objectives and needs of the organization, leaders and managers need to find the way to impress the employees by the way they treat them; and win their support and improve motivation and coordination among the employees. Pursuing the goals and achieving preferred results is much easier when the employees willfully adhere the leader (Pirouz et al., 2009).

In light of this introduction, managers of the organizations may find the results of studies like the present one helpful. This study is aimed to survey realization of tolerance and forbearance in Esfarayen University of Technology and Engineering. At first, we approach to the concept and theories of organizational health. Given that the principles

of ethics are of the main principles regarding organizational health, what follows is a survey of the concept of tolerance and the theories available in this regard.

### Research questions

What is the relationship between the Islamic ontological foundation of tolerance and organizational health?

What is the relationship between the Islamic anthropological foundation of tolerance and organizational health?

What is the relationship between the epistemological foundation of organizational and health?

What is the relationship between the Islamic axiological foundation of tolerance and organizational health?

The conceptual model of the study encompasses the variables organizational health (elements: institutional integrity, consideration, initiating structure, resource support, manager's influence, moral, and emphasis) and Islamic tolerance managers (elements: epistemological, ontological, anthropological, and axiological foundations). In addition, organizational health, and managers' tolerance are dependent and independent variables respectively. As shown in the model, the relationship between organizational health and tolerance are examined. In other words, we try to find out contribution of each elements of Islamic tolerance to organizational health.

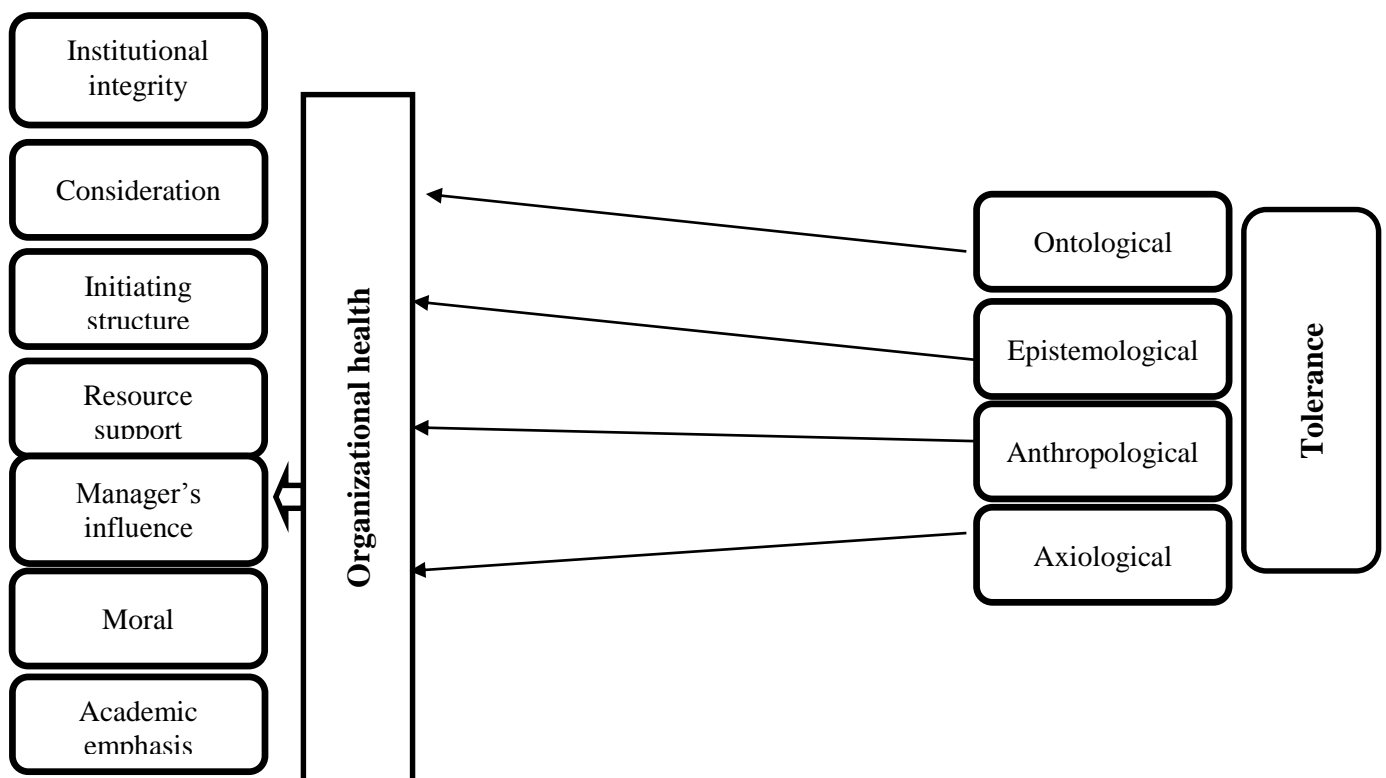


Figure 1 conceptual model

Management is the most critical factors in growth or failure of an organization. The manager leads the organization from current state to the preferred future and never stops seeking better future. To this end, the manger needs all available facilities and resources. Human resources (HR) are one of the key resources and good relationship between the manager and employees had notable effect in growth and development of the organization. Keeping and preserving employees is a critical issue. It is notable that mental nature or the work environment and influences of the way the employees are treated by the management have considerable effect in welfare of work environment. Nowadays, many authors have come to understanding that there is relationship between the manager's behavior and health and welfare of employees. Moreover, the manager's behaviors are taken as the norms in the organization. Tolerance is one aspect of personal behavior of the managers with considerable effect on organizational health. Tolerant manager tend to have optimistic attitude toward the environment and people. Thus, there is more likelihood that they could manage negative emotions and create healthier organization.

An organization undergoes a continuous endeavor of dealing with problems whether in external environment or within the organization. What is needed to overcome these problems is to determine and understand the problem and its different aspects. A healthy organization is the one that manages to reach its humanistic goals and objectives, to recognize the challenges in the way of its success, and to overcome these challenges. A healthy organization adopts realistic approaches regarding itself and its situation, while it keeps its flexibility and finds the best solution for all problems (Saatchi, 2009, p.101). The concept of positive health in an organization points the condition that facilitates development and growth of the organization or leads to organizational dynamism. The aspects of organizational health are explained in what follows.

- a. Institutional integrity: the organization has integrity in its programming.
- b. Managers' influence: the manager's capability to influence their superiors' decision. Strong manager can motivate and effectively work with their direct manager. They also keep their independence in their job.
- c. Consideration: the managers' behavior is friendly, supportive, open, and collaborative.
- d. Initiating structure: the manager's behavior is task/success-based. The manager clarifies what they expect from the training courses to the training committee and observes realization of the standards strictly.
- e. Resource support: the organization has access to required tools and managers and what is needed can be easily supplied.
- f. Moral: relationships among the employees are featured with trust, assurance, and friendship. The employees enjoy each other's company and believe that they are doing great job.

- g. Academic emphasis: learning environment is serious and well-disciplined. The employees work hard and academic success is recognized (Hoy and Miskel, 2008).

Tolerance and forbearance do not mean to accept others regardless of what they are or indifference to unfair situation, but it rather means to respect human nature of everyone (Peterson, 2003). Tolerance and forbearance is to accept other imperfection and weaknesses. Tolerance and forbearance is a way of thinking and feeling and a way of doing things. Tolerance and forbearance means showing respect toward others who are not like us (UNESCO, 1995).

The term “clemency” clearly illustrates what we mean by tolerance. Clemency means to cope unwanted and bitter situations and events while they could be avoided. Rather than accepting and remaining indifferent to unwanted behaviors, tolerance means to accept people the way they are.

In light of what mentioned above, one definition of tolerance is “a directional and moderate action to deal with controversial and opposite directions” (Bagheri, 2010). Two key elements are evident in this definition; 1- directional and 2- moderate reaction to controversial directions. The definition sounds right only with these two elements. Without the first one (directional), it means that the individual has no direction himself and ready to move along whatever direction; likewise, we miss the point without the second element (moderation reaction to controversial directions) as a tolerate person can deal moderately with controversial beliefs and ideas. This feature of tolerance is characterized with emotional and rational aspects. The emotional aspect of moderation reaction indicates decorum and dignity and the rational aspect highlights that the logical bases of others’ viewpoint is not forgotten.

International organizations put great deal of emphasis on tolerance; so that UNESCO declared 1955 as “the year of tolerance” (UNESCO, 1995). Tolerance is about seeing high humanistic values. A tolerant person establishes positive relationship with others and demonstrates humanistic behaviors. They always try to create better environment for themselves and others (Karaman, 2009). Tolerance and forbearance helps the one to let go of ethnocentrism. People with ethnocentrism attitudes only find their own culture and beliefs valuable and neglect those of others. Such people find other people with different culture as inferiors (Slocum et al., 2007, p. 13). Some scholars believe that tolerance is a principle of religion rooted in the Holy Quran and the Tradition (Morovati, 2006, p.67). The Holy Quran explains that the key of success and public acceptance of the prophet’s call was his good manner, openness, tolerance, and never dictating strict and harsh rules (Nasr Esfahani et al., 2007). The importance of tolerance of the leader is considered so high that in a narration from prophet Mohammad (PBUH), tolerance is equivalent of promoting the prophet’s call (Farzanehpour, 2009).

Leniency and tolerance are one of the essential tools of leadership and management (Pirouz et al., 2009). As noted in the definition of leadership, it is the outcome of the leader’s influence on behaviors of the employees toward realization of their organizational tasks (Alagheband, 2007). Because of this, having influence on others demands different tools and people can be influenced through different ways. One of the

ways to manipulate others' behavior according to desired codes and principles is tolerance and leniency (Pirouz et al., 2009). Imam Sadigh (PBUH) states that tolerance and leniency adds to social position and aggression degrades social image (Harati, 2003). By tolerance and leniency one can reach peoples' heart and such influence is the most effective way of influencing people (Pirouz et al., 2009). In short, what is inferred from Islamic narrations and verses of Quran is that Islam is the religion of tolerance, leniency, and forbearance (Kadivar, 2009). Therefore, an Islamic manager is expected to be tolerant and lenient.

From Islamic viewpoint, a tolerant, patient, and forbearing person adopts specific ontological, epistemological, anthropological, and axiological attitudes. This indicates that internalization of characteristics such as tolerance must be done by preparing ontological, epistemological, anthropological, axiological beds. Different aspects of tolerance are explained in the following section (Bagheri, 2010).

The main ontological basis of tolerance is an image of the world in which mercy is a principle. That is, the universe was created by God's mercy and the world dynamics and function is to reach God's mercy and God never stops extending His mercy to the universe.<sup>1</sup> While God never stop extending His mercy, why we should not be like that? When the whole universe is created by God's mercy, we have no reason to build our world based on aggression, anger, and hatred.

Based on what mentioned, a tolerant individual adopts a mercy-based ontology and adopts to be tolerant in his attempt to coordinate with this ontology. To elaborate on leniency and good manner of prophet Mohammad, which, among many, emerges as a tolerance, Gods explains that tolerance is rooted in God's mercy " Al e Imran 159- It is part of the Mercy of Allah that thou dost deal gently with them Wert

Thou severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about thee: so

Pass over [Their faults], and ask for [Allah's] forgiveness for them; and

Consult them in affairs [of moment]. Then, when thou hast taken a decision put

Thy trust in Allah. For Allah loves those who put their trust [in Him].

Thereby, given the basis of Islam prophet's way of tolerance, one may conclude that the key to promote tolerance in management methods is to find mercy-based ontology and to try to coordinate with such ontology.

Tolerant attitude of Islam prophet has another basis, which highlights specific image and perception of human. Being tolerant to people entails specific perception of man; as being arrogant also needs specific perception of man. Three elements can be named for tolerance from anthropological basis including nature, innate disposition, and group identity.

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<sup>1</sup> Al Raham 29, Of Him seeks [its need] every creature in the heavens and on earth: every Day in [new] Splendor doth He [shine]!

Regarding the first element, man tends to walk toward goodness based on his natural desires. Therefore, there is no need for force and dictation. The second element refers to cognitive and natural features of man's nature. Man feels the nature by his body and tries to be part of the nature. Man's dependence on nature makes him susceptible to the environment's temptation. In this regard, man can be considered as weak creature and because of this, he is never immune to hazards and temptations. Thus, given that man naturally may and will make mistake and misled, tolerance in deal with man is essential. Eventually, the third element of anthropological bases of man is his group identity. This element makes man accustomed to social traditions so that different traditions have created considerably different groups of people over time. Dealing with the difference entails tolerance even when the traditions are wrong and unacceptable. It is too hard and even impossible to suddenly stop the traditional way of life and adopt new one.

Before discussing this viewpoint, two key points must be discussed. For one thing, what is right is right and what is wrong is wrong. We do not mean that tolerance is to accept a wrong deed, but indeed a tolerant person does not hesitate to reject what is wrong. For another, from epistemological viewpoint, tolerance means that right and wrong exist in people minds and thought systems, while they are not misplaced. This mixture of right and wrong constitutes the mainstream of the intellectualism that leads to tolerance. Thereby, one may not reject all ideas other than their own without reflecting on them. Otherwise, we throw out the good points that most likely can be found in any opposing idea. The point is that right ideas must be confirmed no matter where they are found. This justifies why people and systems of thoughts must treat different ideas with tolerance so that not only acceptable ideas are recognized but also a way to tell right from wrong is developed. Additionally, emphasizing and accepting correct elements of others' thoughts helps them to overcome the wrong elements of their thoughts.

The last but not least foundation of tolerant education system is its value from aesthetic viewpoint. Tolerance has great aesthetic values, which is nowhere close to hatred and extreme radicalism or indifference and negligence.

Aesthetics of tolerant manner of an Islamic manager emerges at three stages of communication, termination of communication, and after termination. At communication stage, the manager relies on facts not on zeal and prejudice. At termination, the manager decides to stop and leave the communication when they find that continuing the conversation is useless. Termination of communication can also be free of anger and hatred. Finally, at after termination stage, the manager deals with thoughts and image of the person with controversial ideas. Tolerance still exists at this stage and the manager keeps having positive thoughts, about those who disagree with him.

## **Methodology**

Study population was an accessible and purposefully selected group of employees and members of the board of faculty, Esfarayen University of Technology and Engineering (n = 45). Given the subject of the study and variables under study, the required data to test the hypotheses were collected using questionnaires (Ohio et al.'s Organizational Health Questionnaire and a researcher-design tolerance questionnaire). Data analyses were carried out using correlation and regression tests.

The results of descriptive statistics tests showed that anthropological element among the elements of tolerance had the highest mean point. One explanation of this is that the participants tend to accept probable mistakes done by human and treat their employees with tolerance. That is they do not possess negative images of man and find no reason to keep supervising their employees permanently. In addition, the managers under study believed that the employees naturally have the motivation to work well, and thus, there is no need for introducing harsh and strict regulations. They also knew that bad behaviors do not change by force or in short run.

Among the elements of organizational health, consideration and initiating structure, with small difference, had the highest mean point. High mean point of consideration indicates that managers of the organization are usually warm-hearted and passionate and treat their colleagues as their friends. In addition, the participating managers tended to pay attention to their employees' ideas and recommendations. They also emphasized on welfare of their employees. Furthermore, high mean point of initiating structure highlighted that the managers have had a set of specific rules regarding performance of their employees and ask them to observe the specific codes of action. They explicitly mentioned what they expect from their employees. Furthermore, the managers did their jobs according time schedule. Summary of the hypotheses tests are listed in Table 1.

Table 1 Summary of the hypotheses

Hypotheses	Test	Result
Relationship between tolerance and organizational health	Correlation analysis	Supported
Strength of relationship between ontological elements of tolerance and organizational health	Regression analysis	Supported
Strength of relationship between anthropological elements of tolerance and organizational health	Regression analysis	Supported
Strength of relationship between epistemological elements of tolerance and organizational health	Regression analysis	Supported
Strength of relationship between axiological elements of tolerance and organizational health	Regression analysis	Supported

**H<sub>1</sub>:** there is a relationship between the elements of tolerance and organizational health.

The Spearman Correlation test showed a significant relationship between tolerance and organizational health. This shows that the principle of tolerance and forbearance is considerably effective on organizational health so that, the higher the tolerance of the manager, the healthier the organization.



Table2 Relationship between tolerance and organizational health

Organizational health / Tolerance		Emphasis	Moral	resource support	initiating structure	Consideration	manager's influence	Institutional integrity
Axiological	R	0.549**	0.507**	0.424**	0.353**	0.267	0.419**	0.217
	Sig	0.000	0.000	0.004	0.017	0.076	0.004	0.151
anthropological	R	0.421**	0.280	0.196	0.411	0.453**	0.491**	0.390
	Sig	0.004	0.062	0.196	0.005	0.002	0.001	0.008
Ontological	R	0.640*	0.719**	0.369**	0.471	0.394	0.428**	0.311**
	Sig	0.000	0.000	0.013	0.000	0.007	0.003	0.038
Epistemological	R	0.340*	0.348**	0.361*	0.147	0.259	0.136	0.110
	Sig	0.022	0.019	0.015	0.336	0.085	0.371	0.473

**H<sub>2</sub>:** ontological elements of Islamic tolerance can predict organizational health.

Results of simple regression showed that there is a significant relationship, with coefficient of 0.594, between ontological elements of tolerance and organizational health ( $p < 5\%$ ). That is, 0.594% of changes in organizational health can be explained by changes of ontological element of tolerance. One may conclude that good will and positive thinking of the participating managers have considerable effect in organizational health. In addition, sympathy, altruism, and tendency to neglect mistake of the employees were notable among the managers under study. In other words, high organizational health of the university is not due to eagerness and greed of the managers.

Table 3 Relationship between anthropological elements of tolerance and organizational health

Decision Variable	Model	R	T	Beta	Std. Error	B	Sig
Institutional integrity	(Constant)1	.097	6.389	.311	.344	2.134	.000
	Ontological		2.144		.98	.211	.038
manager's influence	(Constant)1	.227	4.450	.477	.404	1.798	.000
	Ontological		3.555		.119	.422	.001
Consideration	(Constant)1	.178	4.920	.421	.633	1.783	.000
	Ontological		4.120		.186	.567	.000
initiating structure	(Constant)1	.283	4.920	.532	.568	2.133	.000
	Ontological		4.120		.167	.225	.000
resource support	(Constant)1	.213	1.965	.461	.568	1.117	.056
	Ontological		3.409		.167	.570	.001
Moral	(Constant)1	.465	.195	.682	.504	.098	.846
	Ontological		6.118		.148	.906	.000
Emphasis	(Constant)1	.466	3.380	.683	.377	1.276	.002
	Ontological		6.130		.111	.680	.000

**H<sub>3</sub>:** anthropological elements of Islamic tolerance can predict organizational health.

Results of simple regression showed that there is a significant relationship, with coefficient of 0.442, between anthropological elements of tolerance and organizational health ( $p < 5\%$ ). That is, 0.442% of changes in organizational health can be explained by changes of anthropological element of tolerance. One may conclude that philanthropic behaviors of the participants led to higher organizational health. For instance, the managers knew that human has a set of needs or that he may and will make a mistake. They also perceived human as a creative and innovative being, which meant that there is no need for permanent supervision as if human is naturally an evil creature. Given that organizational health is influenced by anthropological aspect of tolerance, philanthropic managers are more effective on organizational health.

Table4 relationship between anthropological elements of tolerance and organizational Health

Decision Variable	Model	R	T	Beta	Std. Error	B	Sig
Institutional integrity	(Constant)1		4.916	0.390	0.371	1.822	0.000
	Anthropological	0.152	2.777		0.108	.301	0.008
manager's influence	(Constant)1		3.350	0.491	0.459	1.537	0.002
	Anthropological	0.241	3.695		0.134	0.495	0.001
Consideration	(Constant)1		1.873	0.453	0.713	1.336	0.068
	Anthropological	0.205	3.330		0.208	0.694	0.002
initiating structure	(Constant)1		4.057	0.471	0.517	2.098	0.000
	Anthropological	0.222	3.503		0.151	0.529	0.001
resource support	(Constant)1		1.760	0.385	0.677	1.192	0.086
	Anthropological	0.148	2.734		0.198	0.541	0.009
Moral	(Constant)1		.195	0.682	0.504	0.098	0.846
	Anthropological	0.465	6.118		0.148	0.0906	0.000
Emphasis	(Constant)1		2.581	0.610	0.496	1.210	0.013
	Anthropological	0.373	5.053		0.127	0.692	0.000

**H<sub>4</sub>:** epistemological elements of Islamic tolerance can predict organizational health.

Results of simple regression showed that there is a significant relationship between epistemological elements of tolerance and organizational health. That is, 0.102% of changes in organizational health can be explained by epistemological element of tolerance. Managers in the organization under study paid attention to the decision made by their employees as they believed that by doing so, their employees develop their knowledge and can make better decisions after receiving feedbacks.

Table 5 Relationship between epistemological elements of tolerance and organizational health

Decision Variable	Model	R	T	Beta	Std. Error	B	Sig
Institutional integrity	(Constant)1	0.012	8.395	0.110	0.312	2.616	0.000
	epistemological		.723		0.092	0.301	0.473
manager's influence	(Constant)1	0.029	6.832	0.170	0.404	2.761	0.000
	epistemological		1.128		0.120	0.135	0.206
Consideration	(Constant)1	0.067	4.391	0.259	0.601	2.461	0.000
	epistemological		1.761		0.178	0.313	0.085
initiating structure	(Constant)1	0.022	7.644	0.147	0.452	3.452	0.000
	Epistemological		.974		0.134	0.130	0.336
resource support	(Constant)1	0.056	3.874	0.237	0.557	2.151	0.000
	Epistemological		1.596		0.164	0.262	0.118
Moral	(Constant)1	0.130	2.965	0.361	0.573	1.699	0.005
	Epistemological		2.538		0.169	0.430	0.015
Emphasis	(Constant)1	0.029	6.694	0.170	0.454	3.039	0.000
	Epistemological		1.132		0.134	0.152	0.264

**H<sub>5</sub>:** axiological elements of Islamic tolerance can predict organizational health.

Results of simple regression showed that there is a significant relationship between axiological elements of tolerance and organizational health. That is, 0.324% of changes in organizational health can be explained by changes of axiological element of tolerance. This result indicates that humanistic values (e.g. forgiveness, communicating instead of stubbornness) were respected in the organization. In addition, hatred and revenge were barely found among the managers as they admired values such forgiveness and remission.

### Conclusion

Health of any organization is influenced by the managers' manner. Some indices of tolerance and forbearance among managers are optimism, optimistic attitude to the environment, prioritizing mercy and affection over anger and outrage, adopting realistic viewpoint toward human and accepting that man can make mistake or be reckless, respecting human liberty and avoiding dictating regulations as possible, respecting different ideas and seeing positive points in others' ideas, good and friendly manner, refusing to use force and aggression, paying attention to fairness and justice, ruling the hearts by good manner, never insulting others, being humble in the way they treat others, clemency, and patience. Clearly, negligence of these indices influences organizational health

Based on what discussed above, it can be concluded that for further development and growth in the modern world organizations need to pay more attention to their human forces and social capital. The principle of tolerance as a personality trait and characteristic of manager can have key role in organizational health.

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