ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The studies described in this thesis were performed at B.N. Bahadur Institute of Management Sciences, University of Mysore, Mysore, India. While conducting this research project I received support from many people in one way or another, without whose support, this thesis would not have been completed in its present form. This thesis could not have been completed without the support of several people both from within my family and outside. It is my pleasure to take this opportunity to thank all of you, without the intention or possibility to be complete. I would like to apologize to those I do not mention by name here; however, I highly valued their kind support.

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest appreciation and sincere gratitude to my wife Mrs. Somayeh Karkhaneh, without whose whole love, unconditional support and patience and encouragement, I would never have been able to realize my dreams pursuing doctoral studies and submit the thesis.

My sincere gratitude also goes to my dissertation supervisor Prof. Aisha M. Sheriff, for her continuous guidance, unfailing support, and encouragement throughout my doctoral study. Her wisdom and patience helped me overcome any situation or problem which initially might seem impossible to solve.

I would like to express my deeply thank to all the managers of the firms who participated in the study for their valuable time and feedback on the survey instrument and provided me with the data.

Most importantly, I owe a special gratitude to my family – specially my father, my mother – for their continuous and arduous endeavor in helping, advising and encouraging me through all of this.

Alireza Akhoundi