

THE EFFECT OF NATIONAL EVENTS AND HOLIDAYS ON AMBIENT PM_{2.5} CONCENTRATIONS

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ARTICLE INFORMATION

Article Chronology:

Received 25 April 2018
Revised 21 May 2018
Accepted 17 June 2018
Published 29 June 2018

Keywords:

Norooz; PM_{2.5}; holidays; Tehran

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ABSTRACT:

Introduction: The aim of this study was to evaluate the effect of national events and holidays on PM_{2.5} concentrations in Tehran megacity. **Materials and methods:** Air quality data were collected from Tehran Air Quality Control Company (TAQCC) over a period of four years, 2012 – 2015, then data from 10 air quality monitoring stations were processed using R- 3.3.3. The Iranian New year, Ashura and Eid al - Fitr were the national events that considered to study. To compare the daily mean PM_{2.5} concentrations in Norooz holidays and other days of spring, the Mann - Whitney test and difference in PM_{2.5} concentrations in each season were investigated with Kruskal-Wallis test.

Results: In Norooz holidays, the daily mean PM_{2.5} concentrations in comparison with other spring days were decreased significantly ($P_{\text{value}} < 0.001$). The same decreasing occurred for 10 first days of Muharram too ($P_{\text{value}} < 0.01$) but the daily PM_{2.5} concentrations during Ramadan days were significantly higher than that of summer days ($P_{\text{value}} < 0.001$). Based on Kruskal-Wallis test the difference in PM_{2.5} concentrations between seasons was significant and only between summer-autumn ($P_{\text{value}} > 0.05$) and winter-summer ($P_{\text{value}} > 0.05$) was not.

Conclusions: The effect of holidays on PM_{2.5} concentration was not observed in summer, however it was an effect in autumn. In addition the concentration of PM_{2.5} was not influenced by holidays in winter regarding the thermal inversion and stability of air.

INTRODUCTION

Air pollutants may be in the form of solids, liquids and gases which are produced naturally and by man - made activities [1, 2]. Human activities and sources can release air pollutants through motor

vehicles traffic, industry, power plants, transportation and domestic fossil fuels [3]. Currently, in most countries, air pollution caused by transportation is the most important environmental concerns [4]. However, a few efforts have been done

to specify the contribution of different sources in air pollution by studies in some cities. Particulate matters as one of the main air pollutants, are mostly emitted by transportation and vehicles, causing economic and health - related problems. Particulate matters can result many health risks in some areas without natural ventilation regarding the topography of district.

Tehran is a high - altitude city with the approximately population close to 8 million people and a land area of about 2,300 km². People are facing to large amount of air pollutants, especially particulate matter less than 2.5 μm . This city is surrounded by mountains with an elevation of about 1000 - 3800 m located in north - south and east which exacerbate air pollution. [3, 5-8]. In addition, it has been proved that many customs and traditions can have impact on urban air pollution so that culture plays an important role in emission of air pollutants in urban air quality. Many studies have focused on influence of people participation in the traditions resulting increase of air pollution. For example, in a study conducted in east of China during the harvesting, a direct relationship between burning residual of crops and increasing the concentration PM_{2.5} was observed [9-13]. Seasonal characteristics can cause severe changes in concentration of air pollutants, therefore, it should be considered and managed by administrators and authorities. Due to changes in concentration of pollutants, identifying behavioral patterns of pollutants in different seasons can help the management of pollutants concentration. These changes can vary from one year to the next year, associated mostly with changes in weather conditions [14]. Several studies have found that concentration of air pollutants in holidays are less than the other days. This reduction usually appears over the weekends [15-21]. The aim of this study was to evaluate the effect of national

events (Norooz holidays), Ramadan moon and Ashora days on concentration of PM_{2.5} in Tehran. Therefore forecasting the concentration of pollutants can be possible and helps to which decision should be made in high polluted days of next years.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In case of gathering and processing of air quality data, Real-time hourly concentrations of PM_{2.5} were obtained from 21 air quality monitoring stations (AQMSs) in Tehran during 2012 – 2015; all AQMSs were belonged to Tehran Air Quality Control Company (TAQCC). The air pollutant data measured at AQMSs are publicly available in Internet. At each AQMSs, PM_{2.5} are measured using the beta - attenuation method. Daily average concentrations were calculated by the hourly data when more than 75 % of the data per day were valid measurements. Hourly concentration of pollutant was calculated for each air pollutant by averaging all available data of the selected monitoring stations. This cross sectional study was conducted by gathering data from Tehran Air Quality Control Company (TAQCC). Data of 2012 to 2015 were obtained and analyzed by R-3.3.3. In the current study, events such as Norooz (New Year holidays), 10 first days of Muharram and Ramadan were considered which have effects on the quality of life significantly. The seasonal concentration of PM_{2.5} and the effect of traditional holidays on its concentration have been shown by figures.

The Mann-Whitney test was used to compare the mean PM_{2.5} concentration in each event with the other days. Difference in PM_{2.5} concentration in each season was investigated with Kruskal - Wallis test. Eventually, ultimate effect of holidays (one day, two days or more than two days) on the concentration of PM_{2.5} has been examined.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Norooz (Iranian new year holidays)

The Iranian new year or spring festival is one of the most important holiday for the Iranian people. The Festival generally begins at first day of spring and end of the 13th day. During Norooz holidays, government departments, schools and universities are closed. Therefore, most of people living in Tehran travel to the other cities of the country.

In most days of the year, there is a heavy traffic in Tehran, but it is not observed in Norooz holidays. The effect of new year holidays on $PM_{2.5}$ concentration in Tehran is shown in Fig. 1.

Regarding the daily changes in $PM_{2.5}$ concentration during the study period (2012 - 2015), it can be concluded that the $PM_{2.5}$ concentration in the mentioned holidays decreases to its lowest amount compared to the other days of a year.

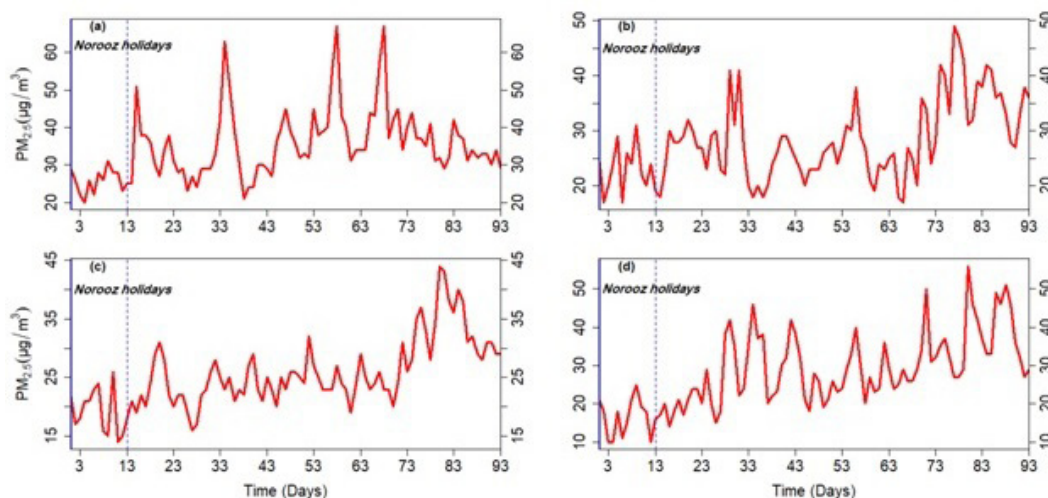


Fig. 1. Spring $PM_{2.5}$ changes in Tehran, in years 2012(a), 2013 (b), 2014 (c) and 2015 (d)

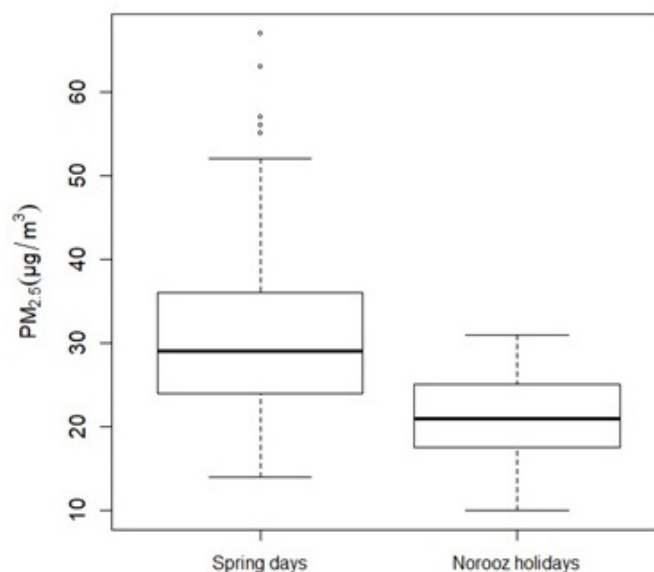


Fig. 2. Box plot of $PM_{2.5}$ concentrations of Tehran in Norooz compared to spring days

A box plot was used to compare the effect of Norooz holidays on $PM_{2.5}$ concentration. As shown in Fig. 2, the mean concentration during Norooz is lower than the other days of spring which represents the holidays effect on reducing the concentration of these particles. To show the effects of this holiday on $PM_{2.5}$ concentration the Mann-Whitney test was applied in order to compare the mean of two groups (Norooz holidays and other days of spring) for $PM_{2.5}$ concentration. Based on the Mann-Whitney test analysis, the $PM_{2.5}$ concentrations ($P_{\text{value}} < 0.001$) varied significantly in Norooz holidays ($20.88 \mu\text{g} / \text{m}^3$) compared to the other days of spring ($30.31 \mu\text{g} / \text{m}^3$).

Ramadan

Ramadan is one of the Islamic holy months in a year. It varies from 29 to 30 days. Fasting during Ramadan is an obligation during daylight and it has been mentioned in the Quran [22]. It is a religious event in Iran. Ramadan days effect on people activities and reduce unnecessary actions. Fig. 3 shows the effect of Ramadan on concentration of $PM_{2.5}$ in Tehran during the study years. Studying the changes in Ramadan shows that in the last days which coincides with the Eid al - Fitr, $PM_{2.5}$ concentration reduced, However, dust storms occurred in summer increased the concentration of $PM_{2.5}$ in some days.

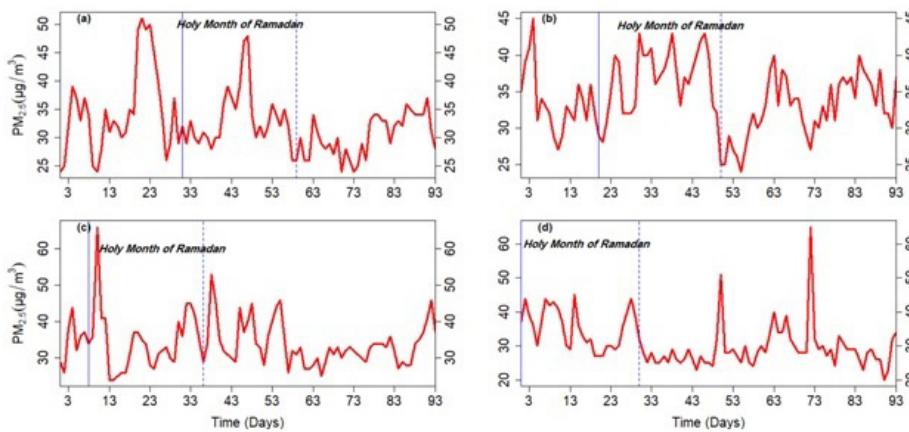


Fig. 3. Summer $PM_{2.5}$ changes in Tehran, in years 2012(a), 2013 (b), 2014 (c) and 2015 (d)

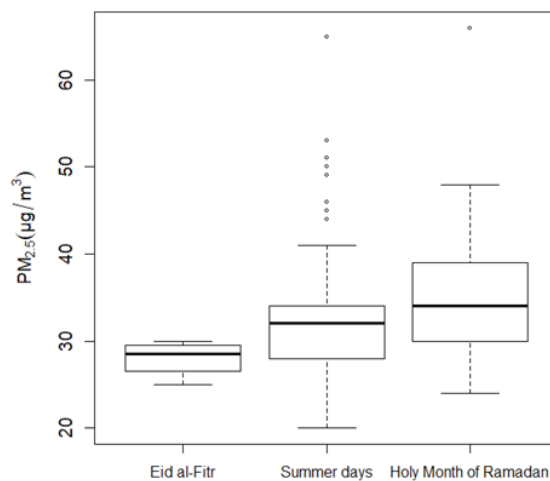


Fig. 4. Box plot of $PM_{2.5}$ concentrations of Tehran in Ramadan compared to summer days

Fig. 4 shows the box plots used to determine the effect of Ramadan on the $PM_{2.5}$ in Tehran. According to Fig. 4, the mean of $PM_{2.5}$ during Ramadan is higher compared to the other summer days. The main reason is dust storms during Ramadan, which caused lots of fluctuations in $PM_{2.5}$ concentration. Therefore, the $PM_{2.5}$ during Ramadan days has not been reduced, but also observed more. The Mann - Whitney test compares the mean of the two groups (the month of Ramadan and other summer days) for $PM_{2.5}$ concentrations. Statistical results using Mann - Whitney test showed significant differences in the mean of $PM_{2.5}$ levels between holy month of Ramadan and the other summer days ($P_{\text{value}} < 0.001$) with 95 %

significance. The mean concentration levels was ($M = 32.2 \mu\text{g} / \text{m}^3$, $SD = 6$ in summer days; $M = 34.6 \mu\text{g} / \text{m}^3$, $SD = 6.32$ holy month of Ramadan).

Muharram

Muharram is another lunar month which is special to Muslims for the Ashura in Karbala. Mourning ceremony is held on 10 first days of Muharram and most of people participate in this ceremony especially on days 9th and 10th of Muharram which are holidays. Fig. 3 shows the effect of 10 first days of Muharram on $PM_{2.5}$ in Tehran. According to Fig. 3, it can be seen that in the last days of Muharram (days 9th and 10th), $PM_{2.5}$ concentrations can be as little as possible which is mostly due to the final two days of the Muharram.

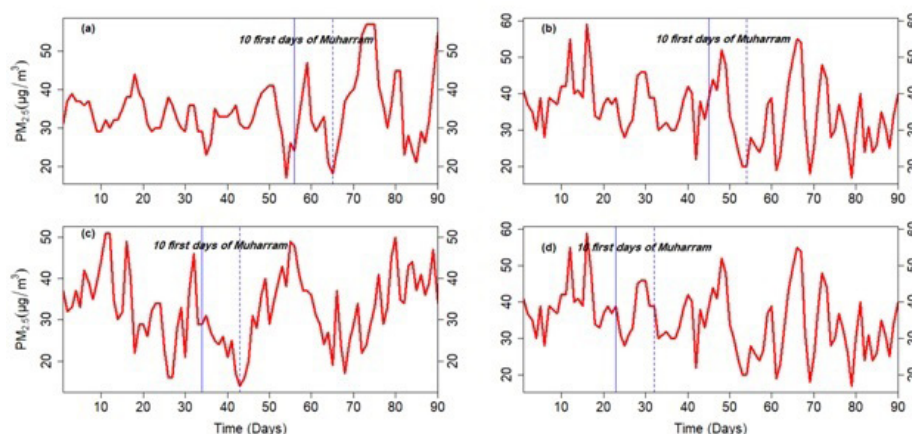


Fig. 5. Autumn $PM_{2.5}$ changes in Tehran, in years 2012 (a), 2013 (b), 2014 (c) and 2015 (d)

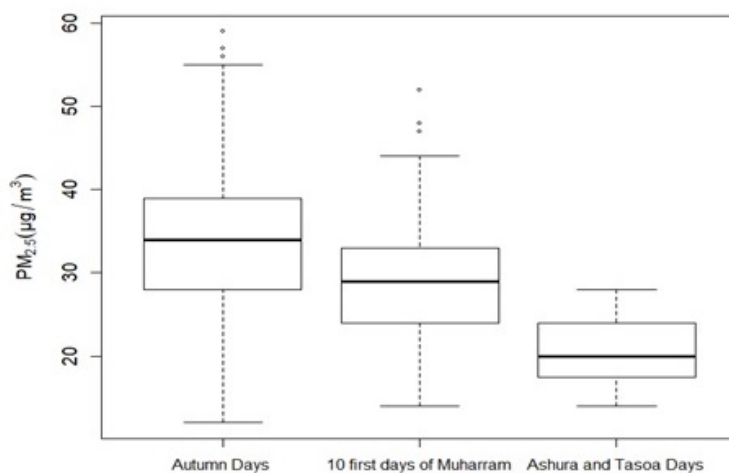


Fig. 6. Box plot of $PM_{2.5}$ concentrations of Tehran in Ashura compared to autumn days

In order to determine the effect of Ashura on $PM_{2.5}$ in Tehran's, a box plot was used as shown in Fig. 6. The mean concentration of $PM_{2.5}$ in Ashura is lower than the mean concentration of the other autumn days. Considering that the highest thermal inversions occur during autumn and winter, high concentration of particulate matters is usually observed. The occurrence of Ashura in autumn has reduced the $PM_{2.5}$, which represents the culture and customs of the people in Muharram and Ashura. The Mann - Whitney test compares the mean of two groups (10 first days of Muharram and other autumn days) for $PM_{2.5}$ concentration. Statistical results using Mann-Whitney test showed significant differences in the mean $PM_{2.5}$ levels between 10 first days of Muharram and other autumn days ($P_{value} < 0.01$) with 95 % significance. The mean concentration levels was ($M = 34.18 \mu\text{g} / \text{m}^3$, $SD = 8.9$ in autumn days; $M = 30 \mu\text{g} / \text{m}^3$, $SD = 8.7$ 10 first days of Muharram). Fig. 7 compares the effect of events on $PM_{2.5}$ concentrations during the study period. As can clearly be seen in the Fig. 7, the highest effect of event on $PM_{2.5}$ concentrations was shown during

Ashora and Tasoa days, whereas the lowest effect was found over the month of Ramadan. The median $PM_{2.5}$ concentrations on Ashora and Tasoa days and Ramadan were 20 and $34 \mu\text{g} / \text{m}^3$ respectively.

Effect of season on $PM_{2.5}$

Air pollution in Tehran is usually caused by a variety of sources, but the main source is fuel combustion in motor vehicles. Several studies have reported that the ignition of vehicles is the main source of particulate matters in Tehran. Since the vehicle traffics are usually fluctuated during weekdays and are usually less at weekends, emissions of $PM_{2.5}$ will be less at weekends. The level of emission can be different in seasons. Fig. 7 represents the effect of seasons according to the information obtained from Tehran Air Quality Control from 2012 to 2015. Fig. 7 indicates that the concentration of $PM_{2.5}$ in the spring is less than the other seasons during the mentioned four years and plot mean is lower than general mean ($30.45 \mu\text{g} / \text{m}^3$). The overall range of concentrations of $PM_{2.5}$ is between 15 to $60 \mu\text{g} / \text{m}^3$ in spring be-

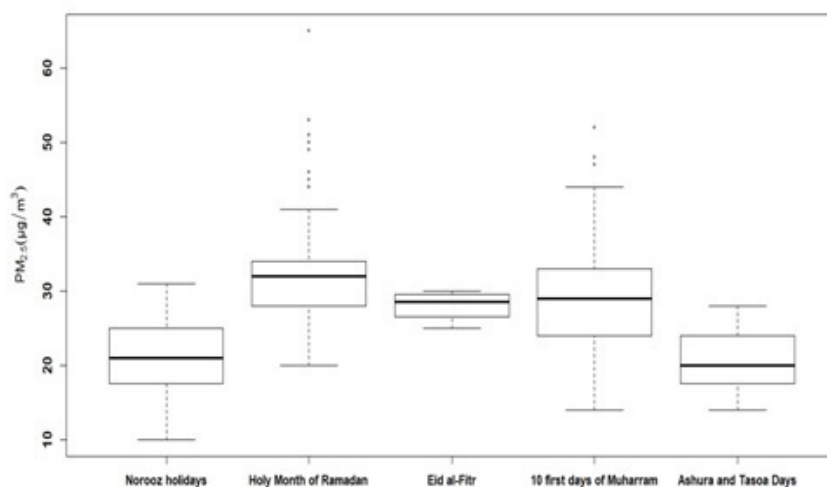


Fig. 7. Box plot of $PM_{2.5}$ concentrations of Tehran in all events

cause of the unstable conditions. In summer, plot mean is higher than general mean ($34.15 \mu\text{g} / \text{m}^3$), so $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ concentrations is higher than spring and daily range of $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ is 25 to $60 \mu\text{g} / \text{m}^3$). Increasing this value in summer is more than spring due to the seasonal dust storms. In the autumn, data mean is consistent with general mean ($33.54 \mu\text{g} / \text{m}^3$) but most of the data recorded in this season is in the range between 35 to $60 \mu\text{g} / \text{m}^3$.

Due to the thermal inversion and stable conditions in winter, pollution concentrations are much higher than the other seasons and the data mean is

more than general mean ($35.64 \mu\text{g} / \text{m}^3$). The concentration of $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ is between 30 to $60 \mu\text{g} / \text{m}^3$ in winter. Kruskal - Wallis test was used to compare difference in $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ concentration in each season. The results are shown in Table 1 and Fig. 8

A combination of box plots, density plot, and rug plot is used. The long line on each bean is the mean of observations, the short black bars represents each data point, and the shape of the bean is a mirrored density curve. The dotted horizontal line across the plot is set to overall mean [23].

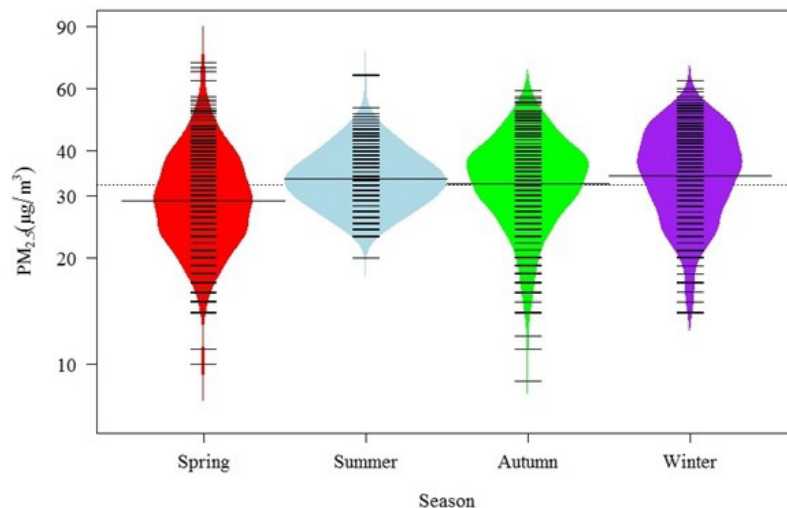


Fig. 8. Seasonal concentration of $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ bean plot in the air of Tehran, 2012 to 2015

Table 1. The Kruskal-Wallis test analysis for seasonal of $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ concentrations

Season	Obs.dif	Critical.dif	Difference
Autumn-Spring	207.85122	90.70397	TRUE
Autumn-Summer	36.99887	90.65271	FALSE
Autumn-Winter	99.38488	90.65271	TRUE
Spring-Summer	244.85009	90.70397	TRUE
Spring-Winter	307.23610	90.70397	TRUE
Summer-Winter	62.38600	90.65271	FALSE

*($P < 0.05$) values were based on Kruskal-Wallis test

Based on Kruskal - Wallis test analysis the difference in $PM_{2.5}$ concentrations in seasons were significant (spring - autumn, $P_{value} < 0.05$; winter-autumn, $P_{value} < 0.05$ and summer-spring and winter - spring $P_{value} < 0.05$), but only between summer-autumn ($P_{value} > 0.05$) and winter-summer ($P_{value} > 0.05$) was not significant.

Holidays effect on $PM_{2.5}$ concentrations according to seasons

As Thursdays and Fridays in Iran are holidays, it is expected that traffic would be low over the weekend, and concentration of $PM_{2.5}$ decreases. Table 1 listed daily descriptive statistical parameters in each season and the effect of holidays on the parameters.

In the spring, the mean concentration of $PM_{2.5}$ was approximately $30.45 \mu\text{g} / \text{m}^3$, while on holi-

days the mean of particle concentration is $29 \mu\text{g} / \text{m}^3$. It means that holidays in spring time can reduce the concentration of these particles about 6.38 %. If the holiday is two days or more, the mean concentration is $25 \mu\text{g} / \text{m}^3$. It means that in the spring the concentration of $PM_{2.5}$ decreased by value of 18.43 %. The impact of holidays by one day and two days off are the same in summer and can reduce the concentration of $PM_{2.5}$ almost 2.76 %. In autumn the effect of holidays on concentration reduction is 2.29 % and if the holiday is over two days, the effect is 14.5 %. Due to cold weather and stable conditions in winter, holidays don't have any positive effect on reducing the concentration of $PM_{2.5}$, but just if the holiday is over two days, the mean reduction in the concentration of $PM_{2.5}$ is 9.85 %.

Table 2. Descriptive statistical analysis of $PM_{2.5}$ in normal days, holidays and holidays over two days off in different season of 2012 - 2015 in Tehran

Season	Type of days	Statistical descriptive analysis					Change mean (percent)	P_{values}
		Mean	Median	Min	Max			
Spring	days	30.45	29	10	71	-	-	
	holidays	29	29	10	71	-6.38	0.06726	
	Two consecutive holidays	25	25	10	49	-18.43	0.0001016	
Summer	days	33.94	33	20	66	-	-	
	holidays	33	33	24	53	-2.76	0.4229	
	Two consecutive holidays	33	33	25	44	-2.76	0.4695	
Autumn	days	33.75	33.5	9	59	-	-	
	holidays	32	32	41	55	-2.29	0.06796	
	Two consecutive holidays	28	28	14	44	-14.5	0.001114	
Winter	days	35.55	35.5	14	63	-	-	
	holidays	36	36	14	55	+1.26	0.8547	
	Two consecutive holidays	32	36	14	46	-9.85	0.138	

* P_{values} were based on Mann - Whitney test

CONCLUSIONS

In the present study, the data was gathered from air quality monitoring stations of Tehran municipality and the department of environment during 2012 - 2015 and the effect of events such as Norooz, Ramadan, Ashura and the weekly holiday on the concentration of $PM_{2.5}$ μm in each season were analyzed by R. Due to lack of similar studies in this field, It was not possible to compare the results to the other studies. Results obtained in the present study can be used to manage the health effects of $PM_{2.5}$ in any season. Results of this study are as follows:

- 1) In the process of reviewing of four-year concentrations, Norooz holidays have effect on reducing the concentration of $PM_{2.5}$. The main reason of this reduction is decrease in traffic, residents travel and doesn't exist of daily trips from close cities to Tehran as well as the closure of universities, schools and other busy places of the city. It should be noted that the Norooz holiday is in spring, in this season the weather conditions are unstable, so the effect of this event is well appearing.
- 2) Ramadan had a negative effect on reducing $PM_{2.5}$ concentration in Tehran, so that the study of last day of this event at the summer, which coincides with Eid al - Fitr, shows that the concentration of $PM_{2.5}$ reaches to minimum.
- 3) Ashura, which is held in autumn in the study year, had a good effect on decreasing the level on $PM_{2.5}$ concentrations, while latter days of this event had a great reduction in $PM_{2.5}$ concentration.
- 4) According to this study, weekly holidays in any season were not a great effect on reducing the concentration of particles in winter due to the stability of air. One day holiday in winter has no significant effect on $PM_{2.5}$ concentrations, but two or more days holiday have remarkable effect. Thermal inversion and stability of air in winter,

are considerable in obtaining the mentioned results.

FINANCIAL SUPPORTS

The authors received no financial supports for this study competing interests.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare there is no conflict of interest.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors are grateful to Tehran Air Quality Control Company for providing $PM_{2.5}$ concentrations data.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

All of the ethical issues have been completely observed by the authors

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