

Identifying Factors affecting the Phenomenon of Organizational loafing; Using Structural Equation Modeling & Delphi Techniques

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Abstract

Organizational loafing is the phenomenon of a person exerting less effort to achieve a goal when they work in an organizational group than when they work alone. This phenomenon is a serious problem in today's organizations. The research seeks to explain factors affecting the phenomenon of organizational loafing. First, the elites' opinion through Delphi technique about the indicators influencing the organizational loafing including environment, human, technology, aims and structure was collected. After designing the model, the fitting as well as editing questionnaire were measured. This research which is both quantitative and qualitative designed the final model. 180 employees of the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology were randomly selected as the sample of study. Statistical analysis of research data was performed with the help of structural equation. In so doing, the questionnaire, whose validity and reliability with Cronbach's alpha equal to 834% were confirmed, was utilized to collect data. And after confirmation of normal distribution of data with the help of Smart PLS software and confirmatory factor analysis, eventually proposed model with 5 criteria and 25 indicators was approved. The results showed that the most influential factors affecting organization loafing is organization environment, followed by other indexes including aims, structure, and human factors and technology. So the managers were recommended to turn to the most important indicators affecting organizational loafing such as satisfaction, commitment and organizational culture so as to achieve efficient organizational loafing management.

Key words: Organizational loafing, participation, organizational culture, environment.

1. Introduction

Certainly, organizational life without the participation and collective action is completely meaningless. One of the main concerns of organizations is to attract the participation of majority of staff to achieve their organizational goals. The researchers of organization and

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management argue that without referring to concepts including satisfaction, justice, commitment, and motivation, it is impossible to present feasible and new model to increase participation in achieving organizational aims. It is obvious that attracting participation of staff is a strategic action causing worthiness of individual, improvement and progress of organization and increase in productivity in an individual, national and transnational levels respectively. One of the most infrastructural measures causing productivity of organizations is providing suitable condition in which staff collectively tries to achieve organizational aims with satisfaction and motivation. In a dynamic, competitive and risky atmosphere and also in such an environment, success is not feasible without the help of employees (Brickner & Harkins, 2014). So one of the big concerns that organizations face is to achieve maximum participation of workers to achieve common visions and goals (Liden & Wayne, 2014). Today, researchers have found that without relying on concepts such as job satisfaction, justice, commitment and motivation, one cannot create a new and efficient model to increase the participation of employees (Karau & Williams, 2014). Obviously, the participation of employees is a strategic action that at the individual level leads to personal wealth, at the organizational level leads to improvement and development and at the national level, leads to increased productivity; so one of the underlying causes of organizational efficiency is creating favorable conditions where employees with job satisfaction, motivation and commitment strive to achieve the organization's goals (Karra, 2014). This topic in the road map of administrative reform is presented as a strategic issue. In the fourth program of administrative reform has been paying special attention to this matter. So that the strategic goal of the Fourth Development Plan of this road map is management of human capital in the administrative system, with an emphasis on active participation of employees and modifying impediments such as lack of motivation, long, resignation and loafing.

In the field of human resource, concept of management, organizational loafing is the tendency of people to use less power to achieve collective goals when participating in a group (Druskat & Wolff, 2014). This is one of the problems with today's organizations. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology also is no exception. The department's staffs, in a move towards strategic goals do not have a good collective performance. So the Ministry in the sovereign duties (that often

requires a team effort) like: assessment, policy, oversight and governance ICT sector, are not doing well. Therefore, these tasks are carried out at their lowest levels or things are done in incomplete and inaccurate manner. Of course, this can have various causes but on the evidence and the statements and opinions can be received that it is rooted in issues such as feeling unmotivated, -long, frustration, injustice, declining work ethic, low loyalty of their employees and dissatisfaction with the state organization. However, it would cause interruptions in achieving the objectives of this Ministry.

Unfortunately, the evidence suggests that employees of the Ministry do not want to participate in teamwork and those are not interested in active participation in teamwork and collective actions. Actually, various excuses, escape from engaging in team work, shirk work, view apparent effort rather than doing actual work during teamwork, low work participation of people on the team and ets are the manifestations of this problem. All this can be summed in the category of organizational loafing, because the staff despite having outstanding merit and abilities, knowledge and higher education, do not actively participate in collective activities. Therefore, a comprehensive model that can represent different aspects of organizational loafing and provide a way to manage it, can be a vital step towards eliminating the root cause of the problem in the organization.

Scott believes that the organization is a human association, structured, high-technology, targeted and enclosed environment. The main elements of this definition, includes: individuals (employees) - technology, objectives, structure and environment. This study sought to identify the impact of each element of the organization and their respective index on loafing on organizational loafing management. According to this view, this research is faced with the fundamental question:

What organizational factors lead to organizational loafing in ICT ministry and how we can manage this issue?

So the aim of this study is to identify the dimensions and indicators of management of organizational loafing.

2. Research Literature

One of the biggest problems in today's organizations is organizational loafing. This concept refers to the state during group activities in the organization, that people do not use all the power and energy in Group Activities (Kardal& Saydin.2013). Organizational loafing reduces the

synergy of group activities. Organizational loafing is a phenomenon that has been discussed and researched since 1913. Maximilien Ringelmann, a French agricultural engineer, observed that when a group of people collectively pulled on a rope, the output was less than when group members individually pulled on the rope (Wallace, 2014). The results of this finding were not considered further until 1974 when Ingham, Levinger, Graves, and Peckham recreated the experiment. The term “organizational loafing” was coined for the discovery that participants working in groups exert less effort than participants working individually. It was described as having a detrimental effect on individuals and the institutions associated with them (Kaufmann & Schneider, 2014).

The origins of organizational loafing begin with “The Ringelmann Effect,” which describes the tendency for individuals to lower their productivity when in a group (Harkins & Petty, 2014); Ingham, Levinger, Graves and Peckham relabeled this effect “organizational loafing” when they were successful in demonstrating individual effort declines in a curvilinear fashion when people work as a group or only believe they are working in a group (Karau & Williams, 2014). Organizational loafing literature blossomed as these findings gave way to more questions:

Is the problem coordination and not motivation? Since the experiment involved groups created for the experiment, would established groups have the same results? What exactly causes organizational loafing? Is it because group dynamics give an individual the ability to “hide in the crowd”? Does organizational loafing only exist in physical activities? Or does it also happen when groups are performing cognitive tasks? These questions paved the way for much more research over the years.

Organizational loafing had already been established in physical tasks, but would the same results be found in cognitive group tasks? In 1977, Petty, Harkings, Williams, and Latane conducted a study to demonstrate cognitive tasks were just as susceptible to organizational loafing as physical tasks (Wagner, 2013). The experiment was divided into three groups. The first group of students was asked to edit a poem, believing they were solely responsible for the task. The second group consisted of a group of four, and the third group believed they were in a group of sixteen. The results support that organizational loafing does occur in cognitive tasks (Kravitz & Martin, 2014). The study was limited, however, in that no rewards were offered to the students for doing a good job and no individual feedback was given, which gave way to the question: Would

having rewards and feedback help prevent organizational loafing from occurring?

Five years after the landmark study, Latane, Williams, and Harkins replicated the experiment with cheering and clapping (Forsyth, 2014). This research contributed two important advances: they demonstrated Ringelmann's results were replicable, and because of the simplistic nature of yelling and clapping, they also made clear that the results of decreased efforts were not simply because of coordination problems between group members or difficulty of the task. Support of the effect only led to more questions: when and why does organizational loafing take place? Because groups are such a huge part of everyone's life, what can be done to prevent it from happening? Realizing the far-reaching implications of these findings, they famously came to the conclusion that organizational loafing is "a kind of social disease".

Although the researchers described organizational loafing in such harsh terms, they did mention in their discussion that people may have decided to loaf in groups because they wanted to save their energy for times when they would need to work as an individual, and would be able to earn rewards (George, 2014). This adaptive look at organizational loafing was not fully explored until thirty years later.

Organizational loafing is positively related to performance and endurance on later tasks (Noruzy, 2014). Social compensation allows each group member to conserve energy for their own individual tasks, while still maintaining solid results of the group task. In this competitive environment, organizations need to have efficiently working employees. Also, these employees should go beyond their traditional job descriptions or formal duties. In order to increase efficiency, organizations should lead the citizenship process. The reason for this attitude can be that employees exhibit higher levels of performance and act more than their job descriptions when they believe they are treated fairly at their workplaces. In other words, employee's job performance may increase or decrease in relation to perceptions of inequitable outcomes (Noruzy, 2014)

Organizational loafing tendency means that any individual tends to expend less effort when working collectively rather than working individually (Karau & Williams, 2014). The reason of this situation is that except from the daily ones, organizations sometimes need to perform special tasks which require more effort and attention of the work groups rather than individuals. It is also obvious that different skills and visions,

brought up together through the work groups, occur as a great synergy for organizations although there can be the negative effects of these types of group work.

Organizational loafing is a phenomenon in which group membership degrades individual motivation and it occurs as the tendency of individuals in order to expend less effort while working collectively rather than working individually.

A widely accepted explanation for productivity losses has been the organizational loafing phenomenon (George, 2013). Organizational loafing is based on the de-individuation that can occur when people work in groups as opposed to working alone. As Liden et al (2004) indicated in their research that researchers have grounded their study of organizational loafing in motivation theories, and have identified a wide variety of potential antecedents. Also, it is expressed that although there are many antecedents, the term organizational loafing has the motivational background.

The literature on organizational loafing field includes theoretical and empirical evidence that provides some insight into the nature and possible causes of organizational loafing. To conclude, the tendency to engage in organizational loafing is influenced by a large number of variables, highlighting a number of conditions under which organizational loafing would be more or less likely to occur. These factors are:

- Group size
- Task difficulty
- Identifiability of individual performance (task visibility)
- Evaluation potential with an objective standard
- Dispensability of effort
- Coworker performance expectations
- Value of outcomes
- Personal Involvement (task meaningfulness and task importance)
- Group cohesiveness and Individual differences.

Social loafing occurs in any group. But organizational loafing is a form of social loafing occurring within the organization. Organizational loafing is originated in each organization aspects such as structure, environment technology, organizational goals and characteristics of human staff. Organizational loafing in many cases comes from the human element of organization and characteristics of human staff. Sometimes lack of

motivation, job satisfaction and commitment causes withdrawal behavior in them.

Sometimes using individuals with introverted personality type in teamwork increases this loafing in the organization. People to find enough motivation to participate in group activities, must feel that their opinion is effective in group decisions and work process; otherwise a resignation occurs in them. People in group activities need attention. People in group activities like to be praised and encouraged and considered. Managers should pay attention to the needs of individuals and rewards commensurate with their efforts. In this kind of circumstances, Employees avoid of withdrawal and resignation and shirk. Organizational goals can also cause Organizational loafing.

Coherent and consistent goals can reduce the level of loafing. Motivating and usefulness of goals, realistic goals, visible and quantifiable goals, and clarity and transparency purposes can reduce the level of organizational loafing (Forsyth.2014). The technology can affect in various forms on organizational loafing. Techniques and tools and technologies can eliminate people from your organization, and this could be a prelude to withdrawal and isolation of staff. Cultural environment that encourages social participation discourages people from loafing. Economic pressures or mature and stable economy could reduce or increase the level of Organizational loafing (Forsyth.2014). Structural dimensions can also be effective on Organizational loafing. Centralized organization allowed to express opinions and ideas and limit the spirit of participation in the organization. Formalized structure also reduces employees' activities.

In this research key elements of organization are structure, environment technology, organizational goals and characteristics of human staff; so those are the basic elements of the initial research model. Therefore, the initial research model is as follows (Figure1):

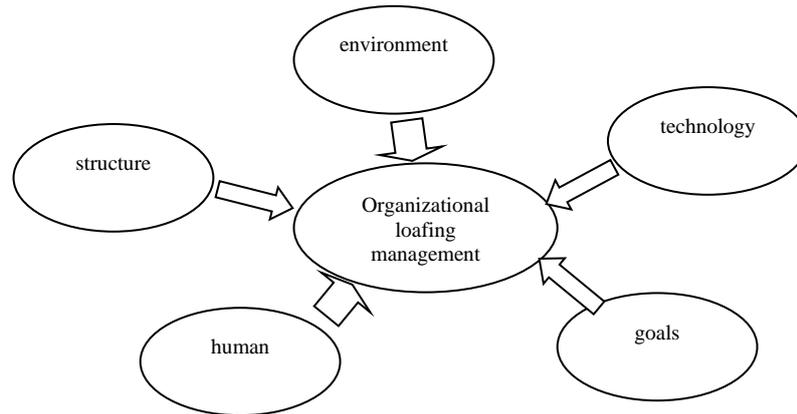


Figure1. Initial research model

3. Research Methodology

In Delphi technique, data were collected from 15 experts in ICT ministry and sample size were 180 employees in this ministry. Various methods were used through the data collection in which an interview was carried out firstly and then by using a questionnaire data were collected. Also a deep research was carried out via universities, digital libraries and databases.

The data collection tool consisted of three parts. The first part of the tool included the demographical questions determining employees' profile that is age, gender, position, salary, marital status and how long they are experiencing this proficiency. In the second section, 95 questions which were designed to measure the organizational loafing tendency were used. Participants were instructed to indicate how characteristic each item was. The answers were placed with a rating scale system ranging from 1, "not at all characteristic," to 5, "very characteristic" and responses to these items were summed. The number of the participants included in this study was 350 persons in ICT ministries; so by using Cochran's formula 180 persons were selected as sample size.

While collecting the data, participants were informed about the reasons for data collection and the required information about participants' anonymity about their responses were given. The research deals with organizational loafing attitudes of managers of ICT ministry. Although it is an explanatory research, it compares the responses of different work groups and their level of perceptions about organizational

loafing tendency. The study has three main steps. Research operational steps shown in the figure 2

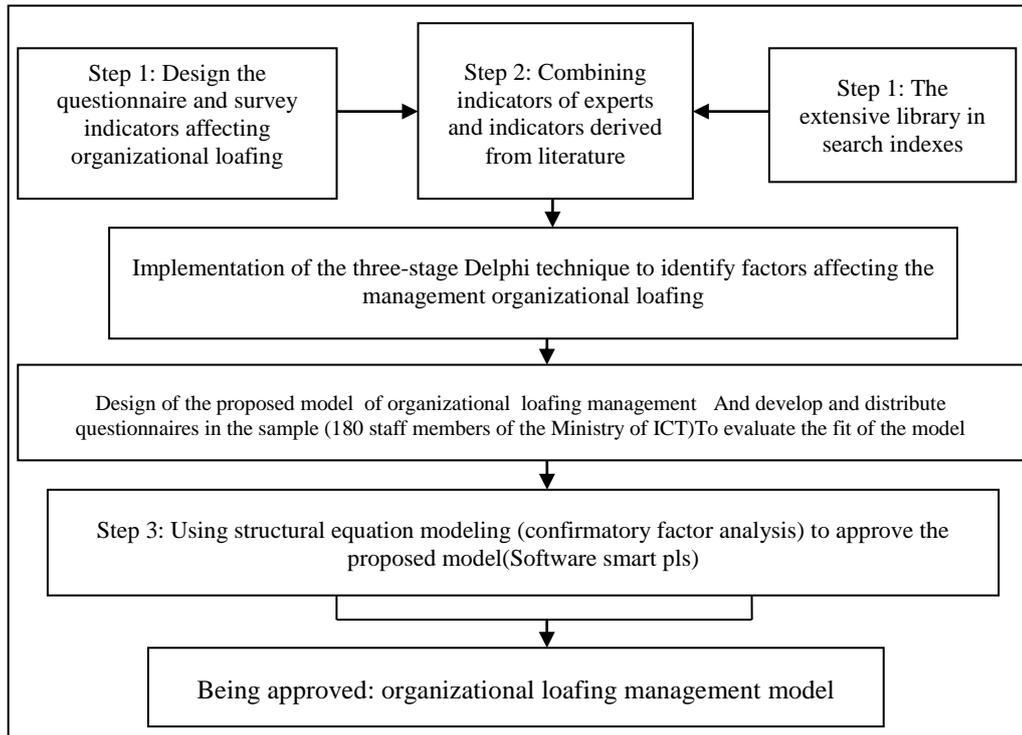


Figure 2. Operational model

4. Findings

Step 1: Researchers designed an open questionnaire and survey indicators affecting organizational loafing. Then they used an extensive library for search indexes to survey indicators affecting organizational loafing. In table 1 all indicators affecting organizational loafing that found from openquestionnaire has shown.

Table 1. Indicators of organizational loafing

| Organizational aspects | | indicators of organizational loafing |
|------------------------|-----------------|--|
| human | | Commitment- satisfaction- self-esteem - job satisfaction- the type of personality- Work engagement - the motivation- Talent - motivation |
| structure | | Focus - complexity- formality |
| technology | | Complexity - Extensive - Simplicity |
| goals | | Cohesion objectives - quantifiable |
| environment | internal | Style of supervision - Organizational Culture |
| | external | Political - economic and social - cultural |

In table 2 all indicators affecting organizational loafing that found from extensive library and background of the research have shown.

Table 2. . Indicators in background of research

| Organizational aspects | indicators affecting organizational loafing | | reserchers | |
|------------------------|--|---|--|---|
| human | Commitment- satisfaction- Cleverness | | Philip & Peters, 2013- Pearson , 2014 | |
| | Religiosity- commitment - the type of personality | | Shuper, 2014 Holmes et al., 2014 | |
| | Commitment - job satisfaction - formidable | | Jacob and Hitler, 2013- Talbot, 2014 | |
| | Conscience - Honesty - Commitment | | Kissinger et al., 2012 Akbari et al., 2015 | |
| | Job satisfaction - Motivation - Commitment | | Torabpour, 2014- Diamond, 2012 | |
| | Work engagement - the motivation -personality type | | hasan Zadeh et al, 2013 | |
| | Patience - self-esteem - job satisfaction | | Born, 2013- servant pour et al, 2012 | |
| structure | Talent - motivation - knowledge | | Bora & salvador, 2013 | |
| | Focus - structural formality - complexity | | Shahrabi et al., 2013 Shuperz et al., 2013 | |
| | oral communication - the size of the organization | | Sakuchy, 2014- sphere, et al., 2012 | |
| | Focus - complexity - formality - Standard | | Piety, 2013- Oskoee 2012 | |
| | Focus - formality - the ratio of managers to staff | | Shooler et al., 2012 Akbari et al, 2014 | |
| technology | formality - complexity - organizational size | | Ahmadi et al., 2011 Arabi et al, 2013 | |
| | Novelty - complexity - extensive | | Seleukid Rad et al., 2010 Sotoodena, 2012 | |
| | Simple - usability | | Philip et al., 2013-seeker et al., 2014 | |
| | Complexity - Extensive - Simplicity | | Thomson et al., 2014 Sizat, 2013 | |
| | Simplicity - Complexity | | Barson and himer, 2014 | |
| goals | Complexity - extensive | | Holmes et al., 2014 | |
| | Cohesion objectives - quantifiable | | Gerald et al., 2011 Barnard et al., 2014 | |
| | Motivational goals - target size | | Jacob and Hitler, 2013- Talbot, 2014 | |
| | Cohesion objectives - quantifiable | | Hitler, 2013 | |
| environment | Commensurate with the resources | | Ahmadi et al., 2010 Rahmani 2011 | |
| | internal | Style of supervision - Organizational Culture | | Gojani et al., 2014, Georgian 2011 |
| | | Working conditions - headed | | Kabiri Ahmari, 2012 Ghouchani, 2013 |
| | | Organizational culture - behavior of colleagues - heading | | Kordestani et al., 2014 - kasraie, 2012 |
| | external | political - social, cultural | | Sami and Ghaemi, 2012 |
| | | Political - economic and social - cultural | | York, 2013 |
| | | Physical - political - cultural | | Silvia et al., 2014 |

Step 2: Combining indicators of experts and indicators derived from literature and implementation of the three-stage Delphi technique to identify factors affecting the management organizational loafing.

Table 3. Results of Delphi technique

| Organizational aspects | | indicators | Number of replies | Average | Standard deviation | result | Rank | coding |
|------------------------|----------------|------------------------|-------------------|---------|--------------------|-----------|------|--------|
| human | | Commitment | 15 | 4.80 | 1.12 | Confirmed | 2 | .A |
| | | Talent | 15 | 4.59 | 1.10 | Confirmed | 20 | .B |
| | | self-esteem | 15 | 3.50 | 1.12 | Confirmed | 29 | .C |
| | | satisfaction | 15 | 4.82 | 1.10 | Confirmed | 1 | .D |
| | | Merit | 15 | 4.64 | 1.12 | Confirmed | 16 | .E |
| | | Work engagement | 15 | 4.60 | 1.09 | Confirmed | 19 | .F |
| | | Motivation | 15 | 4.63 | 1.11 | Confirmed | 17 | .G |
| | Character type | 15 | 4.61 | 1.19 | Confirmed | 18 | .H | |
| structure | | Formality | 15 | 4.69 | 1.10 | Confirmed | 13 | .I |
| | | Complexity | 15 | 4.00 | 1.14 | Confirmed | 26 | .J |
| | | Focus | 15 | 4.72 | 1.13 | Confirmed | 10 | .K |
| | | Size of organization | 15 | 4.01 | 1.11 | Confirmed | 25 | .L |
| technology | | Novelty | 15 | 4.23 | 1.12 | Confirmed | 23 | .M |
| | | Simple | 15 | 3.55 | 1.14 | Confirmed | 27 | .N |
| | | Complexity | 15 | 3.51 | 1.06 | Confirmed | 28 | .O |
| | | Usability | 15 | 4.65 | 1.10 | Confirmed | 15 | .P |
| goals | | Alignment of goals | 15 | 4.73 | 1.12 | Confirmed | 9 | .Q |
| | | Quantifiable | 15 | 4.58 | 1.17 | Confirmed | 22 | .R |
| | | Triggers and value | 15 | 4.78 | 1.18 | Confirmed | 4 | .S |
| | | clarity | 15 | 4.57 | 1.08 | Confirmed | 21 | .T |
| | | Being accessible | 15 | 4.71 | 1.06 | Confirmed | 11 | .U |
| | | Be flexible | 15 | 4.70 | 1.12 | Confirmed | 12 | .V |
| environment | internal | Physical | 15 | 4.67 | 1.10 | Confirmed | 14 | .W |
| | | Economic | 15 | 4.75 | 1.10 | Confirmed | 7 | .X |
| | | Sociocultural | 15 | 4.74 | 1.12 | Confirmed | 8 | .Y |
| | external | Organizational culture | 15 | 4.79 | 1.12 | Confirmed | 3 | .Z |
| | | Light-headed | 15 | 4.76 | 1.07 | Confirmed | 6 | .AA |
| | | Partners behavior | 15 | 4.77 | 1.01 | Confirmed | 5 | .BB |

Finally, the effect of the 5 components of the organization on organizational loafing in the form of 29 indicators was approved. Among the factors affecting the management of the organizational loafing, indicators ranked first to third respectively: job satisfaction (mean 4.82), commitment (mean 4.8) and organizational culture (mean 4.79) were awarded (Figure.3).

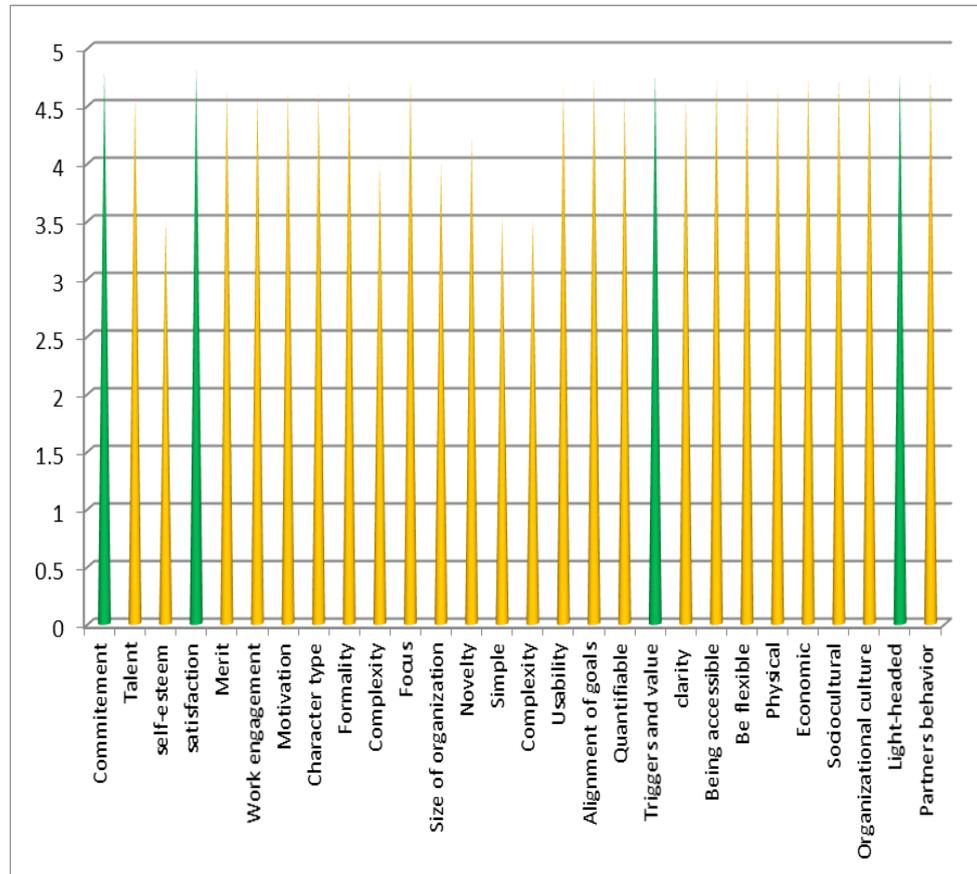


Figure3. Results of Delphi technique (indicators)

Results showed that the most effective factor is environmental factors (Goals with an average of 4.58, Structure with an average of 4.43, Human factors with an average of 4.25, Technology with an average of 3.98) (Figure 4).

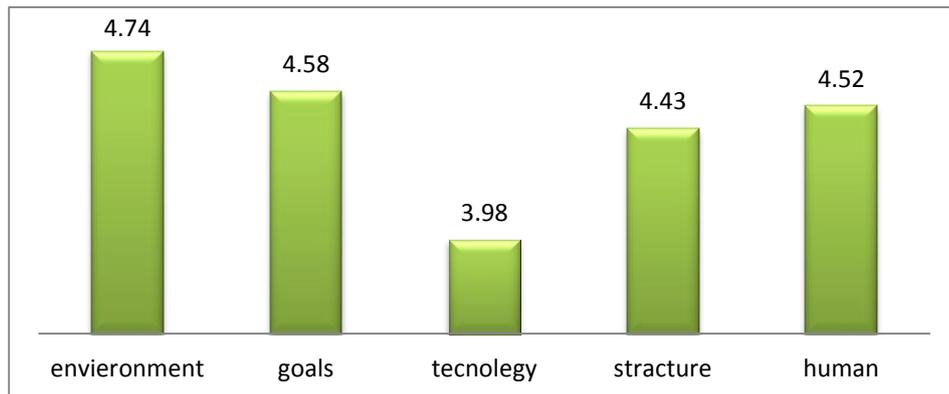


Figure 4. Results of Delphi technique (factors)

Step 3: This step is step of designing the proposed model of organizational loafing management and develop and distribute questionnaires in the sample (180 staff members of Ministry of ICT) to evaluate the fit of the model. In this study to examine the reliability of the criteria used Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability and for validity, construct validity were used. Content validity (that was used to determine the validity of the questionnaire) was confirmed by experts. About the validity of the method Smart PLS (structural equation model) was used. Construct validity is divided into two types (convergent validity and divergent validity) AVE criteria were used for convergent validity (Table 4).

Table 4. AVE test

| | human | structure | technology | goals | environment |
|-----|-------|-----------|------------|-------|-------------|
| AVE | .675 | .754 | .685 | .598 | .595 |

The results show convergent validity is at an acceptable level. In divergent validity, the difference between the indices of a structure model comparison is made with other structures indices. The results indicated that structures are acceptable (table 5).

Table 5. Divergent validity test

| | | indicators | | | | |
|------------|-------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-------|-------------|
| | | human | structure | tecnology | goals | environment |
| indicators | human | .748 | | | | |
| | structure | .624 | .773 | | | |
| | technology | .635 | .503 | .828 | | |
| | goals | .650 | .503 | .371 | .868 | |
| | environment | .673 | .630 | .653 | .314 | .822 |

To measure the reliability of the study, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were used. According to the results we can say that reliability is at an acceptable level (table 6).

Table 6. Reliability test

| | human | structure | technology | goals | environment |
|-------|-------|-----------|------------|-------|-------------|
| alpha | .751 | .843 | .841 | .850 | .873 |
| CR | .855 | .892 | .901 | .897 | .898 |

In the inferred part of this research the normal distribution of data need to be tested. In so doing, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (K-S) and Shapiro Wilk (S-W) were used. Table 7 shows the test results (K-S and Shapiro Wilk).

Table 7. K-S and Shapiro wilk tests

| | S-W Statistics | Significance level S-W | K-S Statistics | Significance level K-S |
|-------------|----------------|------------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| human | .979 | .002 | .076 | .003 |
| structure | .974 | .000 | .093 | .000 |
| technology | .962 | .000 | .101 | .000 |
| goals | .949 | .000 | .112 | .000 |
| environment | .973 | .000 | .101 | .000 |

In this study the process of confirmatory factor analysis was in this way: that the model was implemented and the model was significant in terms of significance of 5 factors and 29 indicators. Smart PLS software result has been shown in Figure 5. Results show all dimensions are meaningful. So there is no need to remove any question to get a better fit.

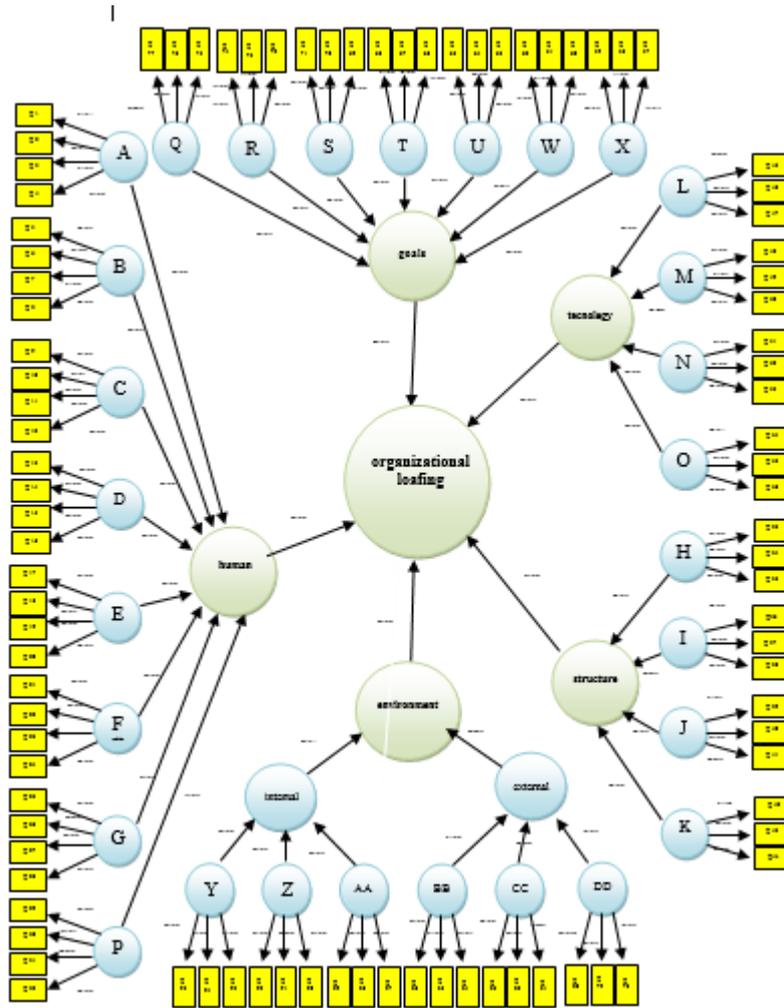


Figure5. Reserch model

5. Conclusions

The results showed that the most important factor influencing the management of organizational loading is organizational environment and among the environmental aspects of the organization, internal factors (with dimensions of organizational culture, style of supervision, and the behavior of colleagues) was recognized as the most important aspect of the organization's environment. On the other hand, the results emphasized on

the impact of the five aspects of organization and 29 related indicators on organizational loafing management.

In this section, a brief discussion of the most important and influential aspects will be discussed. Job satisfaction is the most significant impact on organizational loafing management known. Certainly, any organization considering the issue of job satisfaction may increase the level of positive organizational variables. The desire to use less energy or low level of energy in the collective effort of the organization may be derived from low level of job satisfaction.

When employees are not satisfied with payment level, distribution of rights and benefits, how to behave and interact, how to manage and chief executives, physical conditions of work, the nature of the job, the imbalance between performance and payment, without a doubt, they will respond to the organization.

One of the manifestations of this feedback will appear in the form of hypothyroidism, withdrawal from social activities, and the lack of a high level of energy utilization in organizational activities.

Commitment is the second element that has been identified as a key factor in the management of organizational loafing. When a person is committed and responsible, he tries to carry out his duties with more energy and be more involved in the organizational collective activities.

According to the passage, given the results of the study, the following suggestions are presented:

- Create logical balance between individual and organizational objectives for most motivated people to participate in achieving the objectives.
- Through fair and equitable compensation, try to gain your employee satisfaction.
- Try to gain the trust of employees, so they will be hopeful and being more interested to increase the level of the collective effort and reduce level of organizational loafing.
- Emphasize continually the culture of participation and teamwork in the affairs and decisions.
- Avoid the centralized structure and formalized structure and try to add the flexibility and dynamism.
- In recruiting and hiring staff in team activities try to match jobs and employee characteristics (Favorites, talents and abilities, experience and qualifications) and avoid recruiting people with introverted personality in team activities to reduce organizational loafing.

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