opción

Conceptualization of organizational indifference using cognitive mapping

Gholamreza Malekzadeh[1]

[1]Faculty of Economic and Administrative Science, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran,
malekzadeh@um.ac.ir

Mohammad Golmohammadi[2]

[2]Faculty of Economic and Administrative Science, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran
mohammad.golmohammadi@mail.um.ac.ir

Abstract

The current article aims to investigate the employees' indifference toward organizations, identifying the factors causing this phenomenon and its consequences for the management of organizations. Cognitive mapping is a qualitative research method that allows graphical description of organizational issues and problems in this research. As a result, by analyzing data sources, the management solutions of employees' indifference are divided into four structural, managerial, individual and occupational categories. As a conclusion, the identification of this phenomenon and its aspects can help organizations prevent it to happen.

Keywords: organizational indifference, Cognitive, human resource.

Conceptualización de la indiferencia organizacional mediante el mapeo cognitivo

Resumen

El presente artículo tiene como objetivo investigar la indiferencia de los empleados hacia las organizaciones, identificando los factores que causan este fenómeno y sus consecuencias para la gestión de las organizaciones. El mapeo cognitivo es un método de investigación cualitativa que permite la descripción gráfica de problemas y problemas organizacionales en esta investigación. Como resultado, al analizar las fuentes de datos, las soluciones de gestión de la indiferencia de los empleados se dividen en cuatro categorías estructurales, gerenciales, individuales y ocupacionales. Como conclusión, la identificación de este fenómeno y sus aspectos puede ayudar a las organizaciones a evitar que suceda.

Palabras clave: indiferencia organizacional, cognitivo, recurso humano.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the progressive world of today, organizations play significant and influential roles, proper functioning of which is indispensable for the growth and improvement of the society. Since the most effective factor in the success or failure of organizations is associated with human resources and their behavior, organizations' management must pay special attention to this department, which is considered as one of the basic foundations of any organizations, so that through correct management, organization goals could be established appropriately.

The current world of business is involved with various problems, one of which is the employees' indifference toward organizations. Identifying the factors causing this phenomenon and its consequences for the management of organizations are regarded as major problems concerning the importance of human resources.

After identifying the above-mentioned factors, their correct way of management is another issue which has to be paid attention to in order for the manager to be able to protect his organization from the troubles caused by the mentioned phenomenon. Therefore, through managing employees' indifference, the sense of internal satisfaction, double voluntary effort, commitment and participation in work, growth of the staff interaction, meeting the community expectations, increasing customer and employee satisfaction, developing organizational citizenship behavior, improving efficiency and productivity, improvement of procedures, decreasing unfair working conditions in all fields and increasing spirit at work could be promoted (Abolfazli et al., 2016). Indifference occurs when an individual gives up hope to achieve his goals in a particular situation after a long failure and needs to refrain from the source of his own failure. This phenomenon is regarded as the characteristic of people who are involved with repetitive and boring jobs and often surrender to the fact that there is little hope for improvement and progress in the workplace. Each manager must bear in mind that aggression, demonstrating alibis and indifference are all complications of inability and failure which could indicate the existence of problems.

In order to increase the efficiency and productivity of employees, their work problems and challenges are required to be eliminated. One of the problems that organizations are involved with is the phenomenon of organizational indifference; considering the psychological and sociological costs, it could have for the most of organizations and for the country, the need to consider this subject is much more felt than before.

Indifference

In the language of common sense indifference is defined as a state when one diverts himself from failing conditions or the factors causing failure, and in return for an emotional response, becomes indifferent to impediments or even his own destiny.

Harold Kaplan and Benjamin Sadock define indifference as the lack of inner feeling, affection, interest as well as emotional conflict toward the environment. Abolfazli et al. (2016) explain it as a feeling of separation, disengagement, and lack of subjective (cognitive) and objective (action) link between an individual and society (social institutions and structures such as politics, family, religion, etc.).

Distinctive views on indifference

1. Indifference from a psychological point of view: Psychologists define indifference as the state when an individual, after a long failure, loses hope to achieve his goals and tends to resign from realities and the source of his failure.

From the psychologists' point of view, failure is the result of one's fruitless endeavor to achieve his goals due to encountering obstacles, or failure to modify or replace a goal (or goals).

2. Indifference from a political point of view: In the field of political science indifference is equivalent to a disinclination to actively participate and involve in political processes. This kind of indifference appears in various forms in liberal democratic systems; citizens' indifference for participating in elections and voting for candidates could be referred to as the most common example.

3. Indifference from a sociological point of view: Resignation and not participating in social activities, discouragement and disinterest in social discussions and non-civic engagement as citizens are regarded as social indifference.

Organizational indifference

One of the issues that organizations are involved with today is the problem of employees' indifference. Organizational indifference is described as a condition when realization or not realization of organizational goals does not matter to a member or a group of members anymore.

In the organizational world, the phenomenon of indifference is the characteristic of people who have boring and repetitive jobs in the workplace and who surrender to this reality that there is little hope for improvement and progress. This particular psycho-behavioral state is referred to as behavioral indifference which is known to be the

consequence of an individual's deprivation and the existence of a problem in the workplace. Organizational indifference is a destructive factor in the organization and is considered as a kind of silent crisis, gradual downfall, and continuous quiet destruction. The existence of organizational indifference indicates the presence of a problem in the organization, and managers should take the risks of organizational indifference among the employees seriously.

The attributes of organizational indifference

The attributes of organizational indifference are as follows:

Futility: A person who feels futile is someone who has problems understanding and practicing the importance or usefulness of his deeds appropriately (that something could be meaningful and useful).

Anomaly: This term describes the state of an individual who identifies a few rules to guide and direct his behavior. His social structure and his behavioral disciplines are broken and there are limited guidelines for him.

Social isolation: This is the psychological state of a person who has lost the ability to interact with people and feels that he is incapable to understand the attitudes of others.

Self-loathing: In this case, an individual has conflicts with behaviors that do not reflect his real values or needs and, instead of expressing himself, engages in meaningless activities, and low self-esteem and disinterest are observed in such individuals.

Indifference symptoms: Organizational indifference symptoms can be categorized into two groups of behavioral and functional symptoms.

1. Behavioral symptoms: Such symptoms are behaviors that are demonstrated in the overall behavior of an individual in the organization. Not caring for and not complying with the rules and regulations in the organization, not caring for the goals, wasting resources and facilities of the organization, and lack of sense of belonging to the organization are examples of the symptoms. When an indifferent individual encounters failure or loss or does not reach his goals, he ignores such facts without feeling uncomfortable. Lack of belonging can be easily observed and recognized while interacting with indifferent individuals.

2. Functional symptoms: These are symptoms that appear in the performance of individuals, their responsibilities and behaviors toward the clients. An indifferent individual does not make the necessary efforts to fulfill the tasks requested by the organization; such a person does not value his work, and does not pay attention to the goals and missions of the organization and does not try to progress in line with the organization's purposes. An indifferent person does not tend to accept new tasks and duties and tries to evade responsibilities all the time.

Dimensions of the organizational indifference

Dimensions of the organizational indifference, according to the table (1) include Indifference toward the manager, work, clients, and colleagues.

Table 1: Dimensions of organizational indifference

Concept	Dimension	Component	Indicator
Organizational indifference	Indifference toward manager	In the form of evading responses	- Hiding capabilities - Resorting to white lies - Postponing the manager's assignment
		In the form of not accompanying the manager	- Making alibis - Not caring for the meetings - Avoiding making suggestions in the meetings - Keeping the manager in doubt
		In the form of inappropriate behavior toward the manager	- Avoiding to encounter the manager - Backbiting the manager - Cold and distant behavior with the manager
	Indifference toward organization	In the form of decreasing individual responsibility	- Doing personal jobs at work -Working not in the range of organizational activity during office hours
		In the form of increasing unreasonable organizational expenses	- Personal usage of organizational facilities - Indifference toward protecting properties
		In the form of attempting to leave a workplace	- Increasing hourly leave - Increasing absence
	Indifference toward clients	In the form of not prioritizing clients	- Limiting services to certain times - Not answering clients' phone calls
		In the form of confusing clients intentionally	- Asking for documents irrelevant to work - Postponing clients' jobs unreasonably
		Inappropriate behavior with clients	- Answering to clients reluctantly - Aggressive behavior toward clients
	Indifference toward colleagues	In the form of reducing cooperation with colleagues	- Not cooperating in group work - Inducing pessimistic views to others
		In the form of inappropriate behavior with colleagues	- Cold and distant behavior with colleagues - Focusing on others' weaknesses
	Indifference toward work	In the form of not caring for efficiency	- Reducing accuracy in work - Not pursuing responsibilitiesdc - Not caring for quality in work - Reducing speed in work - Not caring for on-time working
		Pessimism toward work	- Assuming work as unimportant and worthless - Assuming work as useless

2. METHODOLOGY

In this research, cognitive mapping has been used. One of the approaches that help identify effective factors on organizational indifference is cognitive mapping. Cognitive mapping is a qualitative research method that allows graphical description of organizational issues and problems.

This is a collection of techniques that have been developed to gain insight into the individual structures and have been widely used in management thinking studies (Huff and Jenkins, 2002). Cognitive mapping allows us to experience a unique understanding to enface with a specific subject, environment, or concern.

A cognitive mapping with the goal of creating and analyzing the cognitive maps that is, representing the individual or organization's beliefs about a particular domain. A cognitive map consists of two types of elements:

1) Concepts, also known as structures or variables.
2) The relationship between these concepts. These links can be based on similarity, solidarity and similarity influence (such as the impact of maps), causality between concepts (such as causality's maps, or all of these together and at a time).

One way of collecting data in this way is based on documentation, creating a map based on written documents or

transcribing interviews. When all the materials are identified, the researcher will try to identify the elements that the speaker has described as the links or the effects of the concepts (causes, effects, means, and consequences), in these statements.

Cognitive mapping has roots in the Personal Construct Theory (PCT) by Kelly (1955) and it can be attributed to wider academic fields in organizations. Therefore, the cognitive mapping with several advantages was used for such a study. A more complex and profound understanding was potentially created by making the distance between participants and simple linear considerations in geographic representation issues.

The present research aimed to discover and understand the causes, results and consequences of the indifference in Iranian organizations. Desk studies and documents were first utilized to collect data; hence, relevant papers in Iranian organizations were collected by searching validated internal and external databases. A total of 100 papers were obtained as a result of this search. 52 papers were finally collected according to the following criteria: 1- They should be published, 2- They should be research studies, and 3) They should not be too specialized.

Structural procedures were implemented in three stages after data identification and collection. The researcher initially described key elements that seemed to relate to the research topic. Subjects were then given to experts to identify relevant concepts and explain the

nature of these relationships. It allowed the researcher to define causal links between concepts that described lines of influence between them. More concepts were frequently identified during this process.

At the next stage, the mappings were brought to the paper, and then returned to experts to express their beliefs and approvals in order to ensure that obtained mappings represented the individual perception of discussed issues as fair as possible.

Afterwards, the identification of relationships indicating the nature of links between concepts took place and the synonymous data was integrated. Putting individuals' cognitive mappings together in a single mapping required integrating individual mapping concepts that they quite carefully considered them similar. This was a mental affair and depended on the researchers' perception, skills and experience. Therefore, researchers should match similar concepts that had similar links.

Mappings in the conclusion of this research depicted concepts under which factors, implications and organizational indifference strategies identified by papers and studies in Iran had links that indicated the existence of a causal relationship between them.

3. FINDINGS
3.1. The causes of indifference

Indifference can be considered as a dangerous disease for organizations; as a patient cannot perform properly in his or her daily responsibilities and affairs, an organization, infected with indifference,

suffers from a drop in efficiency and failure to achieve its goals. As prevention is the best and most effective action in curing a disease through identifying the causing factors and giving prescriptions in order to counteract their effects, in the case of organizational indifference, the identification of causing factors can be effective as well and can help managers in handling organizations properly.

Factors causing the indifference were obtained from numerous papers. For instance, ambiguous goals, lack of meritocracy and the transfer of indifference to the workplace were identified by Shekari et al. (2016). They stated that: "The lack of meritocracy, ambiguous goals, and the transfer of indifference to the workplace are respectively the most important factors in the appearance of this organizational phenomenon from managers' perspective" (Shekari et al., 2016: 17).

Abbasi et al. (2015) considered the lack of justice as one of the causes of organizational indifference and stated that: "There is a significant negative relationship between organizational justice and organizational indifference in employees. Results of stepwise regression indicate that the organizational justice explains 0.28 of variance in the organizational indifference" (Abbasi et al., 2015: 23).

According to the studies conducted through various texts and sources, the causing factors can be classified into four structural, managerial, occupational, and personal (individual) characteristics categories.

3.2. Structural factors

As we know, the organization duties and responsibilities are shaped in the form of an organizational structure, which indicates the significance of a healthy and efficient organizational structure in the organization. As Jamshidi and Bakhshi (2010) argue, the limitations and weaknesses of the organization are regarded as important factors in the generation of indifference. A high and long structure Mirhosseini Zavareh (1995) can be considered as one of the causing factors of organizational indifference; long structure reduces the efficiency and causes a delay in decision making and power concentration, which can lead to indifference in individuals. Other factors affecting indifference to occur include: concentration Ahmadi and Fattahi (2016), organizational unhealthy atmosphere Abolfazli et al. (2016), organizational culture organizational injustice Abbasi et al. (2015); extreme bureaucracy, the lack or inefficiency of the evaluation system, the organization's indifference toward the employees, organizational isolation of employees, lack of creativity and innovation spirit, lack of staff development Abolfazli et al. (2016), and failure to pay salaries on time.

3.3. Managerial factors

Management is the process of effective and efficient employment of financial and human resources in programming, organizing, preparing resources and facilities, guidance and control

which is conducted to achieve organizational goals based on the accepted value system; therefore, a manager's influence on the success and productivity of the organization is undeniable. The organization's manager can also affect the future of the organization through the influence he has on the workforce in the organization. Lack of attention and management weaknesses are among important factors in the creation of indifference; thus, recognizing such factors, which affects the development of this disease, could be helpful in creating a vibrant and active organization. The effective management factors discovered in the past researches include: Lack of meritocracy Ahmadi and Fattahi (2016), Ahmadi and Rafiee, (2015), lack of trust, separation of manager from employees, employees' lack of participation in decision-makings, lack of attention to employees, economic and welfare issues, failure to inform employees of their influence on the processes, lack of information on the performance result of the employees, Ahmadi and Fattahi (2016), attitude and performance of the manager Abolfazli et al. (2016), weakness in managers' triple skills Abdollahi et al. (2014), dealing with individuals selectively, lack of supervision, attention to some particular occupations and lack of attention to other occupations, the existence of the decision-making pyramid, insufficiency or inappropriateness in leadership styles and management approaches leadership style, ignorance of employees' capabilities, lack of reward attraction, inducing indifference to work environment, lack of understanding employees' needs Ahmadi and Fattahi, (2016), managers' intelligence in the organization (Abdollahi et al., 2014), performance evaluation

errors, and seniors' indifference toward the issues and events of the organization.

3.4. Individual factors (personality characteristics):

As individuals are distinctive concerning physical characteristics and the possibility of developing diseases are not the same under identical conditions, differences in personality traits can also have significant effects on the employees developing the disease of organizational indifference. In the meantime, the influence of employees' personality aspects on indifference has been confirmed.

The features which can increase the probability of individuals developing indifference include: lack of teamwork spirit, lack of job interest, making rumors, displacement of values, employees' attitudes Abolfazli et al. (2016), discordance of the goals of individuals and organization working without understanding the reason, ignorance and lack of knowledge of one's needs, job burnout, ambiguity in roles, inappropriate citizenship behavior Abdollahi et al. (2014), ignorance of personal capabilities, the disproportion between individuals and organization, low wage, salary and emotional distress.

3.5. Occupational factors

The existence of some factors in occupations could lead to the development or exacerbation of organizational indifference, understanding of which can help organization managers and directors

to employ and create jobs free of such diseases in order to contribute to the organizational goals.

Occupational factors collected from various texts and resources include: lack of occupational identity, irresponsibility, lack of job diversity, ambiguous goals, environment and nature of work Abolfazli et al. (2016), career plateauing, occupational stress, lack of occupational health, lack of job attraction, lack of job status, and lack of job motivation (Abolfazli et al., 2016).
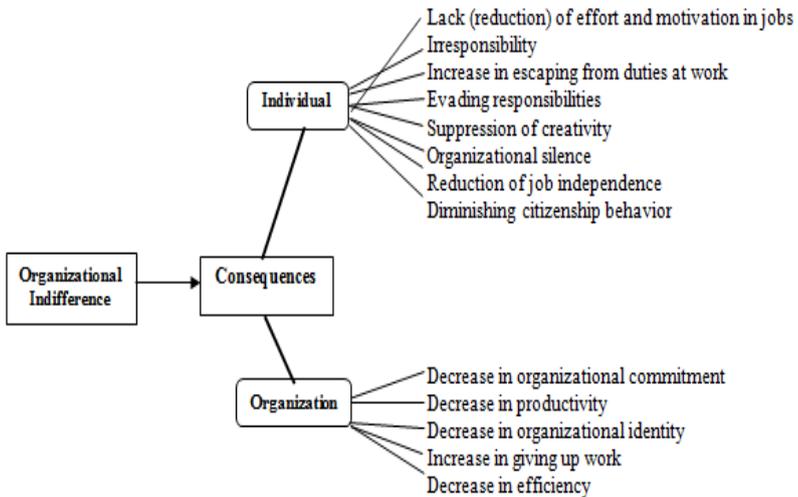

Figure 2. Consequences of organizational indifference

5. SOLUTIONS

After identifying the causes and consequences of a disease, a doctor's prescription could be the final stage of a treatment. Considering the presentation of organizational factors and indifference consequences in the current article, introducing solutions to prevent or decrease the effects is felt to be required on behalf of experts.

Abolfazli et al. stated about indifference management ways and solution as follows:

> Research results indicate that there is a significant negative relationship between the organizational intelligence and organizational indifference. Results of stepwise regression indicate that the strategic intelligence explain 0.24 of variance in the organizational indifference. Therefore, managers of sports and youth departments are suggested providing conditions to reduce the employees' indifference in organizations by paying attention to the strategic intelligence variable (2016: 18).

Shiri et al. (2013) found that Islamic-moral merits reduced organizational indifference and stated that: "There is a significant inverse relationship between Islamic-moral merits and organizational indifference dimensions. Organizational indifference is less observed in employees with Islamic-moral merits" (Shiri et al., 2013: 13).

As a result, by analyzing data sources, the management solutions of this phenomenon are divided into four structural, managerial, individual and occupational categories.

5.1. Structural Solution

Structural solutions include: Helping employees to create a general attitude toward the objective of the organization, distributive justice, improvement of the performance evaluation system, employing specialist managers, systems improvement, processes and structures Keshavarz Haghighi, improvement of organizational culture, clear organizational perspective, increasing knowledge of the employees, and creating enabling structure.

5.2. Managerial Solution

The managerial solutions which affect improving organizational indifference include: Creating moral-Islamic competence, improvement in emotional intelligence, special attention to strategic intelligence Bakhit et al. (2015), employees' participation in organizational), meritocracy, development of servant leadership issues, attention to moderate motivational factors Ghezel Ayagh et al. (2016), attention to personal and family welfare issues and the use of flexible work packages, reward, appointment, and promotion, paying more attention to financial matters, improving the quality of working life, satisfying organizational needs of employees, providing feedback to employees in the organization, caring for a job without comparing it to other jobs, beauty of the workplace.

5.3. Individual solutions

Individual solutions include Perceived organizational support Hariri et al. (2013), emotional relief, and more perceptions regarding distributive justice.

5.4. Occupational solution

The occupational solution could be described as employees' freedom of action in carrying out their affairs and job status, which could decrease or eliminate organizational indifference.
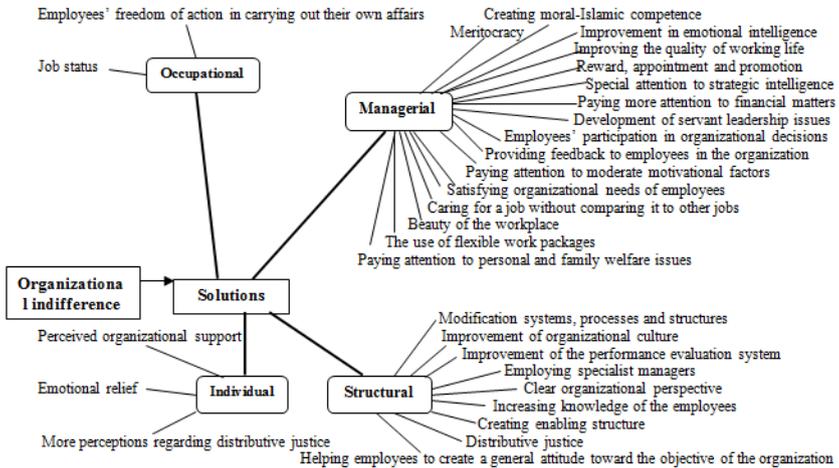

Figure 3. Solutions for organizational indifference

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Indifference is a kind of deviation from the state of balance in the organization. In crisis management, the crisis has also been defined as a deviation from the state of balance. If indifference will be paid attention to as other kinds of crisis factors such as a decline in liquidity or not selling manufactured goods, and so on, it can be observed as a destructive factor in the organization. Indifference may be called a silent crisis, a calm downfall, and a continuous quiet destruction. Such an attitude toward the subject of indifference should be highly concerned, considering the fact that it greatly affects different systems in the organization, especially production.

This phenomenon is regarded as a characteristic of individuals who are employed with repetitive and boring jobs, and often surrender to the fact that there is no hope for improvement and progress in their workplace. Each manager should bear in mind that aggression, making alibis, and indifference are all complications of inability and failure, which can indicate the existence of problems.

Organizational indifference can be named as the disease of the present era that can easily infect organization personnel, and not pay attention to its indications and causes could lead to organizations suffer from irreversible consequences. Therefore, the identification of this phenomenon and its aspects can help organizations prevent it to happen. In the present research, organizations were attempted to be made aware of identifying dimensions as well as factors and

consequences of organizational indifference through different related studies and help them by providing solutions for better management of this phenomenon.

According to collected data, it was demonstrated that the causing factors of organizational indifference could be categorized into four structural, managerial, individual, and occupational groups, but since colleagues can also play a role in the creation of this phenomenon, it is proposed to investigate aspects related to the colleagues in the future.

REFERENCES

ABBASI, H., EYDI, H., BAKHIT, M., & REZAEI, G. 2015. **Explore the relation between organization justice with organizational indifference employees in the departments of Youth and Sports Kermanshah Province**. Scientific Journal of Organizational Behavior Management in Sport Studies. Vol. 2 N° 6: 57-64. USA.

ABDOLLAHI, B., ANARAKI ARDAKANI, D., & TAGHAVI, A. 2014. **Factors Affecting Organizational Indifference of Employees: A Case Study of Two Governmental and Non-governmental Organizations**. Applied mathematics in Engineering, Management and Technology. pp. 1352-1361. USA.

ABOLFAZLI, E., SAIDABADI, Y., & FALLAH, V. 2016. **An analytical study on indifference management in educational system of Iran: Reflection on expert's opinions**. International Review. Vol. 1. N° 2: 22-37. Serbia.

AHMADI, S., & FATTAHI, M. 2016. **Investigating Factors of Organization Indifference and Proper Strategies in Iran Infrastructural Communications Company**. International Business Management. Vol. 10 N° 6: 968-973. UAE.

AHMADI, S., & RAFIEE, A. 2015. **A Study on Emotional Intelligence Strategies to Reduce Organizational Indifference**. International Journal of Management Research and Business Strategy. Vol. 4 N° 3: 168-178. India.

BAKHIT, M., ABBASI, H., EIDI, H., & EIDIPOUR, K. 2015. **Predicting Organizational Indifference in Staff of Sport and Youth Offices of Kermanshah Province through Managers' Strategic Intelligence**. New Trends in Sport Management. Vol. 3 N° 9: 71-81. USA.

GHAHREMANI, M. & KEIKAVOUS, V. 2016. **Investigating the relationship between employees' indifference and displaying organizational citizenship behavior (Case of: Bank Maskan of West Azarbaijan Province).** International Management and Accounting Conference. Tehran. Iran.

GHEZEL AYAGH, M., KERAMATNIA, M. & SIRGHANI, S. 2016. **Measuring organizational indifference in employees using Rough Sets Theory (Case of: Khorasan Gas Production Management Company).** The 5th National Conference on Modern Management Sciences. Gorgan. Iran.

HARIRI, N., ROOTAN, S., & JANMOHAMMADI, M. 2013. **Assessing the Relationship between Perceived Organizational Support and organizational Indifference in Librarians Case Study: Central Libraries of Universities Affiliated to the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology in Tehran**. Journal of Academic librarianship and Information Research. Vol. 47. N° 4: 397-414. Netherland.

HUFF, A., & JENKINS, M. 2002. **Mapping strategic knowledge**. Sage. USA.

JAMSHIDI, M. and BAKHSHI, N. 2010. **From negligence to indifference: Theoretical explanation of the organizational indifference.** National Conference on Management and Leadership Challenges in Government Organizations. Isfahan. Iran.

KELLY, G. 1955. **The Psychology of Personal Constructs**. New York. Norton. USA.

MIRHOSSEINIZAVAREH, S. 1995. **Indifference**. Taavon. Vol. 5.
pp. 68-78. Tehran. Iran.

SEYYEDNAGHAVI, M., & KESHAVARZHAGHIGHI, M. 2011.
Managing indifference in employees. Human Resources
Quarterly of NAJA. Vol. 26. Pp. 1-16. USA.

SHEKARI, Q., OLYAII, L., KHEIRKHAH, M., & HASHEMZEHI,
R. 2016. **The effective factors on organizational indifference
(Case study: Khorasan Regional Power Company)**. Quarterly
Journal of State Management. Vol. 7. N° 22. New York. USA.

SHIRI, A., AZIZIANPOUR, M. & ROSTAMI, K. 2013. **Relationship
between Moral-Islamic Merit and Dimensions of
Organizational Indifference.** Culture in Islamic University.
Vol. 3. No 1: 3-18. China.