



Original Article (Quantified)

# Analyzing the role of employees' slacktivism in organizational isolation with the emphasis on the mediating role of self-presentation and organizational silence

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**Abstract**

The aim of the present study was to investigate the role of employee laxity in organizational isolation with an emphasis on the mediating role of self-effacement and organizational silence. This study was applicable in terms of its purpose, survey in terms of its method, and of causal type. The statistical population of the study was all employees of the executive agencies of Ardabil province. Considering the size of the population; about 40,000 people according to the latest statistics, the sample size was determined as 380 people using the Cochran formula and selected from the statistical population using a simple random method. Data collection was carried out using four questionnaires (titled "laxity", "organizational isolation", "show", and "organizational silence"). Validity was confirmed by confirmatory factor analysis, and reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha. Data analysis was performed using structural equation modeling, by SPSS 26 and Smart-PLS 3 software. The findings showed that since the t-statistic is greater than 1.96 at the 95% confidence level and according to the path coefficients, laxity has a positive and significant effect on organizational isolation, self-effacement, and organizational silence. Also, self-effacement has a positive and significant effect on organizational isolation. In addition, organizational silence has a positive and significant effect on organizational isolation. It is worth mentioning that since the Z-statistic is greater than 1.96 at the 95% confidence level and according to the path coefficients, self-effacement and organizational silence play a mediating role in the relationship between laxity and organizational isolation. The results of this study lead organizations to make greater efforts to reduce the laxity behaviors of their employees in order to prevent their organizational isolation.

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## Extended abstract

### Introduction

In recent years, the field of management has been increasingly concerned with another type of isolation that belongs to the professional class, takes place in the workplace, and is completely different from the previous concept of isolation. This type of isolation, called “organizational isolation,” is defined as a lack of support from colleagues and employers and a lack of opportunities for social and emotional interaction with group members, leading to serious management and social problems (Yang & Lu, 2023). It seems that one of these factors is “laxity,” which means an action or activity in support of one or more social issues that can only be characterized by a small amount of time, effort, or commitment; and that is also an action that simply generates more personal satisfaction (for the person acting) than its social impact (Kriushin, 2021). At the heart of laxity are complex motivations that compel individuals to engage in seemingly superficial activities. A primary driver is the need to express identity and mark value. However, laxity, in turn, leads to a pervasive sense of isolation that is increasingly common in contemporary society (Zohouri et al., 2020). On one hand, it seems that various types of laxity activities can lead to “show-off.” Show-off is a ploy to construct a persona in which an individual wants others to perceive them as such (Nathawat & Mahadevaswamy, 2023). On the other hand, employees may engage in laxity by involving in activities that require little effort but believe that they are contributing to organizational change. This perceived involvement may reduce their motivation to express concerns directly and inadvertently lead to a phenomenon called “organizational silence” (Foster et al., 2019). Organizational silence refers to a situation in which an employee refrains from talking about work-related issues due to concerns that their boss will misinterpret the issue, which may negatively affect their relationship with their colleagues (El-Abdou et al., 2022). Based on the above, it seems that there are shortcomings in examining the role of laxity in the emergence of organizational isolation, especially considering the mediating effect of self-disclosure and organizational silence among studies, especially internal studies. Therefore, the need for this study is felt. It is expected that by conducting the present study, managers can be helped to become familiar with some of the factors affecting the occurrence of organizational isolation (here, laxity along with organizational self- effacement and silence is considered) and to try to reduce it. Accordingly, the main purpose of conducting this study is to investigate the role of employee laxity in organizational isolation with an emphasis on the mediating role of organizational self- effacement and silence. Therefore, the main question is whether laxity can play a role in the occurrence of organizational isolation through organizational self-promotion and silence.

### Theoretical Framework

#### Laxity

Laxity is defined as “doing something to achieve political or social change using the Internet, as well as taking actions that are thought to require little effort or time” (Nagyova, 2022). Laxity can involve actions taken by the general public or include behaviors such as clicking a “like” icon, joining a Facebook group, or retweeting a hashtag (Foster et al., 2019).

#### Organizational Isolation

One type of isolation is organizational isolation, which is defined as “a feeling of separation from the information and resources provided by the organization.” Here, the employee may feel unseen or unknown by management, which affects his or her chances of career advancement and appreciation (Safaa & Al Bayati, 2024).



### **Self- effacement**

Self- effacement is defined as an attempt by an individual to influence the perceptions of others about him or her (Kumar & Tripathi, 2022). It is assumed that in self- effacement, individuals transmit information to others or create or modify an image of themselves in the eyes of their audience (Zimmermann et al., 2025).

### **Organizational Silence**

Organizational silence means “the refusal of individuals to express beliefs, ideas, information, or concerns that start at the individual level and may affect members of the organization” (Zohra & Sabrina, 2022). The motivation for this type of silence is the person’s fear of providing information (Khosravi et al., 2024).

### **Research Background**

Durrah et al., (2023) in a study titled “The Cost of Silence, Isolation, and Pessimism: Impact on Job Dissatisfaction,” found that organizational isolation and organizational pessimism have a significant impact on job dissatisfaction, while organizational silence does not have a significant impact. Thus, reducing organizational isolation and organizational pessimism in the workplace can help reduce job dissatisfaction. In addition, it was found that organizational silence leads to isolation in the workplace.

Smith (2023) in a study titled “Exploratory Analysis of the Relationship between Problematic Facebook Use, Loneliness, Isolation, and Self-Esteem: The Mediating Role of Extraversion and Showmanship” has reached the following conclusions: Loneliness and isolation have a positive relationship with problematic Facebook use, while self-esteem has a negative relationship with it. In addition, extraversion and showmanship play a mediating role in the relationship between problematic Facebook use, loneliness, isolation, and self-esteem.

Daamen (2021) in a study titled “The Impact of Laxity on Feminist Movements” has reached the conclusion that due to laxity, movements cannot have as wide an audience as they should, and this ultimately causes those who hold powerful positions to remain silent.

Hogben & Cownie (2017) in a study titled “Investigating laxity: Does social observability of online charity participation act as a mediator for future behavioral goals?” concluded that individuals’ participation in laxity-related charity activities can lead to a kind of self-promotion in individuals and the creation of stable behaviors.

### **Research Methodology**

This research is applicable in terms of its purpose, descriptive-survey in terms of its method, and of causal type. The statistical population of the research is all employees of the executive agencies of Ardabil province. Simple random sampling method was used for sampling, and Cochran’s formula was used to determine the sample size. Considering the size of the statistical population, which was about 40,000 people according to the latest statistics, the sample size was determined to be 380 people. Information and data were collected through library studies as well as field methods (using questionnaires). The research data were analyzed using structural equation modeling using SPSS 26 and Smart-PLS 3 software.

### **Research findings**

The findings showed that since the t-statistic is greater than 1.96 at the 95% confidence level and according to the path coefficients, laxity has a positive and significant effect on organizational isolation, self-effacement, and organizational silence. Also, self-effacement has a positive and significant effect on organizational isolation. In addition, organizational silence has a positive and significant effect on organizational isolation. Also, since the Z-statistic is greater than 1.96 at the 95% confidence level and according to the path coefficients, self-

effacement and organizational silence play a mediating role in the relationship between laxity and organizational isolation.

### **Conclusion**

Today, the phenomenon of isolation has increased significantly. So that it can even be observed in organizations and workplaces, which is known as organizational isolation. Various factors can be effective in the occurrence of organizational isolation; based on the research findings, it can be concluded that laxity, self- effacement, and organizational silence are all effective in the occurrence of organizational isolation. In addition, laxity can also lead to the occurrence of organizational isolation through self- effacement and organizational silence. These results are somewhat consistent with the results of Ralston (2024), Durrah et al., (2023), Smith (2023), Sun & Linag (2022), Daamen (2021), Mohammadi Nosoudi (2020), Rahimi & Bikarnlou (2020), Beyran Nejad et al., (2017), and Hogben & Cownie (2017).

According to the results of the research, the following suggestions are made:

- Inviting employees to participate in brainstorming sessions, workshops, and group projects;
- Providing rewards for effective employee actions;
- Providing feedback to employees to improve behavior;
- Institutionalizing a culture of criticism in the organization;
- Setting up a box for employees to express their opinions anonymously;