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The Effects of Cyberloafing on Employees' Job Performance Among Administrative Staff at a University

Ikenna Franklin Eze[1]; Thobekani Lose[2]; Ojilere Ijeoma[3]

[1] Researcher, Centre for Entrepreneurship Rapid Incubator, Walter Sisulu University (WSU), South Africa

[2] Director and Researcher, Centre for Entrepreneurship Rapid Incubator, Walter Sisulu University (WSU), South Africa

[3] Lecturer and Researcher, Department of English/Literary Studies, Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike Ikwo, Nigeria

E-mail: Ikerossenerri@yahoo.com

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Abstract

Communication and productivity within institutions have increased because of computer technology and the Internet. Despite all of the benefits that the Internet has provided for businesses, cyber-loafing remains a significant problem. The productivity of the company has been significantly damaged by this practise as a result of employees neglecting tasks to indulge in cyberloafing. Additionally, this action puts organisations in a precarious situation, putting the business at considerable risk of violating security regulations. The Internet and computer technology will continue to be crucial with the onset of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and businesses will continue to have severe issues with cyber-loafing during working hours. Businesses have put measures in place to lessen cyber-loafing, such as software programmes created to monitor, trace, and lock down the usage of the Internet for unlawful purposes. Unfortunately, these solutions cannot stop employees from cyber-loafing, therefore managers must play a part in minimising this behaviour. The role played by managers in reducing and controlling cyber-loafing is unclear. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to examine the effects of cyberloafing on employee job performance among administrative staff at a university. The respondents were managers and administrative staff at a university. This study employed a qualitative method, specifically Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. This method was considered necessary to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon.

Keywords: *Cyberloafing, Employee Productivity; Counterproductive Workplace Behavior; Internet Web Surfing; Employee Job Performance*

Introduction

Internet access and computer technologies have made cross-organisational communication easier and better (Arkorful, &Abaidoo, 2015). These technological resources have enhanced production and improved operational procedures in addition to improving the communication process. While this incredible development of the Internet is growing, employees, on the contrary, have devised new techniques for evading their work obligations and using business computers and the Web to undertake non-work-related activities during business hours (Kim, 2018). This behaviour has grown to such proportions that it has had a severe impact on organisational productivity, as an increasing number of employees are missing responsibilities and indulging in cyber-loafing (Chaven, et al, 2022). As a result of employees' divided attention when cyber-loafing, organisations suffer a slew of challenges, including decreased productivity, increased security concerns, timewasting, and a lack of innovation (Buntarangin, &Frantzen, 2022). Therefore, this act is considered a serious challenge for organisations.

Cyberloafing is described as the personal usage of technological systems when an employee is meant to be conducting his/her job activities (Pindek, Krajcevska& Spector, 2018). Cyberloafing is a form of counterproductive work behaviour (CWB), which is defined as an activity that causes harm to organisations (Mercado, 2017). Counterproductive work behavior comprises several aspects, including abuse (such as verbally abusing a coworker), production deviance (such as deliberately working sluggishly or inefficiently), sabotage (such as intentionally wasting materials or damaging appliances), theft (such as documenting more hours than were actually worked or taking products home without authorization), and withdrawal (taking longer breaks or coming in late). Thematically, cyberloafing is most similar to both withdrawal which deals with working less than necessary (Pindek et al, 2018) and production deviance which focuses on performing work inaccurately or badly (Askew & Buckner, 2017).

In the workplace, cyber-loafing has become a widespread occurrence. For instance, a study carried out by Rescue Time in the USA discovered that the average working hour was only 3 hours a day in 2018 and that employees spent 19% of their working time on social media instead of doing the job they were hired to do (MacKay, 2019). This is because some individuals check their mobile devices regularly without knowing it, and some employees are unaware that their cyberloafing behaviours impair their efficiency and job performance.

Furthermore, the last two decades are regarded as more ground breaking in terms of technology, with the introduction of current web-based services such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube (Collins & Halverson, 2018). These 'social networks' are becoming essential not only for corporations but also for individuals to share information and conduct various research (Appel et al, 2020). Currently, it is inevitable for businesses to employ the internet and social media to gain a competitive edge and respond to customer requests promptly and effectively (Agrawal & Narain, 2021). According to a World Bank Group (2016) report, organisations are using the internet to improve employee performance, facilitate communication, and reach clients in far-flung regions of the world. Conversely, scholars have discovered that workers are abusing the internet supplied by firms for individual benefit rather than office work (Rahman et al, 2022), resulting in significantly poor job performance (Hadlington& Parsons, 2017). Some academics consider cyberloafing to be a waste of resources and detrimental to the organisation (Coskun &Gokcearslan, 2019). Nonetheless, other experts believe that cyberloafing is advantageous to organisations. Various studies have revealed that workplace web leisure has a good direct correlation with employee satisfaction since it makes them feel calm at work, leading to higher efficiency and productivity (Mohammad et al, 2019). Additionally, web browsing is creative since it allows employees to acquire and share information, leading to the production of novel ideas (Van Laar et al, 2019).

The literature's conflicting studies on the influence of cyberloafing on job performance among employees highlight the necessity for additional research in this area. Along these lines, Mercado,

Giordano, and Dilchert (2017), argue that while cyberloafing has emerged as a growing trend among workers, this area of study has not been thoroughly researched.

While businesses have developed numerous strategies to prevent cyberloafing, the proportion of employees who indulge in it is rising. Researchers have found that managers lack the abilities and strategies needed to reduce workplace cyber-loafing (Luo et al., 2022; Çınar & Karcıoğlu, 2015). Due to the expense of dealing with or addressing this employee's behaviour, some of these cases are not adequately addressed. Most organisations are employing a variety of technologies and techniques to keep an eye on the web and computer usage to combat the problem of cyber-loafing (Anjum, 2022). However, further research is required to determine the impact of cyberloafing and how it affects employee performance within an organisation (Madison, 2017). The respondents for this study are managers and administrative assistants at a university.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Employees' Participation in Cyber-Loafing

The usage of internet technologies in the workplace has grown recently to boost employee productivity (Drucker, 2018). Cyber-loafing is viewed as a workplace aberration that impairs workers' productivity and effectiveness (Luo et al, 2022). It has been observed that male employees tend to engage in more cyberloafing than their female counterparts (Ayebi-Arthur, Arhin & Aidoo, 2021). Workers who feel helpless in their work environment are more prone to engage in cyber-loafing activities, which can seriously harm any organisation (Essien-Abasi, 2019). The two main factors or motivations for cyber-loafing within an organisation have been identified as job satisfaction and organisational equity (Uche, 2018).

The amount of time that employee spends online is influenced by both organisational and personal elements, such as the workplace environment and the individual needs of the staff (Banerjee & Thakur, 2016). Employees that indulge in cyberloafing behaviour are likely to undermine job quality, which is contrary to the required employment standards and it has a negative economic impact on their organisation (Karthikeyan & Thomas, 2017). Furthermore, as stated by Farooq (2019), it wastes employees' time, which significantly lowers organisational productivity. According to Mercado et al. (2017), the loss caused by these actions manifests as annual costs for the organisation as a result of security breaches, viruses, reduced worker productivity, information theft, cyberattacks, and time-wasting. This represents a substantial loss to businesses. Cyber-loafing has both direct and indirect consequences (Ezeh, Etodike & Chukwura). Activities that damage brand perceptions result in indirect consequences, which decrease customer loyalty and trust in the company (Aku, 2017). It was also stated by Ezeh, Etodike, and Chukwura (2018) that many businesses fail to report cyberloafing instances that take place at their workplace that raise organisational costs.

According to recent studies, businesses have started to authorize the use of surveillance equipment in the workplace to prevent cyberloafing (Kosgei, Wanyembi, & Bii 2022). Managers of organisations must have a comprehensive understanding of the cyber-loafing issue for the organisation to regulate or identify which strategies are effective (Mkhize, 2022). As reported by Tsai (2023) most employees use their employer's internet to explore websites unrelated to their jobs and that most of them write and receive private emails while at work.

Employees are predicted to spend two to three hours a week cyber-loafing, which equates to half an hour every day. While executing their tasks, several employees indulge in cyber-loafing activities such as visiting social networking sites, doing online shopping, and watching sporting events while at work (Gold, 2018). The level of cyber-loafing behaviour varies by individual. Some employees may use the

Internet frequently for work purposes, while others may abuse the platform for personal reasons such as private communication, shopping, and gaming, all of which occur during work hours (Koay, & Soh, 2019).

2.2 Consequences of Cyber-Loafing within an Organisation

The implications of cyber-loafing can be linked to the nature of its impacts, that is, whether it has positive or negative implications (Elizabeth et al., 2020). It is harmful when it harms the organisation, such as increased costs, lost productive time, and decreased work performance. Conversely, it is constructive when cyber-loafing behaviours have a beneficial impact on the organisation, such as enhanced job productivity, innovative and productive work behaviours, and job satisfaction (Sze et al., 2019). The consequences of cyber-loafing can be studied from both an individual and an organisational standpoint (Luo et al., 2022). From an individual standpoint (consider this to avoid repetition-perspective), disruptive cyber-loafing behaviours can eat up productive time, derail workers from their official responsibilities, and decrease job performance and work efficiency (Jiang et al., 2021). In the same vein, employees who engage in cyber-loafing activities as a stress-reduction strategy can increase their work efficiency because they can recover from work-related physical or mental weariness (Prakash & Kaur, 2018).

The topic of job performance in relation to cyber-loafing has been fairly examined. According to studies, moderate cyber-loafing can improve morale and serve as a recreational pastime. A high level of cyber-loafing, on the contrary, might be exhausting for the employee and contribute to work inefficiency (Akram, Li, & Akram, 2019). When employees engage in non-work-related Web surfing, some of the information gleaned may be useful in boosting employee knowledge and comprehension of their tasks. Furthermore, the use of social media platforms may increase employees' social capital, allowing information transfer and, as a result, enhancing job performance (Cao et al., 2017).

From an organisational standpoint, destructive cyber-loafing behaviours such as email service abuse, use of adult websites and online gambling, downloading illegal software, and accessing unauthorised information can jeopardise an organisation's legitimacy, lead to liability and data security (Tamunomiebi & Adim, 2019). All of these elements can result in legal concerns and increased costs for the organisation (Lim et al., 2020). Additionally, Werner (2020) identified the consequences of destructive cyber-loafing, such as the proclivity to browse adult websites, online gambling, and business information security breaches. Furthermore, Karthikeyan and Thomas (2017) stated that organisations spend billions of dollars in costs as a result of productivity losses, security and internet-related issues, legal proceedings, and other connected costs.

Lost productivity and decreased job performance are significant implications that organisations face as a result of employee cyber-loafing. Engaging in cyber-loafing necessitates cognitive skills, energy, time, and concentration, making it difficult for the employee to switch back to their professional responsibilities (Prakash & Kaur, 2018). Employees delay and primarily postpone their responsibilities in extreme situations of cyber-loafing; as a result, timely completion of duties is not attained, which can lead to poor organisational performance (Kalejaiye & Hammed, 2021).

2.3 Tools Used by Managers to Control Cyber-Loafing Activities

2.3.1 Electronic Monitoring Systems

Monitoring is a key tactic for controlling cyber-loafing behaviours within an organisation. Particularly monitoring prevents the use of the internet for purposes other than work (Luo et al. 2022). Monitoring software tracks how much time employees expend on work computers engaging in non-work-

related activities (Trivedi & Patel, 2021). The software records a user's mouse clicks, browsing history, and visited websites (Arciniega et al. 2019). Keystroke tracking can be used to track inappropriate online activity and serve as grounds for monitoring internet usage. One of the most probable causes for monitoring employee computer use is to prevent company information from being compromised. One of the earliest publications on the topic asserts that keeping tabs on cyber-loafing is crucial for several reasons, including preserving productivity, preventing viruses, ensuring security, preventing the company's network from becoming vulnerable, preventing corporate espionage, and averting financial risks (Al Abbasi, 2018).

Despite the precautions taken, some employees are still found to engage in cyberloafing. Monitoring will not deter these employees from engaging in this behaviour (Sao et al. 2020). Others see cyberloafing as a form of self-improvement, or at the very least, the knowledge gained when using the Internet for personal reasons (Ng et al. 2016). The blurring of the lines between work and personal time as a result of increased connectivity is one aspect of the problem (Sheikh, Aghaz & Mohammadi, 2019). Formal methods like monitoring can aid in reducing the motivation behind cyber-loafing (Lee et al. 2019). Rigourous training on the proper phone, internet, and other communication usages is one method that could be useful in reducing cyberloafing (Kim, 2018).

3. Research and Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted Smith's (1996) interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) research design. IPA is a rigorous, qualitative, psychological research approach that emphasises interpretation (Cuthbertson, Robb & Blair, 2020). Respondents fully participate in data collection, which helps them comprehend the significance of their own opinions and experiences in a group setting (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). As a result, it was decided that using IPA in this research was appropriate

3.1.1 Data Collection

An IPA study may also include focus groups to gather data (Lamb & Cogan, 2016). The purpose of the focus group interview was to learn from the managers and administrative staff at a university about the effects of employees' cyberloafing. The group discussion consisted of five managers and five administrative assistants from a university.

Focus groups may also be used in an IPA study to collect data (Lamb & Cogan, 2016). The goal of the focus group interview was to learn more about the effects of employees' cyberloafing from the managers and administrative assistants at a university. As noted by Sim and Water field (2019), a focus group needs between six to eleven participants. As a result, it was decided that the group sizes used for this study were adequate.

3.1.2 Target Population

A target population is a collection of individuals with shared characteristics who have been chosen as the study's target audience (Thomas, Li & Pencina, 2020). This study's population consisted of managers and administrative assistants at a university in Cape Town. A total of five managers who were numbered (A1-A5) and five administrative assistants numbered (B1-B5) made up the target population for this particular study.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Creswell (2014) stated that ethical concerns in research demand special consideration. Any potential ethical issues that might arise during this research were taken into account by the researcher. focus groups were used to get the responses from the participants. This required getting approval from the respondents. Participants' information was rigorously kept private and utilised solely for this study.

4.Results

This section presents the study findings gathered from various administrative staff and managers at a university. The responses were gathered through a focus group interview.

Table 1.2 Keeping track of internet usage during business hours

Question 1 (Managers)	How do you keep track of your workers' web usage during office hours?
Participant	Response
A1	"We do not monitor browsing habits during business hours. It is the duty of the IT department to alert us if they sense a misuse of the internet by a staff".
A2	"That is not a planned action, but it is performed".
A3	"Monitoring is carried out during business hours. This is very important considering that some employees still work from home and are given limited routers that they can use to perform their tasks. When a staff applies for more data, we quickly follow up to find out if the employee has misused the previous data".
A4	"Internet usage is monitored by the IT department".
A5	"To my knowledge, we do not check it in this institution".

Managers were asked how they supervised their workers' web activity during working hours. Table 1.2 demonstrated that there was a need for unanimity on when and how internet usage should be checked. However, A3 stated that "Monitoring is carried out during business hours. This is very important considering that some employees still work from home and are given limited routers that they can use to perform their tasks. When a staff applies for more data, we quickly follow up to find out if the employee has misused the previous data".

Additionally, web monitoring appears to be a responsibility entrusted to the IT Department. This is supported by A1 and A4, who claimed that it is the duty of the IT department to monitor web usage within the university.

According to Daz, Martin, and Rubio (2016), businesses use a variety of strategies to monitor internet use. Some companies utilise web surveillance systems to track internet use, which is primarily managed by the Computer and Information Technology Department.

Table 1.3 Reactions to Web Abuse

Question 1 (Managers)	How would you respond when you stroll around the office and see administrative staff member performing private business on their desktops during business hours?
Participant	Response
A1	"Administrative personnel are informed that they are not permitted to undertake personal business on corporate premises. If they are caught, they will be reprimanded and/or fired."
A2	"That depends on what they're doing. I have never been in a position where I could observe my staff doing their private stuff; although, if I were in that position, it would depend. I do not think I will have an issue if my employee is conducting a money transaction which is quicker and faster, but if I catch my employee viewing movies or shopping online, I will have a quick conversation with them to get them to stop".
A3	"That is not permitted at this university"
A4	"I will be furious at anyone who uses the university's assets for their gain".
A5	"The staff are cautioned against engaging in private businesses using company resources".

Addressing the question in Table 1.3 above, managers were queried on how they responded when they strolled about and saw administrative personnel performing personal business on corporate computers during working hours. According to the reactions, cyber-loafing is not an acceptable activity. A3 stated clearly that cyber-loafing is not permitted at this university. A1noted that " Administrative personnel are informed that they are not permitted to undertake personal business on corporate premises. If they are caught, they will be reprimanded and/or fired."

Table 1.4 Initiatives that create awareness

Question 1 (Managers)	Is your university implementing an awareness campaign or providing training on the hazards and perils of cyber-loafing? If so, how successful are these campaigns?
Participants	Response
A1	"We have never had a campaign designed expressly for cyber-loafing since we trust our workers to always do the right thing".
A2	"I am not sure whether I have seen any campaigns or awareness initiatives".
A3	"We are yet to undergo any kind of cyberloafing training".
A4	"No. I never heard of such campaigns".
A5	"Sure, we do training and awareness campaigns. They are highly efficient".

In addition to the remarks in Table 1.4, managers were questioned about whether the university offers training or awareness campaigns on the hazards and perils of cyber-loafing as well as the efficacy of these campaigns. The results showed that employees are required to be properly informed of any awareness campaigns on cyber-loafing activities.

For example, this can be found in the remarks from A1, who said, "We have never had a campaign designed expressly for cyber-loafing since we trust our workers to always do the right thing" and A4explicitly noted, "*no, I never heard of such campaigns*". The management's approach as a

preventive measure to stop cyber-loafing activities needs to be ongoing behaviour training for staff, as stated by (Luo et al, 2022). Staff members need to be constantly informed about potential cyberattacks and the drawbacks of indulging in cyber-loafing activities. As stated by Prakash and Kaur (2018), there is a correlation between cyberloafing practises and a lack of knowledge about internet security. Managers must receive training on cybersecurity problems so they can properly educate their staff.

Table 1.5 Involved in cyberloafing at work

Question 1 (Administrative staff)	Have you ever been involved in cyberloafing while at work?
Participant	Response
B1	"Yes, I always check different websites while at work such as my emails".
B2	"Yes, I can multitask. While at work, I check the internet for different holiday homes as I am planning a vacation with my partner".
B3	"Yes, I spend at least one hour a day doing my personal stuff on the internet".
B4	"Yes, I open many tabs while I work, some of the tabs are related to my work at the university while the rest are for my private stuff. But, I believe I am still able to give my best to my employer".
B5	"Yes, Checking other websites help me to stay focused while at work"

According to table 1.5,the administrative staff were asked whether they have ever been involved in cyberloafing while at work. The findings revealed all the administrative assistants concurred that they have been involved in some form of cyberloafing while working for their employer. According to B4 "Yes, I open many tabs while I work, some of the tabs are related to my work at the university while the rest are for my private stuff. But, I believe I am still able to give my best to my employer". This is in line with Andel, et al (2019) who noted that most employees engage in cyberloafing while at work.

Table 1.6 Theincrease in virtual work

Question 1 (Managers)	Do you believe that the increase in virtual work has an impact on employees' cyberloafing?
Participant	Response
A1	"Certainly, the increase in virtual work impacts employees' cyberloafing activities".
A2	"Yeah, I absolutely think so".
A3	"Certainly, virtual work influences cyberloafing without a doubt".
A4	"Obviously, I think the increase in virtual work has an impact on cyberloafing".
A5	"Clearly, virtual work contributes to cyberloafing".

The transition to virtual work brought on by COVID-19 may encourage some workers to perceive working remotely as stressful. As shown in Table 1.6, all respondents concurred that the increase in virtual work has led some employees to engage in cyberloafing. Along these lines, A1 said, *"*Certainly, the increase in virtual work impacts employees' cyberloafing activities". Furthermore, A3 concurs with AI saying "Certainly, virtual work influences cyberloafing without a doubt".

Agreeing with these findings, Mercado, Giordano, and Dilchert (2017) cited that, chances for cyber-loafing, or using the Internet for purposes unrelated to one's job, have greatly risen in recent years as a direct consequence of the emergence of virtual work teams, flexible work schedules, and private electronic equipment in the workplace.

Table 1.7 Missed a deadline

Question (Administrative staff)	Have you ever missed a deadline at work due to cyberloafing activities
Participant	Response
B1	"Yes, I have missed several deadlines in the past due to cyberloafing".
B2	"Yes, just yesterday, I missed a deadline because I spent a lot of time on the web doing my personal stuff such as applying for a new job".
B3	"Yes, I have missed deadlines because of cyberloafing. My manager would always scream at me each time I miss a deadline".
B4	"Yes, I have missed deadlines because I was not fully concentrating on my task because I was doing online shopping".
B5	"Yes, I have missed deadlines because of cyberloafing".

According to table 1.7, all the administrative staff agreed that they have missed a deadline at work due to cyberloafing. This is in line withDursun, Donmez, and Akbulut (2018) Who cited that employees don't give their best at work due to divided attention. Managers need to monitor their subordinates to make sure they are doing their tasks.

5. Recommendations for Management

Based on this study, the following recommendations are made:

Cyber-security issues are more likely to be present in universities due to cyber-loafing, which may cause administrative personnel to not give their best effort while on the job. Universities are advised to make investments in more advanced technologies, including CCTV cameras, and to update their surveillance systems. Furthermore, management must also regularly remind staff employees of the consequences of cyber-loafing through meetings, emails, and bulletins. Also, the training of new workers is a crucial element in preventing cyber-loafing activities. Workers need to go through a systematic induction procedure that will mould their behavioural intentions and assist them in avoiding dangerous behaviours that can hurt their institution.

6. Implications of the Study/Conclusions

Cyber-loafing has become a standard practice being carried out by employees in many organisations. This study corroborates the existing literature that cyber-loafing activities are common in the workplace, among administrative staff at a university. Despite the existence of mitigating mechanisms implemented by management, cyber-loafing is still prevalent in most institutions. This is a clear indication that the implementation of these tools falls short. This research concluded that cyberloafing affects the job performance of administrative staff at a university. This is evident in the responses gotten from the administrative staff who noted that they missed deadlines due to engagement in cyberloafing activities.

The contributions of managers to lowering cyber-loafing are still mostly unknown. Evaluation of the management measures used to curb staff cyber-loafing has received little attention. This study, therefore, clarified the role managers can play in minimising cyber-loafing.

Furthermore, this study shed some light on the appropriate tools that can be employed by universities to tackle cyberloafing within their institution. Also, the administrative staff will benefit from this study regarding the detrimental effects of cyber-loafing on institutions and how to lower risk in their organisations by refusing risky internet behaviours.

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