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Cyberloafing: Effects on Employee Job Performance and Behavior

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Abstract: ***Cyberloafing is a relatively new phenomenon. The study conducted, therefore, attempts to gather information about cyberloafing and how it affects employee behavior. The objective of the present study is to find what causes cyberloafing among employees and about the various cyberloafing activities at the workplace that employees are engaged in. The paper studies the significant impact of cyberloafing on employee job performance and behavior. 172 employees participated in this study from various sectors. The results imply that cyberloafing activities have a positive significant impact on behavioral factors such as recovery from work, learning new skills, following developmental sites, taking rest, developing oneself and acquiring abilities and on affecting factors such as generating new ideas, making a person more interesting at work, regaining span of attention, feeling enthusiastic and excited and being productive at work.***

Keywords : Cyberloafing, Goldbricking, Counterproductive Workplace Behavior, Employee Productivity, Employee Job Performance, Work Deviance, Workplace Ostracism, Narcissism, Time Theft, Web Filtering, Cyber Security

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, technology has been growing at a faster pace. Organizations are moving towards digitalization thus increasing the usage of the internet at their workplace. The use of resources of the organization for personal work seems to be a very common practice today for all. Cyberloafing is a terminology which can be described as the action of employees who use the internet for non-work related activities or personal use during their working hours while pretending to do official work due to which it is also called as 'goldbricking'. It is also connoted as abuse of the internet by the employees at the workplace. There are various definitions and approaches for cyberloafing in organizations.

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Examples of cyberloafing activities include being active on social media websites, shopping online, playing games, watching videos, reading news or blogs, sending and receiving personal emails, job searching, etc.
Cyberloafing is mostly observed in professions where long working hours on computers are involved. Although many researchers say that cyberloafing occurs through computers, (Askew, 2012) in his report says that it can also occur through cellphones and tablets as calls and messages also come in the sphere of cyberloafing. Other terms used to describe cyberloafing are non-work related computing, online loafing, cyberslacking, internet deviance, problematic internet use, personal web usage at work, internet dependency, internet addiction disorder, cyber-bludging and Internet abuse (Kim, Sahara, & Byrne, 2011). It can also be described as a modern form of counterproductive workplace behavior. This is because the cyberloafing activities taking place during working hours divert the focus of employees from their work and leads to wastage of time thus failing to fulfill their work demands. However many researchers argue that internet serves as necessary deviance from work which can result in more flexibility, creativity and an environment of learning for the employees (Blanchard & Henle, 2008). Several studies indicate that the modern work environment with its digital devices and services may allow cyberloafing for around one to three hours daily, thereby stealing company time. A blog by InterGuard (Minimize Employee Time Theft While Maintaining A Motivated Workforce) released on April 16, 2018, says that time theft is an important problem to address but it is also sensitive as you don't want to take full control over the employees and create negative workplace consequences. It also causes a loss of productivity and the loss of a huge amount of money to organizations. Time theft can be minimized while keeping employees positive and motivated by setting good examples by managers, making workplace policies clear, installing monitoring software on company devices. Another blog by InterGuard (How Web Filtering Can Improve Workplace Cyber-security) released on May 21, 2019, suggests that web filtering is also one of the ways which prevent employees from using insecure websites that may contain viruses or malware and increase cyber-security. Data breaches caused by viruses and malware may cost in loss of clients and public trust. The employees in organizations are not even aware that these cyberloafing activities are affecting their productivity and job performance. For example, some people check their phones frequently without even realizing it. People tend to behave in a way that follows social norms and learn vicariously.

Hence, when employees observe other employees involved in cyberloafing during their working hours they may perceive it as acceptable behavior.

Besides, employees using smartphones for both work and personal activities make it difficult for employers to measure the actual work hours of employees. It has been found that cyberloafing is a part of their day to day activities and since employees are dependent upon smartphones or internet-connected devices to do their work it is difficult to tell who is cyberloafing and who is doing the actual work (Cyberloafing: The hidden epidemic killing Business Productivity by My Sammy, July 10, 2013). In some cases, cyberloafing activities lead to an unpleasant environment and other undesirable outcomes such as when an employee chooses to view offensive material at work. This can also affect other employees who may be distracted, disturbed, or offended. It is associated with the development of traits such as narcissism, self-interest, and manipulativeness (Minimize Employee Time Theft While Maintaining a Motivated Workforce, a blog by InterGuard released on April 16, 2018). Also, employees have a very casual approach towards it and so do organizations. Although organizations and employees are unaware of the concept of cyberloafing they are still involved in these activities in some or the other way.

Some employees can focus more on work when they take a break and browse some social networking sites or otherwise. Few may prefer to play music while doing work. The latter may be more focused at work due to music. If the music is played online by using the internet resources of the organization and the employee is performing well also; would you still call it a negative cyberloafing? Cyberloafing is not only person-specific, but it is also influenced by the working environment and the needs of each employee.

Cyberloafing decreases the overall productivity in the organizations. However, if cyberloafing is handled with caution and is monitored it may bring positive effects and higher productivity. A policy concerning clear usage of internet and monitoring may help the organization and the employees may involve in low cyberloafing activities as they are monitored. (J-Ho, Ching, Gan, & Ramayah, 2017).

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

When the internet was new to organizations, the employees using internet for personal use would receive a memo or could be fired as well. With the advent of internet at the workplace, cyberloafing cannot be avoided.

It offers employees opportunities to take a break from work and at the same time it proves beneficial to the organization when employees take cyberloafing as a mean to recover from work (Doorn & (HPM), 2011). A significant amount of attention has been drawn by scholars about Internet abuse in companies. Studies on Cyberloafing have often implied that it leads to the negative consequences in terms of work deviance and security threats; (LIM*, 2002), (Johnson & Indvik, 2003), (Henle & Blanchard, 2008); (Bock, Shin, Liu, & Sun, 2010). The possible positive consequences of this behavior are not studied to a significant extent. However, there are also possible positive consequences of Cyberloafing applicable to recovery from work and activities related to work (Oravec, 2002); (Belanger & Slyke, 2002). Thus in previous studies, the findings on Cyberloafing are contradictory in nature and have shown positive as well as negative consequences. Some studies have shown that this phenomenon can act as one of the coping strategies against adverse experiences at work (Oravec, 2002), (Stanton, 2002), (Anandarajan & Simmers, 2005). This is vital as employees have to extend their working hours and may have to go through the negative impact of burnout and stress (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Hence, it is important to investigate how cyberloafing can have a positive impact on work to see the potential benefits. As per studies, a certain amount of cyberloafing at work was acceptable.

Based on gender, men perceive that cyberloafing has a positive impact on work than women.

Also, internet surfing is positively correlated with employees' emotions. On the contrary, sending or receiving emails has a negative impact. The employees had a feeling that basic form of cyberloafing during working hours generally is tolerable (Lim, V.K.G., Chen, & D.J.Q., 2009). Researchers, (Maslach & Leiter, 1997); (Oravec, 2002); (Anandarajan & Simmers, 2005) indicate possible outcomes of cyberloafing such as decreasing burnout, less stress, and anxiety level. In another research, five core values of job characteristics (task identity, task significance, skill variety, feedback and job autonomy) and three main types of role stressors (role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload) are the predictors of cyberloafing, but skill variety, job autonomy, role ambiguity, and role conflict are found to be significant predictors of cyberloafing (Madiha Arshad, December 2016).

With the advent of technology which is freely available in the hands of employees, browsing at work for personal reason is a matter of concern for employers. This may deviate employees from productive hours to non-productive hours. An employee spending zero hours doing personal work on the internet; will be more productive. However, an increase in usage of the internet to one hour can increase the productivity of the employees by three times. Today, many organizations restrict the usage of social networking sites on devices provided by the employer. This restriction may divert the mind of employee more towards browsing the internet for enhancing knowledge (Saleh, Daqqa, AbdulRahim, & Sakallah, 2018). Thus, the engagement of employees in some sort of recreational activities is a must to increase their productivity. Indoor recreational activities may not be possible in every organization due to infrastructure. Therefore, usage of internet for educational purpose, enhancing knowledge or for some sort of leisure activity within the ethical principles should be permitted by organizations.

A notable gender difference is also seen in informational, social and leisure cyberloafing. Female managers working in banks have more informational, less social and less leisure cyberloafing as compared to their male counterparts. Primarily two types of cyberloafing behaviors exist; minor (usage of personal emails and browsing non work-related sites) and major (usage of such sites which would damage the system of an organization). Also, male employees get engaged in such cyberloafing activities much more as compared to females with a probability of factor lack of self-control (Ahmad & Omar, 2017).

Males have a higher level of addiction to the internet and towards cyberloafing as compared to females and no difference in surfing social networking sites or web browsing concerning gender (Keser, Kavuk, & Numanoglu, 2016).

As per studies of (Galperin & Burke, 2006), highly committed staff have less deviation at work and do not waste time as they have an interest in their job. The study reported that there is an inverse relationship between professional commitment and cyberloafing. (Garrett & Danziger, 2008) In the study, he concluded that there is an inverse relation amid organizational commitment and personal utilization of the internet during work. A study also shows that workplace ostracism has a positive relationship with cyberloafing and emotional exhaustion is a mediating factor (Koay, 2018). Another study indicates that when organizations are fair towards employees, it creates organizational trust and leads to higher employee engagement which consequently reduces cyberloafing behavior among employees (Oosthuizen, Rabie, & Beer, 2018). The researcher reported that employees who like their job would tend to spend less time on irrelevant activities such as internet abuse (Rezayian, 1995). While many studies talk about the impact of cyberloafing on employee productivity and job satisfaction, a study by (Lim & Chen, 2009) says that different cyberloafing activities have a different impact on employee work attitude. It says that browsing activities have a positive impact on attitude towards work as it temporarily helps to relief work stress while emailing activity has a negative impact on work attitude as it leads to work depletion; the reason being employees replying to personal emails thus putting extra energy and time. A study by (Stoddart, 2016) says that cyberloafing is a kind of disengagement coping whereas mindfulness is a kind of engagement coping and mindfulness is partially responsible for the relationship between role overload and work burnout.

Usage of internet for personal work at the workplace has a significant impact on organizations. The rise in Counterproductive Work Behaviour ("voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and thus threatens the well-being of an organization and its members") saw an increase of ten percent in Cyberloafing and other counterproductive work behaviors from the year 2003 to 2007 (Fine et al., 2010). Further studies reveal a shocking 34 million employees in the United States are involved in Cyberloafing resulting in productivity loss amounting to 200.6 million hours per week (Lim, V.K.G., Chen, & D.J.Q., 2009). (K.S, 2010) studied and estimated the loss in terms of productivity to 54 billion dollars per year. (Greengard, 2000) This study focused on productivity loss and reported that more than half of the cyberloafing activities within organizations are unrelated to work. According to estimates, Cyberloafing activities amounts to nearly two to two and a half hours every day (Johnson & Indvik, 2003); (Blanchard & Henle, 2008); (Lim, V.K.G., Chen, & D.J.Q., 2009); (Ramayah, 2010).

These studies report that Cyberloafing activities take away a minimum of 5 hours per week, thereby affecting both the employee and the organization. The study of involvement of employees in Cyberloafing and its impact on employees and their organization can help managers to take suitable measures.

Employees who feel down and have a feeling of low power at work may involve in cyberloafing activities more (Kim, Triana, Chung, & Oh, 2016).

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is exploratory and analytical in nature. Various factors such as sources of cyberloafing, the behavior of employees due to cyberloafing and its impact were explored through available literature and in-depth interviews with respondents and group discussions. The opinions of experts in the research were taken into consideration for questionnaire design and validation. Primary data was collected through an online survey and the secondary data were collected from websites, public reports, research reports, journal articles, blogs, and news articles. The questionnaire helps the researchers gather information from the potential respondents and analyze the collected data. A structured questionnaire that consists total of a 42 questions was used for collection of primary data. The components of the questionnaire were taken from (Stoddart, 2016), (Doorn & (HPM), 2011) and (LIM & CHEN, 2009) which is divided into four categories, demographics, sources of cyberloafing, behavior and its impact on job performance and behavior. Demographics consists of six questions. The components for sources of cyberloafing were taken from (Stoddart, 2016), which consists of sixteen questions; the components of the behavior of cyberloafing were taken from (Doorn & (HPM), 2011), which consists of nine questions. And the components for the impact of cyberloafing were taken from (LIM & CHEN, 2009) which consists of eleven questions. The responses were measured with the help of five-point scale ranging from "Never" to "Always". The sample size for the present study is 172 out of which 92 respondents were males and 80 respondents were females. The maximum number of respondents belonged to the age of 25-34. 84 respondents belonged to the IT/E-Commerce industry and the rest belonged to manufacturing, retail, real estate, and education industry. Data were collected through convenience and snowball sampling. Regression analysis has been applied to find the significant impact of cyberloafing on employee job performance and behavior. It helps to examine the influence of one or more independent variables on dependent variables.

This journal uses double-blind review process, which means that both the reviewer (s) and author (s) identities concealed from the reviewers, and vice versa, throughout the review process. All submitted manuscripts are reviewed by three reviewer one from India and rest two from overseas. There should be proper comments of the reviewers for the purpose of acceptance/ rejection. There should be minimum 01 to 02 week time window for it.

A. Reason for topic selection:

Cyberloafing has become an important issue to address to the organizations because of the increasing use of the Internet for completing maximum tasks at the workplace. Organizations provide employees with Internet and email access for the work-related activities, but at the same time, it has led to distraction from work among employees as they make misuse of the same for non-work related activities, thus spending unnecessary time on the Internet and delaying the work tasks which in turn causes loss of productivity. Thus, a study on cyberloafing helps organizations and employees cope with the problems caused due to cyberloafing.

B. Problem identification and need of the study:

In this era, technology is getting advanced and organizations are moving towards automation and digitalization. The internet has completely transformed business activities like marketing, sales, media and many more. The Internet has revolutionized how we work, studies show that some of the cyberloafing activities have adverse effects on the productivity of employees. This research emphasizes on causes and impact of various cyberloafing activities on employee job performance and behavior.

C. Significance of the study:

Various studies have been carried out on Cyberloafing. The research to cyberloafing, therefore, gives an overview of what cyberloafing is and how to deal with the consequences of cyberloafing. Studies have shown various consequences of cyberloafing; both positive and negative based on activities and behaviors. Thus, the research will be useful for organizations to avert the negative effects of cyberloafing. Many organizations have policies in place regarding internet usage at work. This implementation recognizes the potential risk of misusing internet at the workplace. Thus, the study of cyberloafing and its impact on employees can help organizations influence cyberloafing positively.

D. Objectives of the study:

- To study the sources of cyberloafing in the organization.
- To study the behavior of employees caused due to cyberloafing reasons.
- To study the impact of cyberloafing on employee job performance.

E. Hypothesis of study:

Hypothesis One: Cyberloafing has no significant impact on employee job performance.

Hypothesis Two: Cyberloafing has a significant impact on employee job performance.

IV. INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

A. Reliability Statistics:

Reliability analysis is important because it checks whether the study really fulfills the aim and hypothesis or not and it also ensures that the outcomes are based on the study and not on any other material. It was done using SPSS. Following table represents reliability statistics for: sources of cyberloafing, behavioral factor and affecting factors respectively.

The Cronbach's Alpha is greater than 0.70 for the given parameters which make the measurement scale reliable (Drost, 2011)

Table 1.1 Reliability Statistics

Parameters	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Cyberloafing activities	0.937	16
Behaviour factors	0.842	9
Affecting factors	0.76	10

B. Demographics:

The below graphs represent age and work experience of the respondents.

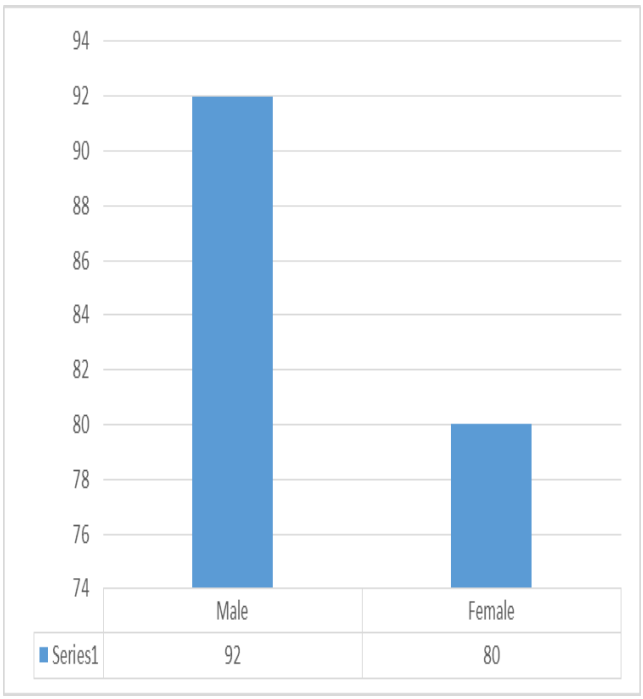

Figure 1: Gender

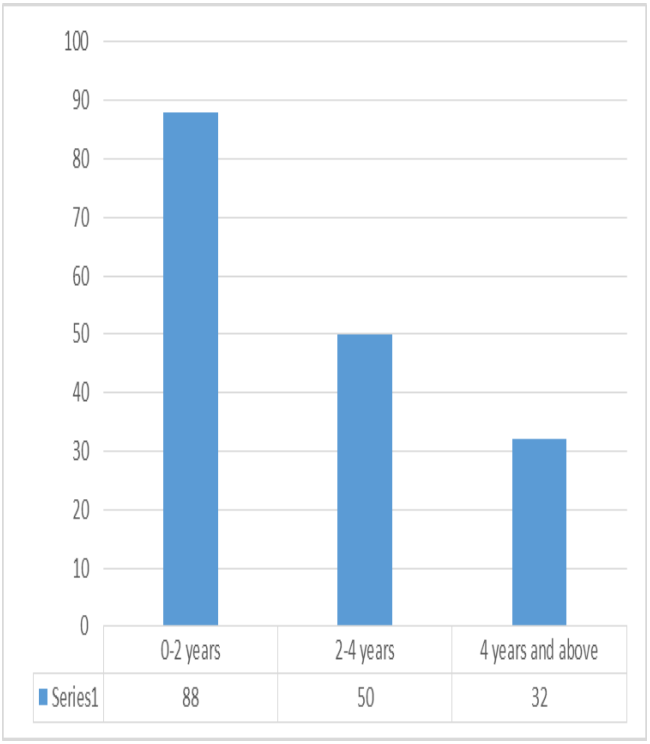

Figure 2: Work Experience

C. Regression Analysis:

The data were analyzed using regression analysis to find the impact of cyberloafing activities on employee job performance taking into consideration behavioral factors and affecting factors.

The significance value which is less than 0.05 shows that cyberloafing activities have a significant impact on behavioral and affecting factors. Detailed analysis is shown in Table 2.1 and Table 2.2.

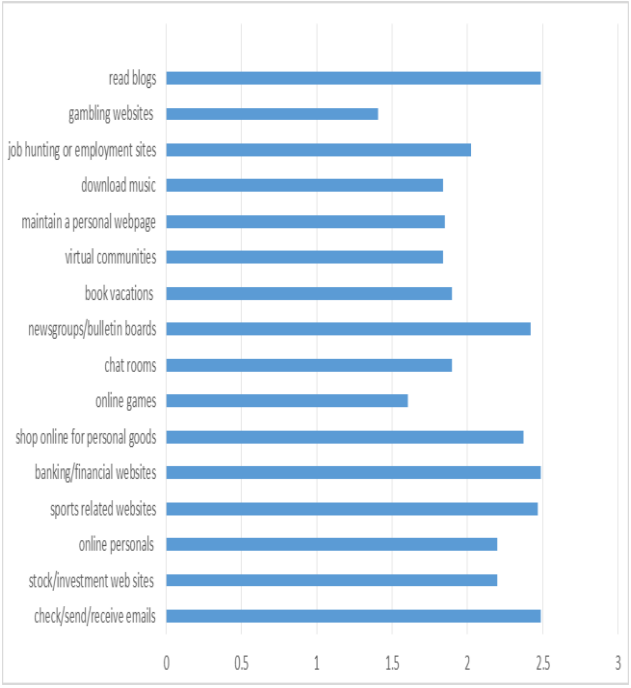

Figure 3: Sources of cyberloafing activities

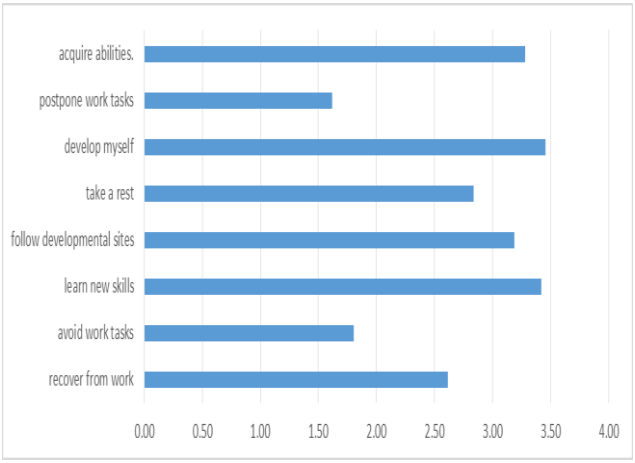

Figure 4: Behavioral Factors

From the above data, it is evident that the majority of the employees believe that they engage in cyberloafing activities to develop themselves through learning new skills and improve their abilities.

	Factors	Significance Value
Behavioral factors	Recover from work	4.70E-06
	Avoid work tasks	1.43E-07
	Learn new skills	9.87E-04
	Follow developmental sites	6.39E-05
	Take a rest	2.50E-04
	Develop myself	3.93E-03
	Postpone work tasks	2.08E-10
	Acquire abilities	4.60E-04
Affecting factors	Distraction from work	0.262
	Unable to meet deadlines	0.072
	Generating new ideas	0.058
	Making a person more interesting at work	0.026
	Regaining span of attention	0.021
	Reducing work stress	0.125
	Difficult to fulfill work obligations	0.073
	Extension of working hours	0.066
	Dealing with practical/personal issues at work	0.062
	Feeling enthusiastic and excited	0.033
	Made productive at work	0.002

Table 2.1. Regression Analysis

	Factors	Significance
Behavioral factors	Recover from work	Positive significance
	Avoid work tasks	Negative significance
	Learn new skills	Positive significance
	Follow developmental sites	Positive significance
	Take a rest	Positive significance
	Develop myself	Positive significance
	Postpone work tasks	Negative significance
	Acquire abilities	Positive significance
Affecting factors	Distraction from work	No significance
	Unable to meet deadlines	No significance
	Generating new ideas	Positive significance
	Making a person more interesting at work	Positive significance
	Regaining span of attention	Positive significance
	Reducing work stress	No significance
	Difficult to fulfill work obligations	No significance
	Extension of working hours	No significance
	Dealing with practical/personal issues at work	No significance
	Feeling enthusiastic and excited	Positive significance
	Made productive at work	Positive significance

Table 2.2 Observations

V. CONCLUSION

From the current study, it is found that cyberloafing has a significant impact on all the behavioral factors. It has a positive significant impact on all the behavioral factors except on the factors such as avoid work tasks and postpone work tasks. Whereas, affecting factors such as generating new ideas, making a person more interesting at work, regaining span of attention, feeling excited and enthusiastic, and being productive at work, have a positive significant impact on employees and no significant impact is seen in rest of the affecting factors.

It has also been observed that employees are mostly engaged in activities such as reading blogs, visiting job hunting or employment sites, visiting newsgroups/bulletin boards, shop online, visiting banking/financial, sports online personals and stock/investment websites and check/receive or send emails. Also, most of the employees are engaged in cyberloafing activities to acquire abilities, develop themselves, take a rest, follow developmental sites, learn new skills and recover from work. Further studies can be done to explore the impact of cyberloafing on employee engagement, attrition rates, job satisfaction, workplace ostracism, and coping methods to avoid job stress and burnout.

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