

Impact of Cyberloafing on Team Potency & Team Conflict at the Workplace

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In recent years the phenomenon of cyberloafing has become an endemic problem of concern for organizations. The ease of access to internet at the workplace, has amplified the dominance of cyberloafing as a workplace deviant behavior. In this article the authors have attempted to investigate the prevalence of the phenomenon and its effect on employees' perceptions of potency and conflict within teams. A sample of 209 persons, with work experience, was examined through survey research method. Regression analyses and AMOS 21 was used to test the relationship between cyberloafing and aforementioned variables. The results confirmed the impact of cyberloafing on team potency (negative) and conflict (positive). The findings have significant implications for academicians and practitioners in the industry.

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Introduction

One of the biggest disruptors of this modern age is the internet. It has been the cornerstone to many emerging opportunities and developments of this era. Internet has not only enhanced business opportunities, but also increased the productivity of employees (Huma, Hussain, Thurasamy & Malik, 2017). The emergence of the net has led to the development of virtual teams and has enabled collaboration across geographies with ease. Apart from this, the internet has also helped in marketing of products and services effectively, reducing the product cycle times and diminishing costs (Anandarajan, Simmers & Igbaria, 2000). Internet is not only an integral part of the operations of an organization but it also results in favorable outcomes with respect to employee efficiency and communication (Yan et al, 2015). While the internet has proven to be so beneficial, it has a flip side as well. A pertinent problem plaguing corporations is its personal usage at the workplace during working hours (Ramayah, 2010). This counter-productive behavior is known as cyberloafing (Uche, George & Abiola, 2017).

Cyberloafing is a new way for employees to be engrossed in workplace deviance behavior (Baturay & Toker, 2015). Surfing non-work related and news websites, chatting online, playing games, booking tickets, downloading music, shopping, performing personal banking, updating personal website/blogs/social media pages, using emails, viewing adult content and gambling comprise cyberloafing (Weatherbee, 2010). Needless to say, it has become a matter of growing concern for organizations (Kim & Jeong, 2015). Internet usage for personal work is threatening for organizations as it reduces employee efficiency and productivity (Yılmaz et al, 2015). In fact, researchers have established that cyberloafing diminishes productivity of employees by 30-40 % (Lim & Teo, 2005). In addition, it increases security threats and unnecessary network bandwidth consumption (Lim & Chen, 2012); and has an impact on economic losses of enterprises (Malachowski, 2005). While other counter-productive work behaviors like coming late, taking long lunch breaks, chatting with co-workers are easily recognized as loafing behaviors, cyberloafing is not as evident (Zhang et al, 2015).

Cyberloafing diminishes productivity of employees by 30-40 %

Further, cyberloafing can also put organizations at risk when employees resort to downloading music, viewing offensive content and/ or accessing pornographic sites (Blanchard & Henle, 2008). With such alarming consequences, monitoring and reducing the prevalence

of cyberloafing is of great concern, thus making it a worthwhile research theme for academicians and practitioners alike. Organizations today are increasingly relying on teams to function, innovate and create value (Felps, Mitchell & Byington, 2006). A team is a group of individuals sharing space, ideas, experiences, and knowledge with a common goal in mind (Van den Bossche, Gijsselaers, Segers & Kirschner, 2006). However, in order to understand that goal, people in teams need to integrate various perspectives and have a shared understanding. This is attainable only through interactive and meaningful discussion (Roschelle, 1992). To be able to share ideas and communicate within the teams the social context needs to be such that it enriches the willingness of individuals to engage with one another (Barron, 2003). A study by Barron (2003) revealed that the relational facet of interpersonal context, like bonding and relationships, while working in teams can stimulate the team. Hence, for organizations it is imperative to provide a thriving environment such that it nourishes the zeal of employees to involve and work effectively in teams.

Corporations primarily function through teams, hence, we were keen to probe how a phenomenon like cyberloafing, a pervasive issue for companies and managers, has an impact on team dynamics. Despite it being an area of concern, rarely studies have concentrated on the influence of cyberloafing on team variables. Therefore, in the current study we are fixating our attention on the impact of cyberloafing on employees' perceptions of team potency and team conflict.

This paper has two significant contributions. First, it extends previous research on cyberloafing and analyzes its impact on team potency and conflict. Second, our work provides some plausible methods and strategies for practitioners to reduce the extent of cyberloafing.

Cyberloafing

‘Cyberloafing’ is described as the act of voluntarily using the company’s internet services for non-work related purposes during working hours (Lim, 2002; Lim & Chen, 2012). Cyberloafing has been considered as a workplace deviant behavior (Lim, 2002). Workplace deviance is defined as a deliberate act of an employee to violate organizational norms like well-being of the organization and its members (Lebron, Tabak, Shkoler & Rabenu, 2018; Lim, 2002). This can range from dishonesty, gossiping, and absenteeism (Goldberg & Waldman, 2000), to more severe deviant behaviors like aggression and theft at the workplace (Lim, 2002). Loafing has existed in organization since time immemorial but with the advent of internet and its indispensable role in organizations, cyberloafing has emerged as a relentless form of loafing. It is not only a convenient way of wasting time, as one can resort to this mechanism by sitting on one’s seat or computer system, but is also difficult to monitor (Lim, 2002).

Historically, studies have used varied terminologies to explain the concept of cyberloafing. These include cyberslacking (Bortolani & Favretto,

2009), cyberbludging (Bortolani & Favretto, 2009), personal web use (PWU) (Mahatanankoon, Anandarajan & Igbaria, 2004), cyberslouching (Urbaczewski & Jessup, 2002), internet abuse (Anandranjan et al, 2000), junk computing (Guthrie & Gray, 1996), internet misuse (Lavoie & Pychyl, 2001) and non-work related computing (Chun & Bock, 2006). Ultimately, they all describe cyberloafing as an unproductive use of the internet at the workplace that results in procrastination of work and wastage of time and resources, thus making it a workplace deviant behavior (Martin, Brock, Buckley & Ketchen, 2010). For our study, we define the terminology cyberloafing as “the personal use of internet and e-mail while at work” (Bortolani & Favretto, 2009). In a study by Grover (2014) it was revealed that 64% of a sample of 1,000 workers in US surfed the Internet for some personal activity during the working hours. It is vital that managers ensure there is no lapse in their monitoring strategy regarding usage of internet for personal interest during business hours. To do so, organizations have implemented some mechanisms of control that include internet usage policies (Moody & Siponen, 2013), blockage of access to certain websites and imparting punishment to the offenders (Baturay & Toker, 2015). In addition, companies are also supervising the internet usage pattern and behavior through software (Moody & Siponen, 2013). However, despite these processes in place, organizations fail to prevent cyberloafing (Al-Shuaibi, Shamsudin & Subramaniam, 2013). This very fact excites researchers to delve

into gaining an understanding of antecedents of cyberloafing.

Conversely, there are limited studies conducted on explaining the potential outcomes of cyberloafing. There are researchers who have looked at the influence of cyberloafing on job quality, productivity (Boxall & Macky, 2014), and organizational commitment (Niaei, Peidaei, & Nasiripour, 2014). However, scholars have barely investigated the effect of cyberloafing on team dynamics (Al-Shuaibi et al., 2013). Past research highlights that organizations also report losses due to the loss of cohesion and performance of the team (Al-Shuaibi et al., 2013). Hence, there is a need to identify the extent of impact of internet misuse on employees' perceptions of team related variables which will subsequently determine the mechanisms and interventions used in response to cyberloafing (Betts, Setterstrom, Pearson & Totty, 2014). In our work, we have concentrated on cyberloafing and its relationship with team variables – team potency and team conflict. Though these concepts have been studied in literature separately, the dynamics between cyberloafing and the two team variables has seldom been explored. Hence, in the present study our endeavor is to investigate the effect of cyberloafing on team potency and team conflict at the workplace.

Cyberloafing & Team Potency

Team potency is defined as “generalized beliefs about the capabilities of a team through tasks and contexts” (Gully, Incalcaterra, Joshi & Beaubien, 2002).

Team potency captures efficacy beliefs at the group level that manifest into effectiveness across various tasks performed by the team (Gibson, Randel & Early, 2000). It substantiates the team's faith in their ability to perform together (Bell, Brown, Colaneri & Outland, 2018) and achieve specific tasks (Stajkovic & Nyberg, 2009). For employees to experience a sense of team efficacy, it is essential that the teammates spend time together, trust each other and interact with one another so as to develop an understanding of every member of the team. This leads to reliability and dependability amongst teammates culminating into accomplishment and productivity in the industry.

Cyberloafing also negatively affects team potency which hampers the team's conviction and ability to perform together.

Cyberloafing has been established as a habit of employees to consciously waste time (Martin et al., 2010). The time and energy, which are limited, could be spent interacting with one's team members instead (Fallows, 2002). Other team members see cyberloafing as a workplace deviant behavior which is a major impediment in the completion of the tasks and goals of the team. Subsequently, this leads to decline in information sharing and trust in the team, therefore, in team potency. Also, research indicates that cyberloafing negatively impacts job performance (Moody & Siponen, 2013). It is likely that in the process of impacting productivity and performance,

cyberloafing also negatively affects team potency which hampers the team's conviction and ability to perform together. Groups that experience low efficacy put in less effort, have lower goals and exhibit poorer performance as compared to groups with high efficacy (Gully et al., 2002).

In addition, researchers have highlighted that social loafing and shirking which involves incompleteness of tasks on time, inadequate efforts towards team goals, disinterest in taking responsibilities and contributing to the team, have a direct impact on the dysfunctionality of a team (Felps et al., 2006). Such an environment with deviant behaviors, causes distrust. When teams experience lack of trust, team members become wary of each other, especially those who resort to counter-productive behavior like cyberloafing (Wageman, 2000). Absence of group efficacy may disturb team members and engulf them in negative emotion resulting in interpersonal issues, gossiping and distraction. Subsequently, the focus of the team moves away from task completion and concerns (Grawitch, Munz & Kramer, 2003). Thus, when employees in a team resort to cyberloafing, the team is at risk to decreased efficacy, potency, motivation and distraction. Members of the team end up losing faith in their team leading to disengagement, decrease in group commitment and dissatisfaction with team membership (Felps et al., 2006). Therefore, we propose:

H1. Cyberloafing is related negatively to team potency.

Cyberloafing & Team Conflict

Team (intragroup) conflict comprises altercations that may arise due to friction in the relationship between teammates; the decision of who is to perform what task; and/or the process in which the task is to be performed (Jehn & Mannix, 2001, O'Neill et al., 2015). Team conflict leads to reduced team productivity, performance and work engagement of the team (Costa, Passos & Bakker, 2014). Research illustrates that cyberloafing has a negative impact on work environment of teams and organizations (Lim, 2002). Further, research by Felps et al. (2006) shows that member (members) of a team resorting to negative and deviant behavior is likely to provoke conflict, heading to dysfunctional team dynamics. It is likely that the quality of a team's work environment diminishes due to cyberloafers and it subsequently has a bearing on other members as well.

Cyberloafing has a negative impact on work environment of teams and organizations.

Studies reveal that for a functional team, team members must contribute sufficient amount of effort towards common goal of the team (Felps et al., 2006). It has been proven that cyberloafing results in wastage of time and resources. With employers setting tough time-driven deadlines and deliverables, it is natural for team members to feel agitated if someone from the team is indulging in cyberloafing at the workplace. It can lead

to distress as it violates discipline, norms and efficacy of the group. This distress is likely to cause conflict within the team. Further, when an employee exhibits counter-productive behavior like cyberloafing, he/ she has a tendency to cause irritation, garner disrespect and cause discontentment (Furr & Funder, 1998). This will plausibly lead to relational tensions within the team. Thus, we hypothesize:

H2. Cyberloafing is positively related to team conflict.

As mentioned before, we believe that prevalence of cyberloafing is likely to have an impact on team functioning. However, researchers have seldom investigated this proposition. No study has examined the influence of cyberloafing on team potency and conflict in the Indian context. In this study we strive to venture into the domain of cyberloafing and understand its impact on employees' perceptions of team dynamics with focus on team potency and conflict. We believe this work will lead to interesting insights in comprehending the consequences of cyberloafing. The purpose of this study is to understand and establish the effect of the phenomenon of cyberloafing on two team variables- potency and conflict. We used the survey research method for our study.

Participants & Procedure

The hypothesized relationships were investigated through an online structured questionnaire. A total of 209 respondents answered questions on cyberloafing, team

potency, team conflict and demographics like age, gender, education qualification and experience. The sample comprised 135 males (65%) and 74 females (35%). The average age of the respondents was 27 years. As far as the education qualifications are concerned, the sample consisted of 44% graduates and 56% post graduates. The average work experience of the respondents was 3.5 years.

Measures

We assessed our respective variables through a questionnaire comprising well-established scales of cyberloafing, team potency and team conflict. We were keen to capture the prevalence of cyberloafing amongst individuals. Hence, 13-items scale from Blanchard and Henle (2008) has been used. Questions such as, "During office hours, how often do you use the internet at work to access general news websites for personal reasons" were asked. Respondents had to rate such statements on a 5- point Likert scale (1 - never, 2 - few times per month, 3 - few times per week, 4 - once a day, 5 - few times per day). The Cronbach's alpha reliability value for the scale was 0.85.

In order to understand the respondents' perception of team potency, the 7-items scale of Riggs, Warka, Babasa, Betancourt, and Hooker (1994) was used. A sample of the item used includes, "The members of my team have excellent job skills". Respondents had to answer on a 5-point likert scale (1- strongly disagree to 5 -strongly agree). The scale had a reliability value of 0.73 Cronbach's alpha.

To gauge the intragroup/ team conflict perceptions of employees while working in teams, Jehn and Mannix (2001) 9-items scale was used. Respondents rated the items on a 5-point Likert scale (1-strongly disagree to 5 - strongly agree). The scale included questions such as, “There are conflicts of ideas in my work team”. The Cronbach’s alpha reliability value for the scale was 0.89.

Single statement questions to capture age, gender, education qualification, and work experience were asked in the questionnaire.

Goodness of Measures

To analyze the psychometric properties of the measures we conducted confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) by means of SPSS/ Amos 21 statistical software. Four measures were used to assess the fit of the structural model - the goodness of fit index (GFI) = 0.80, the adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) = 0.75 (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1993), comparative fit index (CFI; Bentler, 1990) = 0.83, and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA; Browne & Cudeck, 1993) = 0.08. The values ensured good model fit.

Table 1 Impact of Cyberloafing on Team Potency & Team Conflict

Dependent variable	β	t	F	R ²
Team Potency	-0.22**	-3.40	11.57**	0.05
Team Conflict	0.42***	5.21	27.15***	0.12

Note: ***denotes significance at 0.001 level, ** denotes significance at 0.01 level

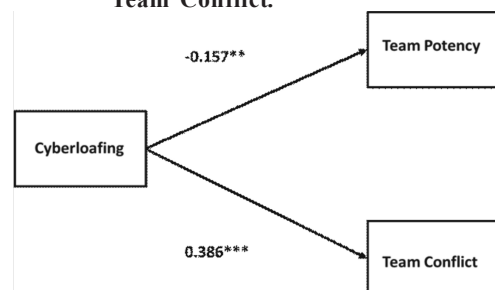
Test of Hypotheses

We used SPSS to run the correlation and regression analyses for our study to test the hypotheses. The results are displayed in table 1.

Our findings reveal that cyberloafing impacts team potency negatively. Thus, for employees the frequency of cyberloafing influences the experience of team potency. Hence, our hypothesis H1 is supported. Cyberloafing also influences team conflict significantly such that instances of cyberloafing lead to team conflict. Thus, our hypothesis H2 is supported as well. Post regression we used AMOS 21 for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), where cyberloafing is ob-

served to have a substantial impact on team potency and conflict with R square values as .11 and .19 respectively. The fit indices of the structural model, as CMIN/DF= 2.53, GFI = 0.80, AGFI = 0.75, IFI = 0.82, CFI = 0.82, RMSEA = 0.086 ensure model fit. The model is displayed below in figure 1.

Fig. 1. Structural Model of Impact of Cyberloafing on Team Potency & Team Conflict.



The prevalence of cyberloafing not only reduces team potency, which induces the ability to perform and bond in a team, but also results in conflicts within a team.

The exploration of effect of cyberloafing has led to some interesting results. It is noted that the prevalence of cyberloafing not only reduces team potency, which induces the ability to perform and bond in a team, but also results in conflicts within a team. Hence, it is crucial for researchers as well as practitioners to design strategies and interventions to cater to the high rise of frequency of cyberloafing and its behavioral consequences within a team.

Discussion

Organizations predominantly function by virtue of teams. Understanding what makes teams effective is imperative. Counter-productive behavior like cyberloafing is noted to have an impact on productivity of employees and teams (Al-Shuaibi et al., 2013). Our findings reveal that majority of the respondents access internet for personal usage during working hours. It is possible they believe that not all activities that fall under the purview of cyberloafing are harmful or serious offence. For instance, if we look at the items measuring the prevalence of cyberloafing, the frequency of habit of using the internet for personal emails (mean M) = 2.56), chatting (M = 2.77), browsing non-work related websites (M = 3.08), reading news (M =

3.20) and viewing entertainment websites (M = 2.55) is higher than visiting sports websites (M = 2.33), shopping online (M = 2.33), looking for employment (M = 2.02), downloading non-work related content (M = 2.01), playing online games (M = 1.41), and visiting adult-oriented websites (M = 1.25). It would be interesting to further explore how individuals perceive each cyberloafing behavior in terms of seriousness of the offence.

Results of the current study evidently show that cyberloafing does have a significant influence on interplay of team dynamics. Prevalence of this counter-productive behavior results in reducing team potency which has proved to diminish team productivity and effectiveness. This revelation provides opportunity for researchers to probe how cyberloafing impacts functionality of a team. Additionally, the study also makes it clear that presence of cyberloafers in a team provokes conflict, thus damaging relationships and impeding efficiency in completion of tasks. This proves that there is immense scope for scholars to delve into analyzing the presence and seriousness of cyberloafing and its effect on various facets of a team.

Since this field of research is relatively new with very few studies on the influence of cyberloafing of employees' perceptions of team dynamics, our work has just briefly explored and ventured into this field. The results look promising and encouraging for further studies to be conducted in this domain in the industry.

Theoretical Implications

The trends that emerge from our findings bring forth appealing insights that not only contribute to the extant workplace deviant behavior literature, but also make foray into research on cyberloafing. Our study asserts that cyberloafing has serious repercussions on functioning of a team, wherein evidently it influences team potency negatively and team conflict positively. Our work also attempts to bridge the gap in literature by analyzing employees' perceptions of the effect of cyberloafing on team dynamics. Future researchers can examine cyberloafing and its influence on varied aspects of a team. Additionally, our work has the potential to be further empirically tested and validated in different contexts.

Practical Implications

As mentioned earlier, there are mechanisms to regulate and monitor internet usage at the workplace. Research shows that 20 – 30% organizations have fired an employee for cyberloafing (Case & Young, 2002), for example Xerox (Piscotty, Martindell & Karim, 2016). However, one cannot help but ponder that cheap and free data is available on our own smartphones 24/7, and so even if organizations manage to restrict the usage of companies' internet services for personal activity, will it stop cyberloafing? Our results show that cyberloafing exists and is here to stay. Thus, it is crucial for organizations to realize that they need to have interventions that can bring about behavioral change

in employees so that they limit their extent of cyberloafing.

It is crucial for organizations to realize that they need to have interventions that can bring about behavioral change in employees so that they limit their extent of cyberloafing.

Kim (2012) predicted that the losses due to cyberloafing amount to \$5000 per employee annually in the United States. Hence, practitioners need to make sure that there are measures taken to curtail the frequency of cyberloafing. Organizations must have sensitization programs and trainings to make employees aware of cyberloafing and alert them about its influence of individual, team and organization productivity. In many situations, there appears to be no boundary between personal and work time as employers expect response to mails and messages after regular working hours as well (Garczynski, Waldrop, Rupprecht & Grawitch, 2013). Hence, it is natural for employees to think that it is acceptable to check personal mails and respond to them during working hours (Koing & De La Guardia, 2014). While it may be alright to quickly see mails and notifications, the duration of loafing online needs to be under check.

In addition, employees need to be educated on security risks and possible threats like viruses, hacking etc associated with violating organizational policy on cyberloafing (Bartariya & Rastogi, 2016). With people engrossed in personal activi-

ties on the internet, it is likely that they spend lesser time in interacting and bonding with their colleagues and team members. Organizations need to design activities and interventions that promote team engagement, interactive conversation and sense of efficacy which will consequently enhance team potency and productivity.

Furthermore, a study by Zhang et al. (2015) revealed that employees who are future-oriented and consider consequences of their current actions, are discrete and less inclined towards deviant behaviors like cyberloafing. Future orientation influences employees' sense of self-control which further reduces their counter-productive behavior. Thus, it is crucial for organizations to enable and encourage teams to work proactively towards long term goals with clear performance indicators and preview of future consequences. When employees create plans and goals for themselves, they are much more invested and engaged. Hence, their intention and prevalence of cyberloafing decreases (Zhang et al., 2015). This is likely to make them experience a heightened sense of motivation and team efficacy which consequently will induce team potency.

Additionally, research reveals that work environment in terms of design has a critical impact on cyberloafing and sense of self-control (Karimi et al, 2014). For example, an open office design makes an employee feel more exposed and accessible to seniors vis-à-vis a cabin or closed office design. In fact, the influence of employees' perceptions of "leader's physical proximity" to workplace behavioral

control is widely acknowledged (Lara, Tacoronte & Ding, 2006). Leader physical proximity concept enhances a cyberloafer's psychological sense of his/her leader's presence, thus it is likely to make him/her vary of cyberloafing. Research by Kwok, Au, and Ho (2005) noted that an increase in formal normative control (the regulations of managers and organization over employees), leads to a decrease in deviant behaviors like that of cyberloafing. Thus, it may diminish the liberty of an employee to resort to high frequency of cyberloafing and help curtail this phenomenon.

Finally, past research highlights the relevance of motivational intervention of team members to mitigate an employee with deviant behavior (Felps et al., 2006). Thus, organizations need to make employees aware of their critical role in ensuring that their colleagues do not resort to workplace deviant behavior, like cyberloafing, for the overall benefit of team efficacy and performance. Also, employees and employers can resort to practices such as providing reminders to cyberloafers to decrease the misuse of internet (Alder, Schminke, Noel & Kuenzi, 2008). With the high dependence of organizations on teams to function and sustain, it is critical that organizations resort to implementing the likes of aforementioned strategies to monitor, control and manage cyberloafing.

Limitations & Future Directions

In our study, though we have tried to examine new relationships and outcomes of prevalence of cyberloafing, we have

considered only team potency and conflict as outcomes. In future, researchers can investigate seriousness of cyberloafing on other relevant aspects of teams as well. Since limited work has been carried out in understanding the influence of cyberloafing on team dynamics, we have started with exploration of employees' perceptions of cyberloafing and its impact on team variables. In addition, scholars can also consider teams as unit of analysis, so as to investigate the impact of cyberloafing on intergroup as well as intragroup interactions. Also, the reliance of self-report measures can be mitigated by taking data from multiple sources to make the research methodology more robust. Finally, though we have made an attempt to provide solutions to monitoring cyberloafing at the managerial and the organizational level, there is a lot left desired to understand how cyberloafing can be curtailed at the individual level through self-control mechanisms. It will be interesting to delve deeper into how cyberloafing can be regulated at the individual level through self-motivation and cognitive mechanisms.

In this day and age, the usage of internet is indispensable and cyberloafing is surely an issue of real concern for organizations. Hence, it is imperative for scholars and human resource practitioners to ideate, strategize, and design mechanisms to manage the varied facets of cyberloafing at the workplace.

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