

A Review on Cyberloafing

Abstract

As technology permeates every aspect of our lives, employees are increasingly using technology for personal purposes during office hours. The largest proportion of non-work-related activities at work is spent using technologies on activities such as responding to emails on a personal email account, checking friends' Facebook updates, reading sports or news, and paying bills online. While practitioners have been wrestling with cyberloafing prevalent in the workplace, research on the matter has grown exponentially over the last decade. Despite the growing empirical evidence, lacking is an integrated understanding of the phenomenon. In order for this area of inquiry to develop into a strong program and thus provide more useful advice to practitioners, a framework is needed to integrate the literature and provide a clear agenda for future research. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to provide a comprehensive review of literature on cyberloafing that can guide future research.

In my review of empirical evidence, I seek the answers to three questions central to understanding any observed organizational phenomenon, and particularly relevant to explaining emerging workplace phenomenon: 1) who cyberloafs?; 2) why do individuals cyberloaf?; and 3) what happens when individuals cyberloaf?

First, much of the empirical efforts have been devoted to understand the profiles of employees who are most likely to engage in cyberloafing. Available evidence suggests that most likely candidates are those associated with certain demographic (age, gender, and, supervisory position), and personal characteristics (conscientiousness, self-control, sleep quality, moral standards, and work anomia or individual's lack of integration in social life at work).

A second stream of research attempts to understand why employees cyberloaf. The reasons or motivation for cyberloafing identified include perceived organizational injustice, job dissatisfaction, role stressors, and perceived utility of cyberloafing. Further, under certain conditions (task non-routineness, detection system, potential sanctions, and technology use policy and norms), individuals have been found to be more tempted to cyberloaf.

Lastly, relatively, a limited number of studies have examined the outcomes of cyberloafing. Outcomes investigated include job performance, positive and negative emotions, and psychological well-being.

My comprehensive review reveals several limitations in the literature: 1) underrepresentation of studies examining the outcomes of cyberloafing, 2) investigation of the antecedents and outcomes of cyberloafing mostly at an individual level, 3) assumption that all cyberloafing activities are the same, despite the multidimensional nature of cyberloafing, and 4) heavy reliance on cross-sectional self-reports data. I conclude the review by outlining key directions for future research.