Cyberloafing and Job Performance: The Mediating Effect of Stress: Empirical Evidence from the Apparel Manufacturing in Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

Cyberloafing is using the office provided internet facilities for non-work-related purposes. It is known to be a hindrance to job performance. This study aims to explore the mediating role of stress on cyberloafing and job performance. Data was collected from a group of merchandising managers from the apparel manufacturing industry in Sri Lanka, using a non-probability sampling technique. Drawing on the conservation of resources, transactional theory of stress and coping and social exchange theory, we explain cyberloafing, stress and job performance respectively. Data was collected from 96 managers and analyzed using covariance-based structural Equation Modeling (CB-SEM). The path model indicated that there is a positive relationship between cyberloafing and stress and a negative relationship between stress and job performance. It further indicated that cyberloafing does not negatively impact job performance. It also suggested that stress mediated the relationship between cyberloafing and job performance. These findings align with previous research on cyberloafing and stress, stress and job performance. Stress mediating the relationship between cyberloafing and performance is new to the apparel manufacturing industry in Sri Lanka. Findings of the study fills major literature gap in research and its contribution to HRM literature is substantial.

Keywords: Apparel Manufacturing, Cyberloafing, Job performance, Managers, Stress, Mediating role

INTRODUCTION

Computers have become an important tool for work in many organizations worldwide. This tool, combined with information communication technology, the dissemination of information and access to information has become fast, making it easier to quick decision making to improve the performance of organizations (Mastrangelo *et al.*, 2006; Marchiori et al, 2022). The internet, which is the main facilitator of information, has transformed the work setting, making it possible to improve work processes, employee efficiency and productivity (Mačiulytė-Šniukienė & Gaile-Sarkane, 2014; Soori et al., 2023; Bhima et al., 2023). Apart from these benefits, the internet has become a tool for individuals to use for non-office-related work, identified as cyberloafing (Lim, 2002). Cyberloafing has become pervasive and a detrimental activity that can cause negative effects to organizations (Anandarajan et al., 2006). While some identify cyberloafing as detrimental (Lim, 2002; Wu *et al.*, 2019), others consider it beneficial as it improves creativity (Oravec, 2002; Aghaz & Sheikh, 2016; Tsai, 2023).

Job performance, a construct explored for many years, is an important part of organizational performance and competitive advantage (Albrecht *et al.*, 2015). It is related to achieving objectives and the survival of organizations (Viswesvaran & Ones, 2000). Anwar and Abdullah (2021) indicated that all human resources management practices are directed to improve the performances of individuals in organizations. Job performance has been defined as the behaviours of individuals that can be observed and contribute to the value of the organization (López-Cabarcos *et al.*, 2022).

Stress has become a critical concern for organizations in the 20th century and is identified as a serious health concern in modern history (Marten and Wilkerson, 2003). Bhatti *et al.* (2010) noted that stress has become a significant worry for workers, employers and societies. The term stress has been given different interpretations since Selye (1955). Selye (1955) defined it as a non-specific response of the body to a demand. Metreveli and Japaridze (2022) posited that modern human life is replete with stress due to the circumstances within which people live and defined as human peculiarities within the interactions between the individual and the external world. Research has acknowledged that stress levels of an individual are important and optimal stress level is important to build a biological shield to ensure normal life process (Lu et al., 2021).

It has been suggested that cyberloafing while at work causes stress among employees (Lim & Chen, 2012; Sonnentag *et al.*, 2018; Wu *et al.*, 2020). Such mental stress at work can impede the performance of individuals, leading to poor organizational performance (O'Neill *et al.*, 2014). Although such literature is abundant, research on the mediating role of stress on cyberloafing and job performance appears to be limited in many sectors, including the apparel manufacturing sector. Researchers have claimed that different forms of stress function as a mediator in numerous relationships. Espedido and Searle (2018) suggested that stress appraisal functions as a mediator between goal difficulty and organizational performance. Aghdasi *et al.* (2011) posited occupational stress functions as a mediator between emotional intelligence and organizational commitment. It has been found that emotional exhaustion mediated the relationship between abusive supervision and cyberloafing behaviour (Khan *et al.*, 2021). Burnout was highlighted as a mediator between attachment styles and employee performance (Virga *et al.*, 2019). Similarly, Koay *et al.* (2017) reported that stress mediates the relationship between employee private demands and cyberloafing. In a recent study Dodanwala and Santoso (2021) suggested that job stress functioned as a mediator in the relationship between job satisfaction facets and turnover intentions. These research studies have made it clear that stress or stress-related constructs can function as a mediator in research related to cyberloafing and performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cyberloafing

Cyberloafing is identified as loafing on the internet while at work and a deviation from work (Lim, 2002). Most researchers have recognized cyberloafing as a waste of time, adding costs to the organization and leading to poor organizational performance (Jalón *et al.*, 2018; Demircioglu & Chen, 2019; Ötken et al., 2023). Cyberloafing is classified as activities and behaviours that are prevalent in many organizations. Anandarajan and Simmers (2004) indicated cyberloafing as a complex phenomenon that needs proper exploration. They suggested that it is a dysfunctional activity that promotes distractions from work, leading to poor performance. This is somewhat similar to the narrative of Lim (2002) who noted that cyberloafing is a deviation from work behaviour. However, Şimsek and Şimsek (2019) posited that cyberloafing has positive and negative effects on the organization. Researchers noted that cyberloafing becomes a positive act as it supports individual learning and development. It becomes a negative act when individuals engage in activities such as gaming and visiting pornographic sites that compromises their work engagement. Further, the duration of cyberloafing has also been identified as a decider of its benefits and harm. Research suggests that cyberloafing for a shorter period is considered a reinvigoration, and engaging in it for a long duration is considered detrimental (Askew, 2014; Şimsek & Şimsek, 2019; She & Li, 2023). The consideration of cyberloafing as a negative behaviour could also be due to the research context. For example, individuals in a work environment where there has been prolific cyberloafing are likely to see a negative impact. However, some researchers argue that browsing activities are less problematic than emailing as it is known to drain cognitive resources (Lim & Chen, 2012; Farid et al., 2024). The mental effort of emailing, especially mobile emailing is made abundantly clear by Middleton and Cukier (2006) in their research. Yet some others identified cyberloafing as a hidden epidemic that hinders the performance of individuals and functions as a hindrance to business performance (Koay *et al.*, 2017).

Anandarajan and Simmers (2006) posited that cyberloafing would entail reading news, making travel arrangements, making online purchases and searching for jobs. Lim and Teo (2005) identified these activities as checking personal emails, browsing non-work-related websites and playing online games. Expanding this list, Aybas and Güngör (2020) recognized visiting Websites such as news, sports, entertainment, pornographic, instant messaging and chatting, downloading non-work-related material, seeking employment, shopping,

gaming, and sending and receiving emails while at work as cyberloafing activities. The above types of cyberloafing activities have not been universal to all researchers as the contexts of these studies are different. There have been different classifications of cyberloafing for example researchers such as Ozler and Polat (2012) called them as minor and major, while others noted them as browsing and emailing (Lim, 2002; Aybas and Güngör, 2020). C in general, yberloafing has been identified as a challenge in the modern digitalized work environment impacting performance (Hessari et al., 2024). Social media use, which is a part of cyberloafing, is also a challenge to organizational performance. Ma et al. (2024) found that private social media usage has a positive impact on emotional exhaustion of employees leading to poor performance.

Job Performance

Job performance has been defined as behaviours or actions that are connected with organizational goals and objectives (Koopmans *et al.*, 2014). This is a construct, which has a direct connection with organizational performance and competitive advantage, and it is also affected by personality factors (Bergman *et al.*, 2018). Further, technological advancements have also affected job performance as it has changed the expectations of organizations and individuals (Autor, 2019). Darmawan *et al.* (2020) noted that organizational success is affected by job performance. Viswesvaran and Ones (2000) reported that job performance is an important phenomenon as all human resources activities are designed to improve the same. Organizations make every effort to improve employee job performance as it seriously impacts organizational performance (Wood *et al.*, 2012). It is noted that job performance is likely to change over time due to changes in the work environment, the nature of the job and the individual performance requirements (Hassan & Olufemi, 2014). Borman *et al.* (2014) suggested that job performance is likely to change based on personality traits and ability, as they affect task performance significantly. It has also been indicated that the work environment will affect job performance (Na-nan *et al.*, 2017). Owens *et al.* (2015) reported that job performance is also impacted by the relationships an employee has with his colleagues and superiors in the organization. These researchers noted that positive energy created due to such relationships affects performance. In a recent study, Davidescu *et al.* (2020) claimed that work flexibilities such as partial work from home and office are likely to impact job satisfaction and job performance of employees. In modern work settings, digital technologies enhance job performance (Duan et al., 2024) due to the facilitation of improved coordination, communication, knowledge sharing and decision-making. Sackett et al. (2024) suggested that general cognitive ability is an important factor for job performance. Recent research indicates that job performance is enhanced with the integration of information communication technology into industries that support continuous information sharing resulting in timely decision-making (Deng et al., 2023). Others have indicated that the work environment enhances the job performance of individuals (López-Cabarcos et al., 2022). The above researches indicate that job performance is sensitive to tools provided to execute the job and the environment employees' work.

Stress

The concept was defined as a non-specific response of the body to a demand for change (Selye, 1955). Since then, there have been numerous definitions of stress, albeit there was no consensus among scholars on the definition of stress. Singh (2018) acknowledged that the competitive corporate world generates stress among people. Sørensen *et al.* (2021) posited that chronic stress can contribute to ill health and disease. Pandey (2020) indicated that stress occurs when an individual comes across situations which warrant more abilities and resources than the individual has to perform a task. Weinberg and Cooper (2011) noted that stress cannot originate from one source but from numerous sources, such as the individual, organizational and global. Many researchers have identified stress with work and called it job stress, leaving out other sources of stress (Sonnentag *et al.*, 2018; Mullan & Wajcman, 2019). Wu *et al.* (2019) suggested that stress is a response to a difference between the resources available and the external demands of an individual in which job plays a major source of stress. Stress is also suggested to be a cause of deviant behaviour in organizations (Silva & Ranasinghe, 2017). Difficult situations faced by individuals, according to Deng *et al.* (2019), are a major cause of stress, irrespective of their origin. Describing stress from a broader perspective Bhatti *et al.* (2010) claimed that stress can originate from intra and extra-organizational sources. The researchers identified extra organizational sources as climate, economic conditions and family and intra-organizational sources as company policies, working conditions, workload, leadership styles and working hours. Hence, it is apparent that stress can arise out of different sources, including organizational and non-organizational, and can lead to deviant behaviour and can also promote ill-

health among individuals when they are exposed to it for long durations.

Theories Related to the study

The Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping Building on the transactional theory of stress and coping of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), this research explains the concept of stress. This theory contends that successful navigation through stressful events is based on an individual's ability to appraise the intensity of the stressful experience and the coping mechanism (or transactions) that the person is likely to engage in to mitigate such stress. The nature of stress is when an individual struggles due to inadequate resources to meet a demand; it creates psychological and physiological unease in the person (Gmelch & Chan, 1992). Primary and secondary appraisals are necessary to identify strategies to assess and cope with the stress, respectively (Si *et al.*, 2023). Si *et al.* (2023) used this theory to explain the negative impact of excessive social media use on employee job behaviour. Li *et al.* (2018), studying the creative performance of employees, suggested that the creative performance of employees was based on their appraisal and the coping mechanism employed in the reward for creativity programs. They noted that external rewards are effective when problem-focused coping is embraced. As different people appraise situations differently, their coping mechanisms vary from problem-focused and emotion-focused approaches. Dewe (1997) claimed that managing stress in organizations is based on the meaning they give to the stressful event and the coping strategy individuals employ to overcome such stress. These coping strategies were identified as emotional or problem-based, and outcomes were created based on the appropriateness of the strategy (Dewe, 2004).

Social exchange theory

This research has embraced social exchange theory to explain job performance as it can be viewed as a reciprocation of an individual towards what he receives from the organization. Coined by Homans (1961), it suggests that social behaviour is an exchange in which giving and taking take place throughout individuals' associations with society. Moreover, an individual's relationship with an organization depends upon the exchange based on what he receives from the organization. Huang (2016) posited that job satisfaction, engagement and low turnover are results of providing a safe job climate and reiterated that relationships are dependent on reciprocity. Hence, a transaction between parties begets an exchange, which can be assimilated into a quid-pro-quo exchange (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Social exchange is a reciprocation in which either favourable or unfavourable treatment received by an individual will be returned in kind. Yin (2018) reported that employee engagement is to exchange benefits in multiple forms, and the outcomes employees generate are expected to be similar to what they expect from that engagement.

Conservation of Resources Theory

A theory promoted by Hobfoll (1989), suggests that individuals are inclined to safeguard and obtain resources they value. Further, it was suggested that behaviour exhibited at times of stress by individuals is aimed at preserving resources. Oravec (1999) posited that playing games on the net while at work reduces work stress and conserves resources. Hence, cyberloafing in this research is framed as a tool to protect resources at work. Building on the conservation of resources theory, Yui *et al.* (2020) suggested that cyberloafing is used to preserve resources depleted due to job burnout, lack of psychological well-being and poor work-life balance in organizations. Studying cyberloafing during the COVID-19 pandemic, Zhong *et al.* (2022) claimed that informational cyberloafing was positively related to innovative performance at work. It was suggested that cyberloafing can improve the perceived meaning of work, leading to improvement in performance. Further, Khan *et al.* (2021) noted that emotional exhaustion resulting from abusive supervision was palliated by cyberloafing at work. Wu *et al.* (2019) suggested that cyberloafing promotes psychological stress and mental fatigue.

Hypotheses Development

Cyberloafing and Job Performance

Modern-day individuals are more likely to engage in private activities while at work due to the multitude of

demands placed on them (Clark, 2000). Employees engaging in non-work-related activities using internet facilities at work are a common phenomenon organizations have to deal with today (Derin & Gökçe, 2016). Lim (2002) categorized it as deviant behaviour at work. Anandarajan and Simmers (2004) indicated that personal web use at work has become necessary as demands at work today have moved beyond the eight-hour day and five-day-a-week schedule. This form of cyber-behaviour at work impacted the job performance of individuals negatively (Ramayah, 2010). Koay and Soh (2019) claimed that cyberloafing in the workplace has both negative and positive effects on job performance. The authors argued that cyberloafing activities that require more cognitive resources, such as downloading pornographic material, playing online games and betting online, can deplete personal resources, leading to poor job performance. Similarly, Askew (2014) reported that engaging in cyberloafing for prolonged periods can deplete task performance. Further, Kularathne and Senevirathne (2021), studying the banking sector, posited that cyberloafing at work negatively impacted employee performance. Saleh *et al.* (2018) reported that cyberloafing on social networking and Web browsing while at work is likely to hamper the work performance of individuals. Wu *et al.* (2018) indicated that cyberloafing using social networking sites is a harmful distraction in the classroom, impacting negatively on the academic performance of students.

H1: Cyberloafing has a negative impact on job performance.

Cyberloafing and Stress

Stress is a manifestation that is mostly connected with work (Hurriyati & Marlinda, 2023). However, with cyberloafing, heightened stress levels have emerged at work and elsewhere due to the pervasiveness of access to the Internet with handheld devices (Chen & Lee, 2013). Further, blurring boundaries between work and non-work has also contributed to more private work while at work using the Internet, leading to more stress (Tarafdar *et al.*, 2011; Karjalainen, 2023). Lim and Chen (2012) highlighted that cyberloafing at work can lead to psychological stress in individuals. Macklem (2006) suggested that expending energy to attend to personal emails is a cause for emotional exhaustion in individuals. Similarly, Steffensen *et al.* (2022) reported that emailing can cause job tension, leading to work-family conflict. Sonnentag *et al.* (2018) also suggested that cyberloafing can generate negative emotions in individuals leading to psychological stress. It was suggested that cyberloafing can lead to psychological and physical exhaustion in individuals in organizations (Shaddiq *et al.*, 2021). O'Neill *et al.* (2014) claimed that cyberloafing can cause mental stress, leading to low productivity. It has been reported that uncontrollable use of the Internet can lead to negative mental states, leading to poor psychological and physical functions (Brand et al., 2016). Wu *et al.* (2019) posited that social cyberloafing can cause mental fatigue, leading to negative outcomes. It is also noted that social cyberloafing leads to ego depletion and mental fatigue (Boksem *et al.*, 2005). A study by Zhou *et al.* (2018) indicated that constant use of online messaging also causes negative effects, leading to mental health issues.

H2: Cyberloafing has a positive influence on stress

Stress and Job Performance

Warraich *et al.* (2014) posited that stress can have a significant effect on job performance among university employees. Comparing traditional and high-tech industries, Yang *et al.* (2021) reported that stress impacted the job performance of these organizations. The authors suggested that such stress is more prominent in traditional than high-tech industries. Halkos and Bousinakis (2010) suggested that increased levels of stress hamper the productivity of employees. They combined stress at work and elsewhere to claim that a broad spectrum of stress impacts employees negatively. Studying surgeons, Wetzel *et al.* (2006) reported that stress impairs judgments, communication and decision-making among surgeons in practice. Albeit they have found novel ways of coping, it can still affect these surgeons negatively. Weinberger and Cooper (2011) pointed out that causes of stress cannot emanate from a singular source as individuals have to interact with society, playing many roles and impacting many spheres, including work, resulting in poor job performance. Jackson and Frame (2018) indicated that stress and anxiety impact job performance and the employee negatively. Referring to the psychological consequences of stress, Clays *et al.* (2007) reported that high levels of stress lead to depression, which could in turn affect employee performance. Van Dyne *et al.* (2002) also posited that non-work-related stress lowers job performance. The emphasis here is on possible stress originating from the family domain and is likely to cause non-work-related stress affecting work-related behaviour. Catherine and Fonceca (2022) claimed that stress can

arise out of work and the environment within which one lives and such stress can function as an impediment to job performance. Imtiaz and Ahmad (2009) found that stress can arise out of factors such as personal issues, environmental factors, supervisor issues, lack of appreciation for work done etc. affecting job performance negatively. Akter and Rahman (2012) reported that stress arising from sources such as family, financial and social situations can impact task performance negatively.

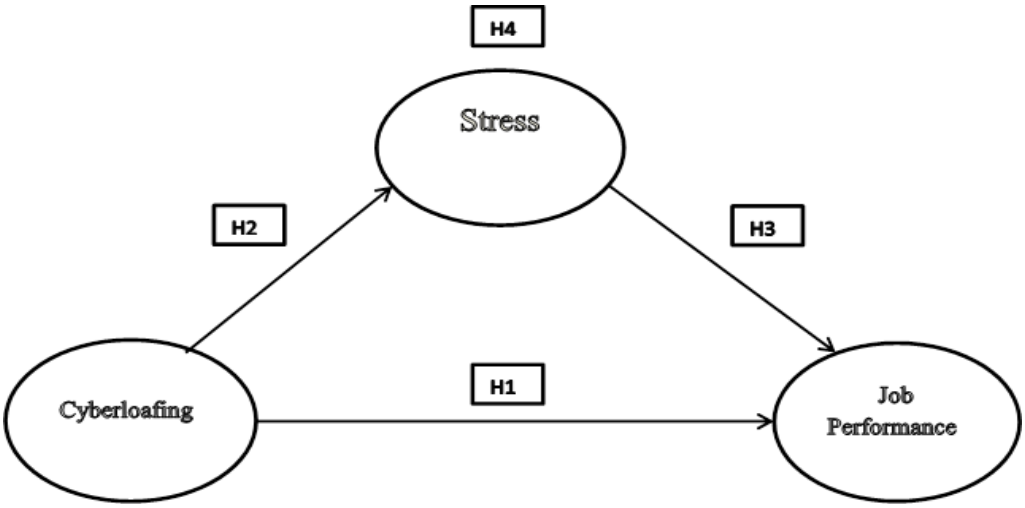
H3*:* Stress has a negative effect on Job Performance

Stress as a mediator

Although there is a dearth of research directly related to the mediating effect of stress between cyberloafing and job performance, there is a handful of research related to the relationship between related constructs, with stress as a mediator. Dagher *et al.* (2021) posited that dimensions of stress, such as anxiety, depression and stress, functioned as mediators in the relationship between problematic social media usage and memory performance. Abbasi and Janjua (2016) suggested that the relationship between work overload and organizational performance was mediated by job stress. This was confirmed in a study related to the banking sector in Pakistan. Gaudioso *et al.* (2016) illustrated that strain facets and coping strategies mediated the relationship between technostress and adverse job outcomes. This study clearly illustrates how technostress drove strain outcomes, such as work-family conflict, contributing to poor job outcomes. Zhong *et al*. (2022) suggested that COVID-19-based informational cyberloafing impacted innovative performance, with job anxiety functioning as the mediator. Albeit this study specifically refers to the pandemic, it infers that stress-related aspects can function as a mediator. This finding further underscores the notion that cyberloafing can lead to stress-related outcomes hindering employee performance. Studying the field of education, Zhao (2023) posited that stress mediated the relationship between social media addiction and the academic performance of students. However, Malik (2023) revealed that work stress does not mediate the relationship between cyberloafing and performance, albeit cyberloafing has a significant negative effect on the performance of accounting teachers and other education staff. These conclusions reiterate that cyberloafing impacts job performance negatively, although it has been claimed that it improves innovative performance (Derin & Gökçe, 2016). The above empirical studies proposed that stress or related concepts can function as mediators

H4*:* Stress mediates the relationship between cyberloafing and job performance

Figure: 1 The Theoretical Model



Source: Authors own work

METHODOLOGY

Assuming a positivist stance, this research employed a quantitative approach to reach its objectives. To collect data, a Google form was distributed online among this group, consisting of tech-savvy employees who used the Internet to carry out their work (Lim & Teo, 2005).

Participants

Merchandising Managers of the apparel manufacturing industry were targeted as the population as their nature of employment warrants them to use internet facilities provided for them at work. A sample of 108 was selected using a non-probability convenience sampling technique to collect data. The survey questionnaire was distributed among two industry experts, namely, senior merchandising managers of organizations, to determine the comprehensibility of the same and ensure a high response rate as a pre-testing of the questionnaire. Pre-testing a questionnaire is necessary to improve unambiguousness and to confirm the validity, adequacy and clarity of the instruction (Zikmund *et al.*, 2000). Following the pre-test, adjustments were made as necessary. Informed consent was obtained before the distribution of the questionnaire. In total, 96 responses were received, recording a 90.5% response rate.

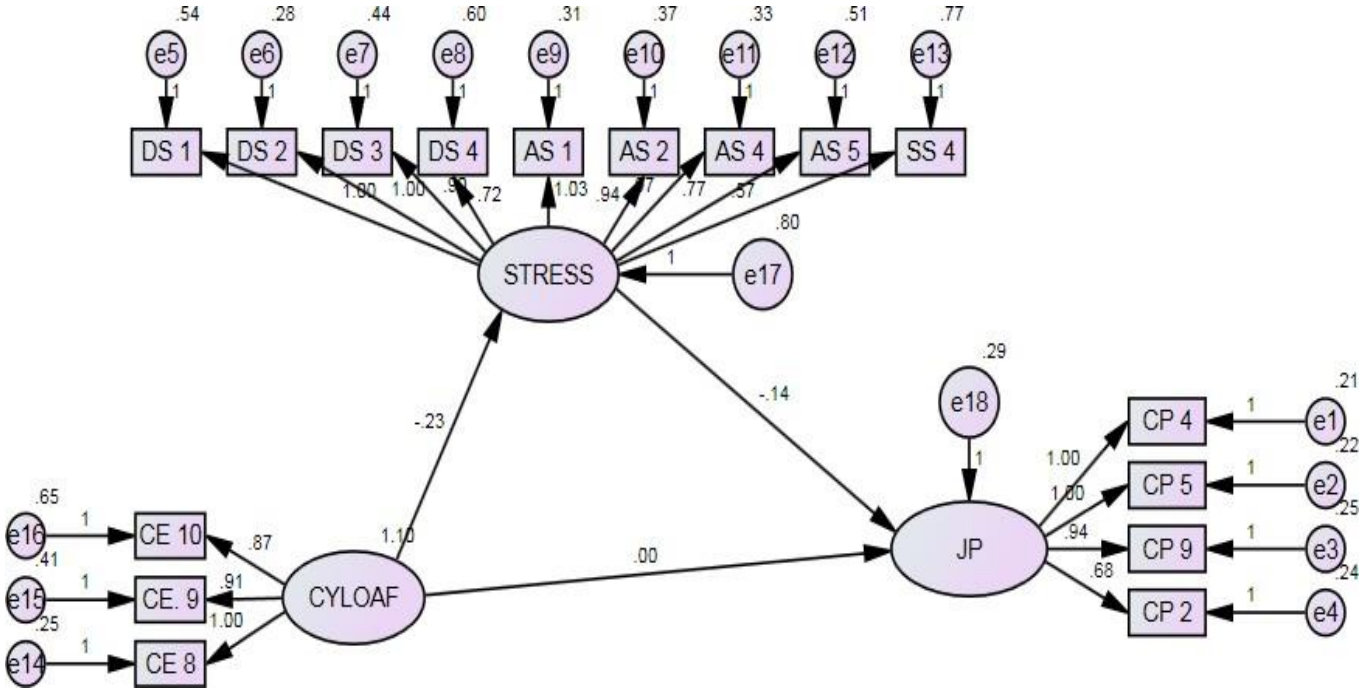
MEASURES

Cyberloafing was measured using the scale proposed by Lim (2002). Cyberloafing was dissected into six (6) items. These items include "I visit sports Websites", "I visit general news sites", "I check personal emails at work", and "I read personal emails at work".

Job performance was measured using the scale developed by Koopmans *et al.* (2014) with ten (10) items. Some of the items included are "Compared to last year, I judge the quality of my work in the past three months to be higher", "I managed to plan my work so that it was done on time", "I am able to fulfil my responsibilities", "I understood others well when they told me something", "I recovered fast, after difficult situations or setbacks at work" and "I worked at keeping my job knowledge up-to-date".

Stress was measured using the DASS scale developed by Crawford and Henry (2003) with thirteen (13) items. A Sample of questions included "I felt nothing to look forward to", "I found it difficult to work up an initiative", "I felt breathing difficulty", "I overreact to situations", and "It is difficult for me to tolerate interruptions". This construct and all the above were measured using a five-point Likert scale including measures 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree.

Figure: 2 The Final Path Model



Source: SEM output

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RESULTS

Data Analysis

Demographic Statistics

Table I: Gender

Gender	Responses	Percentage
Male	53	55.2
Female	43	44.8
Total	**96**	**100**

Source: Survey Data (2024)

Table II: Work Experience

Work Experience	Frequency	Percentage
< 1 Year	4	4.2
1 – 3 Years	12	12.5
4 - 6 Years	21	21-9
7 - 9 Years	17	17.7
10 Years and Above	42	43.7
Total	**96**	**100**

Source: Survey Data (2024)

Table III: Age Group

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
18 – 25	14	14.6
25 – 34	24	25.0
35 – 41	37	3.5
42 – 49	16	16.7
50 and above	5	5.2
Total	**96**	**100**

Source: Survey Data (2024)

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) of Variables

To check the model fit CFA was carried out and findings indicated an appropriate overall fit of the model developed after deleting items, as shown below, Table IV.

Table IV: Model Fit

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	JP	CYLOAF	STRESS
JP	0.810	0.517	0.053	0.820	**0.719**		

CYLOAF	0.868	0.687	0.069	0.888	0.066	**0.829**	
STRESS	0.926	0.588	0.069	0.940	-0.231	-0.263	**0.767**

Source: Results of Stat Tools Package (2024)

The above table indicated composite reliability (CR) of variables job performance, cyberloafing, and stress above .7, denoting appropriate internal consistency of items (Molina *et al.*, 2007). AVE results indicate values above the threshold value of .5, reporting convergent validity of constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The diagonal elements of constructs depict higher values than all the values below them, satisfying the Fornell-Larcker criterion and indicating discriminant validity of the measurement models. Further, the fit indices of cyberloafing, job performance and stress revealed a good fit representing values CMIN/DF = 1.64, GFI = .833, TLI = .910, IFI = .926, CFI = .925 and RMSEA = .082.

Direct Relationships

AMOS Path analysis was used to calculate the direct relationship between cyberloafing and job performance. The results indicated no significant direct effect of cyberloafing on job performance. The P-value reported was .593 ($p>0.05$), rejecting *H1*. A significant direct effect of cyberloafing on stress was observed with a P-value of .019, accepting the hypothesis *H2*. A significant relationship between stress and job performance was also reported with a P-value of 0.05, acknowledging *H3*.

Mediation Analysis

Path analysis was also used to assess the mediation of stress on cyberloafing and job performance. The results reported a P-value of 0.04 (<0.05), indicating that the relationship between cyberloafing and job performance is fully mediated by stress, accepting the hypothesis, *H4*.

DISCUSSION

According to the results of the current study, cyberloafing does not impact job performance. This result is not in line with the results of other studies in the literature. Past research indicated that cyberloafing negatively impacts job performance. Koay and Soh (2019) posited that cyberloafing negatively impacts job performance, while Kularathne and Senevirathne (2021) indicated that cyberloafing negatively impacts job performance. Ngowella et al. (2022) suggested that cyberloafing impacts job performance negatively. Further, Wu *et al.* (2020) also suggested cyberloafing impacts job performance and organizations negatively. It has been observed that cyberloafing with smartphones affected student academic performance negatively (Wagner *et al.*, 2012). Junco (2012) reported that using social networking sites and texting while learning negatively affected student learning. Askew (2012) suggested that long durations of cyberloafing can impact task performance negatively. Folorunso et al. (2024) argued that cyberloafing among library personnel impacted their performance negatively while it marginally affected innovative work behaviour.

However, other researchers have indicated that cyberloafing does not affect job performance negatively. Among them, Aybas and Gungor (2020) suggested that cyberloafing does not affect employee performance in organizations. Discussing cyberloafing and innovative work behaviour, Derin and Gökçe (2016) reported that managers must not prevent employees from cyberloafing as such can impact innovative performance positively. A similar finding was proposed by Yogun (2015), who claimed that informational-centred cyberloafing impacts the innovative work behaviour of employees in the banking sector, positively. Agreeing with the above finding, Zhong *et al.* (2022) claimed that information-oriented cyberloafing improved the innovative work behaviour of employees in organizations. In a recent study conducted by Prasetya et al. (2023) claimed that cyberloafing does not impact performance.

This research also revealed that cyberloafing impacts the stress of employees in the apparel manufacturing industry positively. This finding is in line with other research findings, which identified cyberloafing as a factor that can influence stress. Gökçearslan *et al.* (2018) reported that smartphone addiction resulting from

cyberloafing leads to stress. Researchers found that this form of stress is prevalent among women more than men. Further, Wu *et al.* (2020) claimed that cyberloafing does lead to employee fatigue. Researchers noted that social cyberloafing is an activity that consumes the cognitive and emotional energy of individuals and is detrimental to mental health. This finding was supported previously by Windeler *et al.* (2017), who suggested that social interactions with telework lead to mental fatigue. Wu *et al.* (2019) posted that social cyberloafing causes employee fatigue. Subscribing to the same view, Lim and Chen (2012) reported that cyberloafing can lead to psychological stress in individuals. The researchers indicated emailing activities that consume more cognitive energy are more likely to cause stress than browsing activities. Sonnentag *et al.* (2018) also supported the notion that cyberloafing can promote negative emotions in individuals. Further, Karimikia *et al.* (2021) broadly indicated that Information communication technology used at work generates stress in organizations, leading to negative work outcomes.

This study also highlighted that stress impacts job performance negatively. Similar findings were also recorded in previous research on stress and job performance. Ajayi (2018) posited that stress has a negative impact on job performance in the banking industry. The researcher noted that stress at work is a major impediment to positive work outcomes. Catherine and Fonceca (2022) posited that despite the source of stress, it is likely to impact job performance negatively, as it leads to mental strain and fatigue. There is also a claim that stress is not only a serious obstacle to positive work outcomes, but it can also lead to a decrease in the quality of labour, absenteeism, high labour turnover and poor organizational performance (Pandey, 2020). Further Silva *et al.* (2012) found that low level of performance in the financial sector is the result of high level of employee stress in such organizations. Murali *et al*. (2017) indicated that employee performance is seriously affected by employee stress arising out of work. Research also suggests that stress originating from organizational sources also contributes to poor job performance among individuals (Khan *et al*., 2022). A Similar finding was also recorded by Ehsan and Ali (2019) indicating that stress negatively affects job performance in the banking sector in Pakistan. Comparing high-tech and low-tech organizations in Taiwan, Yang *et al*. (2021) suggested that stress factors in organizations contribute to poor job performance and indicated that low-tech has higher stress factors than high-tech organizations. Similarly, Wu *et al.* (2020) reported that high levels of stress found the construction industry in China seriously affect the job performance of employees. Researchers claimed that more stress originated from organizational sources than elsewhere.

Research Implications

The present study has several significant implications that can help organizations reap the full potential of their human resources and improve organizational performance. This study highlights that cyberloafing can lead to stress, affecting employee productivity. The path analysis indicated that cyberloafing has a positive effect on stress and stress has a negative effect on job performance. However, results reported relationship between cyberloafing and job performance is not significant. These results indicate that employees today with internet facilities at work are likely to engage in cyberloafing which can contribute to stress, which can negatively affect employee productivity. Although eliminating cyberloafing may not be possible entirely with hand-held devices being available to every employee, managers should seek strategies to minimize cyberloafing among employees at work (She et al., 2023). Apart from this, managers can also look into precursors of cyberloafing and take appropriate actions to mitigate such, to harness the true potential of employees, especially if they originate from organizational sources. The current study also supplements the current literature related to cyberloafing and job performance, and it adds a new finding, indicating that stress mediates the relationship between cyberloafing and job performance.

Limitations and Future Research

The current study is limited to apparel manufacturing industry and the sample is confined to 96 Merchandising managers, which is small. Future research can consider a larger sample from the industry and extend it to observe the differences between male and female cyberloafing, and how such will impact stress and job performance in the industry. Further, this research can be replicated in other industries to determine the mediating role of stress on the above relationship. Researchers can also consider adding suitable moderators to this theoretical framework and contemplate using mixed-method studies to expand the current knowledge.

CONCLUSION

The present study revealed the impact of stress as a mediator on cyberloafing and job performance. To examine this mediating role of stress, a non-probability convenience sampling technique was used to gather data and CB-SEM was used to analyze the data. The results indicated stress fully mediated the above relationship. Moreover, there is a positive relationship between cyberloafing and stress and a negative relationship between stress and job performance. Although the study does not indicate negative a relationship between cyberloafing and job performance, some measures to keep cyberloafing in check among employees would be advisable for organizations which can in turn, affect job performance. Further, antecedents that lead to cyberloafing can be looked into to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to minimize those if they originate from organizational sources.

Ethical Considerations

This research has received the ethical approval from the University.

Conflict of interests

Authors of this article have no conflict of interest concerning the publication of this article.

Data availability

Data of this research is not available publically due to ethical considerations of the study.

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