Cyberloafing, Workplace Incivility and Employee Productivity: An Empirical Study in Rural Municipalities of Kaski District

*Badri Tiwari[1] and Damodar Niraula[2]
Faculty, Nesfield International College

Abstract

In today's digitalized workplace, workplace incivility and cyberloafing have become major concerns for many corporate and government organizations all over the world. The objective of this study was to determine the effects of cyberloafing and workplace rudeness on workers. The study took a quantitative approach, administered a set of survey questionnaire, and collected response from 135 employees from three rural municipalities in Kaski district. Different descriptive and inferential statistical analysis tools were applied to draw the conclusion. Results showed that the cyber loafing and employee productivity had a weak significant positive relationship (0.320) whereas work incivility and employee productivity had a negative co-relationship (-0.304). Similarly, the regression result reveled a significant low magnitude of impact of cyberloafing and workplace incivility (0.443 and -0.445 coefficient respectively) on employee productivity. This research underlines the necessity for local governments to put policies in place that discourages uncivil behavior at workplace and prevent employees from the tendency of cyberloafing, as doing so can help to increase worker productivity.

Keywords: cyberloafing, workplace incivility, employee productivity, government organization, rural municipalities

1. Introduction

The digital revolution has changed how organizations function in recent years, bringing both extraordinary advantages and problems to the modern workplace. The dynamics of employee behaviour within the context of an organization change along with technology. The frequency of work incivility and the phenomenon of cyber loafing are two such issues that have come to light and may have an effect on employee productivity. Cyberloafing is the practice of employees using the internet and digital gadgets to engage in non-work-related activities during working hours. The internet provides a wealth of opportunities for study, communication, and work,

[1] Badri Tiwari https://orcid.org/0009-0007-8539-1918

* Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Badri Tiwari, Nesfield International College, Lagankhel, Lalitpur. Email: pokhara.badri@gmail.com

[2] Damodar Niraula https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6858-3893

but it also offers a wealth of distractions, including social media websites, websites for online shopping, games, and amusement. Like many other places, rural Nepalese municipalities have seen rapid adoption of technology in their workplaces. However, there is still a lack of knowledge regarding how cyber laziness affects worker productivity in these particular situations (Kaptangil et al., 2021). Most often, cyber loafing is seen in occupations that require extensive computer use. Even though a lot of academics claim that cyber loafing happens on desktops, (Askew et al., 2014) claimed that it can also happen on smartphones and tablets because calls and texts fall under the category of cyber loafing. It might also be referred to as a contemporary variation on unproductive behavior at work. This is due to the fact that employees' attention is diverted from their work by cyber loafing activities during working hours, which wastes time and results in failure, has negative impact on productivity. According to several studies, the modern workplace's digital tools and services may permit one to three hours per day of cyber loafing and squandering business time. Additionally, it is challenging for businesses to determine how much time workers spend working when they use their smartphones for both work and personal purposes. Employees use smartphones or other internet-connected devices to complete their work, making it difficult to distinguish between those who are cyber loafing and those who are actually working. Cyber loafing activities can occasionally result in an unpleasant workplace and other unfavorable effects, such as when workers decide to read inappropriate content at work. Other workers may also be impacted by this if they are insulted, disturbed, or distracted. It relates to the development.

Theoretical Background

The word cyberloafing is defined as using the internet for personal purposes at work (Lim, 2002). According to Kim and Byrne (2011), other terms for cyber loafing include non-work-related computing, online loafing, cyber lacking, problematic internet use, personal web usage at work, internet dependency, internet addiction disorder, cyber-budging, and Internet abuse. Numerous studies analyzed the relationship between cyberloafing and various factors, such as organizational citizenship (Katou, 2015) job stressors (Sawitri, 2012), justice (Sheikh et al., 2015), etc. Their findings exhibited that when workers use cyber loafing as a way to unwind from work, it gives them the chance to take a vacation from it while also being advantageous to the company (Doorn, 2011). It has benefits for activities related to and used in recuperation from work (Belanger & Slyke, 2002; Oravec, 2002). However, Henle and Blanchard (2008) and Lim (2002) claimed that it results in security hazards and work deviance. Though the topic of Internet abuse in businesses has received a lot of attention from academics, the potential advantages of this behavior have not been sufficiently researched.

According to Henle and Blanchard (2008), cyberloafing reduces employee productivity in the United States by 30–40%, costing the country, on average, $750 million annually. Organizations must take precautions against cyber loafing as a result of this cost assessment. These safety measures could be subtle, ones like turning toward hallways rather than walls to make computer-mediated activities more visible. Along with these softer safeguards, some firms have implemented strict control mechanisms for internet access or management training (Cheng et al., 2020). Therefore, it is evident that academics should make an effort to comprehend cyber loafing behavior and produce helpful management suggestions to minimize its harmful consequences while maintaining the benefits of its favorable effect.

Being fair to employees fosters corporate trust, increases employee engagement, and lowers employees' tendency to engage in cyber loafing behavior (Oosthuizen et al., 2018). According to the findings of Oosthuizen et al., workers who enjoy their work are likely to spend less time engaging in pointless activities like abusing the internet (Schell, 1998). While numerous studies discuss the effects of cyberloafing on worker productivity and job satisfaction, Lim and Chen (2012) found that different types of cyberloafing activities have varying effects on worker attitudes. It claims that whereas emailing has a negative effect on work attitude since it results in work, browsing has a favorable effect on work attitude because it momentarily reduces job stress.

However, based on the in-depth interview with 15 informants, Manuel et al. (2019) found no negative effect of cyberloafing on employee productivity. That was possible because the employees were aware about the right time of using internet for non-work-related activities and the consequences. In the mean time, Saleh et al. (2018) conducted a study on 250 employees of 20 companies in Saudi Arabia. They conducted a experiment and found that the employers who restrict internet services on social networking and web browsing enjoyed increased work activities from their employees.

Pearson (2010) defined workplace incivility as uncouth, disrespectful, or careless conduct that deviates from social norms and can have a detrimental impact on both individuals and companies. Organizations can put policies in place to encourage a more civil and effective work environment by understanding how incivility affects productivity. Work place incivility is defined as a low type of destructive behavior that disrupts the standards and norms of the organization (Alias et al., 2020). These inappropriate workplace gossiping habits include interrupting or criticizing others, making disparaging remarks about someone, and talking about coworkers in an unprofessional fashion (Cortina et al., 2001).

Saleem et al. (2022) surveyed 252 employees of telecommunication companies in Pakistan to examine the impact of workplace incivility on employee performance. They used a closed-ended questionnaire composed of five-point Likert scale statements. Based on the data, they affirmed that the incivility is harmful to the employee performance and prevents them for moving forward.

People who are the targets of unruly workplace conduct report higher levels of psychological distress, job-related stress, distraction, and unhappiness, as well as lower levels of creativity and cooperation. According to several studies (Lim, 2002; Pearson, 2010), over time they become less committed to their organizations and leave at larger rates. Even employees who just observe rude behavior (such as colleagues being treated poorly) exhibit decreased job commitment and satisfaction, as well as higher job burnout and turnover intentions (Lim et al., 2008). The negative effects of work incivility, according to Cortina, have financial ramifications for employers, who must bear the price of employee distraction and discontentment, employment, job accidents, substance abuse, sick leave, work team conflict, productivity decline, and turnover. Organizations looking for productive and capable workers must provide realistic conditions that support employee performance. As Mathis et al., (2016) revealed, practicality, quality, amount of output, employee participation, and productivity are affected by the behaviors adopted in the workplace, especially negative behaviors.

Nepalese government organizations are extensively adopting the use of information technology in their operations and thus much of the Nepalese research focuses on the use of digital technology on customer satisfaction, and its challenges to the organization, customer, and employee's perspective but lacks the investigation of cyber loafing and it's impact on job performance. In this context, this study investigates the factors that contribute to cyber loafing and work incivility and its effects on the productivity of employees at Nepalese rural government office.

Hypothesis

Cyberloafing and employee productivity: Cyberloafing is the act of employees using Internet access at work for personal purposes while pretending to be doing legitimate work. On the other hand, according to Oravec (2002) and Belanger and Slyke (2002), cyberloafing may also have benefits for activities related to and used in recuperation from work. In this context, the following hypothesis has been developed:

H1: Cyberloafing has a positive impact on employee productivity.

Workplace incivility and employee productivity: Similarly, work place incivility shares characteristics with other ideas of harmful behavior (such as sexual harassment and workplace bullying) in terms of the reduction in work effort,

employee turnover, and productivity. On the other side, they are ill-defined workplace incidents caused by instigators who make imperceptible attacks. According to Cortina et al. (2001), in their research revealed that exposure to workplace incivility sparks physical or psychological withdrawal by employees from work environments and decreases productivity. From this perspective, the following hypothesis were made regarding the relationship between workplace incivility and employee productivity:

H2: Work incivility has a negative impact on employee productivity

2. Research Methodologies

Employees of 3 rural municipalities (Rupa Rural Municipality, Madi Rural Municipality and Machhapuchre Rural Municipality) of Kaski district were taken as samples of the study. To test the model, a scale composed of 20 questions and demographic information was used. A total of 135 rural municipal employees were selected using convenient sampling method and surveyed accordingly during December 2022. The questionnaire was developed using 5-point Likert scale. Data was processed on SPSS. The reliability and validity of the data was tested at first. The minimum value of Cronbach's Alpha is found 0.681 which is greater than 0.6 as acceptable value defined by van Griethuijsen et al. (2014). Conclusions are drawn with the help of descriptive and inferential analysis tools.

3. Results

Two scales were utilized to assess employee cyber loafing and work incivility behavior in addition to demographic factors (Table 1). In addition, demographic information including gender, age, gender, marital status, work experience, education and job position (Table 2) were considered to analyze the demographic characteristics of the sample.

Table 1
Scales for Measuring Variables

Variables	Source of scale
Cyberloafing	Created by Lim (2002) and developed by Blanchard and Henle (2008) – a 7 item 6 points Likert Scale.
Work incivility	Created by WIS; Cortina et al. (2001) - a 7 item 5 points Likert Scale
Employee Productivity	6 items self-construct, 5 points Likert Scale

Descriptive statistics

Table 2 is all about the display of demographic frequencies of the respondents. Out of 135, major portion (65.20%) fall under the age group of 31 to 40 years whereas, only 3 are of 51 and above years. Similarly, 96 respondents are married. On the other hand, 40.70% are freshers. In terms of educational qualification, 40% have intermediate level of education, 36.30% are bachelors passed and 20 are of below school leaving certificate (SLC) or secondary education examination (SEE) level. At last, 70 respondents hold middle level position in their organization and 48 hold senior position.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics based on Demographic Variables

Baseline Characteristics	N	Percent
Gender		
Female	48	35.6
Male	87	64.4
Age Group		
20-30 age	10	7.4
31-40 age	88	65.2
41-50 age	34	25.2
51 and above	3	2.2
Marital Status		
Married	96	71.1
Single	38	28.1
Others	1	0.7
Experience		
Fresher	55	40.7
Experienced	80	59.3
Education		
Below SLC/SEE	27	20
Intermediate	54	40
Bachelors	49	36.3
Others	5	3.7
Position		
Junior	11	8.1
Middle position	70	51.9
Senior position	48	35.6
Others	4	4.4

Note. N = 135.

Correlation Analysis

Table 3 shows the correlation between variables. It is found that the employee productivity and cyberloafing are significantly positively correlated with each other. However, the work incivility is found to be significantly negatively correlated with the employee productivity.

Table 3

Correlations for Study Variables

	Cyber loafing	Work incivility	Employees productivity
Cyber loafing	1		
Work incivility	0.204**	1	
Employees productivity	0.320**	-0.304**	1

**$p < .01$.

Regression Analysis

It is found that the 23.30% of the variation in the employee productivity is defined by the model. Result of ANOVA suggested that the model is significant at 1% with 34.718 F-value. Further, the regression result (Table 4) showed that there is a weak significant positive (=0.218) effect of cyber loafing and employee's productivity. Similarly, from the above table, it is concluded that there is a negative impact of work incivility (-0.145) and employee productivity. Based on the result, it is concluded that both the hypotheses of this study are accepted at 1% significance level.

Table 4

Regression Coefficients taking Employee Productivity as Criterion Variable

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.105	1.863		1.190	0.236
Cyber loafing	0.443	0.082	0.218	2.394	0.000
Work incivility	-0.445	-0.102	-0.145	2.355	0.000
Adjusted R Square = 0.233, F-stat = 34.718, F-sig = 0.000					

a. Predictors: (Constant), Work incivility, cyber loafing

b. Dependent Variable: Employees productivity

4. Discussion

This study demonstrated that cyberloafing may also have good impacts, such as improving inventive work behavior, refreshment to employees, increases creativity and innovation at work through internet sources thus it should not be fully eradicated. It is therefore vital to examine cyberloafing to reduce its negative effects. These findings are supported by studies that assert a link between social and informational cyberloafing and creative activity (Doorn, 2011). This study adds to the body of knowledge on creativity management by arguing that management needs to be aware of both the advantages and disadvantages of cyber loafing. These findings suggest that managers should take advantage of employees' time spent online as a creative break and recognize that productivity may not be best measured by official working hours and daily outcomes. Similarly, findings suggest that the incivility has a weak significant negative impact on the employee's performance. This result is consistent with the findings of Cortina et al. (2001); Lim et al. (2008); and Harvey et al. (2007).

The research findings highlighted that engaging employees in non-work-related internet activities during work hours have potential benefits, such as providing employees with short breaks that enhance overall productivity and creativity. This finding is consistent with previous studies by Kenyon (2008) and Moody and Siponen (2013). Organizations may need to consider implementing measures to address excessive cyber loafing and communicate the unacceptability of such behavior through formal internet usage policies, education, and punishments for violators.

In conclusion, cyber loafing was seen as a means of recreation, recovery, work-life balance, fostering digital learning, enhancing creativity, entertainment, and relieving boredom and exhaustion. Recovery behavior was reported to enhance productivity. Behavioral intention played a crucial role in determining actual cyberloafing behavior, while social factor is positively related to intention to cyberloaf. On the other hand, it has been concluded that workplace incivility is one of the major issues that became harmful for the employee productivity in three municipalities of Kaski district.

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