

CYBERLOAFING: IT'S IMPACT ON STRESS AND PERFORMANCE IN THE SELECTED BANKS IN THE COLOMBO DISTRICT, SRI LANKA

Parakrama Jayasuriya, Dinoka Perera, Amitha Padukkage

PhD Student University of Sri Jayawardenapura, Gangodawila, Nugegoda. Sri Lanka
chulaj3@gmail.com

Abstract

Cyberloafing, characterized by the engagement in non-work-related activities using the office internet facilities, is known to hinder job performance. This study aims to investigate the mediating role of stress on the relationship between cyberloafing and job performance in the banking sector. It utilizes conservation of resources, transactional theory of stress, and coping, and social exchange theories to underpin cyberloafing, stress, and job performance. This study used a non-probability convenience sampling technique to select the sample and collected data from 108 middle managers of selected private banks in Colombo, Sri Lanka, using a self-reporting questionnaire. Data was analyzed using covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM). Findings indicated that stress moderated the relationship between cyberloafing and job performance. This is unique, as past literature does not refer to the mediating function of stress on the above relationship. Further, it aligns with the current literature, suggesting that cyberloafing can cause stress among individuals. This is significant as there is limited research related to the mediating role of stress on the relationship between cyberloafing and job performance. While cyberloafing is a common phenomenon in modern work settings, the findings of the study reiterate its detrimental effects on individual performance, with potential adverse effects on organizations. The recommendations provided herein will enable managers to navigate the issue of cyberloafing in the workplace more prudently.

Keywords: Banking Sector, Cyberloafing, Job performance, Middle Managers, Stress

INTRODUCTION

Computers have become an important tool for work in many organizations worldwide. Combined with information and communication technology, the distribution and access to information have become faster, making it easier for decision making and to improve organizational performance (Mastrangelo et al., 2006). The internet has transformed the work environment, enabling improvements in work processes, employee efficiency, and productivity (Mačiulytė-Šniukienė & Gaile-Sarkane, 2014; Duguma & Bai, 2024). Apart from these benefits, the internet has become a tool for individuals to cyberloaf (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 (Oravec, 2002; Aghaz & Sheikh, 2016; Wu et al., 2025).

Job performance, a construct explored for many years, is vital for 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 performance 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 & Wilkerson, 2003; Ahmad et al., 2025). 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). He 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.

It has been suggested that cyberloafing while at work causes stress among employees in the workplace (Lim & Chen, 2012; Sonnentag et al., 2018; Wu et al., 2020). Such mental stress at work can impede performance, leading to poor organizational performance (O'Neill et al., 2014; Maryani & Gazali, 2024). 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 Banking 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 that 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. These research studies have made it clear that stress can function as a mediator in research related to cyberloafing and performance.

PROBLEM OF THE STUDY

Research gaps

Although studies on cyberloafing and performance in the banking sector in Sri Lanka (Kularathne & Senevirathne, 2021) have examined the relationship, the mediating effect of stress has not been explored, creating an empirical gap. Furthermore, in their study, Kularathne and Senevirathne (2021) have suggested using appropriate mediators to ascertain how they affect the above relationship. Hence, this study would fulfill this need in current research literature. This study would also fill the methodological gap in research, as it uses covariance-based structural equation modelling, which has been omitted in past research.

Hence, the problem of this study is, does stress mediate the relationship between cyberloafing and job performance in the banking sector in Sri Lanka?

The following are the objectives of this study:

- a) To determine the impact of cyberloafing on job performance.
- b) To determine the impact of cyberloafing on stress.
- c) To determine the impact of stress on job performance.
- d) To determine the mediating role of stress on cyberloafing and job 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 identified cyberloafing as a waste of time, adding costs to the organization and leading to poor organizational performance (Jalón *et al.*, 2018; Şimsek & Şimsek, 2019; Demircioglu & Chen, 2019). Cyberloafing is classified as activities and behaviours that are prevalent in many organizations. Anandarajan and Simmers (2004) identified cyberloafing as a complex phenomenon that needs proper exploration. They suggested that it is a potentially dysfunctional activity which promotes distractions from work, leading to poor performance. Cyberloafing has also been identified 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 (2004) 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. There have been different classifications of cyberloafing. Researchers such as Ozler and Polat (2012) called them minor and major, while others noted them as browsing and emailing (Lim, 2002; Aybas and Güngör, 2020).

Job Performance

Job performance has been defined as behaviours or actions that are connected with organizational goals and objectives (Koopmans *et al.*, 2014). It has a direct connection with organizational performance and competitive advantage, and it is affected by personality factors, which have a significant influence on task performance (Borman *et al.*, 2014; Bergman *et al.*, 2018; Li *et al.*, 2025). Furthermore, technological advancements and the changing work environment have also impacted job performance, as they have altered the expectations of both organizations and individuals (Hassan & Olufemi, 2014; Na-nan *et al.*, 2017; 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 it. Organizations make every effort to improve employee job performance, as it has a significant impact on organizational performance (Wood *et al.*, 2012; Kassa and Worku, 2025). It has been suggested that coworker support and relationships also have a significant influence on job performance (Owens *et al.*, 2015; Dijkshoorn-Albrecht *et al.*, 2024). The 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 organizations.

Stress

The concept was defined as a non-specific response of the body to a demand for change (Selye, 1955). Since the above, there have been numerous definitions of stress, although there has been 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 that require 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 (Sonntag et al., 2018; Mullan & Wajzman, 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 the job plays a major as a 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 from 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 this theory of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), this research explains the concept of stress. It contends that successful navigation through stressful events is based on the ability to appraise the stressful experience and the coping mechanisms (or transactions) engaged to mitigate stress. Primary and secondary appraisals are necessary to identify strategies for assessing and coping with stress, respectively (Si et al., 2023). Using this framework, Si et al. (2023) explained the negative impact of excessive social media use on employee job behaviour. Similarly, de Cordova et al. (2024) noted that the COVID-19 pandemic presented nurses with unprecedented levels of stress, emphasizing that management of such stress depended on the ability to appraise and employ appropriate coping strategies. Additionally, Tudayan-Espiritu (2024) observed that appropriate appraisal of stress by caregivers enabled effective management of work-related stress, leading to satisfaction.

Social Exchange Theory

This research employs social exchange theory to explain job performance, viewing it as reciprocation for what an individual receives from the organization. Homans (1961) introduced the idea that social behaviour is an exchange of giving and taking, in individuals' associations with society. Huang (2016) posited that job satisfaction, engagement, and low turnover result from providing a safe job climate, resulting in reciprocation. Consequently, transactions between parties are understood as quid-pro-quo exchanges (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Yin (2018) reported that employee engagement is to exchange benefits in multiple forms, and the outcomes generated are expected to be similar to what they expect. Kalra et al. (2024) claimed that the idiosyncratic deals offered to sales personnel were considered as benefits received, reciprocated with improved change agility and performance. Jun and Eckardt (2025) noted that social exchange theory is not always supported with positive results, and, for example, training and labour turnover can sometimes encourage people to leave the organization, while others may decide to stay.

Conservation of Resources Theory

A theory promoted by Hobfoll (1989) suggests that individuals are inclined to safeguard and obtain resources they value. 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 preserves resources depleted due to job burnout, lack of psychological well-being, and poor work-life balance in organizations. Zhong et al. (2022) claimed that informational cyberloafing was positively related to innovative performance at work during the COVID-19 Pandemic and improved perceived meaning of work. Further, emotional exhaustion due to abusive supervision was palliated with cyberloafing (Khan et al., 2021). Wu et al. (2019), however, suggested that cyberloafing promotes psychological stress and mental fatigue. Hence, cyberloafing mostly functioned as a tool to conserve resources depleted at work.

HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Cyberloafing and Job Performance

Cyberloafing at work is a common phenomenon that organizations must deal with today (Derin & Gökçe, 2016; Sarfraz et al., 2023). Lim (2002) categorized it as deviant behaviour at work, while others noted it as a necessity as the boundaries between work and life have become fluid (Anandarajan & Simmers, 2004; Kwala & Agoyi, 2025). This form of Cyber-behaviour at work negatively impacted job performance (Ramayah, 2010). Koay and Soh (2019) and Wu et al. (2020) claimed that cyberloafing in the workplace has both negative and positive effects on job performance, depending on the cognitive load employees expend on private internet activities. Other studies reported that engaging in cyberloafing for prolonged periods can deplete task performance (Askew et al., 2014; Guo et al., 2025). Others argued that cyberloafing on social networking and Web browsing also

hampered performance (Saleh et al., 2018; Wu et al., 2018) As such, we hypothesized the following as the study's first hypothesis.

H1: Cyberloafing has a negative impact on job performance.

Cyberloafing and Stress

Heightened levels of stress have emerged with cyberloafing, as the pervasiveness of Internet access with handheld devices (Chen & Lee, 2013). The blurring boundaries between work and non-work have further contributed to increased cyberloafing, which in turn leads to greater stress (Tarafdar et al., 2011; Karjalainen, 2023). Lim and Chen (2012) highlighted that cyberloafing at work can directly cause psychological stress in individuals. Expending energy to attend to personal emails during work has been suggested as a driver of emotional exhaustion, job tension, and work-family conflict (Macklem, 2006; Steffensen et al., 2022). Sonnentag et al. (2018) suggested that cyberloafing generates negative emotions, thereby leading to psychological stress. Further, O'Neill et al. (2014) and Shaddiq et al. (2021) noted that cyberloafing can result in both psychological and physical exhaustion with low productivity. Additionally, social cyberloafing directly leads to ego depletion and mental fatigue (Boksem et al., 2005; Yang et al., 2023). Hence, we developed the following as our second hypothesis.

H2: Cyberloafing has a significant positive influence on stress

Stress and Job Performance

Sert et al. (2025) posited that stress can significantly affect job performance. Yang et al. (2021) suggested that stress is more prevalent in traditional than in high-tech industries. Halkos and Bousinakis (2010) noted that increased stress levels hinder employee productivity. Wetzel et al. (2006) and Buivydienė et al. (2025) noted that despite novel coping mechanisms, stress impairs judgments, communication, and decision-making among surgeons and in the medical industry (Buivydienė et al., 2025), despite their novel ways of coping with stress. Weinberger and Cooper (2011) observed that stress from many sources, results in poor job performance. Jackson and Frame (2018) indicated that stress and anxiety negatively impact job performance. Clays et al. (2007) and Jahagirdar et al. (2024) reported that high levels of stress lead to depression, affecting performance. Non-work-related stress, such as that from the family domain, lowers job performance (Akter & Rahman, 2012; Sukor et al., 2025). Catherine and Fonceca (2022) claimed that stress can arise from both work and environmental factors, leading to poor job performance. Hence, we propose the following as the third hypothesis of the study.

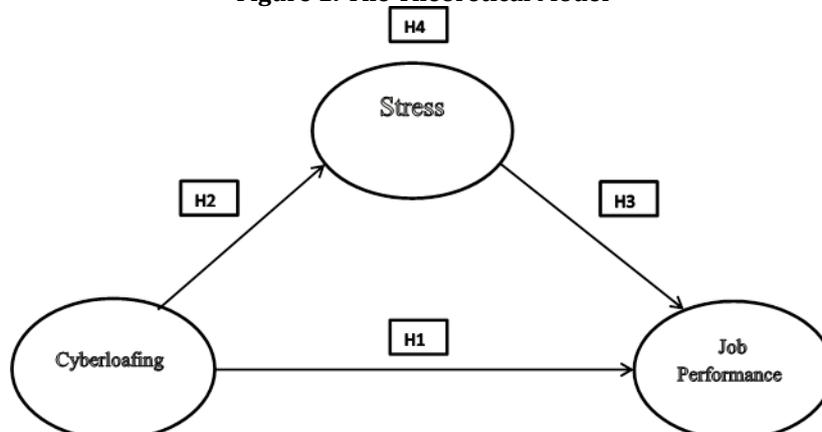
H3: Stress has a significant negative effect on Job Performance

Stress as a Mediator between Cyberloafing and Job Performance

Dagher et al. (2021) found that stress, anxiety, and depression functioned as mediators in the relationship between problematic social media usage and memory performance. Abbasi and Janjua (2016) demonstrated that job stress mediated the link between work overload and organizational performance. The strain facets and coping strategies are said to mediate the relationship between technostress and adverse job outcomes (Gaudioso et al., 2016). COVID-19-based informational cyberloafing impacted innovative performance, with job anxiety functioning as the mediator (Zhong et al., 2022). Studies have also revealed that stress, mediates the relationship between social media addiction and academic performance (Zhao, 2023). However, Malik (2023) argued that work stress does not mediate the relationship between cyberloafing and performance, although cyberloafing has a significant negative effect on performance (Wu et al., 2020). Therefore, we hypothesize the following as our fourth hypothesis.

H4: Stress mediates the relationship between cyberloafing and job performance

Figure 1: The Theoretical Model



Source: (Authors developed based on the literature,2025)

MATERIALS AND METHODS

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 and possibly for recreational activities at work (Lim & Teo, 2005).

Participants

Middle Managers of Private Banks, located in Colombo, numbering 150 were selected as the population, as their nature of employment warrants them to use internet facilities at work. A sample of 108 was selected using a non-probability convenience sampling technique to collect data. The sample selection was based on the Krejcie & Morgan table (1970). The survey questionnaire was distributed among two industry experts, namely senior managers of banks, to determine the comprehensibility to ensure a high response rate. The questionnaire was concise with clear instructions and avoided complex, ambiguous items to ensure that all respondents were motivated to answer all questions. Anonymity and confidentiality are guaranteed to ensure honest answers from respondents. Pre-testing a questionnaire is necessary to improve clarity and to confirm the validity, adequacy, and clarity of the instructions (Zikmund *et al.*, 2000). Following the pre-test, adjustments were made as necessary. Informed consent was obtained before the distribution of the questionnaire.

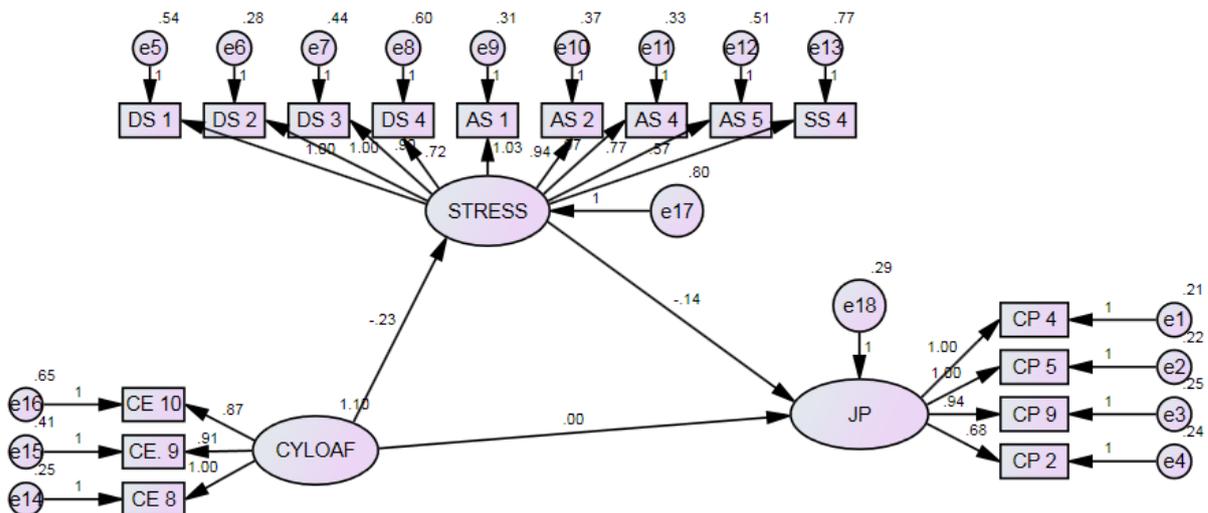
Measures

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 developed by Koopmans *et al.*'s (2014) ten (10) items scale. Sample items include: “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”. All constructs 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.2025

RESULTS

Response rate

The response rate of the questionnaire was 89% in this study.

Demographic Statistics

The following Table 1 depicts the demographic details of the participants of the study.

Table 1: Demographic Profile

<https://www.gapjibs.org/>

Gender	Responses	Percentage
Male	53	56
Female	43	45
Work Experience		
< 1 Year	4	4
1 - 3 Years	12	13
4 - 6 Years	21	22
7 - 9 Years	17	18
10 Years and Above	42	44
Age (Years)		
18 - 25	14	15
25 - 34	24	25
35 - 41	37	4
42 - 49	16	17
50 and above	5	5

Source: Survey Data (2025)

To check the model fit Confirmatory Factor Analysis(CFA) was carried out and findings indicated an appropriate overall fit of the model developed after deleting items, as shown below, Table 2.

Table 2: 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 (2025)

The table 2 indicates 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

The current study results indicate that cyberloafing does not affect job performance. This does not align with the most common past research findings, which posited that cyberloafing negatively impacts job performance. For example, Koay and Soh (2019), Kularathne and Senevirathne (2021), and Wu *et al.* (2020) posited that cyberloafing negatively impacts job performance. In addition, cyberloafing with smartphones and social media can negatively affect academic performance (Junco, 2012; Wu *et al.*, 2018; Doost & Zhang, 2024; Çalişkan *et al.*, 2025). Deliberating on time spent on cyberloafing, prolonged cyberloafing is said to affect performance (Guo *et al.*, 2025; She & Li, 2023), reiterating the previous findings of Askew *et al.* (2012), which suggested that cyberloafing can negatively impact task performance. However, some researchers have argued that cyberloafing does not negatively affect job performance. Among them, Aybas and Gungor (2020) suggested that cyberloafing does not affect performance among university academics. Derin and Gökçe (2016) reported that cyberloafing improve innovative performance and, therefore, it should not be prohibited in organizations. Information-centred cyberloafing was found to be beneficial for innovative performance (Yogun, 2015; Zhong *et al.*, 2022). The above highlights the context-specific impacts of cyberloafing on performance, representing the relevance of the work context on cyberloafing behavior.

This study has revealed that cyberloafing impacts the stress of employees, aligning with prior studies recognizing cyberloafing as a stress factor. For example, Gökçearsan et al. (2018) reported that smartphone addiction due to cyberloafing leads to stress, while Metin-Orta (2023) linked it to depression. In addition, researchers found that this stress is more prevalent in women who cyberloaf than in men. Furthermore, it is said to consume cognitive and emotional energy and detrimental to mental health (Wu et al., 2020), aligning with conclusions of Windeler et al. (2017), Sonnentag et al. (2018), and Wu et al. (2019). These findings are also consistent with Lim and Chen (2012), who reported that cyberloafing can cause psychological stress, and noted that emailing activities are more cognitively demanding than browsing. Observing the prevalence of information communication technology (ICT) Karimikia et al. (2021) argued that ICT generally generate work stress, leading to negative work outcomes.

This research aligns with previous findings that stress negatively impacts job performance. Ajayi (2018) posited that work place stress is a major impediment to positive work outcomes. Catherine and Fonceca (2022) posited that, regardless of the source of stress, it is likely to negatively impact job performance, as it leads to mental strain and fatigue. This claim was reiterated by Sert et al. (2025), arguing that stress arising from external sources, such as natural disasters, can also trigger poor performance in the medical industry. Stress is also considered not only a serious obstacle to positive work outcomes, but it can also lead to a decrease in the quality of labour, absenteeism, and turnover (Ajayi, 2018; Pandey, 2020). Studies have noted that performance is seriously affected by stress arising from work in many sectors (Murali et al., 2017), the finance (Silva et al., 2012), banking (Ehsan & Ali, 2019), construction (Wu et al., 2020), and manufacturing (Khan et al., 2021). Comparing high-tech and low-tech organizations in Taiwan, Yang et al. (2021) argued that stress factors contribute to poor job performance and suggested that low-tech organizations experience higher stress levels than high-tech organizations. There is a general consensus that stress originates more from organizational than external sources at present due to competitive work settings (Pealeu, 2025).

This study has deepened the understanding of the mediating role of stress in the relationship between cyberloafing and job performance. Although there are studies on cyberloafing and performance, there is very limited research on the mediating role of stress in that relationship. Jamaluddin et al. (2023) found that emotional exhaustion mediated between cyberloafing and job satisfaction. However, Malik (2023) argued that stress does not mediate the relationship between cyberloafing and performance in the education sector. Stress was found to mediate the relationship between problematic social media use and memory performance (Dagher et al., 2021). This study demonstrates that stress can effectively mediate the relationship between cyberloafing and job performance. It extends our understanding of stress in an integrative framework.

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Given the pervasiveness of internet facilities in modern work settings, our study has several significant implications for research and practice. First, it contributes to the literature related to cyberloafing by exploring fatigue-controlling and fatigue-generating effects of cyberloafing. This allows researchers to explain the complex effects of cyberloafing on employee performance and stress. Secondly, the results also reveal that there is no direct effect of cyberloafing on performance. This is significant as it contradicts the existing research assumption that cyberloafing directly impacts performance negatively (Razak et al. 2024; Doost & Zhang, 2024). Thirdly, our study expands research on stress resulting from cyberloafing in work situations. As modern work settings have forced work-life boundaries to evaporate, researchers have begun to explore how to achieve mental recess at work (Wu et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2025). Cyberloafing, which is fluid and spontaneous, has been recommended as a suitable means of mental recess (Liu & Zhang, 2023; Abbas et al., 2025). However, in this situation, such claims have been refuted, and it cannot be accepted that cyberloafing is inherently useful to alleviate stress. Fourthly, our findings have extended the understanding of the mediating role of stress on cyberloafing and job performance. Considering the negative effects of cyberloafing our model has suggested, it offers several practical implications for organizations. Managers and policymakers must now realize that eliminating cyberloafing completely may not be possible with the pervasiveness of ICT in organisational settings, but they should seek strategies to minimize cyberloafing among employees at work, especially on sites that consume heavy cognitive resources, to prevent stress. Organisational causes that might promote cyberloafing can be addressed with appropriate steps to mitigate its effects. Individual goal clarity can be improved with appropriate support to ensure consistent goal achievement. We recommend that organizations educate employees to support the achievement of organizational goals by engaging in responsible internet behaviour without violating organizational norms.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The current study is limited to six privately owned banks in Colombo, with a small sample of 108 middle-level managers. Future research could use a larger sample from similar banks and examine the differences in male and female cyberloafing and its effects on stress and performance. Additionally, this research could be replicated

in other industries to assess the mediating role of stress in this relationship. Researchers may also add relevant moderators to this framework and adopt mixed-method studies to broaden the current understanding.

CONCLUSION

In this study, we developed a comprehensive framework to further our understanding of the detrimental effects of cyberloafing. As a result, we have shown the mediating effect of cyberloafing on performance. Although cyberloafing was promoted as a tool to mitigate psychological stress and detach psychologically from work, this study has demonstrated that it serves as a fatigue promoter. Employers should be aware that cyberloafing in modern ICT-enabled work environments is prevalent and must attempt to ensure that it stays at a level that does not impede performance, leading to negative organisational outcomes. Further, antecedents that lead to cyberloafing can be looked into, and appropriate measures can be taken to minimize those, if they originate from organizational sources.

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