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The Dual Impact of Social Media Use in the Workplace on Employee Behavior: Cyberloafing Perspective

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Abstract: *The increasing alignment of internet-based technologies into business processes has transformed the contemporary work environment, influencing employees' use of digital devices during working hours. While such usage facilitates professional tasks, it also encompasses personal activities known as cyberloafing. This study investigates the relationships among workplace ostracism, challenge stressors, cyberloafing behaviour, and psychological detachment is based on the of Conservation of Resources (COR) theory. A structured questionnaire assessing the relevant variables was administered to a sample of 257 full-time employees. The findings showed a significant positive association between workplace ostracism and cyberloafing, however, challenge stressors did not significantly predict cyberloafing behaviour Moreover, cyberloafing was positively related to psychological detachment. While no significant relationship was found between ostracism and psychological detachment, challenge stressors showed a significant negative association with psychological detachment. These results contribute to understanding how social and job-related stressors differentially impact employees' cyberloafing tendencies and psychological detachment from work. The study generates theoretical insights and practical implications for researchers and practitioners aiming to address workplace behaviours in digitalized organizational settings.*

Keywords: *workplace ostracism; challenge stressors; cyberloafing; psychological detachment; conservation of resources theory.*

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Introduction

The fast-paced advancement of digital technologies and the ubiquitous presence of the internet have profoundly transformed contemporary work environments, blurring the barriers between professional responsibilities and daily life. The widespread accessibility of smartphones, tablets, and computers enables continuous connectivity, facilitating information retrieval and communication at any time. According to TÜİK (2024), internet usage among the Turkish population has steadily increased, reaching 86.5% in 2024, highlighting the growing integration of digital technologies into daily life. This digital proliferation has catalysed significant changes in communication patterns, notably through the rise of social media platforms, which have reshaped interpersonal interactions (Tengilimoğlu et al., 2015). While the effective utilisation of internet technologies can enhance organisational productivity, there is growing concern regarding the use of work time by employees for non-work related online activities —commonly referred to as cyberloafing (Lim, 2002). Studies report that between 30% and 50% of employees engage in such behaviours, raising productivity concerns among organisational managers (Koay, 2018).

Despite these concerns, some scholars propose that cyberloafing may function as a coping mechanism for adverse workplace experiences such as ostracism and challenge stressors (Stanton, 2002; Anandarajan and Simmers, 2005). This perspective highlights that employees may utilize cyberloafing as a strategy to momentarily detach from workplace stressors and regulate their emotional state. The notion of cyberloafing is especially salient in the context of extended workplace exposure and the increasing prevalence of stress and burnout (Koay et al., 2017). In view of these developments, it is of increasing importance to understand the psychological and organisational dynamics that shape employees' online behaviours during working hours. Among these dynamics, workplace ostracism — defined as employees' subjective experience of socially excluded within the organizational context; for example excluded by their peers— has garnered scholarly attention due to its detrimental effects on employees' well-being and performance (Ferris et al., 2008). In a similar vein, challenge stressors – described as work requirements that, though potentially stressful, are perceived as opportunities for learning, achievement, or growth (Cavanaugh et al., 2000) – also influence behavioural and emotional responses in the workplace. In this context, cyberloafing may not merely signify counterproductive behaviour, but rather serve as an adaptive response or psychological detachment strategy—a temporary mental disengagement

from work-related stressors to preserve emotional resources (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2015). This perspective is in alignment with the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, which posits that individuals strive to obtain, retain, and preserve valuable resources such as time, energy, and psychological well-being (Hobfoll, 1989). From this standpoint, cyberloafing can be interpreted as a coping mechanism employed to diminish the resource-depleting effects of stressors like ostracism or excessive workload. Moreover, it may also serve as a strategy that facilitates psychological detachment from work by allowing individuals to temporarily disconnect mentally and emotionally from their job demands.

The present study aims to investigate the relationships among ostracism, challenge stressors, and cyberloafing behaviour, alongside the role of cyberloafing in psychological detachment from work. Based on the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, the study argues that workplace ostracism depletes social resources, thereby increasing cyberloafing as an avoidance strategy. Conversely, challenge stressors are hypothesised to decrease cyberloafing by motivating employees to actively cope with demands. Cyberloafing is also theorised to facilitate psychological detachment by enabling temporary mental disengagement from work-related stress. In line with COR theory, individuals strive to protect valued resources, and resource loss provokes stress. Experiences of workplace ostracism may diminish social and psychological resources, increasing compensatory cyberloafing behaviours. Conversely, challenge stressors may encourage resource investment to overcome demands, potentially decreasing cyberloafing. The direct effect of workplace ostracism on psychological detachment appears minimal, suggesting ostracism alone may not foster mental disengagement. In contrast, challenge stressors negatively affect psychological detachment, indicating that elevated job demands hinder employees' capacity for mental recovery during non-work periods.

The study is structured into five key sections. The first section presents a comprehensive literature review, focusing on the key constructs of workplace ostracism, challenge stressors, cyberloafing, and psychological detachment, alongside an overview of the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory. The second part outlines the theoretical framework and delineates the proposed research model. The third section describes the research methodology in detail. The fourth section provides an in-depth discussion of the findings. The final part discusses the study's limitations and provide recommendations for future research.

Literature review

Workplace ostracism

Workplace ostracism indicates to the perception of exclusion or socially rejected by others in the work environment (Ferris et al., 2008). It is a form of interpersonal mistreatment that is often covert, passive, and ambiguous, making it less visible and more difficult to address compared to overt negative acts like bullying or harassment (Williams, 2007). Despite its subtle nature, ostracism can have serious psychological and organizational consequences. It threatens fundamental human needs (Williams, 2001), which can lead to emotional exhaustion, reduced job satisfaction, and decreased task performance (Wu et al., 2012).

Furthermore, ostracized employees may engage in withdrawal behaviours—both psychological and behavioural—as a way to cope with the emotional toll. These may include absenteeism, social disengagement, or engagement in counterproductive work behaviours, including cyberloafing (Howard et al., 2020). In the absence of social support, individuals may turn to digital environments to fulfil unmet social needs or to escape the emotionally negative work atmosphere, using online platforms as replacement social interaction spaces (Chiang & Suen, 2015).

Challenge stressors

Challenge stressors are work demands or conditions that, although potentially taxing, are perceived as opportunities for growth, mastery, or future gains (Cavanaugh et al., 2000). Common examples include intense workload, time pressure, job complexity, and increased responsibility. Unlike hindrance stressors—which are perceived as obstructive and are associated with negative outcomes—challenge stressors can foster positive motivational states and have positive influence on employee attitude and behavior such as engagement, resilience, and task focus (LePine et al., 2005).

It is important to note that challenge stressors can be appraised as hindrances (Podsakoff et al., 2023). This aligns with the dual-process view of stressors, suggesting that the same stressor can produce both beneficial and harmful outcomes depending on the individual's interpretation and context (Podsakoff et al., 2007). For example, individual differences that can shape whether stressors are appraised challenge stressors or hindrances. Moreover, leader behaviours and perceived organizational support also influence stressor appraisal as contextual factors (Podsakoff et al., 2023).

Cyberloafing

Cyberloafing is conceptualized as the voluntary use of the internet during working hours for personal purposes that are not related to one's job responsibilities (Lim, 2002). This includes activities such as browsing news websites, online shopping, checking social media, and watching videos. Initially conceptualized as a form of counterproductive work behaviour, cyberloafing was thought to reduce employee productivity and organizational effectiveness (Blanchard & Henle, 2008). However, emerging research suggests that cyberloafing may also serve functional roles under certain conditions.

For example, cyberloafing can operate as a form of emotion-focused coping—a psychological mechanism aimed at reducing negative affective states generated by work stressors (Askew et al., 2014). Moreover, it can be understood as a recovery behaviour, akin to taking a break, enabling employees to replenish cognitive resources, reduce fatigue, and regain focus (Wu et al., 2020). Additionally, in their study, Wu et al. (2020) emphasize that cyberloafing activities can contribute, physical, social, emotional and cognitive health. In the literature the positive outcomes of cyberloafing have been argued such as increased work performance, learning and creativity (Lim & Teo, 2024). Beyond its outcomes, the antecedents of cyberloafing can be classified as personal (age, gender, marital situation, education, etc…), interpersonal (communication), environment (culture, social norms, etc) (Lim & Teo, 2024).

Psychological detachment

Psychological detachment is the experience of mentally disconnecting from work-related thoughts, tasks, or responsibilities during non-work time—or temporarily within the workday (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). It is considered one of the four key recovery experiences, alongside relaxation, mastery, and control, that help individuals restore their personal resources (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2015). Detachment is critical for reducing the adverse effects of chronic work stress and for maintaining long-term well-being, including better sleep quality, reduced emotional exhaustion, and improved job performance (Moreno-Jiménez et al., 2009).

However, in highly demanding jobs or toxic environments marked by interpersonal stressors (e.g., ostracism), psychological detachment may be harder to achieve. In such settings, employees may seek alternative ways to achieve momentary disengagement, such as engaging in cyberloafing activities. By shifting attention away from the source of stress, employees can experience a temporary sense of relief and emotional regulation, even if the detachment occurs within work hours (Derks et al., 2014).

Conservation of resources (COR) theory

Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, developed by Hobfoll (1989), offers an integrative framework for theorizing how individuals respond to stress. According to the theory, people are motivated to acquire, protect, and retain valuable resources—such as time, energy, personal characteristics, and social support. Stress is understood as the result of resource loss, threat of loss, or insufficient return on invested resources. COR theory emphasizes that resource loss is disproportionately more critical than resource gain, and individuals who have fewer resources are more vulnerable to further depletion (Hobfoll, 2001).

In organizational contexts, COR theory helps explain why employees engage in behaviours like cyberloafing or psychological detachment when faced with resource-draining conditions such as ostracism or intense challenge stressors. These behaviours may be employed as protective strategies to conserve remaining resources or to initiate recovery. For example, employees who experience ostracism may browse social media to regain a sense of connection. Thus, COR theory integrates these disparate behaviours and stressors into a coherent framework, emphasizing that even seemingly inappropriate actions may serve a resource-conserving function under stress.

Theoretical framework and research model

The present study is based on Conservation of Resources (COR) theory. In this study Zhou et al. (2023) has been followed. It investigates the influence of workplace ostracism and challenge stressors on cyberloafing behaviour, and explores the role of cyberloafing on psychological detachment from work.

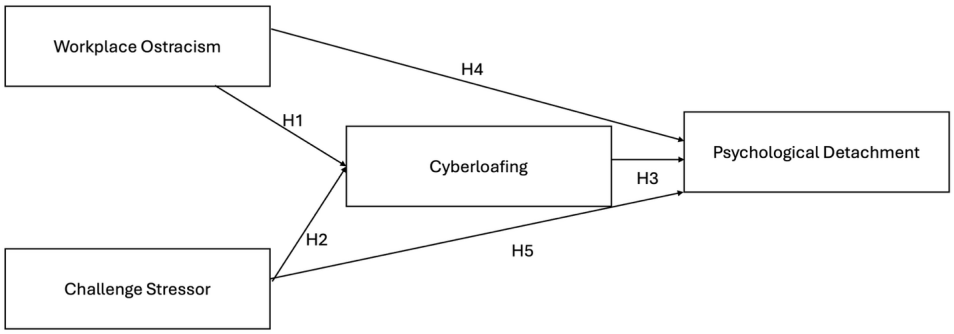
Drawing from COR Theory, the research posits that workplace ostracism increases perceived resource loss (Hawkley et al., 2011), prompting employees to engage in coping strategies such as cyberloafing to mitigate further loss (Ferris et al., 2008). In contrast, challenge stressors are theorised to enhance motivation and resource investment in work (Cavanaugh et al., 2000), thereby reducing both cyberloafing and psychological detachment (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007).

The study emphasises the dual nature of cyberloafing: although it may undermine productivity, it also facilitates mental disengagement from work and serves as a short-term recovery mechanism (Karadeniz, 2024). This research makes a novel contribution by its simultaneous consideration of both the detrimental and restorative aspects of cyberloafing within a single, integrative model.

Hypothesis development

Grounded in the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (Hobfoll, 1989), this research investigates the relationship between workplace ostracism, challenge stressors, cyberloafing, and psychological detachment. The proposed conceptual model integrates these constructs to explain how employees manage work-related stress and resource depletion in digital work environments.

Figure 1: Research Model (Source: developed by the authors)



The relationship between workplace ostracism and cyberloafing

Experiencing social exclusion can be very hard on people, as it makes them feel like they don't belong anywhere and relates to psychological and physical experiences (Xu et al., 2020). According to the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (Hobfoll, 1989), being rejected by others can feel like you've lost important social connections. This can lead to feelings of emotional exhaustion and make it harder to stay motivated at work. To deal with this feeling that there aren't enough resources, employees might start doing other things that are not part of their job, like spending time on the internet when they should be working. Cyberloafing is when people use the internet or digital devices at work to do things that are not related to their job (Lim, 2002). It can be a way to avoid workplace stress. Research has shown that employees who are ignored by their peers tend to avoid their work, including using the internet to do so, in an attempt to deal with their negative feelings (Ferris et al., 2008).

H1: There is a positive relationship between workplace ostracism and cyberloafing.

The relationship between challenge stressors and cyberloafing

Challenge stressors are work-related demands that, although stressful, are viewed as opportunities for personal development, mastery and achievement. Unlike hindrance stressors, which are perceived as barriers to achieving goals and typically elicit negative emotional responses, challenge stressors are associated with increased motivation and engagement (Cavanaugh et al., 2000). According to Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (Hobfoll, 1989), individuals tend to mobilise their cognitive, emotional, and physical resources in response to challenge stressors in order to meet these demands effectively. This increased investment of resources fosters greater task involvement and a heightened sense of purpose in one's role. Consequently, employees experiencing challenge stressors tend to remain focused on their work tasks and are less likely to engage in behaviours that drain resources or are counterproductive, such as cyberloafing. Research findings support this notion, suggesting that challenge stressors reduce the likelihood of cyberloafing (Zhou et al.,2023).

H2: There is a negative relationship between challenge stressors and cyberloafing.

The relationship between cyberloafing and psychological detachment

Cyberloafing refers to employees' engagement in non-work-related online activities during working hours, often as a means of temporarily escaping the cognitive and emotional demands associated with their professional roles (Lim, 2002). Within the framework of the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (Hobfoll, 1989), such behaviour can be conceptualised as a self-initiated coping strategy that allows employees to conserve or replenish depleted psychological resources. By momentarily distancing themselves from work-related stressors through digital diversion, individuals may facilitate the restoration of their attentional capacity and emotional equilibrium. Psychological detachment, defined as the ability to mentally and emotionally disengage from job responsibilities during and outside of work hours, plays a critical role in preventing chronic strain and promoting recovery (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). Recent researches suggest that cyberloafing can support this detachment process by enabling a brief but meaningful cognitive withdrawal from occupational pressures, thereby contributing to employees' psychological well-being (Karadeniz, 2024).

H3: There is a positive relationship between cyberloafing and psychological detachment.

The relationship between workplace ostracism and psychological detachment

Workplace ostracism is the subjective experience of being ignored, excluded or rejected by colleagues in an organisational setting. As an unpleasant and painful experience ostracism have negative impact on workplace behaviours such as aggression and harassment (Zhang & Shi, 2017). According to the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (Hobfoll, 1989), such exclusionary experiences are perceived as a threat to valuable social and emotional resources, prompting individuals to utilize coping strategies to prevent further depletion of these resources. One such strategy is psychological detachment, which involves the ability to disengage mentally from work-related demands and thoughts. This facilitates emotional recovery and reduces stress (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). In response to ostracism in the workplace, employees may exhibit increased levels of psychological detachment to preserve their well-being and mitigate the emotional burden of social rejection.

H4: There is a positive relationship between workplace ostracism and psychological detachment.

The relationship between challenge stressors and psychological detachment

Unlike hindrance stressors, which hinder progress and cause frustration, challenge stressors tend to boost employees' intrinsic motivation and engagement in their work by prompting them to invest more cognitive, emotional and behavioural resources in work-related activities (LePine et al., 2005). In the line with the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (Hobfoll, 1989), the increased cognitive, emotional, and behavioural investment that employees make in response to challenge stressors leads individuals to remain cognitively absorbed in their work, even outside of working hours. Psychological detachment, defined as the ability to disengage mentally from work during non-working hours, is considered essential for recovery and well-being (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). However, employees engaged with demanding yet meaningful job tasks may find it difficult to achieve such detachment. The ongoing mental preoccupation with work responsibilities associated with challenge stressors often prevents employees from mentally 'switching off', thereby hindering the recovery process. Supporting this view, empirical studies have shown that challenge stressors are negatively associated with psychological detachment (Sonnentag & Fritz,

2015) as they increase work involvement and reduce the likelihood of cognitive disengagement.

H5: There is a negative relationship between challenge stressors and psychological detachment.

Methodology

Sample and data collection

Following a quantitative research approach, data were collected through a self-administered questionnaire distributed via Google Forms and the convenience sampling method was applied to reach eligible participants efficiently. Following the collection of the data, the analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics software.

The target population comprised full-time employees aged 18 and over residing in Türkiye. A total of 257 valid responses were obtained for the purposes of analysis.

The questionnaire was structured into five sections. The initial section of the questionnaire collected demographic and professional information, including gender, age, educational background, total work experience, tenure at the current organisation, department, and position. The subsequent sections of this study comprise validated scales measuring the key constructs of the study, namely cyberloafing, workplace ostracism, challenge stressors, and psychological detachment.

A 7-point Likert scale was employed, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree); higher scores represent stronger agreement.

Table 1: Participants' Demographic Characteristics (source: Authors' findings)

Demographic variable	Groups	N	%
Gender	Female	131	51,2
	Male	125	48,8
Age	25 and under	32	12,5
	26-35 years	109	42,6
	36-46 years	78	30,5
	47 years and above	37	14,4
Education	Associate's degree	8	3,1
	Bachelor's degree	145	56,6
	Master's degree	85	33,2
	PhD	18	7
Department	Education	54	21,1
	Marketing and sales	33	12,9
	IT and R&D	34	13,3
	Legal	31	12,1
	Finance and accounting	28	10,9
	HR	28	10,9
	Customer service	22	8,6
	Other	26	10,2
Title	Assistant specialist/Assistant	60	23,4
	Expert / Senior expert	106	41,4
	Junior manager	41	16
	Mid-level manager	38	14,8
	Senior manager	11	4,3
Total working period	Less than 2 years	39	15,2
	3-5 years	114	44,5
	6-10 years	62	24,2
	11 years and above	41	16

Among the 257 full-time employees in Turkey who participated in the study, 51.2% were female and 48.8% were male. With respect to age distribution, 12.5% of the sample were 25 years old or younger, 42.6% were between 26–35 years, 30.5% were aged 36–46, and 14.4% were 47 years or older. With respect to educational attainment, 3.1% of the participants held an associate degree, 56.6% possessed a bachelor's degree, 33.2% had obtained a master's degree, and 7% had attained a doctoral degree. Participants were drawn from a variety of departments: The data indicates that 21.1% of the sample worked in education, 13.3% in IT and R&D, 12.9% in marketing and sales, 12.1% in legal, 10.9% in finance and accounting, 10.9% in human resources,

8.6% in customer service, and 10.2% in other departments. With regard to job position, 23.4% of respondents were assistants/assistant specialists, 41.4% were specialists/senior specialists, 16% were junior managers, 14.8% were middle managers, and 4.3% were senior managers. With respect to the total duration of employment, 15.2% of respondents had been in employment for less than two years, 44.5% for three to five years, 24.2% for six to 10 years, and 16% for 11 years or more. With respect to the duration of their tenure at their current organisation, 24.2% of respondents had been employed for less than 1 year, 41.4% for 1–3 years, 18.4% for 4–5 years, and 16% for 6 years or more.

Measures

Workplace ostracism

The Workplace Ostracism Scale employed in this study was adopted from Ferris et al., (2008), titled "The Development and Validation of the Workplace Ostracism Scale". The scale under consideration comprises 10 items, each assessed on a 7-point Likert-type scale, extending from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).

Challenge stressors

The Challenge Stressors Scale employed in this study was adapted from Cavanaugh et al. (2000), in the article titled "An Empirical Examination of Self-Reported Work Stress Among U.S. Managers." The scale under consideration comprises six items, each assessed on a 7-point Likert-type scale, extending from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).

Cyberloafing

The Cyberloafing Scale employed in this study was adopted from Zhou et al. (2023), in the article titled "Challenge-Hindrance Stressors and Cyberloafing: A Perspective of Resource Conservation versus Resource Acquisition." The scale under consideration includes 10 items, each assessed on a 7-point Likert-type scale, extending from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).

Psychological detachment

The Psychological Detachment Scale utilised in this study was adopted from Sonnentag and Fritz (2007), in their article titled "The Recovery Experience Questionnaire: Development and Validation of a Measure for Assessing Recuperation and Unwinding from Work." The scale

under consideration comprises six items, each assessed on a 7-point Likert-type scale, extending from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).

Validity and reliability

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is a widely utilised statistical method for the evaluation of the validity of theoretical models by means of the examination of the relationship between observed variables and their underlying latent constructs. In contradistinction to exploratory factor analysis, CFA is a theory-driven approach that enables researchers to assess the degree to which a proposed measurement model corresponds with actual data (Hurley et al., 1997). It is customary to undertake this analysis within the framework of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), wherein the establishment of a satisfactory model fit constitutes a prerequisite for proceeding with structural model analysis.

The assessment of model fit in CFA is conducted through the utilisation of multiple goodness-of-fit indices, each providing a distinct perspective on the alignment between the hypothesised model and the observed data. The following indices are commonly used: the chi-square statistic relative to degrees of freedom (χ^2/df), the comparative fit index (CFI), the incremental fit index (IFI), the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). The interpretation of these indices is informed by the application of widely accepted threshold values as established within the extant literature. The acceptance of a model is contingent upon the majority of the indicators falling within the recommended ranges. When considered as a whole, these measures provide a comprehensive evaluation of the validity and adequacy of the measurement model (Çokluk et al., 2012).

Cronbach's Alpha is a widely utilised technique for the evaluation of the internal consistency of measurement scales within the domain of social sciences. A value above 0.70 is generally regarded as acceptable, reflecting a sufficient level of reliability for the construct being measured. In addition to Cronbach's Alpha, item-total correlation analysis is also employed to examine how well each item aligns with the overall scale. Higher item-total correlation values indicate that the item contributes meaningfully to the internal coherence of the scale, thereby supporting its reliability (Çokluk et al., 2012).

Following the removal of problematic indicators, the revised measurement model showed a satisfactory level of fit with the observed data. The fit indices obtained from the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) are presented in the following table, which reflects the adequacy of the model's overall structure.

Table 2: Goodness-of-Fit Indices for the Measurement Model (source: authors' findings)

χ2/ df	CFI	IFI	TLI	RMSEA	PNFI
2.653	0.926	0.926	0.917	0.80	0.795

An evaluation of the model fit indices presented in the table above indicates that the measurement model demonstrates an acceptable level of fit. Specifically, the chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df) was 2.653, suggesting a reasonable fit. The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Incremental Fit Index (IFI) were both calculated as 0.926, while the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) was 0.917, all exceeding the commonly accepted threshold of 0.90. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was 0.80, which falls within the acceptable range, showing an adequate fit. Additionally, the Parsimonious Normed Fit Index (PNFI) was 0.795, reflecting satisfactory model parsimony.

During the confirmatory factor analysis, it was identified that certain items exhibited factor loadings below the acceptable threshold of 0.50 and demonstrated cross-loadings on multiple factors. The presence of these items was found to compromise the overall consistency and discriminant validity of the measurement model. Consequently, the problematic items were excluded from the analysis in order to develop the model's fit, as is detailed below.

The Cyberloafing Scale originally consisted of ten items. However, items 2, 3, and 9 were excluded from the analysis, as they were found to reduce the internal consistency and overall reliability of the scale.

- *"At work, I can't help but go online and do something irrelevant to work."*
- *"When I'm at work, my attention tends to be drawn to non-work-related information on the Internet."*
- *"At work, I go online as planned to deal with things outside of work."*

The Challenge Stressors Scale initially comprised six items. However, item 2 was excluded from the analysis due to its negative impact on the internal consistency and construct validity of the scale.

- *"The amount of time I spend at work."*

The Psychological Detachment Scale originally included four items. However, item 4 was removed from the analysis, as it was found to diminish the internal consistency and overall reliability of the scale.

- *"During my nonwork time I get a break from the demands of work."*

The results of the analysis are presented in the table below. As indicated, all factor loadings exceed the recommended threshold of 0.50, demonstrating satisfactory item reliability.

Table 3: Factor Loadings (Source: authors' findings)

Variable	F1	F2	F3	F4
Workplace Ostracism				
B2-1	0,815			
B2-2	0,785			
B2-3	0,895			
B2-4	0,914			
B2-5	0,896			
B2-6	0,859			
B2-7	0,920			
B2-8	0,866			
B2-9	0,813			
B2-10	0,809			
Challenge Stressors				
B6-1		0,792		
B6-3		0,904		
B6-4		0,953		
B6-5		0,961		
B6-6		0,677		
Cyberloafing				
B5-1			0,676	
B5-4			0,724	
B5-5			0,862	
B5-6			0,889	
B5-7			0,778	
B5-8			0,813	
B5-10			0,641	
Psychological Detachment				
B4-1				
B4-2				
B4-3				0,953
				0,940

The table below presents the reliability statistics, inter-variable correlation coefficients, and descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) for the study sample. Additionally, it reports Cronbach's alpha values, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Composite Reliability (CR) scores computed via AMOS. All values meet or exceed the recommended thresholds established by Fornell & Larcker (1981). In accordance with their criterion for discriminant validity, the square of the correlation coefficients between constructs is lower than the corresponding AVE values, supporting

both the one-dimensionality of the constructs and the adequacy of the measurement model in terms of reliability and discriminant validity.

Table 4: Reliability and Validity Coefficients (source: authors' own analysis)

Variable		1	2	3	4
Workplace Ostracism	1	(0,85)			
Challenge Stressors	2	,058	(0,86)		
Cyberloafing	3	,295**	,084	(0,76)	
Psychological Detachment	4	,047	-,209**	,155*	(0,86)
Mean		2,27	4,84	4,91	3,62
Standard Deviation		0,98	1,23	1,17	1,42
(AVE)		0,73	0,74	0,59	0,75
CR		0,96	0,93	0,91	0,89
Cronbach's α		0,96	0,93	0,91	0,89

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Furthermore, statistical tests were conducted to control for common method bias. Within this paper, Harman's single factor test was performed. Accordingly, the results showed that the 25.1% variance explained by a single factor demonstrates that the common method bias is not a significant threat within the scope of this study.

Results of hypothesis testing

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was employed using AMOS to test the proposed relationships. The results of the hypothesis testing, including the path coefficients and significance levels, are summarized in the table below.

Table 5: Path Model (source: authors' own analysis)

Hypothesis	Path Direction	Standardized Estimate (β)	Result
H1	Workplace Ostracism → Cyberloafing	0.264	Supported
H2	Challenge Stressors → Cyberloafing	0.084	Not Supported
H3	Cyberloafing → Psychological Detachment	0.225	Supported
H4	Workplace Ostracism → Psychological Detachment	–0.035	Not Supported
H5	Challenge Stressors → Psychological Detachment	–0.273	Supported

CFI=0.926; IFI = 0.926; $\chi 2/df$ =2.653; RMSEA = 0.80
(*p <.1, **p < .05, ***p < .01)

Hypothesis H1, which posits a relationship between workplace ostracism and cyberloafing, is supported by the findings. The findings indicate a statistically significant positive relationship between the two variables (β = .264, $p < .01$), indicating that higher levels of workplace ostracism are associated with increased cyberloafing behaviours

Hypothesis H2, which examines the relationship between challenge stressors and cyberloafing is not statistically significant (β = .084, $p > .1$). Therefore, hypothesis H2 is not supported.

Hypothesis H3, which examines the relationship between cyberloafing and psychological detachment, is supported by the findings. The results reveal a statistically significant positive relationship between cyberloafing and psychological detachment (β = .225, $p < .05$), suggesting that increased cyberloafing is related to higher levels of psychological detachment.

Hypothesis H4, which examines the relationship between workplace ostracism and psychological detachment is not statistically significant (β = -0.035, $p > .1$). Therefore, Hypothesis H4 is not supported.

Hypothesis H5, which examines the relationship among challenge stressors and psychological detachment, is supported by the findings. The analysis indicates a statistically significant negative association between challenge stressors and psychological detachment (β = -0.273, $p < .01$).

Discussion

This study explores cyberloafing within organizational behaviour, applying Conservation of Resources (COR) theory to understand how workplace ostracism and challenge stressors influence employees' management of personal resources like energy and psychological well-being. It builds on Zhou et al.'s (2021) framework, viewing cyberloafing as an adaptive response to workplace resource dynamics.

The present study offers several theoretical contributions by extending the application of Conservation of Resources (COR) theory to the domain of cyberloafing, thereby enriching the understanding of how employees manage their psychological and emotional resources in response to workplace stressors. By conceptualizing cyberloafing as an adaptive behavioural strategy, rather than solely a form of counterproductive work behaviour, the study challenges prevailing assumptions in the organizational behaviour literature.

A key theoretical contribution lies in identifying both workplace ostracism and challenge stressors as distinct in how they are perceived and responded to by employees. The finding that workplace ostracism significantly affects cyberloafing supports the idea that ostracism is experienced as a threat to valued emotional and interpersonal resources. In response, employees may engage in compensatory behaviours such as cyberloafing to conserve their psychological detachment. In contrast, the absence of a significant direct relationship between challenge stressors and cyberloafing suggests that such demands are not always seen as resource threats. Instead, employees may cognitively appraise these stressors as opportunities for personal or professional growth, which decreases the likelihood of avoidance-oriented coping behaviours like cyberloafing. This highlights that individuals' responses to challenge stressors are shaped not only by the objective nature of the demand but also by how these demands are interpreted, adding nuance to the COR perspective.

Furthermore, the study contributes to recovery literature by revealing a positive relationship between cyberloafing and psychological detachment. This suggests that cyberloafing may serve a functional role in facilitating short-term mental disengagement from work demands, thereby offering limited but immediate restoration of psychological resources. However, no significant relationship was found between workplace ostracism and psychological detachment, possibly because socially excluded individuals remain cognitively preoccupied with the exclusion, which may hinder their ability to mentally disengage from work. Conversely, the negative association between challenge stressors and psychological detachment supports the COR theory's prediction

that employees tend to remain mentally engaged when they perceive potential for resource gain (e.g., recognition, achievement), even if this engagement comes at the cost of full psychological recovery. With regard to practical implications, the findings suggest that organizations should approach employee behaviours like cyberloafing with greater sensitivity to context and individual resource needs. Instead of treating all forms of cyberloafing as negative or punishable, it may be more effective to examine the underlying mechanisms—particularly social stressors such as workplace ostracism, which can harm employees' sense of psychological safety. By creating a more inclusive work environment and promoting stronger social connections among employees, organizations may reduce the likelihood that individuals may engage cyberloafing as a coping strategy for stress.

Moreover, organizations should recognize the functional role of brief disengagement activities in promoting short-term recovery. Structured micro-breaks or digitally mediated restorative practices may serve as proactive strategies to support employee well-being without impairing performance. Simultaneously, the adverse impact of challenge stressors on psychological detachment underscores the importance of job design practices that balance high demands with sufficient recovery opportunities and resource-support mechanisms.

Finally, the dual role of cyberloafing—as both a coping mechanism and a potential barrier to deep psychological recovery—necessitates a more nuanced management approach. While occasional cyberloafing may help employees preserve emotional resources in socially stressful environments, habitual reliance on it may impair long-term detachment and recovery. Therefore, organizational interventions should not only focus on reducing resource-depleting conditions like ostracism but also promote healthier recovery strategies such as mindfulness practices, supportive supervision, and resource-enriching developmental opportunities. These targeted efforts may help employees build resilience and maintain sustainable engagement levels over time.

Limitations and recommendation

This study has several limitations. First, the data were collected from employees who were demographically similar and located in a specific geographical area based on Türkiye. Given the diversity and complexity of the global business environment, factors such as cultural background, industry sector, and working conditions may significantly affect stress perceptions and cyberloafing behaviors. For example, digital habits vary widely between technology-driven sectors and manufacturing or service

industries. To improve the generalizability of results, future studies should utilize more diverse cultural and occupational samples.

Second, this study uses self-reported data, which may be influenced by respondents' tendencies toward socially desirable responses —especially for behaviors like cyberloafing that may be viewed negatively. Participants might underreport such behaviors to present themselves in a better light. Subsequent studies could benefit from more objective data collection methods, such as digital activity tracking or workplace observations.

Third, the cross-sectional design limits the study's ability to capture dynamic, time-sensitive processes. Future studies could employ longitudinal data or use experimental methods to provide a broader understanding of causality among variables. It is important to note that, stress, resource loss, and coping behaviors evolve over time, and employees' cyberloafing tendencies may fluctuate accordingly.

Additionally, individual differences were not deeply examined. Cyberloafing behaviors may differ between younger employees who are more technologically adept and older generations who may be less comfortable with digital tools. Further empirical studies should examine how psychological factors such as personality traits, motivation, and job satisfaction moderate or mediate these relationships.

Moreover, while this study focused on workplace ostracism and challenge stressors, work stressors are varied. Other common stressors like role ambiguity, role conflict, workload, job insecurity, and emotional demands may affect employees differently. For instance, role conflict and job insecurity can increase anxiety, while emotional demands may lead to burnout, especially in customer-facing roles. Comparing these stressors' effects on cyberloafing and psychological detachment would clarify which have greater impacts and further inform COR theory.

Finally, practical interventions to reduce workplace ostracism and challenge stressors should be developed and tested. For example, the effects of digital detox programs, psychological support, and team-building activities that enhance social connection could be evaluated for their impact on employees' coping and cyberloafing behaviors.

Conclusion

This study extends theoretical insights into cyberloafing by framing it through the lens of Conservation of Resources (COR) theory. Rather than conceptualizing cyberloafing solely as counterproductive work behavior, the findings support its interpretation as a context-dependent coping strategy

employed by employees to regulate psychological resources in response to specific workplace stressors.

The results demonstrate that workplace ostracism is meaningfully associated with the tendency to engage in cyberloafing, indicating that employees who experience social exclusion may utilize digital distractions as a compensatory strategy to protect their sense of psychological safety. In contrast, challenge stressors do not show a statistically meaningful association with cyberloafing behavior, which may reflect employees' tendency to interpret such stressors as avenues for personal development rather than as threats to existing resource reservoirs. This distinction reinforces the relevance of cognitive appraisal processes within COR theory and underscores the non-uniformity of stressor effects on coping behaviors.

Additionally, the study highlights a positive link between cyberloafing and psychological detachment, pointing to its potential utility in facilitating short-term mental disengagement from work. However, the absence of a significant association between workplace ostracism and psychological detachment suggests that social exclusion may impair employees' ability to mentally disconnect, potentially due to ongoing cognitive rumination. Meanwhile, the observed relationship between challenge stressors and psychological detachment is consistent with resource gain prospects can sustain individuals' engagement, even at the expense of recovery.

Taken together, these findings advocate for a more differentiated understanding of cyberloafing—recognizing it not merely as misconduct but also as a contextually driven behavioral strategy. From a practical perspective, interventions aimed at enhancing employees' social inclusion and recovery opportunities may reduce reliance on maladaptive coping behaviors. Moreover, organizational strategies that support structured disengagement (e.g., micro-breaks, restorative digital practices) can serve to protect and replenish employee resources without compromising productivity.

Overall, this research advances theoretical discourse by emphasizing the conditional nature of cyberloafing and by refining COR theory's explanatory capacity in the context of modern work environments. Future studies should build on this framework by incorporating longitudinal designs, diverse occupational samples, and individual-level moderators to further elucidate the resource dynamics underpinning workplace coping behaviors.

Statement on the Use of AI Tools | *In line with the journal's AI Policy GPT-4 was employed for language editing purposes. Furthermore, during the revision process, some inaccuracies in the use of reference information were identified and corrected to ensure accuracy and consistency.*

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