Do Perceptions of Organisational Trust and Psychological Ownership Predict Cyberloafing?

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Abstract

Novel transitions in workplace mobile technologies have created an avenue for increased cyberloafing trends in the workplace. Therefore, interventions towards mitigating cyberloafing and its negative consequences in workplace settings have become an area of scholarly interest. This study focuses on the predictive role of organisational trust and psychological ownership on cyber-loafing among employees of selected organisations in Lagos. The study employed a descriptive cross sectional survey design. Purposive sampling techniques were utilized in selecting study participants. Using the tenets of Social Cognitive Theory of behaviour, the expected nexus among organisational trust, psychological ownership and cyber-loafing was illustrated as a basis for empirical testing. Results showed that cyber-loafing was not jointly predicted by organisational trust and psychological ownership [$F_{(2, 122)}$=.213; p>.05]. Similarly, there was no significant independent influence of organisational trust (β=.023; p>.05) and psychological ownership (β=-.075; p>.05) on cyber-loafing among the study participants. However, influence of age was a significant on cyber-loafing (β=-.288; p<.05), while work experience failed predict cyberloafing among the study participants. (β=.048; p>.05).The findings from this study imply that not many employees consider cyberloafing activities as infringements. Thus, there is need for management to operationalise and identify cyberloafing as unethical workplace behaviour among employees.

Keywords: *Cyber-loafing, Organisational trust, Psychological ownership*

1. Introduction

The advent of the internet and its related applications has led to major transformations and transitions in the world of information sharing (Ciolfi & De Carvalho, 2014). Novel transitions in mobile technologies have aided easier access to the Internet by employees, thereby creating an avenue for loss of concentration and cyberloafing activities while at work. Moreover, the internet explosion has encouraged the use of virtual workstations to accomplish tasks, while promoting job flexibility and autonomy; however the downside of virtual workstations lies in its unsupervised nature, which has a high tendency to encourage cyberloafing, and other similar workplace vices (Jandaghi, Alvani, Matin, & Kozekanan, 2015). Numerous business organisations have utilized programming programs intended to screen, track, and square the wrong utilization of the Internet by their employees, still yet the issues related with cyberloafing have not diminished (Nazareth & Choi, 2014). On the average, employees are interrupted by notifications from new media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook every 10 minutes; and it takes such employees about 23 minutes to get back to work (Pelling, & White, 2009). Similarly, Hartijasti and Fathonah (2014) assert that cyberloafing among employees is counterproductive and detrimental to employees' performance, as it reduces time spent on workplace tasks, undermines employees' ability to concentrate, impedes employees' creativity at work and has accounted for significant levels of financial loss.

Interventions towards cyberloafing have therefore become an area of scholarly interest in a bid to mitigate occurrences of cyberloafing, while promoting the values of virtual workspace and enhancing employees' performance within the same context. The concept of cyberloafing is relatively broad and multifaceted as activities that constitute cyberloafing may sometimes be subjectively skewed, vague or contextual (Umukoro, Rowland-Aturu, Tomoloju, & Wadi, 2019). A general description of cyberloafing is provided by Jamaluddin, Ahmad, Alias and Simun (2015) as the employee use of internet enabled devices including phones, palmtops, laptops, etc., to access the internet for personal interests, while at work. However, the interactive nature of the internet may sometimes provide prompts that need immediate responses beyond work activities. The argument for and against cyberloafing arises in various contexts. For instance, making a call home on one's mobile phone while at work in the traditional workplace may not be deemed wrong, but sending a similar message home via the internet, while working in a virtual workspace may be considered an act of cyberloafing. Nevertheless, certain acts of cyberloafing

are quite glaring and finding effective strategies for mitigating adverse consequences of such glaring acts of cyberloafing remains a major setback for the productivity levels of many organizations (Anandarajan & Simmers, 2005). This study considers the influence of organisational trust and psychological ownership as predictive behaviours that may affect levels of cyberloafing.

Organisational trust describes the level of confidence that an employee places on the actions and reactions of significant others within the hierarchy (McAllister, 2005). It portrays the degree to which one places personal matters and decision in the hands of significant others. Organisational trust is an important construct that moderates and mediates in variables of social order within an organisation. Within an organisation, the quality of association and communication between and among management staff and employees, which is inevitable, is often dependent on the levels of interpersonal trust embedded between parties in the organisation. Building trust in traditional workplace is more straightforward as the physical and observed attributes of significant others are easily accessible indices for trust evaluations. However, within the virtual workspace, building trust may be more challenging due to the inaccessibility of these indices. It has been argued by Zhang, Tsui, Song, Li, and Jia (2008) that the behavioural dispositions and attitude of management staff and other employees in managerial roles have a role to play in the way their subordinates or employees perceive the level of trust within the organisation.

Psychological ownership describes the feelings of possessiveness that individuals holds towards a significant entity which may be material and immaterial in nature (Pierce, Kostova, and Dirks 2003). In relation to employees and their organizations, the psychological ownership of employees portray the feelings of possessive attachment that the employees have towards the organization, its activities and its welfare; such that the success or failure of the organization may be of personal significance to the employees (Avery, Avolio, Crossley & Luthans, 2009). Psychological ownership asks the question, *'How much do I feel this organisation is mine?* Psychological ownership is often boosted by actions of transparency and inclusion in organisational decision making between management and employees. Sufficing from empirical outcomes, acts of employee deviance have been known to be negatively correlated with psychological ownership. Thus, it is logical to assume that acts of cyberloafing may have similar associations with cyberloafing. In other words, if virtual employees possess significant levels of

attachment towards the organizations, cyberloafing acts, which have negative consequences to the productivity of the organization may be reduced.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As a theoretical framework, Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) by Bandura (1986) can be applied in understanding employees' cyberloafing conduct while at work (LaRose and Eastin, 2004). The social cognitive hypothesis relies upon three components which influences an individual's conduct: (a) the environment, (b) people, and (c) behaviour. All three elements dynamically and reciprocally interact with and upon one another to form the basis for behaviour, as well as potential interventions to change behaviours (Bandura, 2001). Consequently, scholarly interest on how individual and environmental factors affect employees' conduct may provide an understanding of cyberloafing and other deviant practices while at work. According to Grover (2014), employees are more likely to abide by company policies and regulations if such rules apply to everyone. However, when such rules appear to favour some members of the organization over others, employees may feel disgruntled and exhibit unethical practices as a form of silent retaliation against perceived injustices. Similarly, individual level factors related to employee behaviour can explain unethical practices, including self-control and self-regulation (LaRose & Eastin, 2004).

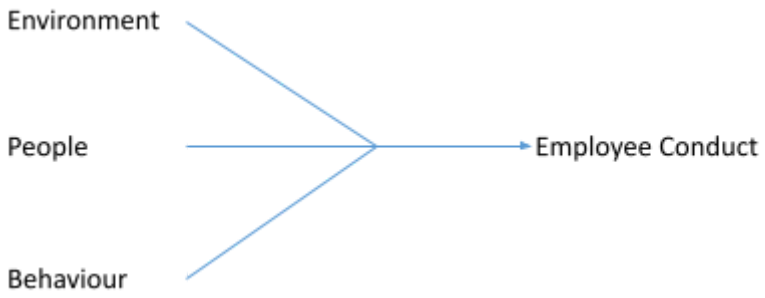


Figure 1: SCT Assumptions for Workplace Behaviour

From a social cognitive perspective, cyberloafing activities by employees during work time can also be an addiction resulting from individual inability to apply self-regulatory cognitive skills. Thus, one may find that employees, who have become addicted to cyberloafing may be aware that the time they spend online is excessive and disruptive for their productivity;

and that they could face consequences for policy violations, but still carry on with cyberloafing practices due to the level of addiction and helplessness in controlling this behaviour (Baumeister, 2014). To investigate the rationale for involvement in cyberloafing, additional theoretical frameworks could be useful as well. For instance, the Goal-Setting Theory (GST), which is based on Social Cognitive Theory (Locke & Latham, 2004), maintains that personal, social and contextual variables determine personal goals and self-control. Self-control is an individual's desire to conform to social norms (Ugrin et al., 2008). Since cyberloafing is considered a deviant behaviour from the social norms, it is plausible to consider the role of self-control in investigating the phenomenon.

From the tenets of the SCT, employees' conduct may be borne out of a combination of endogenous (behaviour) and exogenous factors (environment, people). Endogenous factors comprise individual level variables that originate from personal dispositions along a continuum of self-control, while exogenous factors describe variables that have an external origin of influence. Based on these theoretical assertions, the current study proposes that the expression of cyberloafing may originate from both endogenous and exogenous factors. In a bid to establish the empiricism of this assertion, variables of psychological ownership and organisational trust were identified respectively as possible endogenous and exogenous workplace variables that may influence cyberloafing. As an endogenous variable, the exhibition of psychological ownership lies along the self-control continuum of the employee, while the perception of organisational trust is a function of workplace energies including policies and human interaction. Therefore, in line with assumptions of the SCT, it is expected that both variables (organisational trust and psychological ownership) should, in combination or individually, influence employees' exhibition of cyberloafing.

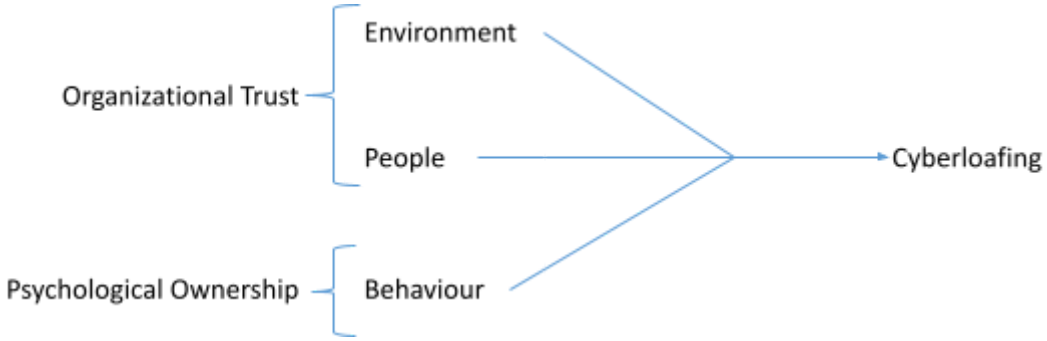


Figure 2: Application of SCT Assumptions to the Study Variables

Based on the expected relationship among the study variables (as highlighted in figure 2), a hypothesis to determine this linkage would be tested. Furthermore, it has been deemed worthwhile to consider demographic differences, when evaluating individual behaviour within social contexts (Whitsett & Shoda, 2014); as this may provide added information about mediators, moderators, and confounders which are embedded in a model. Thus, hypotheses that highlight the role of employees' demographics in relation to cyberloafing would also be tested.

H_i: *There will be significant joint and independent influence of organisational trust and psychological ownership on cyberloafing among employees.*

H_i: *There will be significant joint and independent influence of age and work experience on cyberloafing among employees.*

H_i: *There will be significant gender differences in cyberloafing among employees.*

METHODS

Design and Participants

This study employed a descriptive cross-sectional survey research design via a cross sectional survey. This involves the collection of a data from a subset (sample) of homogenous population with varying attributes at a specific point in time. The dependent variable in the study is cyberloafing, while the independent variables include organisational trust, psychological ownership and other selected demographic characteristics of the participants. This study was carried out among employees of selected organisations located in Lagos. Based on the total population of potential participants, a representative sample size of 125 employees was obtained using the Slovin sample size determination formula. Percentage distribution of the participants showed that majority (44.8%) of them were between ages 18 to 25 years. Other age ranges across the study participants include persons between ages 26-35 years (29.6%), 36-45 years (12.0%) and 46-55 years (11.2%). Sex differences showed that 58.4% were female employees,

while the remaining 41.6% were male. Their marital status showed that majority (65.6%) were single, 31.2% were married, 2.4% either separated or legally divorced, while 0.8% were widowed. In terms of their length of service as employees within their current organisations, it was shown that 42.4% had work experience ranging from 1-5 years, 10.4% had work experience ranging from 6-10 years, 18.4% had work experience above 10 years, while 28.8% had less than a year's experience of work.

Measures

A structured questionnaire was developed for this study. The questionnaire was made up of standardized scales and comprised four sections. The initial section of the questionnaire described the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants including their gender, age, work experience (in years), educational qualification, marital status, etc.

Organisational Trust was measured using the Organization Trust Inventory by Cummings and Bromiley (1996) which measures the extent to which an employees' trusts management staff using dimensions of good faith in issues of commitment, honest negotiations and propensity to take advantage of others. The three dimensions consist of items which assess organisational trust in terms of affect, cognition and intended behaviour components. The scale utilizes a 5 point response format ranging from 1 (= Very Low) to 5 (= Very High). High scores depict higher levels of organisational trust, while low scores depict lower levels of organisational trust. The original authors obtained internal reliabilities ranging from .77 to .89.

Psychological ownership was measured using the psychological ownership scale by Avey, Avolio, Crossley and Luthans (2009). The scale measures cognitive and emotive attachment of an employee towards his/her organisation. The scale utilizes a 5 point response format ranging from 1 (= Strongly Disagree) to 5 (= Strongly Agree). The scale has five components; feelings of territoriality (4 items), sense of belongingness (3 items), self-efficacy (3 items), accountability (3 items) and self-identity (3 items). Examples of items include *'I will accept responsibility and take consequences for decisions made by management'*. High scores depict higher levels of psychological ownership, while low scores depict lower levels of psychological ownership. Internal reliabilities for the components ranged from .73 to .92.

Cyberloafing was measured using a 10-item scale adapted from Blau, Yang & Ward-Cook's (2008) cyberloafing scale. Six items were taken directly from Lim's (2002) 11-item

cyberloafing scale. The remaining four items represented an integration of cyberloafing items measured across a number of previously cited studies. The scale outlines various cyber activities with respondents expected to indicate the extent to which they are involved in such activities during work periods. The scale has three dimensions (i) browsing-related cyberloafing, 0.78; (ii) non-work-related e-mail cyberloafing, 0.91; and (iii) interactive cyberloafing. The Items are rated on a 5-point scale ranging from '*not at all=1'* to '*a great deal=5.* The dimensions of the scale produced adequate reliability estimates ranging from 0.70-0.91.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researchers visited the human resource management of the selected organisations in Lagos, where permission to conduct the study within their premises and among their employees was obtained. Upon getting permissions, the researchers provided the human resource units of the selected organisations with the web link for the survey instrument to be forwarded to the emails of employees in the organisation based on the eligibility criteria provided. The online survey contained instructions on how to complete the questionnaire. All participants were provided with detailed briefings about the study and their rights to voluntary participate and withdraw from the study at any time, if they so wished. Participants were assured of their anonymity and implored to provide sincere answers to questionnaire items, as there were no right or wrongs answers. Each participant was expected to spend an average of 5 minutes in filling out the questionnaire. Upon completion, participants were expected to submit their responses, which was instantly collated and stored in an online database for the survey. Percentage frequency distribution, was used to describe the demographic characteristics of the population being studied. Further analyses of the hypotheses were conducted using inferential statistics including regression analysis and t-test for independent measures.

HYPOTHESES TESTING

Hypothesis One

There will be significant joint and independent influence of organisational trust and psychological ownership on cyberloafing among employees of selected organisations in Lagos. This hypothesis was tested using multiple regression analysis. Results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of multiple regression showing predictive role of organisational trust and psychological ownership on cyberloafing

Predictors	R	R^2	F	Sig	B	t	Sig.	Confidence Interval	
								Lower	Upper
Organisational Trust					.023	.155	.877	.016	.072
	.059	.003	.213	.809					
Psychological Ownership					-.075	-.513	.609	-.786	.092

Results from Table 1 show that cyberloafing was not jointly predicted by organisational trust and psychological ownership [$F_{(2,\ 122)}$=.213; p>.05] and accounted for an insignificant variance (R^2=0.3%) in cyberloafing among employees. Similarly, there was no significant independent influence of organisational trust (β=.023; p>.05) and psychological ownership (β=-.075; p>.05) on cyberloafing among the study's participants. The results imply that, while organisational trust and psychological ownership may be important workplace factors among employees, both constructs did not influence the level of cyberloafing activities that employees engaged in. The hypothesis stated is therefore, rejected.

Hypothesis Two

There will be significant joint and independent influence of age and work experience on cyberloafing among employees of selected organisations in Lagos. This hypothesis was tested using multiple regression analysis. Results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of multiple regression showing predictive role of age and work experience on cyberloafing

Predictors	R	R^2	F	Sig	β	T	Sig.	Confidence Interval	
								Lower	Upper
Age					-.288	-2.256	.026	-.288	.121
	.256	.065	4.261	.016					
Work Experience					.048	.376	.708	.051	.501

Results from Table 2 show that cyberloafing was jointly predicted by age and work experience [$F_{(2, 122)}$=4.261; p<.05] and accounted for a significant variance (R^2=6.5%) in cyberloafing among employees. Similarly, there was a significant independent influence of age (β=-.288; p<.05) on cyberloafing, while work experience (β=.048; p>.05) did not independently predict cyberloafing among the study's participants. The results imply that, age is a potent negative predictor of cyberloafing in which younger employees are more likely to report higher levels of cyberloafing than their older counterpart. The hypothesis stated is therefore, accepted.

Hypothesis Three

There will be significant gender differences in cyberloafing among employees of selected organisations in Lagos. This hypothesis was tested using t-test for independent measures. Results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of t-test showing gender based differences in cyberloafing

Sex	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t	df	sig	Confidence Interval		Cohen's *d*
							Lower	Upper	
Male	52	28.3846	7.8144				-.69560	1.58520	0.017
				-.074	123	.941			
Female	73	28.5205	11.5351				-.71285	1.60245	0.012

Results from Table 3 show that there was no significant difference in reported levels of cyberloafing between male and female employees [t(123)=-.075; p>.05]. Based on the results, both male ($\overline{x}$=28.38) and female ($\overline{x}$=28.52) employees reported similar levels of cyberloafing. Further results show that the effect size of both gender (male=1.7%; female=1.2%) were minute and insignificant. Thus, employees' sex had no significant influence of cyberloafing. The hypothesis stated is therefore, rejected.

CONCLUSION

Discussion of Findings

This study set out to examine the predictive role of organisational trust and psychological ownership on cyberloafing among employees of selected organisations in Lagos. Based on a theoretical framework and reviews of related studies, three hypotheses were formulated and analysed using appropriate statistics. The first hypothesis which expected a joint and independent influence of organisational trust and psychological ownership on cyberloafing among employees of selected organisations in Lagos was not supported. The results showed that both constructs did not significantly influence the level of cyberloafing activities among employees. The results imply that, while organisational trust and psychological ownership may be important workplace factors among employees, they do not account for much of the variance in the level of cyberloafing among employees. The outcomes of this initial hypothesis suggest that there are

other potent predictors of cyberloafing within the workplace beyond organisational trust and psychological ownership.

The seemingly low influence of organisational trust and psychological ownership on cyberloafing among employees may be justified by the perceived morality attached to act of cyberloafing. This is because, the activities tagged as cyberloafing, being carried out by employees while at work may not be perceived as being deviant among the employees themselves, especially when no negative consequences are attached to their work performance or productivity. For instance, employees may not consider *'chatting with a friend via social media platforms*' as unethical while at work. Moreover, the nature of some workplace tasks may, in fact, provide ample room for some employees to engage themselves in internet activities. It is also plausible for employees to justify their acts of cyberloafing as having positive effects on their productivity levels. This perspective proposes that cyberloafing can give rest from work and lift efficiency, when the workers come back from job schedules. Thus, taking part in internet activities, at subjectively appropriate times, recoups these resources, enabling workers to exhibit higher levels of performance on the job.

The influence of social desirability on the study outcomes cannot be overlooked. By default, the concept of cyberloafing (or engaging in non-work internet activities) while at work tends to be viewed as an unacceptable practice among employees from a managerial perspective. This leads to expectations that employees would be conscious and sensitive to subjects bordering on their engagement in cyberloafing; which may introduce levels of bias in their responses. Perceived levels of organisational trust and psychological ownership may therefore not be consistent in predicting cyberloafing. Moreover, employees' perceptions of cyberloafing as a vice may be based on its magnitude in terms of frequency, duration, and timing. This may therefore produce inconsistencies in their responses. In support of the results obtained in the current study, Page (2015) and Restubog et al. (2011) suggested that cyberloafing among employees was not a product of trust levels within the organization, but on other personal factors within the purview of the employees.

The second hypothesis focused on the expected influence of age and work experience on cyberloafing among employees of selected organisations in Lagos. The outcome of this hypothesis was partially supported as age emerged as a potent negative predictor of cyberloafing. This implies that cyberloafing activities are more profound among younger employees. The

plausibility of this result lies in the fact that the younger generation are known to be more active on the Internet (Chan & Fang, 2007) than their older counterparts. This may be due to the use of the internet as a platform for the development of social skills during youthful years. Moreover, younger employees have the luxury of time for long-term future career plans to achieve multiple life goals. Thus, the advent of the internet affords younger employees a platform to achieve such goals, while being engaged in their current jobs. In other words, being engaged in a regular job poses little of no limitations for younger employees in achieving other life goals due to the flexibility of the internet.

Supporting the results obtained in this study, several studies show that more youthful employees will in general acknowledge innovation more and utilize the internet more. As such younger employees will in general have a much higher propensity to visit the internet and surf the web more frequently, which can lead to misuse of internet resources (Ugrin et al, 2007). In some studies, it has been found that younger employees report higher levels of information technology misuse while at work (Restubog, et al, 2011). However, Ozkalp et al (2012) found no relationship between employees' age and cyberloafing. In terms of range and technology types, Weatherbee (2010) found that younger employees were more receptive to the use of technological innovations to promote their social skills, while older employees preferred to channel such new innovations specifically to work tasks. These findings allude to the array of mixed results linking employees' age and cyber-deviant behaviours at work.

The third hypothesis was formulated on the expectation that there would be significant gender differences in cyberloafing among employees of selected organisations in Lagos. However, there was no significant difference in reported levels of cyberloafing between male and female employees, implying that sex had no significant influence of cyberloafing. The justification for this result may be that cyberloafing is not a gender based activity; even though various studies have highlighted gender differences in internet usage behaviours. These differences have, however, been applied to specific internet activities. For instance Everton, Mastrangelo and Jolton (2005) suggested that males tend to use the Internet on the job for personal purposes and therefore tend to experience greater internet abuse risk (Stavropoulos, Alexandraki, & Motti-Stefanidi, 2013), while Dileep, Normala, Govindarajo, & Othman (2014) assert that males tend to use the internet for e-commerce activities more than females.

Additionally, some studies have suggested that male employees engaged in cyberloafing more frequently than their female counterparts (Lim and Chen, 2012). Stanton (2002) and Ugrin et al. (2008) however found that both men and women are equally liable to engage in cyberloafing activities, ceteris paribus. According to Vitak, et al (2011) being a more youthful male essentially predisposed employees to both higher frequency and duration of cyberloafing (Vitak et al, 2011). Gender differences likewise exist in the internet exercises that employees may habitually participate in, with males being attracted to web based games and females being attracted to online communication (Chak and Leung, 2004). In any case, adequate exact proof to decide whether sexual orientation or gender difference is emphatically associated with cyberloafing practices has not received adequate empirical validation.

Implication of Findings

The findings from this study imply that cyberloafing is generally prevalent at the workplace; albeit not many employees may consider cyberloafing activities as an unethical workplace behaviour. These results, therefore, provide insight for management of organisations about the prevalence of cyberloafing activities among their employees. The proliferation of internet usage in most organisations for improved productivity often clouds the obvious acts of cyberloafing among employees. Therefore, negative impacts of cyberloafing on organisational productivity are more likely to also go unnoticed and unaccounted for. This study has, therefore, highlighted the importance of identifying issues of cyberloafing within organisational settings. Nevertheless, the internet is an inevitable resource in the society, therefore stamping out employees' internet usage may be a tall order. Thus, the results of the study provide a basis for management to consider modifying acts of cyberloafing into more productive internet usage behaviour among employees.

Recommendations

Based on the study findings and attendant implications, the following recommendations are proposed for improved organisational productivity:

- Firstly, it is necessary for management to formulate and implement policies that address issues of cyberloafing. Results of this study have shown that it may not be enough to introduce psycho educative interventions with modules of organisational trust and

psychological ownership to curb cyberloafing. Instead, promoting employees' understanding of what cyberloafing is and its related consequences may be a more direct intervention. This can be achieved by organizing seminars and workshops on cyberloafing for both entry level and experienced staff.

- Secondly, based on the age disparity found in the cyberloafing activities among employees, it may be necessary for management to ensure that internet related tasks in the workplace should be handled by older employees, as younger employees may be more inclined to use internet resources for personal activities. This is the classic notion of placing round pegs in round holes. This can be achieved via the employee selection and placement processes done by the human resource unit of organisations; where a productive person-environment fit is established between employees and their job descriptions.

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