

Crushing the Tradition: Does Cyberloafing Provide Potential Learning?

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Abstract

This study bridges the domains of creativity and deviance by exploring the nuanced relationship between creative self-efficacy, creative deviance, and cyberloafing behaviors—specifically emailing and web surfing activities. Recognizing cyberloafing not merely as counterproductive behavior but as a potential catalyst for creative performance. Therefore, this research investigates its dual role as both an outlet for creative expression and a learning mechanism within organizational settings. The findings reveal that individuals with higher creative self-efficacy and a propensity for creative deviance are more inclined to engage in cyberloafing. Moreover, the data demonstrates that certain cyberloafing activities, particularly emailing, positively influence creative performance outcomes. These results challenge traditional perceptions of workplace deviance and underscore the importance of re-evaluating informal digital behaviors as contributors to innovation. Theoretical implications for creativity research and practical recommendations for managing creative work environments are discussed in depth.

Keywords: Self-Efficacy, Creative Deviance, Cyberloafing, Emailing Activities, Surfing Activities, And Creative Performance

1. Introduction

The notion of a "halcyon day" has all but vanished in today's fiercely competitive business landscape, where escalating rivalry propels organizations to dismantle traditional barriers and erect strategic defenses to secure elite market positions ([Carmeli et al., 2013](#); [Zeytinoglu et al., 2008](#)). In response, companies increasingly seek to recruit knowledge workers distinguished by exceptional capability and creativity, recognizing these attributes as critical drivers of sustained innovation and competitive advantage ([Amabile et al., 1996](#); [Hon et al., 2014](#)). However, sustaining such high levels of capability and creativity poses significant challenges. Consequently, knowledge workers frequently leverage the internet as a real-time information resource to augment their cognitive and creative processes ([Anakwe et al., 2000](#); [Anandarajan et al., 2000](#)). This reliance has simultaneously raised concerns about potential internet misuse within organizations, known as cyberloafing ([Lim & Chen, 2012](#)). Organizational responses

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vary: some embrace controlled cyberloafing as a means to foster creativity and employee well-being ([Lim & Chen, 2012](#)), while others impose stringent policies and restrictions to mitigate its perceived risks ([De Lara, 2007](#)). This dichotomy underscores the complex interplay between digital behavior, creativity, and organizational control in contemporary knowledge work environments.

Despite the pervasive integration of the internet into modern workplaces, scholarly discourse on cyberloafing continues to oscillate between its perceived "bright side" and "dark side" ([Lim & Chen, 2012](#)). While a substantial body of research has rigorously examined the detrimental antecedents and consequences of cyberloafing—highlighting its potential to undermine productivity and organizational discipline ([Henle & Blanchard, 2008](#); [Lim & Chen, 2012](#); [Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara, 2012](#))—the constructive dimensions of cyberloafing have received comparatively less scholarly attention ([Henle & Blanchard, 2008](#)). This imbalance has led to an ongoing dilemma for organizations, as a nuanced understanding of cyberloafing's potential benefits remains elusive ([Lim & Chen, 2012](#)). Notably, earlier studies have predominantly characterized cyberloafing as a drain on productivity ([Case & Young, 2002](#)). In light of this, our research seeks to illuminate the constructive antecedents and outcomes associated with cyberloafing, thereby equipping managers with innovative strategies and perspectives for managing this complex phenomenon in ways that may ultimately enhance both individual and organizational creativity.

This research centers on creative self-efficacy and creative deviance as key predictors of cyberloafing in the workplace. By integrating these constructs, we present a novel perspective within the cyberloafing framework, expanding the understanding of its antecedents and outcomes. Notably, we introduce creative deviance—a relatively new concept in creativity research—as an antecedent of cyberloafing, emphasizing its role in fostering innovative behaviors that diverge from organizational norms. Creative deviance reflects employees' willingness to pursue novel ideas despite managerial resistance, thereby enriching the discourse on the drivers of cyberloafing and its potential to stimulate creative thought processes.

Furthermore, this study explores the impact of cyberloafing on creative performance, addressing a gap in the literature that has traditionally focused on the negative consequences of cyberloafing while overlooking its constructive potential. By examining both emailing and web surfing activities as dimensions of cyberloafing, we provide nuanced insights into how these behaviors may serve as catalysts for creativity and innovation in knowledge-intensive environments. The findings aim to equip managers with a deeper understanding of how to harness the positive aspects of cyberloafing, promoting a balanced approach to digital behavior management that supports both organizational goals and employee creativity.

2. Literature Review

Through information technology, employees continuously update their knowledge base by accessing real-time information, which is then processed and transformed into organizational knowledge. Building on this foundation, this study proposes that certain personality traits—specifically creative self-efficacy and creative deviance—enable employees to actively absorb data and information from the internet. This active engagement with digital resources, often manifested through cyberloafing, serves as a valuable source for enhancing creative performance. Therefore, this study explores the potential of cyberloafing as a learning mechanism that contributes to creativity in organizational contexts. Technology has profoundly transformed the world, fundamentally influencing the ways in which people conduct their daily

activities and work ([Zamoon and Curley, 2008](#)). The widespread availability of the internet—whether at home, in the office, or on personal devices—has deeply integrated itself into employees' routines, enabling constant connectivity and access to information ([Werbach, 1999](#); [Sardžoska and Tang, 2012](#)). While this ubiquitous internet use is often viewed with concern by organizations due to potential distractions and productivity losses ([Blau, Yang, et al., 2006](#)), employers have increasingly recognized the substantial benefits it offers ([Chen and Tang, 2006](#); [Chen and Lim, 2012](#)). The internet facilitates enhanced information access and communication within companies, fostering more efficient knowledge exchange and collaboration ([Alavi, et al., 2005](#)). Moreover, it strengthens production processes and organizational networks ([Zamoon and Curley, 2008](#)), accelerates information retrieval and improves information literacy ([Goode and Cruise, 2006](#)), and promotes the dissemination of knowledge, education, and continuous learning ([Zamoon and Curley, 2008](#)).

Cyberloafing is widely associated with workplace deviance and is often influenced by psychological and organizational factors. Employees experiencing feelings of disconnection or normlessness tend to exhibit higher levels of deviant internet use, often as a response to anxiety, stress, or confusion in the workplace. Similarly, work-related stressors, such as role conflict and ambiguity, can increase the likelihood of cyberloafing, while excessive workloads may actually reduce it simply due to lack of time. On the other hand, some scholars suggest that personal online activities during work hours can serve as a coping strategy, enabling employees to balance professional demands with personal needs. This perspective reframes cyberloafing as not only a form of deviant behavior but also a potential mechanism for maintaining well-being in demanding work environments.

2.1 Creative Self-Efficacy

Creative self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their capacity to generate novel and valuable ideas, rooted in Bandura's concept of self-efficacy ([Tierney & Farmer, 2002](#)). Employees with high creative self-efficacy are more likely to embrace challenging tasks, experiment with new approaches, and sustain creative performance in the workplace. This domain-specific belief extends general self-efficacy to creative contexts, emphasizing confidence in producing original and useful outcomes.

Research consistently shows that creative self-efficacy is a strong predictor of creativity ([Tierney & Farmer, 2002](#)). Individuals with high creative self-efficacy demonstrate greater motivation, curiosity, and persistence in idea generation, reflecting a willingness to engage in complex problem-solving ([Hsu et al., 2007](#)). These beliefs encourage proactive information-seeking and enhance the ability to construct anticipatory scenarios and solutions under conditions of uncertainty ([Van Acker et al., 2014](#)).

In organizational settings, cyberloafing has emerged as one avenue through which employees with strong creative self-efficacy gather diverse information. Rather than being purely detrimental, activities such as emailing and browsing can support creativity by providing access to new perspectives, stimulating knowledge accumulation, and facilitating idea incubation ([Bristol & Viskontas, 2006](#)). Employees with higher creative self-efficacy anticipate positive outcomes from such behaviors, viewing them as opportunities to strengthen their creative process ([Mathisen & Bronnick, 2009](#)).

Building on this perspective, recent studies suggest that creative self-efficacy moderates the relationship between cyberloafing and creativity, enhancing the benefits of certain activities

while reducing potential drawbacks ([Sawitri & Mayasari, 2017](#)). Thus, cyberloafing—when guided by high creative self-efficacy—can serve as a preparatory stage in creativity, enabling employees to explore, experiment, and synthesize information. Based on these insights, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1a: Creative self-efficacy is positively influenced by emailing activities.

H1b: Creative self-efficacy is positively influenced by surfing activities.

2.2 Creative Deviance

Creative deviance, first introduced by [Mainemelis \(2010\)](#), refers to the deliberate continuation of work on a novel idea despite explicit managerial orders to abandon it. This behavior often arises during the elaboration stage of the creative process. Because truly original ideas are complex and difficult to evaluate, managers may underestimate their value ([Amabile et al., 1996](#)). Individuals with strong intrinsic motivation and confidence in their creativity often view prohibitions as challenges, motivating them to persist in refining their ideas even at personal or professional risk ([Soda & Bizzi, 2012](#)).

Internet-related deviant behavior in the workplace has been labeled in many ways, such as cyberslacking, cyberloafing, personal web usage, and internet misuse. These terms often carry different connotations depending on whether the behavior is viewed negatively or positively. For example, terms like cyberslacking and internet misuse usually highlight harmful or counterproductive effects, while personal web usage is sometimes seen as neutral or even beneficial. Research shows that cyberloafing includes a wide spectrum of activities, ranging from simple actions like checking personal emails or browsing social media to more severe behaviors such as illegal downloading or online gambling, which clearly cross into organizational deviance. This diversity makes it challenging for organizations to fully understand and manage such behavior, emphasizing the importance of approaches that acknowledge both its risks and potential benefits.

Cyberloafing is often linked to deviant workplace behavior and is shaped by both psychological and organizational dynamics. Employees who feel isolated or lack a clear sense of workplace norms are more likely to engage in non-work-related internet use, often as a response to stress, anxiety, or confusion. Likewise, organizational pressures such as conflicting job roles or unclear expectations can heighten the tendency to cyberloaf, whereas heavy workloads may limit such behavior simply because employees have less time to engage in it. Interestingly, some perspectives view cyberloafing not purely as misconduct but as a coping mechanism that helps employees manage stress and maintain a sense of balance between their professional responsibilities and personal needs. This interpretation positions cyberloafing as a complex behavior—simultaneously carrying elements of deviance while potentially supporting employee well-being in high-pressure environments.

Employees who engage in creative deviance are typically driven by a desire for originality and divergent thinking, which requires broad exposure to diverse information ([Basadur et al., 2000](#)). To fuel this process, they often turn to cyberloafing—browsing online content or emailing beyond immediate job requirements—as a means to access unconventional perspectives. Such activities allow them to expand their informational base, whether through news, market updates, or other seemingly unrelated content ([Henle & Blanchard, 2008](#)).

In the digital era, information-seeking through online media has become effortless and often unconscious, yet even content that appears irrelevant can serve as latent knowledge for future creative endeavors ([Greenwald, 1968](#)). By persistently pursuing ideas and drawing on digital resources, employees legitimize their deviant behavior as part of the creative process. Building on these arguments, we propose the following hypotheses:

H2a: Creative deviance is positively influenced by emailing activities.

H2b: Creative deviance is positively influenced by surfing activities.

2.3 Creative Performance

Managers increasingly view internet access as a strategic resource to stimulate creativity in the workplace. Yet, its use presents a paradox: while it can foster knowledge acquisition and innovation, it is also often criticized as a channel for distraction and misuse ([Tepper & Henle, 2011](#)). Much of the literature has emphasized the negative side of internet use, commonly termed cyberloafing, cyberslacking, or web abuse ([Alavi et al., 2005](#)). In contrast, research on how internet use can enhance creativity remains comparatively limited, despite its potential role in providing diverse information and facilitating idea generation.

Recent evidence suggests that digital communication and social media platforms can positively contribute to creativity by enabling knowledge sharing, collaboration, and social support ([Sawitri & Mayasari, 2017](#); [Zhang, 2020](#)). For instance, enterprise social media has been shown to enhance creativity through mechanisms such as leader–member exchange and innovation support, though outcomes may depend on usage frequency. These findings highlight that internet use, when effectively managed, can act as a catalyst for creativity rather than a hindrance.

Cyberloafing itself is highly prevalent, with employees admitting to spending significant portions of their workday on non-work-related online activities ([Lim & Chen, 2012](#)). While excessive cyberloafing can reduce productivity, emerging studies reveal that not all forms are harmful. Activities such as browsing may promote positive emotions and divergent thinking, while emailing may sometimes disrupt workflow ([Lim & Chen, 2012](#)). These differences underscore the need to distinguish between cyberloafing behaviors.

For highly creative individuals, the internet functions as a tool for divergent thinking and problem restructuring, allowing them to explore novel connections and generate fresh ideas ([Chen et al., 2014](#)). Through activities such as surfing and emailing, employees absorb vast amounts of information that can later be integrated into long-term memory and retrieved during the creative process. Thus, internet use becomes an important learning mechanism that supports experimentation and enhances the likelihood of insight. Building on this perspective, we propose the following hypotheses:

H3a: Emailing activities are positively related to creative performance.

H3b: Surfing activities are positively related to creative performance.

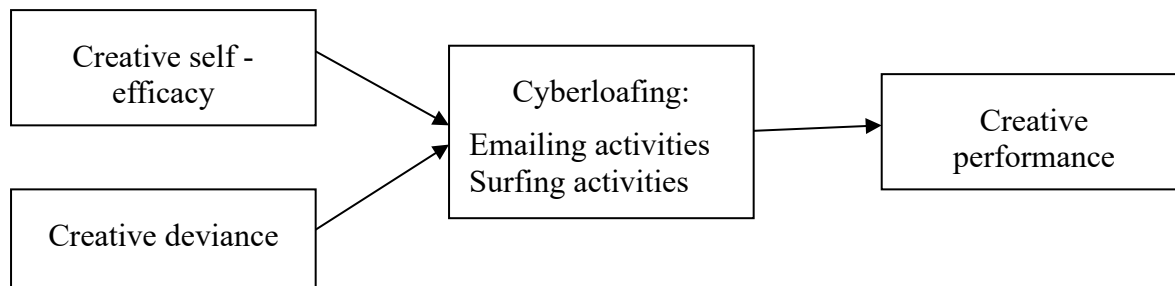


Figure 1 Research Framework

3. Research Method

3.1 Samples

This investigation utilized a structured survey instrument administered to personnel across multiple sectors within the creative industry. The study operated under the assumption that internet access was readily provided in the workplace, thereby facilitating the occurrence of cyberloafing behaviors. The survey was disseminated among 250 participants. The demographic composition of the sample featured a predominance of male respondents (53.6%), with an average organizational tenure of approximately 3.96 years. Educational attainment data revealed that the majority, totaling 169 individuals (67.6%), held academic degrees. Additionally, all participants were engaged in full-time employment.

3.2 Cyberloafing

This study employed a measurement scale for minor cyberloafing derived from items originally developed by [Lim and Chen \(2012\)](#). To uncover distinct dimensions within minor cyberloafing behaviors, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed. The analysis revealed two underlying factors, supported by a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy of 0.841, signifying the data's suitability for factor analysis. Based on these results, cyberloafing was categorized into two dimensions: emailing activities and surfing activities. These factors were subsequently validated through confirmatory factor analysis utilizing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Regarding reliability and validity, emailing activities were assessed via a three-item Likert scale measuring the frequency of checking, sending, and receiving personal emails, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.862. Surfing activities were captured through a five-item Likert scale, which demonstrated high internal consistency with an alpha of 0.912.

3.3 Creative Self-Efficacy

Creative efficacy refers to an individual's confidence in their own capacity for creativity and related skills, as conceptualized by [Tierney and Farmer \(2002\)](#). To operationalize this construct, a four-item Likert scale originally developed by Tierney and Farmer was employed. One example item from the scale states, "I feel that I am good at generating novel ideas." The measurement demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency, with a reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.805, indicating reliable assessment of the construct. Creative efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their own creative abilities and skills, as defined by [Tierney and Farmer \(2002\)](#). To assess this construct, a four-item Likert scale developed by Tierney and Farmer was utilized. An example item from this scale is: "I feel that I am good at generating novel ideas." The scale showed strong reliability, evidenced by a Cronbach's alpha of 0.805.

3.4 Creative Deviance

Creative deviance was measured using (Shalley et al., 2009) a four-item Likert scale. A sample item from the scale is: "I continued to improve some of the new ideas, although they did not receive my supervisor's approval." The scale demonstrated good reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.859.

3.5 Creative Performance

Creative performance was measured using a 10-item scale adapted from Shalley et al. (2009). This research also combined three self-report items originally developed by Shalley et al. (2009) with items from Tierney & Farmer (2002), which were originally designed as supervisor ratings. For this study, the supervisor-rated items were converted into self-report format. To develop this self-reported creative performance measure, a pilot study was conducted with 291 respondents, yielding a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of 0.786 and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.802. In the main study, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) produced a KMO of 0.863, and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) showed good model fit: $\chi^2 = 31.790$, $p = 0.046$, GFI = 0.976, AGFI = 0.933, NFI = 0.977, TLI = 0.98, RMSEA = 0.049. The scale demonstrated strong reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.895.

4. Findings and Discussions

4.1 Findings

Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics, inter-variable correlations, and reliability coefficients for the scales used in this study. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed on the constructs of creative self-efficacy, creative deviance, emailing activities, and surfing activities. The CFA results indicated a good model fit with the following indices: chi-square (χ^2) = 264.139, $p < 0.001$, GFI = 0.906, AGFI = 0.865, NFI = 0.912, TLI = 0.946, and RMSEA = 0.057. These fit indices collectively suggest a satisfactory representation of the data by the proposed measurement model. Table 1 provides descriptive statistics, correlations among study variables, and scale reliability coefficients. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted for creative self-efficacy, creative deviance, emailing activities, and surfing activities, yielding a good fit to the data. Fit indices were $\chi^2 = 264.139$ ($p < 0.001$), GFI = 0.906, AGFI = 0.865, NFI = 0.912, TLI = 0.946, and RMSEA = 0.057, indicating an overall satisfactory model fit.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics, Variable Inter Correlations, and Scale Reliabilities

No	Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1	Creative Performance	2.93	.49	.895				
2	Creative self-efficacy	3.85	.55	.61**	.805			
3	Creative deviance	3.60	.55	.42**	.40**	.859		
4	Emailing activities	3.49	.76	.34**	.27**	.29**	.862	
5	Surfing activities	3.57	.77	.32**	.27**	.28**	.62**	.912

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level

Source: Author's calculation

The results of the measurement model demonstrated an adequate fit to the observed data, reflected by $\chi^2 = 907.869$ ($p \leq 0.001$), GFI = 0.821, NFI = 0.819, IFI = 0.879, and RMSEA = 0.079. Although the RMSEA is near the higher threshold, it remains within acceptable limits.

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The structural model exhibited excellent fit indicators, including $\chi^2 = 1.365$ ($p \leq 0.001$), GFI = 0.998, NFI = 0.996, IFI = 0.990, and RMSEA = 0.037, confirming a robust fit between the hypothesized structural relationships and the empirical data.

The results indicate that all hypotheses, except for Hypothesis 3b, were supported. Creative self-efficacy was positively related to both emailing activities and surfing activities. In other words, individuals with higher levels of creative self-efficacy are more likely to engage in emailing and surfing activities during work.

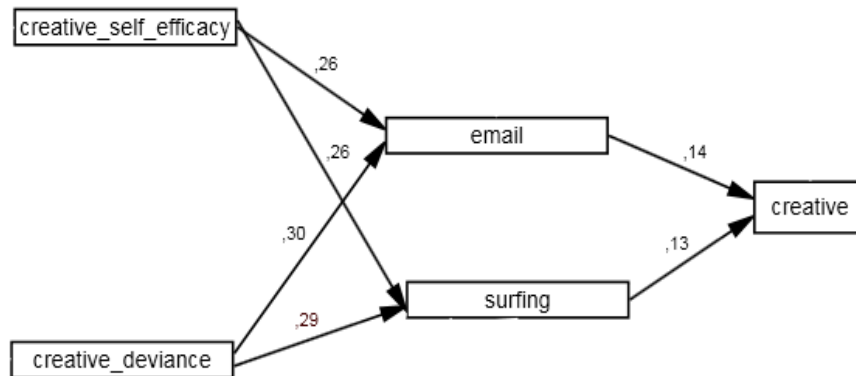


Figure 2. Results

Hypothesis 1a, which proposed a positive association between creative self-efficacy and emailing activities, received empirical support ($\beta = 0.310$; $t = 3.934$; $p < 0.001$). Similarly, Hypothesis 1b, indicating a positive relationship between creative self-efficacy and surfing activities, was also supported ($\beta = 0.263$; $t = 2.888$; $p < 0.05$). Hypothesis 2a, positing a positive link between creative deviance and emailing activities, was corroborated ($\beta = 0.216$; $t = 3.771$; $p < 0.001$). Correspondingly, Hypothesis 2b, which asserted a positive influence between creative deviance and surfing activities, was confirmed ($\beta = 0.290$; $t = 3.208$; $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, Hypothesis 3a, proposing that emailing activities positively influence creative performance, was supported ($\beta = 2.944$; $t = 2.614$; $p < 0.05$). Conversely, Hypothesis 3b was not supported, as surfing activities demonstrated a significant negative association with creative performance ($\beta = -1.596$; $t = -2.258$; $p < 0.05$), implying that higher engagement in surfing activities is linked to diminished creative output among employees.

4.2 Discussion

The primary objective of this study was to explore the positive aspects of cyberloafing within the workplace context. The results underscore the significant role that cyberloafing can play, particularly by facilitating the cognitive learning processes that underpin creativity. The proposed model suggests that such cognitive engagement forms the foundation for deviant behaviors that ultimately foster creativity. However, findings were nuanced, as a negative relationship was identified between surfing activities and creative performance. It is posited that employees may engage in surfing not as a learning mechanism but as a way to balance the demands of work, life, and leisure (D'Abate, 2005), which could potentially diminish creative output.

In contrast, non-work-related emailing activities appear to enhance creative performance, likely because these activities help individuals acquire information relevant to creative tasks. Even

though the information exchanged via emails may not be directly related to work, it serves as an important resource for creative output. Emailing activities differ from surfing in that they are more directed and purposeful (Henle & Blanchard, 2008). Emailing activities are seen to have specific objectives for individuals, conferring a level of importance and intentionality that surfing lacks, where the latter is often purposeless. Consequently, emailing activities are linked to creative performance due to their role in providing a targeted learning process, whereas surfing activities do not share this directed motivation and therefore do not support creativity in the same way.

An intriguing insight emerges when examining the link between creative self-efficacy and cyberloafing. Employees with strong confidence in their creative abilities tend to seek diverse sources of information to strengthen their creative identity and better interpret cues that shape their self-concept. Similarly, individuals with high self-efficacy are often proactive in acquiring knowledge, engaging in learning activities, and revisiting information to deepen their understanding. As a result, these employees may be more inclined to use cyberloafing as a constructive tool for information gathering and cognitive exploration, rather than merely as a form of distraction or deviant behavior.

While prior research has not explored the relationship between creative deviance and cyberloafing, this study demonstrates an interesting connection within a deviant context. Both constructs involve deviance, albeit implemented differently. Employees who engage in creative deviance often exhibit a strong self-determination to implement their ideas, which may lead them to be less cautious about adhering to workplace norms. Active information seeking through cyberloafing provides them with a wide range of data and perspectives to process. By accumulating various information, these individuals strive for self-mastery and enhanced creative output.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that cyberloafing has both positive and negative effects on creativity, which suggests that managers need to carefully regulate internet access in the workplace. While internet use can foster creative potential by providing access to diverse information and enabling cognitive exploration, unrestricted internet access may reduce productivity. Additionally, the potential impacts of other forms of internet misuse, such as serious cyberloafing and personal web usage, remain underexplored in relation to creativity. Therefore, managers should approach the issue with caution, balancing the benefits of cyberloafing for creativity against its possible drawbacks to performance and productivity.

While cyberloafing can enhance creativity, excessive or unregulated cyberloafing may lead to negative outcomes. Moreover, distinctions between constructive personal web usage and detrimental cyberloafing need further investigation to clarify their respective impacts on creativity and work outcomes. Therefore, while cyberloafing holds promise as a tool for enhancing creativity, its management requires a nuanced understanding of its dual nature to maximize benefits and minimize risks in organizational settings.

The findings suggest that employees with high creative self-efficacy and creative deviance are more likely to engage in cyberloafing. Managers should be mindful of the underlying learning orientation that may drive such behaviors. However, it is also possible that employees use cyberloafing as a way to balance work, life, and leisure demands. If managers strictly prohibit cyberloafing, employee morale could decline, as maintaining work-life balance is an important

factor in managing overall performance. To better understand this dynamic, future research should examine the role of work-life balance in the relationship between cyberloafing and employee outcomes.

The limitations of this research are twofold. First, due to the diverse range of creative industries in our sample, we used self-reported measures of creative performance. Although prior research suggests that self-reported and supervisor-rated measures do not significantly differ and employees are generally aware of their creative level, incorporating different perspectives is important to mitigate common method variance. To further reduce this potential bias, we ensured respondent anonymity. Second, while our study aimed to examine the learning potential of cyberloafing, the unsupported findings regarding surfing activities and creative performance limit our ability to draw definitive conclusions. Cyberloafing may also serve as a balancing mechanism for creativity, suggesting avenues for future research. We recommend expanding investigations to include work-life balance as a potential mediator and exploring the role of personal web usage as another important aspect of creativity.

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