

The Mediating Role of Internet Addiction in the Influence of Work Stress to Cyberloafing at the Office of the Regional Representative Council of XYZ Province

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Abstract

This study aims to provide a better understanding of how work stress influences cyberloafing and how internet addiction mediates the influence of work stress to cyberloafing in the workplace. Sample was 53 permanent employees of Regional Representative Council Office of XYZ Province. Data was collected using questionnaires then analyzed using causal method of Baron Kenny. Result showed that indeed work stress influences cyberloafing, and internet addiction is fully mediates the influence of work stress to cyberloafing.

Keywords: cyberloafing, internet addiction, work stress.

Introduction

Humans have created various communication technologies throughout history to enhance social interaction and enable communication, such as radio, telegraph, and signal fires. With the beginning of the fourth industrial revolution, communication technology is developing rapidly, bringing us closer to the future with artificial intelligence, virtual communication, machine learning, and life in a world where everything is connected via the internet (Fook *et al.*, 2021).

The creation of smartphones that provide internet access to users, has changed the way we connect with each other. According to the latest data from Insider Monkey, in 2023 as many as 7,330,000,000 people have mobile phones or smartphones (Syaharani, 2023). Due to internet connectivity and the ability to stay connected with the outside world, smartphones are preferred by users over mobile phones. Undoubtedly, technology has become embedded in our daily lives, and communication technologies have spread throughout the world to impact social activities, safety, and accessibility in society (Fook *et al.*, 2021). Companies can save costs, shorten product cycle times, and sell goods and services more effectively thanks to the Internet (Anandrajana *et al.*, 2000). The Internet has become an integral part of daily activities in the workplace, allowing employees to access information and communicate more efficiently (Lim, 2002).

However, this ICT advancement also brings new challenges, one of which is the phenomenon of cyberloafing. Cyberloafing, which is the behavior of using the internet for personal activities during work hours (Henle & Blanchard, 2008), is becoming increasingly common among employees. These activities include browsing social

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media, shopping online, and watching videos, all of which are done during work hours (Lim, 2002; Henle & Blanchard, 2008). This phenomenon raises concerns because it can reduce employee productivity and disrupt overall company performance.

So companies have to face the reality that the internet can be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the internet increases efficiency and productivity, but on the other hand, the internet can also lead to decreased productivity if used for activities unrelated to work.

Cyberloafing refers to workers' use of email and the Internet for non-work-related activities during work hours (Lim, 2002). A survey in America stated that almost 40% of employees access the internet at work, resulting in cyberloafing behavior (eMarketer, 2003; in Henle & Blanchard, 2008). According to the results of a survey conducted by Vault.com (2000), 88% of employees browse non-work related websites during work hours, with 66% browsing websites for 10 minutes to 1 hour (Henle & Blanchard, 2008). Similarly, 82% of employees send emails and 87% of employees receive non-work-related emails during work hours. According to a report by We Are Social and Hootsuite, the number of internet users worldwide is expected to reach 5,300,000,000 by October 2023. The number of internet users increased by 3.7% from the previous year to 5,110,000,000 people as shown in Figure 1 (Rizaty, 2023).

Although cyberloafing has a positive effect in increasing creativity (Block, 2001), cyberloafing can also cause significant losses for companies that continue to allow this behavior. Employees use the internet at work, ranging from aimless surfing to non-work-related internet use for personal purposes. About 30-50% of employees use and access the internet outside of the workplace, resulting in losses of \$1,000,000,000 per year (Restubog *et al.*, 2011).

In Indonesia, the phenomenon of cyberloafing is also increasingly widespread along with increasing internet access and use of social media. This can be seen from the results of the National Socio-Economic Survey (Suvei Sosial Ekonomi Nasional -

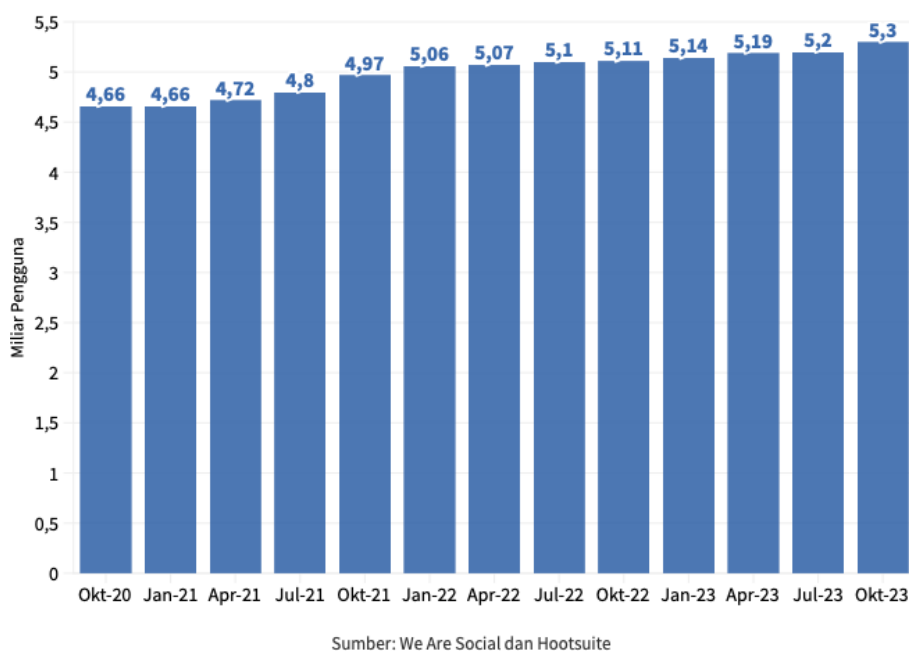


Figure 1. Number of Internet Users in the World

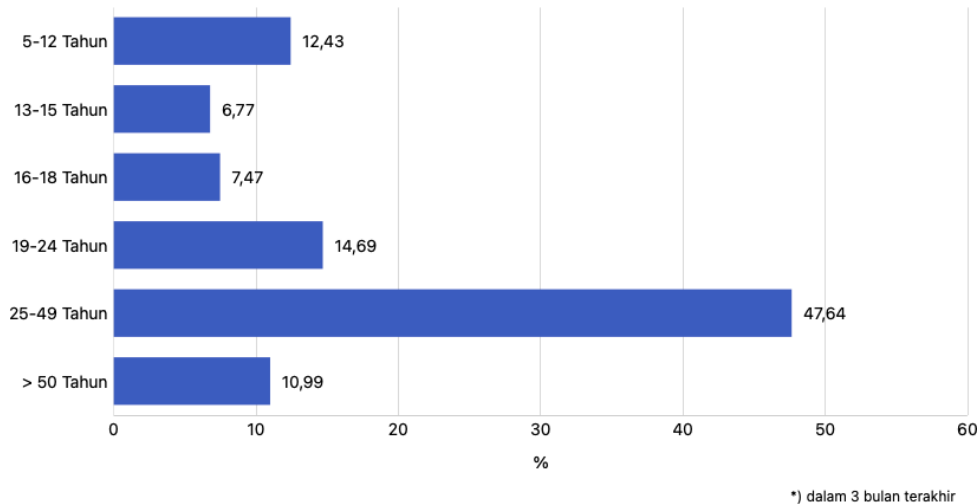


Figure 2. Results of the National Socio-Economic Survey (Susenas)

Susenas) conducted in 2022 by the Central Statistics Agency (Badan Pusat Statistik - BPS) as shown in Figure 2, where the percentage of the Indonesian population according to age group who most frequently access the internet is at a productive or working age, namely between the ages of 25 - 9 years (Central Statistics Agency, 2022). In addition, the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) also contributed data in the form of the number of internet users in Indonesia which reached 215.63 million in 2022, up from 210.03 million in the previous period.

Work stress is one of the factors that can trigger cyberloafing (Herdiati et al., 2015). Stress in the work environment is a challenge that employees often face, which then encourages them to look for various ways to deal with it effectively (Burman & Goswami, 2018). Work stress can affect a person's thought processes, emotions and condition (Handoko, 2011). As a result, excessive stress can compromise a person's ability to cope with the environment and ultimately hinder job performance.

Based on research by Sen et al., (2012), as work stress increases, cyberloafing behavior also increases. Several other studies support this. For example, research conducted by Herdiati (2015) found that when employees experience work stress, they tend to engage in cyberloafing behavior to cope with it. Stoddart (2016) also found that accessing websites that were not related to work was one way for employees to relieve stress and fatigue. This is in line with the fact that when employees feel stressed, cyberloafing behavior tends to increase.

From the results of these studies, it can be concluded that work stress felt by employees has a positive effect on cyberloafing. However, research conducted by Pangestuari et al. (2023) showed the opposite, that work stress had no effect on cyberloafing. This difference makes researchers interested in researching this.

Cyberloafing can also be associated with internet addiction. According to Ozler & Polat (2012), one of the factors that influence cyberloafing is internet habits and addiction. A person's cyberloafing habits are very important in the study of cyberloafing behavior (Ozler & Polat, 2012). Employees who experience internet addiction engage in internet abuse (Ozler & Polat, 2012). This is reinforced by research conducted by Mūcahit et al., (2022) which found that smartphone and internet addiction influence cyberloafing. So employees who are highly dependent on the internet tend to

show increased cyberloafing behavior. Research conducted by Arslantas et al. (2023) showed results that strengthen previous findings, that internet addiction has a significant positive effect on cyberloafing. Thus, employees who have a tendency towards internet addiction are more prone to cyberloafing.

This research was conducted in Regional Representative Council (DPRD – Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah) Office of XYZ Province, where cyberloafing can also be a significant problem. DPRD members have a big responsibility in supervising and making policies that have an impact on the wider community. In implementing their programs, these council members are assisted by employees at the DPRD Office. These employees are tasked to assist the council members both directly and indirectly so that the work programs planned by the council members can be implemented well. However, if they engage in cyberloafing, their focus and productivity in carrying out their duties in assisting the council members may be disrupted.

DPRD employees are divided into 2 types of employment, namely permanent employees and non-permanent employees. The work of permanent employees of the DPRD Office of XYZ Province is related to internet access, such as accessing files on computers, sending files to colleagues, etc. These permanent employees work in the finance division, public relations and protocol division, legislation division, and personnel division. Meanwhile, the work of non-permanent employees is not related to the internet. Non-permanent employees work in the household division, cleaning division, and security division.

This study aims to provide a better understanding of how internet addiction mediate the influence of work stress to cyberloafing in the workplace, especially in DPRD Office of XYZ Province. By understanding these factors, it is hoped that organizations can design effective strategies to reduce cyberloafing.

Literature Review

Cyberloafing

According to Lim (2002) as the first researcher in the world to bring cyberloafing into the academic realm, cyberloafing is any voluntary act of employee's using their companies internet access during office our to surf non-job related web sites for personal purposes and to check (including receiving and sending) personal e-mail.

Along with the development of technology, several researchers have made subtle changes to the definition of cyberloafing, such as the definition presented by Varol & Yildirim (2017): cyberloafing is the use of the internet in workplace for non-work related activities; or Janicke-Bowles, Rieger, & Connor III (2018): cyberloafing is using the web for personal purposes during work.

Henle & Blanchard (2008) classified cyberloafing into two levels: minor and serious. Minor cyberloafing includes actions such as sending and receiving personal emails while at work, browsing news sites, financial websites, and online shopping. Serious cyberloafing includes visiting adult websites, monitoring personal websites, interacting with users through chat rooms, blogs, and personal ads, playing online games, and downloading music.

Cyberloafing can be identified and measured through certain activities. Lim (2002) categorizes these activities into browsing and email-related actions. Browsing

activities include accessing stock investment sites, recreational and entertainment sites, current news sites, and downloading unrelated information (such as online shopping and visiting adult sites). Email-related activity measures how often an employee sends personal emails or receives personal emails during work hours.

Several factors contribute to the occurrence of cyberloafing behavior in the workplace. According to Ozler & Polat (2012), these factors include individual characteristics, perceptions and attitudes, personal traits, habits and internet addiction, and also demographic factors. Employees who have positive attitudes toward computers are more likely to use them for personal purposes at work. Additionally, employees who engage in minor cyberloafing often do not believe that they are engaging in inappropriate or deviant behavior because they assume that only serious cyberloafing that is intolerable. Personal characteristics such as shyness, indifference, isolation, self-control, self-esteem, and locus of control also influence how individuals use the internet. People with low self-esteem and external orientation tend to have less control over their usage of internet. Habits refer to automatic behaviors that is triggered by certain environmental cues.

Cyberloafing can have both positive and negative impacts on organizations. Positively, it can reduce boredom, reduce stress, and increase employee creativity (Vitak, 2011). Several studies have shown that internet access at work enables individuals to use their non-work time effectively, helping them face future tasks with renewed energy and a broader perspective (Oravec, 2002). For employees, when they want to avoid routine practices and eliminate fear, cyberloafing becomes a constructive activity. Cyberloafing then functions as an office game that reduces work stress and fosters creativity (Anandrajan & Simmers, 2005).

However, most researchers focus on the negative impacts of cyberloafing. This is because cyberloafing can pose a potential threat to the business world (Garrett & Danziger, 2008). Cyberloafing can lead to reduced productivity and inefficient use of internet resources, which in turn reduces a company's competitiveness (Lieberman et al., 2011). In addition, this can cause problems with the security of information systems and the general functionality of organizational systems, such as bandwidth blockage, virus infections, and task delays (de Lara & Olivares, 2010).

Work Stress

Handoko (2017) defines work stress as a state of tension that affects a person's thought processes, emotions, and condition, where excessive stress can interfere with an individual's ability to deal with the environment and ultimately hinder their work performance. In line with this statement, Rivai (2018) defines work stress as a state of tension that causes physical and psychological imbalances that affect emotions, thought processes, and employee states.

Luthans (2006) explains several factors that cause work stress. The first is organizational stressors where this is a cause of stress that comes from within the organization, such as authoritarian policies towards employees and unclear tasks assigned to employees, which makes employees stressed and confused because it is not their portion and expertise because of high company demands. Second, group stressors where this is a cause of stress that comes from unpleasant coworkers and lack of togetherness between coworkers, which greatly affects employees in working because workers need the support of cohesive coworkers. Third, individual stressors where this is a cause of stress related to the dimensions of the situation and

individual disposition that can affect stress. Fourth, extraorganizational stressors where this is a cause of stress that comes from outside the company, such as social change, difficulty mastering globalization, and family support. These factors include comfort in the environment, more innovative thinking, better attitudes and social life, and family situations that can be significant stressors for employees.

According to Tewal et al. (2017), work stress can cause both positive and negative impacts. The positive impacts of work stress include high work motivation and increased performance due to the drive to complete tasks well. The negative impacts of work stress include decreased work performance, increased absenteeism, physical and mental health problems, and decreased job satisfaction. These negative impacts occur more often if work stress is not managed properly.

Internet Addiction

According to Young (2009), internet addiction is the inability to control internet usage, leading to psychological, social, and occupational problems in a person's life. It is defined as using the internet for more than 20 hours per week. Internet addiction makes users feel that the internet is essential for daily life, which can result in Problematic Internet Use (PIU) (Saliceti, 2015; in Longstreet & Brooks, 2017). This condition is considered a mental disorder characterized by uncontrolled computer and internet access, leading to disturbances (Jorgenson & Hsiao, 2016).

Several factors influence internet addiction. Social factors include excessive internet use due to interpersonal communication difficulties. Individuals may prefer online communication because it is perceived as safer and easier, and poor communication skills can lead to internet addiction. Psychological factors involve underlying psychological issues such as depression, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), drug abuse, and various syndromes related to mental disorders. These issues can cause individuals to escape their problems, seek entertainment, and find pleasure online, which increases internet use and leads to addiction. Biological factors were identified in a study using Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI), which found differences in brain function between internet addicts and non-addicts. Internet addicts process information slowly and have difficulty controlling themselves (Montag & Reuter, 2015).

Model Development

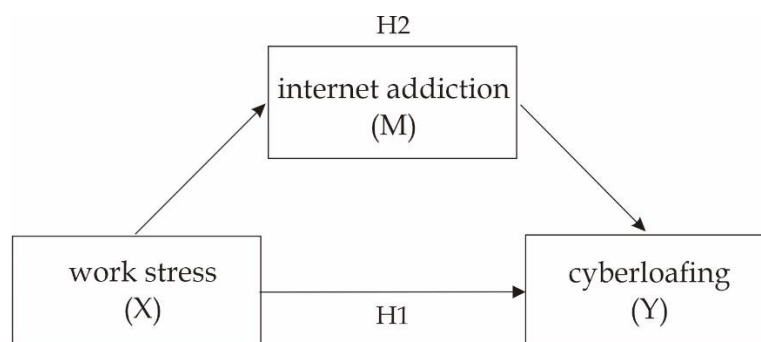


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

The Mediating Role of Internet Addiction in the Influence of Work Stress on Cyberloafing

For internet-addicted individuals, turning to the internet may become a habitual response to stress. This habit increases the likelihood that work stress will lead to cyberloafing as employees default to their usual coping strategy. Several studies have examined the link between work stress and internet addiction, while others have examined the link between internet addiction and cyberloafing. Gökçearsan et al., (2018) who examined the relationship between smartphone addiction, cyberloafing, stress and social support found that work stress had a significant effect on cyberloafing and smartphone addiction. On the other hand, Öztürk & Kerse (2022) who examined the effect of smartphone and internet addiction on cyberloafing. The results of their study showed a significant positive relationship between smartphone addiction and cyberloafing with internet addiction as a mediating variable. While smartphone addiction has a direct effect on cyberloafing.

H1. Internet addiction mediates the effect of work stress on cyberloafing

Methods

Sampling and Procedures

The sample is permanent employees of Regional Representative Council of XYZ Province taken using quota sampling method. Data was collected using questionnaires distributed directly to the employees. Of the 55 questionnaires distributed, 53 were returned, indicating a response rate of 96.36%.

Measures

Cyberloafing was measured using a 10 items instrument developed by Lim (2002) which was measured using a 5-point Itemized Rating Scale, from never (1) to always (5). Validity testing using Pearson Product Moment correlation showed that only 7 items were valid with the alpha value is 0.760 indicating that this instrument is reliable.

Work Stress was measured using a 16 items instrument developed by Robbins (2018) which was measured using a 5-point Likert Scale, from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Validity testing using Pearson Product Moment correlation showed that only 15 items were valid with the alpha value is 0.803 indicating that this instrument is reliable.

Internet Addiction was measured using a 20 items instrument developed by Young (2009) which was measured using a 5-point Itemized Rating Scale, from never (1) to always (5). Validity testing using Pearson Product Moment correlation showed that only 15 items were valid with the alpha value is 0.778 indicating that this instrument is reliable.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the causal step method developed by Baron and Kenny. This is a regression analysis developed to test the mediating role of a variable (Munawaroh, 2015).

The Causal Step Method consists of the following stages:

Step 1: Regress the Mediator on the Independent Variable

The purpose of this step is to determine whether the independent variable (X) significantly affects the mediator (M). This is done by conducting a regression analysis where the mediator (M) is the dependent variable and the independent variable (X) is the independent variable.

$$M = a_1 + aX + e_1$$

Requirements that must be met: the coefficient a must be significant.

Step 2: Regress the Dependent Variable on the Independent Variable

The goal is to determine whether the independent variable (X) significantly affects the dependent variable (Y). This is done by conducting a regression analysis where the dependent variable (Y) is the dependent variable and the independent variable (X) also remains as the independent variable.

$$Y = a_2 + cX + e_2$$

Requirements that must be met: the coefficient c must be significant.

Step 3: Regress the Dependent Variable on Both the Independent Variable and the Mediator

The goal is to determine whether the mediator (M) affects the dependent variable (Y) while controlling for the independent variable (X). This is done by conducting multiple regression analysis where the dependent variable (Y) is the dependent variable, and the independent variable (X) and the mediator (M) are the independent variables.

$$Y = a_3 + c'X + bM + e_3$$

Requirements that must be met: the coefficient b (for the mediator) must be significant.

Step 4: Deciding mediation

Complete Mediation

- ☑ If the independent variable (X) has a significant effect on the dependent variable (Y) in Step 2 (coefficient c is significant), and
- ☑ if the independent variable (X) no longer has an effect on the dependent variable (Y) in Step 3 (coefficient c is not significant), while the mediator (M) has a significant effect on the dependent variable (Y) (coefficient b is significant),
- ☑ then, the mediator (M) fully mediates the relationship between the independent variable (X) and the dependent variable (Y).

Partial Mediation

- ☑ If the independent variable (X) has significant effects on the dependent variable (Y) in Step 2 coefficient c is significant, and
- ☑ if the independent variable (X) still has an effect on the dependent variable (Y) in Step 3 (coefficient c remains significant but reduced), and the mediator (M) has a significant effects on the dependent variable (Y) (coefficient b is significant),

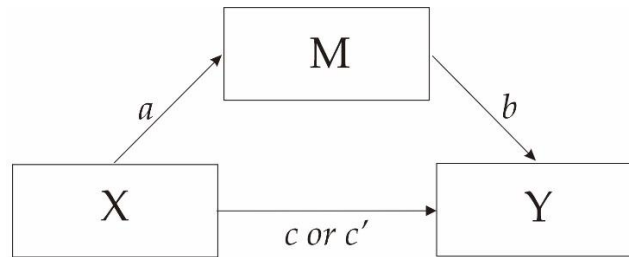


Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation (n=53)

Variable	Mean	DS	(1)	(2)	(3)
Cyberloafing	4.20	0.487	1	.350*	.588**
Work Stress	2.88	0.382		1	.533**
Internet Addiction	2.89	0.356			1

☑ then, the mediator (M) partially mediates the relationship between the independent variable (X) and the dependent variable (Y).

Result and Discussion

Result

Descriptive Statistics and Correlation

Table 1 presents the result of descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. The results of the correlation analysis indicate that the variables in this study are significantly correlated overall. From Table 1, it can also be seen that the average respondents' responses are as follows: 4.20 for cyberloafing showed very high levels of cyberloafing in the sample, 2.88 for work stress showed moderate levels of work stress in the sample, and 2.89 for internet addiction showed moderate level of internet addiction in the sample.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing is conducted using simple linear regression and multiple linear regression by following the causal step method.

In Step 1, Table 2 shows that work stress (X) affects internet addiction (M) with a B value of 0.572 (which becomes 'a' in the equation) with significance level of 0.000. This shows that work stress has a positive impact on internet addiction, meaning that the higher the work stress, the greater the likelihood of internet addiction.

In Step 2, Table 2 shows that work stress (X) affects cyberloafing (Y) with a B value of 0.209 (which becomes 'c' in the equation) with a significance level of 0.010. Thus, work stress positively affects cyberloafing, which higher work stress result in higher cyberloafing.

In Step 3, Table 2 shows an F value of 7.141 with a significance level of 0.010, indicating that the model fit. The R square value of 0.123 shows that 12.3% of performance variation is explained by work stress and internet addiction, while 87,7% is influenced by other factors that is not included in this model.

In Step 3, work stress (X) positively affects cyberloafing (Y) with a B value of 0.031 (that become 'c'' in the equation) with a significance level of 0.704, indicating that in the model where there are work stress and internet addiction as independent variabls with cyberloafing as dependent variable, the increase of work stress doesn't affect cyberloafing. Internet addiction (M) positively affects cyberloafing (Y) with a B value of 0.358 ('b' in the equation) with a significance level of 0.000, indicating that higher the level of internet addiction increase cyberloafing.

Table 2. Result of the First Equation, Permanent Employees (n= 53)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	18.460	5.550		3.326	.002
Internet Addiction (M)	.572	.127	.533	4.502	.000
R Square	.284				
F	20.272				.000

Dependent variable: Work Stress (X)

Table 3. Result of the Second Equation, Permanent Employees (n= 53)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	20.347	3.408		5.971	0.000
Work Stress (X)	.209	.078	.350	2.672	.010
R Square	.123				
F	7.141				0.010

Dependent variable: Cyberloafing (Y)

Table 4. Result of the Third Equation, Permanent Employees (n= 53)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	12.527	3.516		3.562	0.001
Work Stress (X)	.031	.080	.052	.383	0.704
Internet Addiction (M)	.358	.086	.560	4.149	0.000
R Square	.347				
F	13.312				.000

Dependent variable: Cyberloafing (Y)

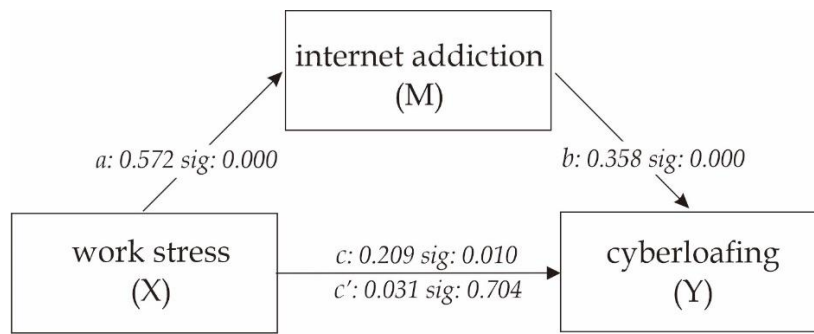


Figure 3. Result of Causal Steps Analysis

The role of internet addiction in mediating the effect of work stress on cyberloafing

Figure 3 describing the mediating role of internet addiction in the influence of work stress to cyberloafing. Results from the causal step method show the significance values for c , a , and b are all 0.010, 0.000, and 0.000, respectively. To decide what type of mediation is, we compare the significance values between c and c' . Since the c is significant ($p = 0.000$) but the c' is not significant ($p = 0.704$), then internet addiction fully mediates the influence of work stress and cyberloafing. It means, work stress only gives an indirectly effect on cyberloafing through internet addiction. When there is internet addiction in the model, work stress does not have direct influence to cyberloafing. So, first work stress positively affect internet addiction, then internet addiction affect cyberloafing.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that internet addiction mediates the effect of work stress on cyberloafing among employees of DPRD Office of XYZ Province. This study found that although work stress has an effect on cyberloafing, the effect is only significant when internet addiction is considered as a mediating variable. This finding suggests that work stress does not have a direct effect on cyberloafing, but rather influences this behavior through increased internet addiction.

This study extends the result of the study conducted by Pangestuani (2023) which did not find a significant effect of work stress on cyberloafing. Our finding show that when internet addiction is included as a mediator, the relationship between work stress and cyberloafing becomes clear. This suggests that the failure to identify an effect may be due to the omission of internet addiction.

This finding is also in line with the study conducted by Mūcahit et al. (2022), which showed that internet addiction has a significant impact on cyberloafing. The results of this study support our hypothesis that work stress influences cyberloafing through internet addiction. In addition, our results also add a new dimension to the findings of Herdiati's (2015) study which found a direct effect of work stress on cyberloafing, by suggesting that this effect may be better explained as an indirect effect through internet addiction.

Conclusion

This study concludes that internet addiction playing an important role in mediates the effect of work stress to cyberloafing of employees at the DPRD Office of XYZ Province. The study's findings highlight the double-edge of internet access in the workplace; while it is beneficial in helping to get work done, it also provides opportunities for distractions that can reduce productivity. By understanding these dynamics, organization can develop strategies to manage work stress and reduce its negative impacts, such as cyberloafing and potential internet addiction.

Limitation

There are several limitations that need to be considered in this study. First, the relatively small sample size and the focus of the study which is only on permanent employees at DPRD Office of XYZ Province may limit the generalization of the findings to other organizations or sectors. The specific context of the sample may affect the generalizability of the findings. Further research is needed to test this mediation model across contexts and industries to confirm its reliability.

Second, this study relied solely on self-reported data, which may be susceptible to response biases, one of them is social desirability bias. Third, the cross-sectional research design means that causal conclusions cannot be established with certainty.

Longitudinal studies are needed to explore the dynamics of work stress, internet addiction, and cyberloafing over time. Other potential mediators or moderators, such as organizational culture or personality traits, were not examined in this study. These variables can be considered for future research.

Theoretical and Practical Implication

Theoretically, these results suggest the need for a more comprehensive model to understand the dynamics between work stress and cyberloafing, incorporating internet addiction as an important component. Practically, these findings suggest that in order to reduce work stress-induced cyberloafing, organizations need to address the issue of internet addiction in the workplace. This could include intervention programs to help employees manage their internet use in a healthier way.

To reduce cyberloafing and its negative impact on productivity, management need to consider implementing stress management programs that help employees cope with work-related stress in a healthy way. Providing access to counseling services, stress reduction workshops, and making the work environment more supportive can help reduce the likelihood that employees will turn to cyberloafing as a coping mechanism for stress.

In addition, organizations should monitor internet usage policies and provide clear guidelines regarding acceptable internet use during work hours. Conducting regular training on responsible internet use, along with promoting work-life balance, can also help in reducing the risk of internet addiction and the cyberloafing that follows.

Finally, by building a positive organizational culture where employees feel valued and supported can reduce the need for stress-induced cyberloafing. Encouraging open communication and providing regular feedback can also help employees manage their

stress more effectively and reduce the temptation to do non-work-related online activities during work hours.

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