



RESEARCH PAPER

Psychological Detachment in Relation with Social Cyberloafing and Creativity among Higher Education Employees

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to find out the relationship between social cyberloafing, psychological detachment, and creativity among higher education employees. Second objective was to find out mediating role of psychological detachment between social cyberloafing and creativity. Employees' various online behaviours have drawn more attention to social cyberloafing, which is the practice of using workplace internet resources for non-work-related, personal purposes. Therefore current study intended to explore social cyberloafing in the workplace, particularly among higher education employees who frequently deal with high levels of stress and cognitive demands. Quantitative research design along with the correlational survey research method was used. Sample of 322 faculty and administrative staff from the Hazara Division, were selected using convenient sampling technique. Standardized measures including the Social Cyberloafing Scale, Psychological Detachment Scale, and Self-Rated Creativity Scale were used to collect responses. Results revealed a significant positive correlation among the three variables. Psychological detachment was found to partially mediate the link between social cyberloafing and creativity. The findings highlight social cyberloafing as a potentially restorative activity that supports psychological wellbeing, social interaction, and workplace productivity.

KEYWORDS Social Cyberloafing, Psychological Detachment, Creativity, Employees

Introduction

In today's digital age, the increasing prevalence of internet use and technological advancements has drastically impacted the workplace, especially higher education institutions. According to reports, 82.90 million people in Pakistan entirely use the internet in a particular manner out of a global population of around 4.9 billion. (Digital Report, 2022). According to the Digital Report (2022), Pakistan has 71.70 million out of a total of 4.62 billion social media users worldwide. According to a recent research, employees spend at least two hours every day on online activities such as social networking, online shopping, instant messaging, non-work mail, and more. According to previous research (Kaifa, et al., 2025). Sha et al. 2019) employees spend more than one full workday on their mobile phones.

Employees' various online behaviors have drawn more attention to social cyberloafing, which is the practice of using workplace internet resources for non-work related, personal purposes. Positive effects including relaxation, stress elimination, and the chance for employees to refuel have been linked to social cyberloafing (Blanchard & Henle, 2008). The novel idea of social cyberloafing identification provides new avenues for exploring social cyberloafing in the workplace, particularly among higher education employees who frequently deal with high levels of stress and cognitive demands.

According to Sonnentag & Bayer (2005), psychological detachment is a crucial component in assessing employee performance and well-being. To avoid burnout and promote recovery after work, people must psychologically distance themselves from their

jobs (Sonnentag, 2018). According to research, psychological detachment affects a variety of workplace outcomes, including creativity, both 2 directly and indirectly.

Creativity has great significance in higher education, as staff are frequently challenged to solve problems, innovate, and generate new ideas (Amabile, 1996). However, there is little knowledge of how psychological detachment may mediate the link between the social cyberloafing along with creativity, particularly in the setting of higher education.

The current research study attempts to fill this gap by looking into the relationship between social cyberloafing, psychological detachment and creativity among higher education personnel. This study contributes to a broader view of employee conduct in academic setting by considering social cyberloafing as a potentially good habit that may promote dissociation from work and, as a result, increase creativity. It is essential to determine if social cyberloafing might act as a catalyst for psychological recovery and creative development, so it benefits both employees and institutions. The study's findings might have practical significance for academic administrators and human resource practitioners, prompting a reconsideration of internet usage restrictions and promoting employee well-being as well as creativity.

Literature Review

This model holds that recovery from job-related effort is critical for maintaining performance and wellbeing. The paradigm emphasizes that behaviors that require continual effort, either mentally or physically, drain resources, leading in exhaustion, necessitating periods of rest to restore those resources. People who do not fully recover may have diminished productivity, psychological well-being, and engagement (Meijman & Mulder, 1998). According to the effort recovery model (ERM), micro-breaks throughout work hours allow employees to replace the mental resources they used while working. Employees currently utilize social media platforms to take a break or to mentally disconnect from their job duties and unwind (Wu et al., 2020). Surfing social networks and connecting with friends and family through social media sites allows employees to become mentally detached from their job-related duties and better deal with workplace stress and pressure, which improves their moods and happiness, resulting in better mental health (Lim & Chen, 2012).

Model of stressor-detachment

Sonnentag et al.(2014) highlights psychological detachment as a crucial element to take into account in the stressor-strain process. In this paradigm, the relationship between stress and strain is shown to be mediated by psychological detachment. In other words, job stressors can cause a decrease in psychological detachment, which significantly impacts the employee's level of stress and mental health.

Meta-analyses demonstrated that psychological detachment is a strong predictor of wellbeing and pleasant mood states. In addition to lowering levels of burnout, exhaustion, and physical discomfort, it has been linked to increased vitality, better sleep, and overall well-being (Wendsche & Lohmann-Haislah, 2017). In addition to reducing burnout, exhaustion, and physical discomfort, psychological detachment from one's job has been linked to increased vitality, better sleep, and overall well-being. According to recent meta analyses have shown that psychological detachment is a strong predictor of happiness and pleasant mood states.

The Dynamic Componential Model of Creativity. A Model of Innovation and Creativity in Organizations was presented by Amabile in 1988.It presented a conceptual framework that included a five-stage sequential sequence for individual creativity and organizational innovation, but it only showed the components and the general ways in which the individual and organizational elements interconnected.

This model offers a comprehensive and systematic examination of creativity, providing a perspective which combines individual creative activities to a wider framework while avoiding the detached nature of individual creative endeavours..The creative teaching process is designed by DCMC. It integrated the DCMC model's five organizational level phases. Second, it examined the components of innovative educational setting. Its ability to relate individual creative processes to the innovation of the organizational system is one of its significant contributions.

Hypotheses

- H1. There will be positive relationship among social cyberloafing, psychological detachment and creativity.
- H2. Psychological detachment will act as a mediator in relationship between social cyberloafing and creativity.
- H3. Younger employees exhibit higher levels of creativity compared to older employees.
- H4. Male employees will have more creativity than female employees.
- H5. Graduate employees will display higher levels of creativity than undergraduate employees.

Material and Methods

Sample

The sample size is computed by using the Rao soft calculator. The survey included a sample of 322 employees aged 25 to 60 years. Data was collected from different colleges and universities employees (faculty members and administrative staff) of different institutes of Hazara Division that is Hazara University Mansehra, Abbottabad University of Science and Technology, Comsats University Abbottabad Campus, University of Haripur, Govt. Commerce College Mansehra, Govt. Post Graduate College Mansehra) 322 employees were given hard copy questionnaires and asked to respond using the convenient sampling technique, which chooses people based on how easy it is to gather data.

Inclusion Criteria

The study comprised employees aged 25 to 60 who had completed their degree and were working at higher education institutions.

Exclusion Criteria

The sample excluded uneducated employees, mentally disabled and older than 60 years of age.

Instruments

Social Cyberloafing Scale

A 5-point Likert scale, which ranges from (1 Strongly disagree to 5 Strongly Agree), was used to quantify workplace social cyberloafing using the 7-item scale developed by Wu et al. (2020). The total scores ranged from 7 to 35. Higher scores correspond to more frequent engagement in social cyberloafing. The Social Cyberloafing Scale value of the Cronbach alpha coefficient is .89. The current study found that the Social Cyberloafing Scale has an alpha reliability of $\alpha = .72$.

Self-Rated Creativity Scale

The creativity of employees will be assessed using the Self-Rated Creativity Scale (Zhou & George, 2001). The scale contains 12-items and uses 5-point Likert scale (1 Totally Disagree, 5 Totally Agree) for each item. The range of total scores is 12 to 60. Greater creativity will be shown by a higher score. The alpha reliability of 34 the scale is .91. The Self-Rated Creativity Scale's alpha reliability in the present study was $\alpha = .75$.

The Psychological Detachment Scale

The Sonnentag and Fritz (2007) developed the Psychological Detachment Scale (PDS), which consists of four items and a five Likert points scale ranging from (strongly disagree, 1 to strongly agree, 5). The ratings vary from 4 to 20. Higher scores indicate greater levels of psychological detachment. The Cronbach alpha reliability rating for the Psychological Detachment Scale is .85 (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). In this present study, the value of alpha reliability for the Psychological Detachment scale was $\alpha = .83$.

Procedure

Data was collected from different colleges and universities employees (faculty members and administrative staff) of different institutes of Hazara Division of (i.e., Hazara University Mansehra, Abbottabad University of Science and Technology, Comsats University Abbottabad Campus, University of Haripur, Govt. Commerce College Mansehra, Govt. Post Graduate College Mansehra). Prior to this, permission was obtained from the appropriate concern authorities and written informed consent was obtained from participants. The data was gathered from those who volunteered to participate in the study. All the data was gathered manually using the given questionnaires. The 322 participants were kindly asked to complete the questionnaires with foremost honesty and integrity. Data was obtained between December 15, 2024, and January 27, 2025. Participants were thanked for their involvement in the study and reassured that their privacy and confidentiality would be respected. After Collecting data, the statistical package for the social sciences, or SPSS, version 26 was used to conduct the study analysis.

Ethical Approval

The Department of Psychology's Graduate Research Committee (GRC) approved the research topic. In addition, Hazara University's Advanced Studies and Research Board (ASRB) provided ethical approval.

Data Analyses and Interpretation

The statistical package for the social sciences, or SPSS, version 26 was used to conduct the study by using the reliability coefficient analysis, Pearson correlation. The mediation analysis by Hayes process macro. T-tests were used for demographic differences.

Results and Discussion

The statistical package for social sciences, or SPSS, version 26 was used to conduct the study. The internal consistency of the data was examined using the reliability coefficient analysis. The relationship between the variables was examined using Pearson correlation. The mediation study was conducted using the Hayes process macro. T-tests were used to check how the research variables differed by age, gender, and level of education.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Variables	Categories	N	%
Age	Younger (25-39)	172	53%
	Older (40-60)	150	46%

Gender	Male	168	52%
	Female	154	47%
Education	BS/BA	174	54%
	MPhil/PhD	148	46%

Table 1 Showed that the sample consisted of a total of 322 participants. Regarding age, 53% (n = 172) of participants were categorized as younger adults (aged 25–39 years), while 46% (n = 150) were older adults (aged 40–60 years). In terms of gender, 52% (n = 168) identified as male, and 47% (n = 154) identified as female. For education level, 54% (n = 174) of the participants held a BS/BA degree, whereas 46% (n = 148) held an MPhil or PhD.

Table 2
Reliability Statistics of Scales

Scale	N	Cronbach's α
Social Cyberloafing	7	.724
Psychological Detachment	4	.753
Creativity	12	.836

Table 2 indicated that the Social Cyberloafing Scale, Psychological Detachment Scale, and Self-Rated Creativity Scale had reliability coefficients of .724, .753, and .836, respectively. According to these results, the internal consistency of all instruments ranges from moderate to above average.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics of Correlation among Variables

Scales	M	SD	I	II	III
Social Cyberloafing	25.91	4.928	-	.588**	.905**
Psychological Detachment	15.19	3.591	-	-	.865**
Creativity	44.94	8.29	-	-	-

Table 3 revealed a significant moderate positive relationship among social cyberloafing and psychological detachment ($r = .588$, $p < .01$, $N = 322$). While social cyberloafing has a significant strong positive relationship with creativity (SRCS) ($r = .905$, $p < .01$, $N = 322$) results also showed a significant strong positive association between psychological detachment and creativity $r = .865$, $p < .01$, $N = 322$).

Table 4
Summary of Mediation Results for Psychological Detachment with Social Cyberloafing and Creativity among Higher Education Employees

DV	M	Effect of IV on M	Effect of M on DV	Direct Effects	Indirect Effect	Total Effects
SRCS	PDS	.429***	1.172***	1.021***	.502***	1.523***

According to Table 4, the mediation analysis for the effects of IV on M was .429***, M on DV was 1.72***, the direct effect was 1.021**, the indirect effect was .502***, and the total effect was 1.523***. Significant findings concerning the mediating role of psychological detachment in relation between social cyberloafing and creativity. As a result, the results showed partial mediation rather than full mediation, indicating that psychological detachment is the important but not the only pathway connecting social cyberloafing and creativity.

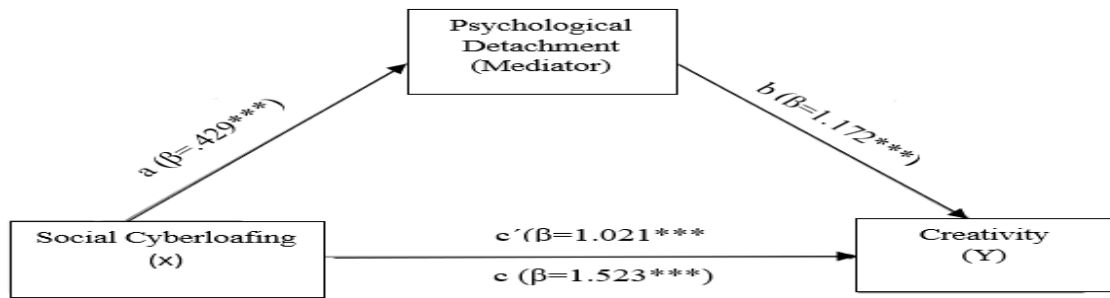


Figure:1 Mediation Analysis Pathway

According to the findings of a mediation study, which are displayed in Figure 1, the relationship between social cyberloafing and creativity is partially mediated by psychological detachment.

Table 5
Mean Differences of Age of Younger employees and older employees on Creativity

Variables	Younger Employees (172)		Older Employees (150)		<i>t</i> (320)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Creativity	45.29	8.876	44.54	7.573	.816	.415	0.09

As shown in Table 5, that non -significant age differences exist on creativity. Both younger employees ($M=45.29$, $SD=8.876$) and older employees ($M=44.54$, $SD=7.573$) meant that were not statistically significant where $p=.415$ ($p > .05$). The effect size (Cohen's *d*) is 0.09, showing ($p > .05$) that there isn't any statistically significant difference in scores between the younger and older employees.

Table 6
Mean Differences of Gender on Creativity

Variables	Male (168)		Female (154)		<i>t</i> (320)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Creativity	44.51	8.027	45.40	8.571	-.963	.336	0.10

Table 6 showed non- significant gender differences in creative ability. Both male workers ($M=44.51$, $SD=8.027$) and female employees ($M=45.40$, $SD=8.571$) were not statistically significant at $p=.336$ ($p > .05$). However, the effect size (Cohen's *d*) is 0.10 even if there is no significance. Consequently, there is not a significant difference in the creativity scores of male and female employees ($p > .05$).

Table 7
Mean Differences of Education on Creativity

Variables	Undergraduate (BS) (174)		Graduate (MS/PhD) (148)		<i>t</i> (320)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Creativity	45.36	8.177	44.45	8.424	.981	.327	0.10

Table 7 displayed no significant gender differences in creativity. Employees with less education ($M=45.36$, $SD=8.177$) and those with more education ($M=44.45$, $SD=8.424$) were not statistically significant ($p=.327$, $p > .05$). Although the effect size (Cohen's *d*) is 0.10, it is not significant ($p > .05$) indicating that there is no significant difference in scores between employees with undergraduate and graduate degrees.

Discussion

The present study examined the relationship between social cyberloafing psychological detachment and creativity among higher education employees. Additionally, the current study intended to determine the demographic differences such as age, gender,

and education on creativity as well as the mediating effect of psychological detachment in connection to social cyberloafing and creativity. In this study, three scales were used: Social Cyberloafing Scale, The Psychological Detachment Scale and Self-Rated Creativity Scale on sample of 322 higher education employees.

To determine the internal consistency of the scales on the sample, the first step in the current investigation was to compute the estimated reliability of each scale. The Social Cyberloafing Scale, the Psychological Detachment Scale, and the Self-Rated Creativity Scale all had alpha reliability coefficient values that were above average, with respective values of .724, .753, and .836 (see Table 2).

It was hypothesized in the present study that social cyberloafing will positively correlate with psychological detachment. Social cyberloafing and psychological detachment were found to be significantly positively correlated in the very initial part of the current investigation (see table 3). These findings are similar to the previous research in which researcher examine the positive relationship between social cyberloafing and creativity (Hu et al., 2020; Mei et al., 2021). Previous study performed in Pakistan revealed a link between social cyberloafing and psychological well being among personnel in the private banking sector. The findings indicate that social cyberloafing is positively associated with psychological detachment, which improves the mental health of employees (Rasheed et al., 2022). Furthermore, another research studied the dual impacts of social cyberloafing on employee mental wellness of Chinese employees. The findings found that, social cyberloafing has a positive relationship with psychological detachment.

The first hypothesis also stated that social cyberloafing will have positive relation with creativity. The findings of the current study suggested that social cyberloafing has a significant positive relationship with creativity (Table 3). The hypothesis was based on previous research, which found a beneficial connection between social cyberloafing and creativity. Prior study indicates a positive relationship between social cyberloafing and creativity (Sawirti & Mayasari, 2017). The current study's findings are similar to those of Batool et al. (2023), who observed that cyberloafing fosters creativity by facilitating information interchange and enhancing autonomous motivation. Employees who engage in non-work-related online activities may be exposed to fresh knowledge and perspectives that promote innovative thinking. This lends credence to the notion that cyberloafing may provide employees access to a variety of ideas, hence improving their capacity for coming up with novel solutions.

Consistent with our research hypothesis, psychological detachment will also have positive relationship with creativity (Table 3). The results of the present study also showed the significant positive relation between psychological detachment and creativity. The previous part of the hypothesis of the current research was aligned with the existing literature. Ghosh et al. (2020) reported that psychological detachment from work is an important mediator of motivation to work and employee creativity. Employees who can psychologically disengage from their professional duties during off-hours have better levels of creativity, since detachment provides for the mental space required for inventive thought. This supports the idea that taking time off from work enables people to recharge and tackle problems from new angles. In a similar way, Kuhnel et al. (2020) found that regular sleep and short breaks during the workday enhance employees' creativity by restoring mental energy. Their study highlights a positive link between psychological detachment and creativity. Additionally, longer periods of detachment, like vacations, further boost creative thinking by allowing individuals more time to relax and explore new experiences.

The results of the current study are consistent with previous research by showing a positive correlation between social cyberloafing, psychological detachment, and creativity, which is in line with earlier studies. Social cyberloafing or using the internet for social relationships unrelated to work, allows employees to momentarily escape from job-related

stressors and fosters psychological detachment. Since it lessens fatigue and cognitive strain, this separation is crucial for mental healing and enhances creative thinking. Workers who step away from the demands of their current jobs may get fresh perspectives that inspire creative problem-solving and innovative solutions. Therefore, the current study emphasizes that among personnel in higher education, social cyberloafing, psychological detachment, and creativity are all positively correlated.

The mediating function of psychological detachment between social cyberloafing and creativity among higher education employees was analyzed in this study using process macro analysis. The study's second hypothesis that psychological detachment acts as a mediator in relation to social cyberloafing and creativity is confirmed by the results shown in the table, which show that psychological detachment acts as a mediator between social cyberloafing and creativity (see Table 4).

An appropriate theoretical foundation for figuring out how psychological detachment mediates the relationship between social cyberloafing and creative support is provided by the Effort-Recovery Model (ERM). Work requires effort, which includes psychological and physiological effects including fatigue and cognitive decline, according to ERM. To sustain their high performance and creative abilities, workers need to recuperate appropriately (Bennett et al., 2018; Meijman & Mulder, 1998). The mediating function of psychological detachment in this process is supported by empirical evidence. According to Wu et al. (2021), moderate social cyberloafing increased psychological detachment, which enhanced cognitive flexibility and creative thinking.

Psychological detachment acts as a partially mediating factor in the association between social cyberloafing and creativity. The association between social cyberloafing and creativity was shown to be somewhat mediated by psychological detachment in the current study. However, this mediation is only partial, as other variables, such as intrinsic drive or working environment, also influence creativity. While psychological detachment accounts for some of the correlation, it does not entirely explain the association between social cyberloafing and creativity.

The third hypothesis of the current research stated that demographic differences (age, gender and education) will exist on creativity. The current study's findings revealed that there was non-significant age differences exist on creativity (see Table 5). The results of previous research studies on age-related shifts in creativity have been contradictory; some studies have shown no significant differences across groups of ages. In a study individuals ranging in age from 12 to 88, Nori et al. (2018) discovered that age was not significantly influence creativity levels. Additionally, Wu et al. (2005) found non-significant age-related variations in the creative ability of students between the ages of 9 and 17, indicating with that cognitive maturity does not always affect creative capacities.

Additionally, the current analysis indicates that that there exists non-significant gender difference on creativity (see Table 6). According to previous research There have frequently been no apparent differences between males and females in research on gender variations in creativity. After reviewing much research on creativity test scores, creative accomplishments, and self-reported creativity, Baer and Kaufman (2008) came to the conclusion that there were no significant gender disparities in these domains. Similar findings were made by Das et al. (2024), who examined undergraduate students' creativity and discovered no significant distinctions between male and female participants in several creativity-related categories. These results imply that gender has no intrinsic impact on creativity and that any discrepancies might be the result of outside influences like cultural norms or preconceptions in the evaluation of creativity. The outcomes of the most present study were consistent with those of earlier research studies.

Continuing with the findings of the present research indicated non-significant education differences on creativity (see Table 7). A study investigating the influence of educational degree on creativity showed no significant differences across undergraduates and graduates. van Broekhoven et al. (2020) evaluated creativity between undergraduate students from diverse fields and found relatively non-significant effect on creativity levels, implying that educational degree has little impact on creative ability. Similarly, Xia et al. (2021) also suggested that individual's creative ability may not be determined by their degree of education, whether undergraduate or graduate, which is consistent with the results of the present study. The present research's analysis concluded that non-significant age, gender and education differences are based on creativity among higher education employees. These findings suggest that demographic characteristics are not associated with creativity in higher education employees, but rather personal experiences, subject competence, and workplace culture.

Conclusion

The present study looked at the association between social cyberloafing, psychological detachment and creativity among higher education employees and mediating role of psychological detachment between social cyberslang and creativity. The findings show a positive relationship between psychological detachment, social cyberloafing, and creativity, implying that getting involved in social cyberloafing might help with psychological detachment, which in turn improves creative thinking. Employees who briefly detach from work-related pressures can replenish their mental resources, resulting in greater creativity and problem-solving ability.

Implications

- 1) The findings of current study help in understanding social cyberloafing in educational settings can help institutions in developing strategies for managing communication online among faculty and staff, ensuring that it promotes collaborative behaviour rather than hinders productivity.
- 2) The current study assists employees in higher education who struggle to detach from stress related to work may engage in social cyberloafing as an effective coping technique, which can have an influence on performance and workplace dynamics.
- 3) Psychological detachment from work may help employees in managing stress and mental tiredness, resulting in their engagement in social cyberloafing and innovative performance.
- 4) In present study understanding these relationships can help higher education institutions in developing programs that encourage beneficial detachment tactics while taking advantage of social contacts for knowledge exchange and creativity.
- 5) The study provides framework for establishing HR policies in maintaining balance between technology use and workplace flexibility, ensuring that social cyberloafing does not turn into a barrier to performance.

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