

Cyberloafing Among Government Employees: A Perspective from the Theory of Planned Behavior

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Abstract

The advancement of information technology has introduced new challenges in the workplace, particularly in the public sector. One prominent phenomenon is cyberloafing, which refers to employees using the internet for personal purposes during working hours. This study aims to analyze the influence of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control on behavioral intention and cyberloafing among employees, based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) framework. The study was conducted with 190 regional government employees of Indragiri Hulu Regency using a quantitative survey approach. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using path analysis (SEM-PLS 4). The findings reveal that both attitude and subjective norms have a significant positive influence on the intention to engage in cyberloafing, whereas perceived behavioral control does not have a significant effect. Furthermore, behavioral intention is proven to significantly influence cyberloafing behavior. Mediation analysis indicates that behavioral intention mediates the effects of attitude and subjective norms on cyberloafing, but not the effect of perceived behavioral control. These findings reinforce the relevance of TPB in explaining cyberloafing behavior among government employees. The practical implications emphasize the importance of fostering positive work attitudes and norms, as well as strengthening monitoring and control systems to reduce cyberloafing and enhance employee productivity.

Keywords: Cyberloafing, Government Employees, Work Behavior, Attitude, Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

1. Introduction

In today's digital era, the rapid advancement of information technology has impacted nearly all aspects of life, including the world of work—both in the private and public sectors. In the governmental context, digital transformation has yielded positive effects such as improved accessibility to public services, faster inter-agency communication, and increased administrative efficiency. However, behind these benefits lies a growing challenge: the phenomenon of cyberloafing. Cyberloafing refers to the behavior of employees utilizing internet facilities at the workplace for non-work-related personal activities, such as accessing social media, online shopping, or playing games. This issue has become increasingly concerning due to its potential to reduce employee productivity and harm organizational performance, particularly in the public sector which is expected to deliver high-quality public service.

The phenomenon of cyberloafing within the Regional Government of Indragiri Hulu Regency is particularly noteworthy due to the high internet penetration rate in Indonesia, including among civil servants. According to data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS) and APJII, the number of internet users in Indonesia surpassed 221 million people in 2024, with a penetration rate of 78.68%. This indicates that the majority of the population—including government employees—has wide access to the internet. At the same time, the Indragiri Hulu Government has launched various digital service applications to support public services, such as e-Layanan Kominfo, Si-Master (Integrated Stunting Information System), and Aban Kepo (Political Party Financial Aid), demonstrating a commitment to efficient and effective digital service delivery.

Nonetheless, the ease of internet access in the workplace presents the risk of misuse, particularly when not accompanied by strong behavioral control and work ethics. Cyberloafing activities represent a form of deviant and counterproductive work behavior. The productivity loss resulting from cyberloafing can directly affect the quality of public services delivered, and ultimately diminish public trust in the performance of regional government institutions.

This study addresses a central issue: how do attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence the intention and behavior of cyberloafing among government employees? To address this issue, the research employs the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) developed by Ajzen. TPB posits that behavioral intention is the primary predictor of actual behavior. This intention is influenced by three core components: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In this context, employees' attitudes toward cyberloafing, their perception of prevailing social norms, and their perceived control over the behavior serve as key indicators in predicting whether an employee will engage in cyberloafing.

Previous studies have examined cyberloafing from various perspectives. For example, Prabowo and Santosa (2022) found that cyberloafing is negatively correlated with work productivity in the public sector. Similarly, Sari and Kurniawan (2023) indicated that employees who frequently engage in cyberloafing tend to have lower job performance. However, other studies—such as those by Lim (2019) and Wu et al. (2021)—suggest that in moderate amounts, cyberloafing can serve as a form of micro-break, helping to reduce stress and restore employee focus.

Cyberloafing can be driven by several factors, including workplace boredom, low work pressure, lack of supervision, and flexible work hours. TPB, on the other hand, explains that individual behavior is shaped by intention, which is influenced by attitude, norms, and perceived behavioral control. In government organizations, this theory provides a robust framework for understanding employee behavior, especially regarding the use of information technology at work.

Conceptually, attitude toward cyberloafing reflects how employees assess the behavior—whether they view it as positive (e.g., for relaxation) or negative (e.g., a waste of time). Subjective norms refer to the social pressure employees feel from colleagues or superiors regarding whether cyberloafing is acceptable. Meanwhile, perceived behavioral control reflects the extent to which employees feel they can control the behavior, such as whether they can access the internet freely without supervision.

This study contributes several novelties to both academic literature and organizational practice. First, it addresses a research gap in public sector studies, particularly within the Indragiri Hulu government. Most prior research has focused on the private sector or specific industries, with limited exploration of bureaucratic and public service contexts. Second, the application of TPB to explain cyberloafing among public employees represents a relatively novel approach, as most previous studies used general organizational or psychological frameworks. Third, this study develops an analytical model that examines the mediating role of behavioral intention in the relationship between attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and cyberloafing behavior.

The research uses a quantitative approach with path analysis via SmartPLS 4 to test the developed theoretical model. Data were obtained from 190 regional government employees through an online questionnaire. The results show that attitude and subjective norms significantly influence the intention to engage in cyberloafing, while perceived behavioral control does not. Furthermore, behavioral intention significantly affects cyberloafing behavior and mediates the influence of attitude and subjective norms on cyberloafing.

Practically, the findings offer crucial insights for human resource management within local governments. Understanding the factors influencing cyberloafing can guide the development of internal policies to monitor and control internet use in the workplace. Local governments should create balanced internal policies—not only emphasizing discipline and supervision but also acknowledging the need for mental breaks and stress management among employees.

Additionally, this study holds relevance for improving the effectiveness of public service delivery. By reducing cyberloafing among employees, work time efficiency is expected to improve, leading to faster and more accurate services for the public. This aligns with the goals of bureaucratic reform, which emphasize quality service and professional public servants.

The study also contributes to the development of management science, particularly in organizational behavior and e-governance. By combining behavioral psychology theory with the context of local government, this research offers a holistic understanding of employee behavior amidst digital transformation. Therefore, its findings are valuable not only for academics but also for practitioners, policymakers, and public institutions seeking to enhance performance and operational effectiveness through more adaptive work behavior management.

In conclusion, through the lens of TPB, this study not only explains the factors influencing cyberloafing but also offers theory-based strategies for managing such behavior. In an era where technology is inseparable from work, understanding, measuring, and managing behaviors like cyberloafing is both a challenge and an opportunity for the public sector to transform into a more productive, transparent, and accountable organization.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Cyberloafing in the Government Sector

Cyberloafing refers to the use of the internet and digital devices by employees during working hours for personal purposes that are not related to their job responsibilities. Activities considered as cyberloafing include browsing social media, streaming videos, online shopping, playing games, and other forms of personal communication through digital platforms while at work (Prihadi, 2021; Sutanto, 2020; Mulyadi, 2019). This behavior is classified as counterproductive and is increasingly viewed as a threat to organizational performance, particularly within the public sector, where employee accountability and efficiency are critical to delivering quality public services.

In the Indonesian public administration context, especially in regional governments like Indragiri Hulu Regency, cyberloafing poses a unique challenge. The rapid adoption of digital infrastructure, such as online service applications and internet-based systems, while aimed at improving public service delivery, has also unintentionally created more opportunities for employees to engage in non-work-related internet activities. With over 80% of Indonesia's population using smartphones and internet access penetrating more than 78% of the population as of 2024, employees are increasingly exposed to online distractions during working hours.

Cyberloafing has been shown to significantly reduce employee productivity. Research by Prabowo and Santosa (2022) and Sari and Kurniawan (2023) has demonstrated that public servants who frequently engage in cyberloafing tend to exhibit lower task performance and responsiveness. Supriyadi (2021) emphasized that excessive cyberloafing among civil servants contributes to delays in administrative work, reduces service quality, and diminishes public trust in government institutions. These findings underline the seriousness of the phenomenon, particularly when it affects the effectiveness of public service delivery, which is one of the core mandates of government institutions.

Despite the predominantly negative perception of cyberloafing, some scholars argue that limited or moderate cyberloafing can serve as a form of psychological detachment or micro-breaks that may enhance mental well-being and improve subsequent task performance (Lim, 2019). Wu et al. (2021) similarly suggest that when employees perceive cyberloafing as harmless and stress-relieving, they may develop a positive attitude toward the behavior, reinforcing its occurrence even when its negative consequences are known.

2.2 Determinants of Cyberloafing Behavior

Cyberloafing is influenced by both individual-level and organizational-level factors. At the individual level, boredom, low self-control, and the desire for instant gratification often trigger cyberloafing. At the organizational level, poor supervision, permissive workplace culture, and unregulated internet access are among the strongest enablers. Putra (2022) outlines several critical antecedents, including:

- a. Workplace boredom
- b. Lack of supervision
- c. Ease of access: The ubiquity of high-speed internet and smartphones facilitates instant connection to non-work content.
- d. Organizational culture
- e. Low work pressure and flexible schedules

These factors highlight the importance of organizational structure, employee engagement, and digital governance in managing cyberloafing behavior.

Cyberloafing itself can be categorized into several behavioral dimensions, including social media use, non-work browsing, online shopping, personal communication, online gaming, and video streaming during office hours (Suharyadi, 2020). Each dimension represents a different degree of distraction and has varied implications for organizational productivity.

2.3 The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), developed by Icek Ajzen (1991), provides a theoretical framework for understanding human behavior based on intention as the key predictor. According to TPB, the intention to perform a behavior is influenced by three key components: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control.

1. **Attitude toward the behavior**
This refers to an individual's positive or negative evaluation of the behavior. If an employee believes that cyberloafing helps reduce stress or boredom, they are more likely to develop favorable attitudes toward the behavior and subsequently intend to engage in it (Durak, 2021).
2. **Subjective norms**
These are perceived social pressures to perform or not perform a behavior. If an employee perceives that their peers or superiors also engage in or condone cyberloafing, they are more likely to form intentions to do the same (Ajzen, 2020; Lim & Chen, 2022).
3. **Perceived behavioral control**
This refers to the extent to which individuals believe they can perform the behavior, considering available resources and potential obstacles. Employees who feel they have unrestricted internet access and minimal supervision often report higher perceived control, thereby increasing their likelihood of cyberloafing (Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara et al., 2022).

In the context of cyberloafing, TPB allows researchers and practitioners to explore not just the occurrence of the behavior but also the psychological and environmental mechanisms that contribute to it. The theory offers a comprehensive lens through which organizations can design preventive and intervention strategies to reduce cyberloafing by influencing employees' attitudes, reshaping workplace norms, and modifying perceptions of behavioral control.

2.4 Applying TPB to Government Employees

While TPB has been extensively applied in business settings, its use in public administration—particularly in developing countries such as Indonesia—is still relatively limited. The unique characteristics of government workplaces, including rigid hierarchies, formal rules, and public accountability, create a distinct environment in which cyberloafing must be studied.

As emphasized in the reviewed thesis, the application of TPB in examining cyberloafing among government employees offers a valuable opportunity to understand how psychological and social factors influence behavior within bureaucratic institutions. This approach moves beyond simple disciplinary solutions and opens the door to more holistic policies that consider motivation, culture, and systemic enablers.

For instance, interventions that improve employee engagement, promote shared digital ethics, and provide clear digital usage policies may effectively reduce cyberloafing by addressing the underlying attitudes and perceived norms. Additionally, training programs that enhance time management and self-control skills could positively influence perceived behavioral control.

3. Method

This study employed a quantitative approach with an associative research design. The primary data used were respondents' responses to a structured questionnaire, which was developed based on the indicators derived from the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) framework. The data source comprised civil servants working for the local government of Indragiri Hulu Regency, totaling 4,974 employees. The sample was selected using purposive sampling, with inclusion criteria being active employees who have access to the internet in their work environment. The sample size was determined using a sample size calculator with a 5% margin of error, 95% confidence level, and 15% population proportion, resulting in a total of 190 respondents.

Data were collected via electronic questionnaires distributed through Google Forms over the period of October to December 2024. The questionnaire was designed using a 5-point Likert scale and covered five variables: cyberloafing attitude (X1), subjective norms (X2), perceived behavioral control (X3), behavioral intention (Z), and cyberloafing behavior (Y). The validity and reliability of the instruments were tested using SPSS and SmartPLS 4.

Data analysis was conducted using both descriptive and inferential methods. Descriptive analysis was employed to illustrate the demographic profile of the respondents and the characteristics of each variable. Inferential (verificative) analysis was conducted using the Structural Equation Modeling with Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) technique via SmartPLS version 4. This analysis involved testing the outer model (for convergent and discriminant validity) and the inner model (evaluating path coefficients, t-statistics, p-values, and R-squared values). Hypothesis testing was conducted at a significance level of 0.05.

4. Result and Discussion

The findings of this study confirm the applicability of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) in explaining the tendencies of government employees to engage in cyberloafing, particularly within the bureaucratic environment of Indragiri Hulu Regency.

4.1 Attitude as a Predictor of Behavioral Intention

The statistical results indicate that employees' attitudes toward cyberloafing significantly influenced their intention to engage in such behavior. The **t-value was 3.696** with a **p-value of 0.000**, and the **positive path coefficient was 0.314**. This supports the TPB framework, which posits that attitude is one of the most powerful predictors of intention. When employees perceive cyberloafing as a harmless or stress-relieving activity, such as a micro-break, their intention to engage in it increases. These findings are in line with Lim (2019), who suggested that minor cyberloafing activities may serve as useful mental recovery tools during work hours.

4.2 Subjective Norms and Social Influence

Subjective norms were also found to have a significant positive influence on behavioral intention ($t = 2.441$, $p = 0.015$, coefficient = 0.323). This highlights the role of social and organizational environments in shaping behavioral tendencies. In a workplace where cyberloafing is perceived as common or tolerated—whether by peers, superiors, or the overall culture—employees are more likely to conform. These findings stress the importance of clear organizational norms and the cultivation of a productivity-oriented culture in preventing counterproductive behaviors.

4.3 Limited Influence of Perceived Behavioral Control

Unlike attitude and norms, perceived behavioral control did not significantly affect behavioral intention ($t = 0.496$, $p = 0.310$, coefficient = 0.034). This implies that even when employees feel they have easy access to the internet and face minimal supervision, these conditions alone are not sufficient to trigger cyberloafing intentions. The result suggests the presence of internal ethical considerations, such as self-discipline or professional responsibility, which may inhibit the formation of such intentions.

4.4 Intention as a Direct Determinant of Cyberloafing

Behavioral intention significantly influenced actual cyberloafing behavior ($t = 4.875$, $p = 0.000$, coefficient = 0.353), affirming TPB's principle that intention is the strongest predictor of action. Employees who have already formed a strong intention are more likely to realize it, especially when working in an enabling environment. This finding underscores the importance of intervening at the intention stage, for example, through awareness campaigns or leadership engagement.

4.5 Mediation Role of Intention

The results further demonstrate that behavioral intention serves as a key mediator in the relationship between both attitude and subjective norms with cyberloafing behavior:

- a. Attitude → Intention → Behavior: The indirect effect was significant ($t = 2.533$, $p = 0.006$, coefficient = 0.111), suggesting that intention strengthens the link between favorable attitudes and actual cyberloafing.

- b. Subjective Norms → Intention → Behavior: Similarly, this path was significant ($t = 3.198$, $p = 0.001$, coefficient = 0.114), indicating that the perception of peer behavior first influences intention, which then leads to action.

These findings reinforce TPB's assertion that behavior is rarely the product of external stimuli alone, but is often mediated by internal cognitive processes, particularly intention.

4.6 Non-significance of Perceived Behavioral Control, Even Through Mediation

Interestingly, perceived behavioral control did not significantly influence cyberloafing behavior, either directly or through behavioral intention ($t = 0.472$, $p = 0.319$, coefficient = 0.012). This may be explained by the presence of external organizational controls—such as formal rules, rigid hierarchies, or job-related constraints—that outweigh personal beliefs about behavioral control. Thus, having the ability or opportunity to cyberloaf does not necessarily mean employees will do so.

4.7 Contextual Implications

The findings of this study are especially relevant to the public sector, where bureaucratic inertia, political pressures, and insufficient technological monitoring often characterize the work environment. In such settings, building a work culture that promotes ethical conduct, accountability, and efficient use of digital tools is critical.

The research suggests that government institutions should not focus solely on technical monitoring of internet use, but should instead seek to influence employees' internal states—their attitudes, perceived norms, and behavioral intentions. This can be achieved through educational programs, policy development, leadership modeling, and creating shared values around professionalism and public service ethics.

5. Conclusion

The phenomenon of cyberloafing among government employees is not merely an expression of individual behavior but rather a reflection of the underlying psychological and social dynamics within bureaucratic work environments. The use of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as a conceptual framework demonstrates that unproductive behaviors such as cyberloafing are influenced by a complex interaction of personal attitudes, social pressures, and individuals' perceptions of self-control. Therefore, understanding the underlying motivations behind this behavior is essential for designing more effective human resource management strategies.

Furthermore, the findings of this study highlight the importance of fostering an organizational culture that goes beyond regulatory enforcement and surveillance, emphasizing also the psychological well-being of employees as part of a holistic approach to improving performance and the quality of public service delivery. This approach can support local governments in developing a more adaptive and productive work environment, particularly in the context of today's digitally-driven administrative landscape.

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