
Article

Workplace Ostracism and Cyberloafing in Afghan Banks: The Moderating Role of Perceived Organizational Support

Farzad Sami, Shahzad Anwar, Faizan Ahmad, Jehanzeb Khan

To cite this article: Sami, F., Anwar, S., Ahmad, F., & Khan, J. (2025). Workplace ostracism and cyberloafing in afghan banks: The moderating role of perceived organizational support. *Kardan Journal of Economics and Management Sciences*, 8(2), 161–176. <https://doi.org/10.31841/KJEMS.2025.194>



Published Online: 30 December 2025



Submit Your Article to this Journal

Workplace Ostracism and Cyberloafing in Afghan Banks: The Moderating Role of Perceived Organizational Support

Kardan Journal of Economics and Management Sciences 8 (2) 161–176

Kardan Publications

Kardan University

Kabul, Afghanistan

DOI: 10.31841/KJEMS.2025.194

<https://kjems.kardan.edu.af/CurrentIssue.aspx?i=KJEMS>

Farzad Sami¹, Shahzad Anwar², Faizan Ahmad³, Jehanzeb Khan⁴

Faculty of Economics, Kardan University, Kabul, Afghanistan.

1 MBA Student, <fzrzsamiafb@gmail.com> ORCID: 0009-0005-7758-4328

2 Assistant Professor, <s.anwar@kardan.edu.af> ORCID: 0009-0004-1519-620X

3 Assistant Professor, <f.ahmad@kardan.edu.af> ORCID: 0009-0000-8480-9824

4 Assistant Professor, <j.khan@kardan.edu.af> ORCID: 0009-0006-4333-8249

Abstract

This study investigates the effect of workplace ostracism on cyberloafing and the moderating role of perceived organizational support in Afghanistan's banking sector. Directed by the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, a quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted with 385 employees from two major banks. Validated scales were used to measure workplace ostracism, cyberloafing, and organizational support, and hierarchical regression was applied to test the hypothesized relationships. Results show that workplace ostracism is positively related to cyberloafing, indicating that employees who are excluded are more likely to engage in non-work internet use. Perceived organizational support, however, is negatively associated with cyberloafing and significantly weakens the positive relationship between ostracism and cyberloafing. These findings highlight organizational support as a protective factor that mitigates the adverse effects of ostracism on employee behavior. The study contributes to theory by integrating COR theory with the ostracism literature and identifying support as a key boundary condition. Practically, it emphasizes the importance of fostering supportive workplace environments to reduce cyberloafing and enhance productivity in high-stress contexts such as Afghanistan's banking industry.

Keywords: Workplace Ostracism, Cyberloafing, Perceived Organizational Support, Moderation, Banking Sector, Afghanistan



Copyright:

© 2025 The Author(s).

This open access article is distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) 4.0 license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

Published by Kardan University.

Received: 25 October 2025
Revised: 13 December 2025
Accepted: 23 December 2025
Published: 30 December 2025

1. Introduction

Cyberloafing refers to employees' engagement in personal, non-work-related internet activities during work periods (Askew et al., 2014; Lim, 2002). It is a widespread workplace phenomenon that can undermine productivity and performance (Block, 2021; Wagner, Barnes, Lim, & Ferris, 2012). Common examples include sending personal emails, browsing social media or entertainment websites, and streaming videos while at work (Koay & Soh, 2018). Surveys have estimated that cyberloafing costs businesses hundreds of billions of dollars annually and that employees may

spend, on average, up to 2–3 hours of each workday on personal online activities (Lufkin & Mudit, 2021; Salary.com, 2014). Such behavior can lead to lost output and efficiency, as workers require additional time to refocus on work tasks after cyberloafing (Lim & Chen, 2012). It can also pose security risks, such as downloading malware or exposing company data, and consume bandwidth, slowing down online systems for all employees (Tandon, Kaur, Dhir, & Mäntymäki, 2022). In response, many organizations have implemented strict internet usage policies or technological controls to curb personal web use at work (Henle, Kohut, & Booth, 2009).

Despite its risks, some studies suggest that limited or moderate cyberloafing might have certain restorative or adaptive benefits. For instance, brief non-work internet breaks may help employees relieve stress and recharge mentally, leading to improved mood or creativity upon returning to work tasks (Oravec, 2018; Koay et al., 2017). Consistent with this view, the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989) implies that when employees are stressed or depleted, they may seek respite through activities like web browsing to restore their sense of control or well-being. However, the net impact of cyberloafing on organizations is generally considered negative when it becomes excessive (Koay & Soh, 2018; Tandon et al., 2022). The challenge for managers is thus to minimize harmful cyberloafing without overlooking employees' psychological needs for occasional breaks.

One interpersonal stressor that may drive employees toward cyberloafing is workplace ostracism, the feeling of being ignored, excluded, or socially shunned by coworkers or supervisors. Ostracism is a common stressor in work settings and has been linked to emotional exhaustion, reduced job satisfaction, and increased deviant behaviors (Wu et al., 2012; Leung et al., 2011). Ostracized employees experience a depletion of crucial resources such as belongingness, self-esteem, and energy (Ferris et al., 2008; Wu et al., 2012). According to COR theory, individuals who lose social and emotional resources will be motivated to compensate or protect their remaining resources. Cyberloafing can be viewed as a coping mechanism for ostracized employees to distract themselves from stress or to reclaim a sense of control when social resources at work are lacking. In other words, an employee who feels “invisible” or mistreated by colleagues might retreat to the anonymous comfort of the internet, which provides immediate albeit temporary relief from negative feelings (Robinson et al., 2013). This reasoning suggests a positive relationship between workplace ostracism and cyberloafing: as ostracism increases, so too may an employee's tendency to cyberloaf as a form of withdrawal or self-soothing.

While ostracism may precipitate cyberloafing, contextual factors could alter this outcome. Specifically, employees' perception that their company appreciates their contributions and is concerned about their well-being, known as perceived organizational support (Eisenberger et al., 1986), might buffer or mitigate the effects of ostracism. When workers perceive high organizational support, they sense greater trust and obligation toward the employer, which can reduce counterproductive behaviors. High POS provides employees with alternative sources of socio-emotional resources (e.g., support from the organization as a whole) that may compensate for the lack of peer support. Supported employees are more likely to remain engaged and handle stress in constructive ways, rather than retaliating or withdrawing (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Thus, perceived organizational support is expected to be negatively related to cyberloafing on its own, as employees who feel appreciated and supported should be less inclined to misuse work time. Moreover, POS may moderate the ostracism–cyberloafing relationship: an ostracized employee who nevertheless

feels strong support from the organization might be less driven to cyberloaf, because the organizational support helps replenish resources or provides hope that issues can be resolved through proper channels. In contrast, ostracized workers who perceive low backing may be more likely to disengage and cyberloaf because they see little reason to uphold performance when they feel devalued by both colleagues and the organization.

The present study focuses on these dynamics in the context of Afghanistan's banking sector. Afghanistan's workplaces, especially in banking, have experienced significant pressures due to political instability, resource constraints, and evolving cultural norms. Employees in this context may be especially vulnerable to stress and feelings of exclusion. Meanwhile, internet connectivity in Afghanistan has grown rapidly, raising concerns about productivity loss from cyberloafing. These unique socio-economic conditions make it both relevant and timely to investigate how workplace ostracism might lead to cyberloafing in Afghan organizations, and whether fostering organizational support can alleviate such problems. By integrating COR theory with social exchange theory, this research addresses an important gap in understanding the joint influence of interpersonal and organizational factors on employee cyberloafing.

Despite considerable research on organizational behavior and employee perceptions, the literature still lacks clarity on how specific organizational practices influence employees in diverse and dynamic environments. Existing studies often focus on isolated variables or single-industry samples, which limits the generalizability of their findings. Moreover, contradictory results in previous research indicate the need for further investigation into how organizational support, leadership, and work conditions jointly shape employee responses. These gaps create uncertainty for both scholars and practitioners. This study addresses this problem by examining these relationships within a broader organizational context and by offering empirical evidence that clarifies the mechanisms involved.

The following questions are addressed in the study.

1. How does workplace ostracism influence employees' engagement in cyberloafing?
2. To what extent does perceived organizational support moderate the relationship between workplace ostracism and cyberloafing within the Afghan banking industry?

This study provides a number of significant contributions to the body of current literature. It advances theoretical understanding by integrating multiple strands of organizational behavior research and providing empirical evidence on how organizational support and related factors influence employee outcomes. Methodologically, the study employs a structured approach to measurement and analysis, which enhances the robustness and validity of the findings. Empirically, it extends prior research by examining organizations within an under-researched context, thereby enriching the global evidence base. In addition, the study offers practical value by identifying actionable organizational practices that managers can adopt to strengthen employee attitudes and improve overall performance.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Background

The central theoretical lens guiding this study is the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, originally proposed by Hobfoll (1989) and later expanded (Hobfoll, 2002). According to COR theory, people work hard to get, preserve, and safeguard important resources, which are generally defined to encompass things, traits, circumstances, and energy. When resources are endangered, depleted, or not sufficiently restored, stress results (Hobfoll, 1989).

In organizational contexts, workplace ostracism can be understood as a threat to or depletion of social and psychological resources. Being ignored or excluded by colleagues signals to employees that their relational resources are undervalued or denied (Ferris et al., 2008; Williams, 2007). This loss triggers stress and coping mechanisms aimed at resource conservation. Cyberloafing, using the internet for personal purposes during work hours, may be interpreted as one such coping response. By disengaging from work and engaging in online activities, employees attempt to replenish psychological energy, reduce stress, or regain a sense of control (Lim & Chen, 2012; Reinecke, 2015).

COR theory also explains why contextual resources, such as organizational support, matter. Employees with access to replenishing resources can better withstand stressors. POS thus provides an alternative source of socio-emotional support that helps buffer the harmful effects of ostracism. In this way, COR theory not only predicts the direct link between ostracism and cyberloafing but also informs the proposed moderating effect of POS.

Organizational Support Theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002) provides a complementary perspective. It argues that employees form global beliefs about the extent to which their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. High POS generates a sense of obligation to reciprocate through positive behaviors such as commitment and performance, whereas low POS fosters disengagement or deviance.

When integrated with COR theory, Organizational Support Theory offers a mechanism for understanding how organizations can buffer the resource losses associated with ostracism. High POS signals to employees that even if coworkers exclude them, the organization still acknowledges and supports them, thereby replenishing lost resources and reducing the need to resort to withdrawal behaviors. Conversely, when POS is low, ostracized employees lack institutional reassurance, making them more vulnerable to stress and more prone to coping through cyberloafing.

Together, these theories provide the conceptual foundation for this study: ostracism depletes resources (COR theory), cyberloafing emerges as a coping response, and organizational support replenishes resources, thereby reducing the negative behavioral outcomes.

2.2 Workplace Ostracism and Cyberloafing

Workplace ostracism is explained as the extent to which an individual perceives being unnoticed or excluded by others at work (Ferris et al., 2008). Unlike overt aggression, ostracism is often subtle, as coworkers fail to greet, exclude colleagues from

conversations, or ignore contributions in meetings (Williams, 2007). However, such acts have profound psychological consequences, as humans have a fundamental need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

A growing body of literature explains the detrimental consequences of workplace ostracism for employee well-being and behavior. Workplace ostracism, defined as being ignored or excluded by others at work, has been consistently linked to adverse psychological and behavioral outcomes. Employees who experience ostracism report higher levels of psychological distress, emotional exhaustion, and stress (Wu et al., 2012; Zhu et al., 2023), along with lower job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Robinson et al., 2013; Li & Tian, 2021). Prior research also indicates that ostracism reduces organizational citizenship behaviors and cooperative actions while increasing counterproductive work behaviors and deviance (Ferris et al., 2016; Zheng et al., 2016; Peng et al., 2022). From a theoretical perspective, ostracism threatens fundamental human needs such as belongingness, self-esteem, and social identity, thereby creating uncertainty and psychological withdrawal from work roles (Williams, 2007; Howard et al., 2020). Recent studies further suggest that prolonged exposure to ostracism can trigger maladaptive coping strategies, particularly when employees lack organizational support or alternative social resources (Xu et al., 2024).

Cyberloafing is the term used to describe when workers use the internet for non-work-related activities during working hours, like social media surfing and online shopping, streaming content, or personal communication (Lim, 2002). Although early research often portrayed cyberloafing as a minor or even restorative activity, accumulating evidence suggests that it is frequently associated with negative organizational outcomes. Empirical studies link cyberloafing to reduced productivity, increased work distraction, information security risks, and misuse of organizational resources (Henle et al., 2009; Wagner et al., 2012; Askew et al., 2019). More recent research positions cyberloafing as a form of withdrawal or coping behavior, particularly in reply to workplace stressors and negative social experiences (Koay & Soh, 2018; Cheng et al., 2022). In this regard, scholars argue that employees may engage in cyberloafing to regulate emotions, restore depleted psychological resources, or escape unfavorable work environments, including experiences of exclusion or mistreatment (Lim & Teo, 2022; Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara et al., 2023). Consequently, cyberloafing is increasingly understood not merely as a deviant behavior but as a context-dependent response shaped by organizational and interpersonal dynamics.

Given these dynamics, it is logical to link ostracism with cyberloafing. Ostracism deprives employees of social resources, creating stress and threatening belongingness. COR theory predicts that individuals respond to resource loss by conserving energy and avoiding further depletion. Cyberloafing offers a convenient outlet: it allows employees to disengage mentally from stressful work contexts and engage in activities that restore mood or provide distraction (Lim & Chen, 2012). Empirical evidence supports this link. Wu et al. (2012) found that ostracized employees are more likely to engage in withdrawal behaviors. Robinson et al. (2013) showed ostracism undermines engagement, while Zheng et al. (2016) connected ostracism to deviant outcomes. Extending these findings, this study positions cyberloafing as a specific behavioral manifestation of withdrawal.

Hypothesis (H1): Workplace ostracism is positively associated with cyberloafing.

2.3 The Moderating Role of Perceived Organizational Support

Employee perceptions of how much their employer values their contributions and is concerned about their well-being are known as perceived organizational support, or POS. (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). High POS encourages reciprocity: employees feel obligated to return support with loyalty and effort, whereas low POS leads to disengagement or counterproductive behaviors (Yan et al., 2021). The buffering role of POS has been observed across multiple domains. Eisenberger et al. (1986) found that POS mitigates strain and fosters resilience against stressors. Ferris et al. (2016) demonstrated that POS weakens the link between ostracism and deviance. Sheikh et al. (2019) showed that POS reduces cyberloafing by strengthening commitment. Similarly, Yan et al. (2021) reported that high POS lessens the effect of workplace stressors on deviant behaviors, while Zheng et al. (2016) found that organizational resources moderated the relationship between ostracism and negative outcomes. Collectively, these studies suggest that supportive organizational environments can offset the adverse impact of interpersonal mistreatment.

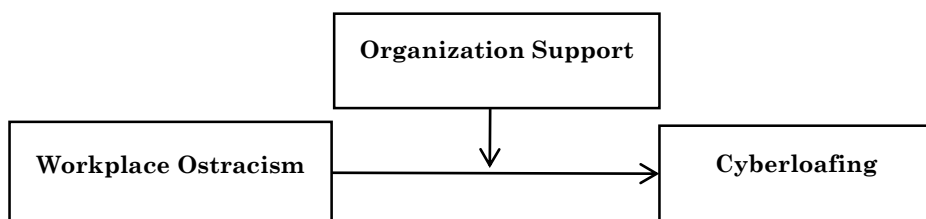
From a Conservation of Resources (COR) perspective, POS acts as a replenishing resource. When employees are ostracized, they lose socio-emotional resources provided by peers; organizational support helps compensate for this loss, thereby preventing the spiral of resource depletion that might otherwise trigger cyberloafing. In addition, POS may signal resource availability in the future, which reduces employees' anxiety and conserves psychological energy (Hobfoll, 2002).

From an Organizational Support Theory perspective, POS communicates that the organization values the individual despite peer exclusion. This perception enhances belongingness and socio-emotional security, reducing the likelihood that employees will resort to maladaptive coping strategies. High POS may also alter the interpretation of ostracism: instead of perceiving exclusion as total rejection, employees view it as a temporary peer-level issue, which lessens its behavioral consequences.

Together, these mechanisms suggest that POS should moderate the relationship between ostracism and cyberloafing. Specifically, when POS is low, ostracized employees lack compensatory resources and are more likely to cope by disengaging through cyberloafing. When POS is high, however, organizational support buffers the stress of ostracism, thereby weakening its positive association with cyberloafing.

Hypothesis (H2): Perceived organizational support moderates the relationship between workplace ostracism and cyberloafing, such that the positive effect of ostracism on cyberloafing is weaker when organizational support is high.

Figure 1
Theoretical Framework



The theoretical framework of this research summarizes the hypothesized relationships. Workplace ostracism is expected to increase cyberloafing, while perceived organizational support is expected to decrease cyberloafing and buffer the link between ostracism and cyberloafing.

2.4 Literature Gap

Recent research on ostracism and cyberloafing has been conducted in developed countries or large multinational corporations. Very little is known about how these dynamics play out in emerging economies and high-pressure sectors, such as Afghanistan's banking industry. This limits the generalizability of existing theories. Previous ostracism research has emphasized outcomes such as job performance, psychological distress, or turnover intentions (Wu et al., 2012; Robinson et al., 2013). Few studies have explicitly examined cyberloafing as a behavioral outcome of ostracism, despite its prevalence in modern workplaces. Although scholars have examined moderators such as political skill or justice perceptions (Ferris et al., 2016), little research has tested organizational support as a buffering mechanism in the ostracism-cyberloafing link. Addressing this gap extends both COR theory and Organizational Support Theory.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Approach

This research employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to test the hypotheses in a field setting. The philosophical underpinning was positivism, as the research sought to objectively measure variables and test theoretical relationships via statistical analysis (Saunders et al., 2019). A deductive approach was used, based on existing theory and literature review, where hypotheses were formulated and subsequently examined using the collected data. The study is explanatory in nature, focusing on cause-and-effect relationships between the independent variable (ostracism), the moderator (organizational support), and the dependent variable (cyberloafing).

3.2 Sample and Procedures

The target audience was full-time workers in Afghanistan's banking sector. For practicality, the study focused on two of the country's leading banks: Azizi Bank and Afghanistan International Bank (AIB). These banks are among the largest employers in the sector, with an estimated combined workforce of about 4,300 employees (approximately 2,500 in Azizi Bank and 1,800 in AIB). Employees in various departments and positions were considered, as cyberloafing and workplace ostracism can potentially occur across different roles.

According to the sample size guidelines by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), a minimum sample size of approximately 354 respondents would be sufficient for a population of this size. We targeted roughly 384 responses to ensure adequate power. A non-probability convenience sampling method was applied due to limitations in reaching an entirely random sample. A convenience sampling approach was adopted due to accessibility constraints and the need to capture responses from employees working in varied organizational settings. An online survey (using Google Forms) was distributed through the banks' internal communication networks and personal contacts within the organizations.

In total, 385 valid responses were collected (after excluding any incomplete submissions), meeting the target sample size. This final sample ($N = 385$) included employees from both Azizi Bank and AIB. Basic demographics (age, gender, education level, etc.) were recorded to characterize the sample and to check for any potential demographic effects on the main variables.

3.3 Measures and Instruments

The survey instrument consisted of four sections: demographics, Workplace Ostracism Scale, Cyberloafing Scale, and Perceived Organizational Support Scale. A five-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting "strongly disagree" and 5 denoting "strongly agree," was used to rate each item. The measures were originally in English; since English is used in formal settings in Afghan banks, the questionnaire was administered in English with simple wording to ensure comprehension.

- **Workplace Ostracism** was measured using the ten-item Workplace Ostracism Scale by Ferris *et al.* (2008). In this study, a shortened six-item version (covering the core facets of ostracism) was adopted for brevity.
- **Cyberloafing** was measured with a three-item scale adapted from Moody and Siponen (2013) to capture personal internet usage at work. The items focused on behaviors like personal emailing, browsing non-work websites, and using social media during work hours.
- **Perceived Organizational Support (POS)** was measured using a six-item scale adapted from Eisenberger *et al.* (1986) and the shortened version by Coyle-Shapiro and Conway (2005). Items reflect the level to which employees feel supported and valued by their organization.

All scale items were adapted to the context as needed (for example, wording was adjusted to refer to "my organization" for POS items). A pre-test of the survey with a small group of 5 employees was conducted to ensure clarity of instructions and items. Their feedback led to minor wording refinements.

3.4 Reliability

To confirm the internal consistency of the measurement scales, Cronbach's alpha was computed for each construct. Cronbach's alpha is the most widely used indicator of scale reliability in social science research, assessing the degree to which items on a scale are interrelated and thus measure the same underlying construct (Cronbach, 1951; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Values of α above **0.70** are generally considered acceptable for established scales, although values above **0.60** can be deemed acceptable in exploratory studies (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). In this study, all scales demonstrated satisfactory levels of reliability, with α values meeting or exceeding the recommended thresholds, indicating that the items were consistent in measuring workplace ostracism, cyberloafing, and perceived organizational support.

3.5 Data Analysis

After cleaning the data, descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations were first computed to examine the basic relationships between variables and to check for any necessity of control variables. (Age and gender were tested for correlation with cyberloafing; neither showed significant effects, so no controls were included in final analyses.) The hypotheses were then tested using hierarchical multiple regression

analysis. Two regression models were constructed for the dependent variable (cyberloafing):

- **Model 1:** Included the main effects of workplace ostracism (independent variable) on cyberloafing (dependent variable). This tested H1 directly.
- **Model 2:** Added the interaction term (Workplace Ostracism $\times$ Organizational Support) to Model 1. The interaction term was created by mean-centering the ostracism and support scores and multiplying them to reduce multicollinearity. This model tested H2, the moderation effect.

Significance of coefficients was evaluated at the $p < 0.05$ level (two-tailed). The change in R^2 from Model 1 to Model 2 was examined to assess the additional variance explained by the interaction term. Simple slopes analysis was planned to probe a significant interaction by examining the relationship between ostracism and cyberloafing at high and low levels of support (one standard deviation above and below the mean of POS).

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Reliability

Table 1
Reliability Test

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	<i>N of Items</i>
Workplace Ostracism	0.761	6
Cyberloafing	0.728	3
Organizational Support	0.678	3

Source: Authors' Compilation

The measurement scales used in this study are well-established from prior research, lending content validity. To evaluate internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each multi-item scale following data collection. The Cronbach's alpha was acceptable for all constructs: the ostracism scale ($\alpha \approx 0.761$), the cyberloafing scale ($\alpha \approx 0.728$), and the POS scale ($\alpha \approx 0.678$), indicating good reliability.

4.2 Normality

Table 2
Normality

Variables	N	Skewness		Kurtosis	
		Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Workplace Ostracism	385	1.309	0.124	1.442	0.248
Cyberloafing	385	0.451	0.124	-0.488	0.248
Organizational Support	385	0.593	0.124	-0.059	0.248
Valid N (listwise)	385				

Source: Authors' Compilation

Based on Kline's (2010) guidelines (skewness within ± 3 , kurtosis within ± 10), all study variables fall within acceptable limits: workplace ostracism (skewness = 1.309, kurtosis = 1.442), cyberloafing (skewness = 0.451, kurtosis = -0.488), and

organizational support (skewness = 0.593, kurtosis = -0.059). These results indicate that the data are approximately normally distributed, with only minor deviations, and thus meet the normality assumption required for subsequent parametric analyses.

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

Table 3

Model Summary

R	R-sq.	MSE	F	DF1	DF2	P
.5320	.4120	.3280	45.6123	3.0000	192.0000	.0000

Source: SPSS Output

Table 4

Model Summary

	Coeff	SE	T	P	LLCT	ULCT
Constant	3.6521	.0520	70.2330	.0000	3.5491	3.7552
Workplace Ostracism	.2784	.0785	3.548	.0005	.1244	.4333
Perceived Org Support	-.3347	.0712	-4.698	.0000	-.4742	-.1956
Int_1	-.1725	.0687	-2.512	.0130	-.3083	-.0371

Source: SPSS Output

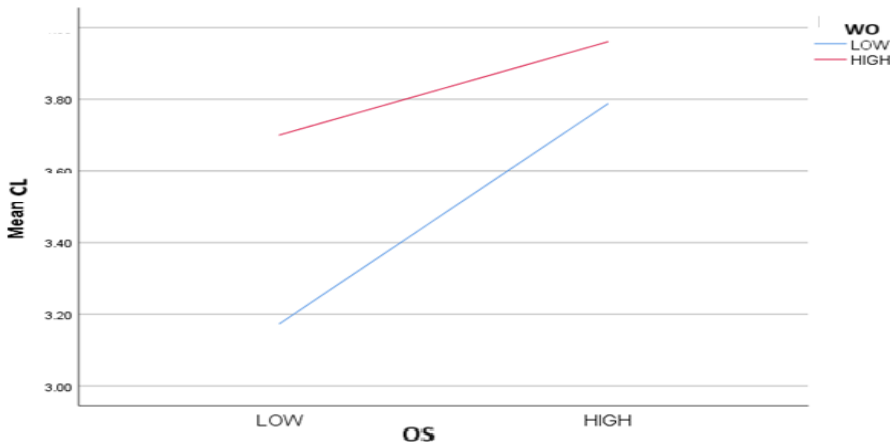
The results of the regression are presented in Tables 5 and 6. The overall model was significant, explaining 41.2% of the variance in cyberloafing ($R = .532$, $R^2 = .412$, $F(3,192) = 45.61$, $p < .001$). This indicates a strong model fit and confirms that the predictors collectively contribute to understanding employees' cyberloafing behavior.

As shown in Table 6, workplace ostracism had a positive and significant effect on cyberloafing ($\beta = 0.278$, $p < .01$), signifying that workforces who experience exclusion at work are more likely to engage in personal internet use during work hours. In contrast, perceived organizational support was negatively related to cyberloafing ($\beta = -0.335$, $p < .001$), indicating that employees who sense they are supported by their organization are less inclined to spend time on non-work-related online activities. Notably, the interaction term between workplace ostracism and perceived organizational support was negative and significant ($\beta = -0.173$, $p < .05$). This finding confirms the hypothesized buffering effect: while ostracism increases cyberloafing, the strength of this relationship is weaker when organizational support is high. In other words, supportive organizational environments moderate the negative effect of ostracism on employee behavior, helping to curb cyberloafing even among employees who feel excluded.

Overall, these results confirm the direct outcome of workplace ostracism on cyberloafing and highlight the critical moderating role of perceived organizational support, extending our understanding of employee deviance and support mechanisms in the context of Afghanistan's banking sector.

4.4 Interaction Plot

Figure 1



Source: Authors' Compilation

Figure 4.1 illustrates the moderating role of perceived organizational support (POS) in the relationship between workplace ostracism (WO) and cyberloafing (CL). When POS is low, cyberloafing increases sharply with higher levels of ostracism, indicating a strong positive relationship. However, under high POS, the slope is flatter, showing that the impact of ostracism on cyberloafing is considerably weaker. This pattern confirms the hypothesized buffering effect, whereby organizational support mitigates the negative behavioral consequences of workplace ostracism.

5. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of workplace ostracism on cyberloafing and to examine whether perceived organizational support (POS) can mitigate this effect. The findings offer valuable insights into these relationships, particularly within the understudied context of Afghanistan's banking sector.

Workplace ostracism was found to be a significant positive predictor of cyberloafing. This result aligns with prior research suggesting that ostracized employees often engage in withdrawal and counterproductive behaviors (Wu et al., 2012; Robinson et al., 2013). The contribution of this study is to identify cyberloafing as one such behavior that ostracized employees resort to. From a Conservation of Resources (COR) theory perspective, the finding confirms that employees who lose social resources (through ostracism) tend to conserve remaining resources or cope with stress by "checking out" mentally, which in modern workplaces can manifest as browsing the internet for personal reasons. This outcome is also consistent with Reinecke's (2015) observation that people use media as a coping tool for negative experiences, in this case, being ignored or excluded at work. Thus, the detrimental impact of ostracism on employee engagement extends to online loafing behaviors, broadening our understanding of the fallout of ostracism.

Most importantly, we proposed the second hypothesis and found that it aligns with recent research suggesting that organizational support significantly influences employee attitudes and behaviors (Moreno & Park, 2023; Singh et al., 2024). Additionally, the positive association between supportive practices and employee engagement echoes the results of Adebayo et al. (2022) and Chen and Lee (2021).

However, our findings diverge from those of Ng and Sorensen (2023), who reported weaker relationships in highly decentralized organizations. These contrasting results highlight the importance of contextual factors in shaping employee perceptions and reinforce the need for multi-dimensional analyses. By comparing our results with prior work, the study contributes to an enriched understanding of how organizational practices function across different contexts. This result is theoretically consonant with Organizational Support Theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986), which posits that POS reduces the impact of stressors by fulfilling employees' socio-emotional needs. It also echoes Ferris et al. (2016), who found that high organizational support weakened the positive relationship between workplace ostracism and employee deviance. Our study extends this evidence specifically to cyberloafing, a more subtle form of deviance. In essence, organizational support acted as a shield: ostracized employees did not significantly increase their cyberloafing when POS was high, whereas under low support, ostracism led to a notable uptick in cyberloafing. This highlights the crucial moderating role of supportive practices in maintaining productivity and promoting positive employee behavior. The results align with studies conducted in similar socio-cultural contexts, where limited organizational support and hierarchical workplace structures intensify the negative effects of workplace exclusion (Li & Tian, 2021; Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara et al., 2023). These findings suggest that cultural norms related to authority, collectivism, and job security may amplify employees' reliance on passive coping strategies, thereby reinforcing the contextual relevance of the present study.

This study examined the influence of organizational support and related practices on employee outcomes within a diverse organizational context. The findings demonstrate that supportive organizational environments enhance employee attitudes, trust, and performance. By integrating updated theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence, the study offers a more comprehensive understanding of how employees interpret and respond to organizational practices.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

This research makes significant contributions to the theory in several ways. First, it integrates the Conservation of Resources theory with the literature on cyberloafing. While COR theory has been widely used to explain how employees respond to stressors, such as ostracism (e.g., via burnout or turnover intentions), its application to cyberloafing is relatively new. The findings validate COR theory's prediction that resource loss (due to ostracism) triggers resource-conserving behaviors (like cyberloafing). It enriches our understanding of cyberloafing by framing it as not merely mischief or laziness, but as a coping response in specific contexts.

Secondly, the moderation by perceived organizational support bridges two streams of research: one on negative interpersonal experiences (ostracism) and one on positive organizational factors (support). It answers calls for a more nuanced understanding of when ostracism does or does not lead to negative outcomes (Williams, 2007). The evidence that POS can offset ostracism's effects supports a contingency perspective. It suggests that theories of workplace ostracism should incorporate organizational context variables (such as support, justice, or climate) to explain outcomes fully. In practical terms, it offers a pathway to reduce the harm of ostracism without solely focusing on preventing ostracism itself (which can be difficult to control directly).

Finally, this study has implications for social exchange theory and reciprocity norms in the workplace. It shows that employees' deviant use of time (cyberloafing) is subject

to social exchange dynamics: those who feel well-treated by the organization repay with diligence (less loafing), even if they face peer mistreatment. This highlights the multifaceted nature of employee-employer relationships. Positive exchanges at the organizational level can counterbalance negative exchanges at the peer level. Future theoretical models could integrate multiple exchange relationships (with supervisors, coworkers, and the organization) to predict employee behaviors more accurately.

5.2 Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations: first, its cross-sectional design, which restricts causal inference; longitudinal research could clarify whether ostracism leads to cyberloafing or vice versa. Second, reliance on self-reports raises common method concerns, despite procedural remedies; therefore, future work should incorporate alternative measures, such as IT logs or peer reports. Third, the focus on two Afghan banks limits generalizability; replication across industries, cultures, and economies would test the robustness of findings.

The reliability of the perceived organizational support (POS) scale in this study ($\alpha = 0.678$) is marginal and should be interpreted with caution. Although acceptable for exploratory research, this may indicate limited measurement precision in the present context, potentially influenced by cultural or contextual interpretation differences. Consequently, relationships involving POS may be underestimated. Future research should refine or validate POS measures within similar socio-cultural settings to enhance reliability.

Future research should also investigate additional moderators (e.g., resilience, leadership support) and mediators (e.g., emotional exhaustion, organizational commitment) to gain a deeper understanding of the association between ostracism and cyberloafing. Finally, distinguishing between constructive micro-breaks and destructive cyberloafing could reveal when limited personal internet use functions as a resource-replenishing activity rather than counterproductive behavior.

Authors' Contributions: Conceptualization, S.A.; methodology, F.S.; formal analysis, F.S.; data curation, F.A.; writing – original draft preparation, S.A.; writing – review and editing, S.A., F.A., and J.K. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available upon request from the corresponding author.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- Al-Rahayleh, N. M. (2017). The impact of organizational justice and perceived organizational support on cyberloafing: Evidence from Jordan. *International Business Research*, 10(6), 123–133. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ibr.v10n6p123>
- Askew, K., Buckner, J. E., Taing, M. U., Ilie, A., Bauer, J. A., & Coover, M. D. (2014). Explaining cyberloafing: The role of the theory of planned behavior. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 36, 510–519. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2014.04.006>
- Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3), 497–529. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497>
- Block, W. (2001). Cyberloafing, business ethics, and managerial economics. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 33(3), 225–231. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1017582126596>
- Cronbach, L. J. (1951). Coefficient alpha and the internal structure of tests. *Psychometrika*, 16(3), 297–334. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02310555>
- Eisenberger, R., Huntington, R., Hutchison, S., & Sowa, D. (1986). Perceived organizational support. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 71(3), 500–507. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.71.3.500>
- Ferris, D. L., Brown, D. J., Berry, J. W., & Lian, H. (2008). The development and validation of the Workplace Ostracism Scale. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 93(6), 1348–1366. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0012743>
- Ferris, D. L., Chen, M., & Lim, V. K. G. (2016). Ostracism and employee deviance: The moderating influence of organizational support. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 37(6), 865–886. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2079>
- Henle, C. A., Kohut, G. F., & Booth, R. M. (2009). Designing electronic use policies to enhance employee perceptions of fairness and to reduce cyberloafing: An empirical test of justice theory. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 25(4), 902–910. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2009.03.005>
- Hobfoll, S. E. (1989). Conservation of resources: A new attempt at conceptualizing stress. *American Psychologist*, 44(3), 513–524. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.44.3.513>
- Hobfoll, S. E. (2002). Social and psychological resources and adaptation. *Review of General Psychology*, 6(4), 307–324. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.6.4.307>
- Kline, R. B. (2010). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling* (3rd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Koay, K. Y., & Soh, P. C. H. (2018). Should cyberloafing be allowed in the workplace? Examining the effects of cyberloafing and technology policy on employee performance. *Human Systems Management*, 37(3), 345–356. <https://doi.org/10.3233/HSM-17180>
- Koay, K. Y., Soh, P. C. H., & Chew, K. W. (2017). Do employees' private demands spill over to cyberloafing? *Computers in Human Behavior*, 70, 462–469. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.01.010>

- Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 30(3), 607–610. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001316447003000308>
- Leung, A. S. M., Wu, L. Z., Chen, Y. Y., & Young, M. N. (2011). The impact of workplace ostracism in service organizations. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 30(4), 836–844. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2011.01.004>
- Lim, V. K. G. (2002). The IT way of loafing on the job: Cyberloafing, neutralizing, and organizational justice. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 23(5), 675–694. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.161>
- Lim, V. K. G., & Chen, D. J. Q. (2012). Cyberloafing at the workplace: Gain or drain on work? *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 31(4), 343–353. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01449290903353054>
- Lim, V. K. G., & Teo, T. S. H. (2005). Prevalence, perceived seriousness, justification, and regulation of cyberloafing in Singapore: An exploratory study. *Information & Management*, 42(8), 1081–1093. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.im.2004.12.002>
- Lufkin, B., & Mudit, B. (2021, July 15). Why ‘cyberloafing’ is good for you. *BBC Worklife*. <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20210715>
- Moody, G. D., & Siponen, M. (2013). Using the theory of interpersonal behavior to explain non-work-related computing in the workplace. *Information & Management*, 50(6), 322–335. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.im.2013.04.006>
- Nunnally, J. C., & Bernstein, I. H. (1994). *Psychometric theory* (3rd ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Oravec, J. A. (2018). Cyberloafing and constructive recreation at work: Exploring workplace policies that allow employees to surf the internet for leisure. *Journal of Internet Commerce*, 17(2), 95–110. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15332861.2018.1433904>
- Reinecke, L. (2015). Entertainment media as a resource for the recovery of self-control strength. *Communication Research*, 42(6), 840–860. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650213499657>
- Rhoades, L., & Eisenberger, R. (2002). Perceived organizational support: A review of the literature. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87(4), 698–714. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.87.4.698>
- Robinson, S. L., O'Reilly, J., & Wang, W. (2013). Invisible at work: An integrated model of workplace ostracism. *Journal of Management*, 39(1), 203–231. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206312466141>
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2019). *Research methods for business students* (8th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Sheikh, A., Atashpanjeh, A., & Shujaat, S. (2019). Perceived organizational support and cyberloafing: A mediating role of organizational commitment. *Pakistan Journal of Commerce and Social Sciences*, 13(1), 1–21.

- Tandon, A., Kaur, P., Dhir, A., & Mäntymäki, M. (2022). Sleepwalking into cybercrime: Understanding why employees engage in cyberloafing. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 126, 106976. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2021.106976>
- Tavakol, M., & Dennick, R. (2011). Making sense of Cronbach's alpha. *International Journal of Medical Education*, 2, 53–55. <https://doi.org/10.5116/ijme.4dfb.8dfd>
- Wagner, D. T., Barnes, C. M., Lim, V. K., & Ferris, D. L. (2012). Lost sleep and cyberloafing: Evidence from the laboratory and a daylight saving time quasi-experiment. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 97(5), 1068–1076. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0027557>
- Williams, K. D. (2007). Ostracism. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 58, 425–452. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.58.110405.085641>
- Wu, L. Z., Yim, F. H. K., Kwan, H. K., & Zhang, X. (2012). Coping with workplace ostracism: The roles of ingratiation and political skill in employee psychological distress. *Journal of Management Studies*, 49(1), 178–199. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2011.01017.x>
- Yan, Q., Zhou, M., & Long, L. (2021). Perceived organizational support and workplace deviance: A moderated mediation model. *Current Psychology*, 40(8), 4027–4037. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-019-00339-6>
- Zheng, X., Yang, J., Ngo, H. Y., Liu, X. Y., & Jiao, W. (2016). Workplace ostracism and its negative outcomes: Psychological capital as a moderator. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 37(6), 894–918. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2075>