

Examining Toxic Leadership Nexus With Employee Cyberloafing Behavior via Mediating Role of Emotional Exhaustion

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ABSTRACT

From the perspective of social exchange and the conservation of resources theories, the current study investigated the effect of toxic leadership on employee cyberloafing behaviour via the mediating role of emotional exhaustion and the moderating role of organisational commitment. SPSS models 1: moderation, 4: mediation, and 14: moderation mediation of PROCESS Hayes were used to evaluate the data from 357 employees of the Chinese corporate sector. The results show a positive relation between toxic leadership and cyberloafing, and emotional exhaustion mediates this relationship. Further, organisation commitment moderates the indirect, interactive effect of toxic leadership and emotional exhaustion on cyberloafing. The model was tested using 3-wave data; however, since the data were attained from a single source, the problem of common method bias cannot be ruled out. To avoid or lessen instances of cyberloafing behaviour and encourage good working attitudes, organisations must also take action and develop regulations governing internet use in the workplace.

KEYWORDS

Toxic Leadership, Cyberloafing, Emotional Exhaustion, Organisation Commitment, Corporate Sector

INTRODUCTION

The internet, an essential aspect of industry operations (Tandon et al., 2021), can significantly impact the productivity and efficiency of both employees and organisations (Koay & Soh, 2018b). While the internet may facilitate employees' work, they may also use it to unwind during working hours. This will, in turn, compromise their ability to do their jobs (Andel et al., 2019). While at work, employees often cyberloaf on social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp (Koay & Soh, 2018b). This negative habit impacts organisational productivity and professional responsibilities (Zhong et al., 2022).

The number of workers who regularly use social networking sites via e-gadgets and mobile phones has increased by approximately 84.1% (Koay & Soh, 2018a). Gökçearsan et al. (2018) found

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that workers spend two hours per day on social media and non-work activities. Tandon et al. (2021) noted that employers may have a difficult time stopping employees from engaging in cyberloafing habits. Workplace productivity suffers when workers are too absorbed in their personal lives, which is detrimental to the organisation (Pindek et al., 2018).

There are many reasons employees practice cyberloafing behaviour in the workplace. As Reed (2004) noted, “toxic leadership is a type of leadership that is destructive to members of a team and the overall workplace” (p. 66). The leader’s toxic behaviour can influence employees’ attitudes and actions. The employees mindset may change from a constructive to destructive approach when leaders display intimidating behaviour toward subordinates (Bani-Melhem et al., 2020). Employees’ destructive approaches include turnover intention, anxiety, cyberloafing, and deviant or counterproductive work behaviours. Toxic leaders tend to be overconfident and arrogant. They view themselves as infallible. They scorn subordinates who dare to reprimand or disagree with their direction (Labrague, 2021).

Research has shown that the negative effect of toxic leadership on employee outcomes is at least as significant as the positive impact of constructive leadership practices (Mehta & Maheshwari, 2013). Misuse of power in the workplace has been linked to a range of negative effects on employee stress, absenteeism, job satisfaction, productivity, and loyalty (Zaman et al., 2022). Still, there is much to study regarding an individual’s feelings or behaviours related to their experience with toxic leadership.

Long-term, regular contact with toxic leaders increases stress and lowers employee well-being (Bani-Melhem et al., 2020). Employees who face toxic leadership feel abused and frustrated. Those who have worked with toxic leaders for an extended period tend to have poor self-worth and self-efficacy (Paton, 2021). Toxic leaders who shout, criticise, or ridicule subordinates will also increase emotional exhaustion, leading to behaviours that relieve stress. According to Gaines and Jermier (1983), “emotional exhaustion is a state of feeling emotionally worn-out and drained as a result of accumulated stress from your personal or work life, or a combination of both” (p. 568).

Using the social exchange theory (SET) and conservation of resources theory (COR), this study will examine cyberloafing behaviour that results from toxic leadership and emotional exhaustion. These theories suggest that positive relationships between leaders and subordinates are crucial to an organisation (Snow et al., 2021). Employees subjected to verbal abuse at work are less likely to demonstrate strong performance and more likely to indulge in cyberloafing as a means to escape their stress (Khan, Saeed et al., 2021; Saqib & Arif, 2017). The COR theory states that emotional exhaustion plays a role in the relationship between cyberloafing and toxic leadership. Employees become psychologically disturbed and weary from their work when placed under too much stress. Thus, employees engage in cyberloafing behaviours (Saleem et al., 2021).

Employees become emotionally exhausted due to the regular use of abusive language and toxic leadership. These actions impact day-to-day responsibilities at work and in their personal lives (Dicke et al., 2022; Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007). Employees who are subjected to undue stress are less likely to focus on their work. They become demotivated. As a result, workers indulge in non-work activities like cyberloafing to relieve their tensions and stay engaged. According to Koay and Soh (2018b), workplace ostracism reduces employee interest, which impacts organisational performance and increases emotional exhaustion (Abukhait et al., 2022). Cyberloafing is a form of retribution for their unjust treatment (Kayani & Alasan, 2021).

According to the findings of this research, organisational commitment may act as a buffer against the link between toxic leadership and cyberloafing caused by emotional exhaustion. This study argues that the effect of toxic leadership on cyberloafing due to emotional exhaustion is mitigated by an employee’s level of organisational commitment (Amri & Ramdani, 2021). This work contributes to the body of knowledge in several ways. First, the study investigates how leadership impacts employees’ behaviours and cyberloafing. Leaders who are knowledgeable and effective in their respective fields can motivate their followers (Alshuaibi et al., 2015). Effective leadership can reduce deviant conduct, guiding an organisation in the right direction (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2018). If leaders are unable to change an organisation’s laws and regulations, they can still demonstrate respect, decency, and integrity.

These behaviours influence employees' habits and reduce cyberloafing activities. However, the opposite occurs when faced with toxic leadership (Al-Hawari et al., 2021). Second, as an alternative theoretical explanation for the relationship between toxic leadership and cyberloafing, the study examines the role of emotional exhaustion as a mediator between cyberloafing and toxic leadership. This relationship has only been examined through the perspective of psychological capital (Agarwal et al., 2021, Bani-Melhem et al., 2020). Third, the study investigates the role of organisational commitment in moderating the link between toxic leadership and cyberloafing. The study provides actionable advice for managers to deal with cyberloafing habits in the corporate workplace (Quratulain & Bani-Melhem, 2020). See Figure 1.

This article includes an introduction, literature review, and development of hypotheses. The methodology is discussed and results are analyzed. The article concludes with a discussion of the implications.

LITERATURE REVIEW

SET

SET, the primary theory used in management research, explains the interaction between employees and their attitudes or behaviours at work (Blau, 1964a). This theory proposes that individuals are inclined to behave in ways that elicit favourable responses from others by assessing the rewards and losses associated with a situation (Blau, 1964b). Regarding employee comfort and wants, this theory shows that workers will follow their feelings and needs (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Treating workers with dignity and respect increases motivation; abusive treatment during work hours results in lower levels of motivation and satisfaction and an increase in non-work activities (Westphal et al., 2012). Productivity (organisation and employee) is directly linked to a leader's behaviour and attitude. Appreciation and rewards are effective tools for engaging employees and diverting their attention from social media (Lambe et al., 2001).

Perceived organisational support (POS) has been long understood in terms of SET. The benefits of POS are seen as reciprocal. Employees who feel their employer is supportive are more likely to reciprocate (Mohammad et al., 2021). High POS has been linked, under certain conditions, to increased organisational citizenship behaviour, improved job performance, and reduced absenteeism. Researchers have perceived POS as the "quality" of the social exchange between an employee and employer. Additionally, leader-member exchange (LMX) has been viewed as the exchange relationship between an employee and their supervisor (Cropanzano et al., 2017).

COR

According to COR (Hobfoll, 2011), individuals constantly attempt to identify, obtain, and maintain their resources. These include objects, energies, or personal qualities. This paradigm explains how

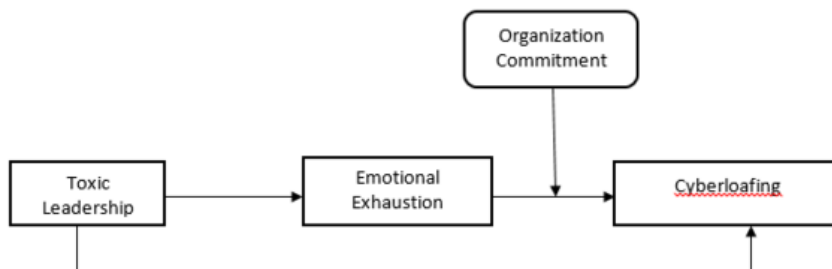


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

individuals behave when there is a threat of loss, actual loss, or absence of an anticipated increase in resources. The response often takes the form of withdrawal until they can recover enough resources to manage the loss.

Using the COR, this article argues that working under toxic leadership is stressful because it results in a perceived loss of resources for the employee. Specifically, employees give in to a helpless condition because they have little control over their conduct and are threatened or punished by leadership's actions. Individuals lose interest in their work and refrain from expressing themselves when they believe they are being coerced into doing duties that lack intrinsic value. Cyberloafing serves as a stress relief, allowing users to avoid further depletion of their resources as they indulge in a favorite pastime.

A recent meta-analysis on toxic leadership highlighted the need for research to understand the mechanisms behind how and why toxic leadership styles are detrimental to subordinates (Hattab et al., 2022). The study revealed that there have been very few studies on the impact of toxic leadership on employee performance. This underlines the need to investigate how subordinates' poor performance is caused by destructive leaders.

The current research aims to contribute to this field by exploring the underlying mechanism of the relationship between toxic leadership and job performance through the lens of work alienation (Hadadian & Zarei, 2016). The mechanism is theorised using the COR, which suggests that individuals with stronger psychological resources are better able to cope with toxic leaders. These leaders are characterised by the abuse of their leadership power and use of tactics like intimidation, threats, and reprimands. The study shows that toxic leadership leads to a decline in job performance. In addition, work alienation mediates this relationship (Hadadian & Sayadpour, 2018). Table 1 illustrates different behaviours within the toxic leadership style.

DEVELOPMENT OF HYPOTHESES

Toxic Leadership and Cyberloafing

Toxic leadership behaviours may be intemperate, arrogant, self-promoting, or degrading. Toxic leadership behaviour affects employees in a negative way (Zhu et al., 2021). Due to destructive behaviours, employees engage in non-work activities like cyberloafing to preserve their resources. One study showed the interconnectedness of cyberloafing and toxic leadership (Usman et al., 2021). Due to a hostile workplace culture, employees resort to cyberloafing to relieve stress.

According to the COR, an organisation's productivity and employee performance are associated with maintaining a healthy, pleasant atmosphere for both the employer and employee (Tandon et al.,

Table 1.

Toxic Leadership Behavior	Author(s)
Arrogant	Suthatorn and Charoensukmongkol (2022)
Autocratic	Abukhait et al. (2022)
Discriminatory	Al-Hawari et al. (2021)
Irritable	Saqib and Arif (2017)
Unrealistic expectations	Hadadian and Zarei (2016)
Hierarchical	Alshuaibi et al. (2015)
Incompetent	Halbesleben and Bowler (2007)
Lack of confidence	Luthans (2005)

2021). When a leader abuses their employee, it impacts workers in a variety of ways, including loss of self-esteem and morale in the workplace (Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara et al., 2019). Some employees spend time on the internet and social media platforms. When in this situation, employees are more likely to be dissatisfied with their work and put in fewer hours (Tandon et al., 2021). When exploited workers put in less effort at work and engage in cyberloafing, they postpone projects and exact vengeance on their employer (Agarwal et al., 2021). In addition, an organisation is deprived of one of its most valuable resources. Its rivals can then gain an advantage by recruiting their skilled workers.

H1: There is a positive relationship between toxic leadership and cyberloafing.

Toxic Leadership and Emotional Exhaustion

Employees' emotional exhaustion is a direct consequence of interpersonal treatment. Being exposed to stressful conditions at work might lead to feelings of exhaustion (Malik et al., 2019). When individuals face a toxic leader, they have feelings of helplessness, demoralisation, stress, and anxiety. It has been shown that toxic leadership has a negative impact on employees' perceptions of justice in the workplace.

Toxic leadership leads to emotional exhaustion (Bani-Melhem et al., 2022; Khakpour, 2019). Toxic leaders provide less emotional support to targeted employees. This, in turn, impacts the targeted employee's interactions with colleagues and productivity in the workplace (Bhandarker & Rai, 2019; Hattab et al., 2022; Watkins & Walker, 2021). Continuous misbehaviours by a supervisor can cause the employee to escape their exhaustion through non-work activities. This helps the employee cope with job stress and abusive behaviours (Khan et al., 2019). According to the COR, constant abuse from a toxic leader results in psychological pressures on employee. Previous research indicates that toxic management causes harm to the psychological well-being of employees (Hadadian & Sayadpour, 2018).

H2: There is a positive relationship between toxic leadership and emotional exhaustion.

Emotional Exhaustion as a Mediator

Exhaustion is a complicated condition that may lead to a decline in mental and physical functions. It is characterised by a loss of attentiveness and difficulty concentrating (Charoensukmongkol & Puyod, 2022). According to the COR, when subjected to abusive language from a supervisor, an employee will face emotional, physical, and psychological exhaustion (Charoensukmongkol & Phungsoonthorn, 2022; Charoensukmongkol & Puyod, 2022). Research has shown that employees who are subjected to elevated stress levels will get exhausted more quickly (Khassawneh et al., 2023). Similarly, an individual's degree of exhaustion the day before has a substantial impact on their level of exhaustion the day after (Charoensukmongkol, 2022).

Exhausted employees are more prone to distractions like cyberloafing (Khakpour, 2019; Liu & Zhang, 2022; Maqbool et al., 2023; Rahaei & Salehzadeh, 2020; Lim et al., 2020). This type of distraction is used to avoid interactions with leadership to protect self-esteem and health (Hadadian & Sayadpour, 2018). Toxic leadership and emotional exhaustion have a positive relationship when employees are psychologically drained. Toxic leaders constantly abuse a targeted employee for petty tasks (Hadadian & Zarei, 2016). According to studies, hostile behaviour among employees is more common in workplaces with a lack of amicable communication and collaboration (Malik et al., 2019).

Hence, it is proved that:

H3: The connection between toxic leadership and cyberloafing is mediated by emotional exhaustion.

Organisational Commitment as a Moderator

Organisational commitment is a behaviour in which employees want to do good work for the organisation (To & Huang, 2022). Luthans (2005) stated that organisational commitment is an individual's aspiration to be a long-term employee, demonstrating efficiency and effectiveness on the organisation's behalf. This type of employee is inclined to agree with the organisation's objectives and values. This commitment is one way the employee identifies with their work environment (Goetz & Wald, 2022).

It is hypothesised that employees with high degrees of organisational commitment are less influenced by emotional exhaustion and less engaged in cyberloafing (Niaei et al., 2014). These individuals are connected to their work through incentives like monetary advantages and personal motivation (Lim et al., 2020). Employees who better manage the negative impacts of stress and stay focused on their duties find that commitment is a valuable resource (Aladwan et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2022). According to Hensel and Kacprzak (2020), employees who lack commitment are more prone to burnout and workplace stress. Additionally, Tandon et al. (2021) concluded that employees who are devoted to their tasks are less affected by changes in supervisor behaviour. Cyberloafing, on the other hand, has been suggested by some to be less common among emotionally exhausted personnel who are committed to their employer (Çınar & Karcıoğlu, 2015; Saeed et al., 2022). Hence:

H4: Emotional exhaustion and cyberloafing are positively correlated. This correlation will be weak when organisational commitment is high.

Integrated Model

It is hypothesised that the impact of toxic leadership on cyberloafing as a result of emotional exhaustion varies according to the level of organisational commitment. Workers with lower levels of engagement are more likely to be emotionally exhausted and engage in cyberloafing when they are in an environment with toxic leadership (Durak, 2020; Lim et al., 2020). For example, research has shown that individuals with a low level of commitment to their organisation are more likely to suffer stress and exhaustion on the job (Mehta & Maheshwari, 2013; Mohammad & Darwish, 2022a).

Workers lose interest in their work if they do not believe they are contributing to the organisation. In addition, toxic leadership has a detrimental effect on employees' obligations to the organisation (Yaghi, 2019). According to studies, when organisational commitment is low, the indirect effect of toxic leadership on cyberloafing via emotional exhaustion will be weak due to strong organisational commitment (Khan, Ali et al., 2021; Kilic & Günsel, 2019). Thus:

H5: The strength of the mediated relation between toxic leadership and cyberloafing (through emotional exhaustion) will depend on the organisational commitment. The indirect effect of toxic leadership on cyberloafing will be weaker when the organisational commitment is high.

METHODOLOGY

Sample and Procedure

Measures

The data were collected from employees in four companies in the corporate sector via convenience sampling. The data collection was done through a time lag study to eliminate the common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The study contacted 443 employees after receiving official approval from the organisations. Before distributing the questionnaire, unique codes were allocated to each respondent. This allowed the study to trace each respondent through the data collection phases. First, demographic factors and information on the independent variable (toxic leadership) were collected.

The response rate was 422 (95.25%). For the second time, data were collected for the dependent variable (cyberloafing) with a response rate of 389 (87.81%). Data regarding the mediating variables (emotional exhaustion) and moderator variable (organisational commitment) were collected for the third time from the same respondents in which data were collected for the first and second times. This stage received 371 responses (95.37%). Overall, the study linked data from the three stages. It removed 14 questionnaires with missing values. Finally, the study had 357 valid questionnaires.

The participants had an average age of 37.442 years (standard deviation = 9.15), an average length of service with the company of 5.42 years (standard deviation = 7.75), and an average length of service with a leader of 3.2 years (standard deviation = 3.23). Of the participants, 41.2% were currently employed in leadership positions. Of the sample, 76.9% were male. A total of 49% of the respondents held master's degrees, 31% held bachelor's degrees, and 20% held other degrees.

Toxic Leadership

The toxic leadership scale included 15 items derived from Schmidt (2008). Sample items included: (1) accepts credit for successes that do not belong to him/her; (2) acts only in the best interest of his/her next promotion; and (3) has explosive outbursts.

Cyberloafing

Cyberloafing was measured using a seven-item scale developed by Lim (2002). Sample items included: (1) check my personal information at work; and (2) check non-work e-mail at work.

Emotional Exhaustion

Emotional exhaustion was measured using a nine-item scale developed by Maslach and Jackson (1981). The sample item for this scale was: "I feel emotionally drained by my work."

Organisational Commitment

Organisational commitment was measured using a three-item scale (Giauque & Varone, 2019). The sample item for this scale was: "I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization."

Control Variable

Gender (female 0, male 1), experience, and education were control variables because past studies indicated that they significantly influence cyberloafing (Khan, Saeed et al., 2021; Lim et al., 2020).

Results

Common Method Variance (CMV)

Survey-based research was used to avoid CMV, particularly when the same method was used to collect data for independent and dependent variables from the same source. Statistical tests were used to identify the severity of CMV. First, the correlation matrix in Table 3 shows that CMV is not a problem because none of the correlations are more than 0.9 (Bagozzi et al., 1991). Second, the study carried out a comprehensive examination of collinearity suggested by Kock (2015). Table 4 shows that the risk of CMV is very low in this research because the variance inflation factor values were less than 10 (Field, 2013). Third, the study performed a series of factor analyses to confirm model fitness as shown in Table 2.

Factor Analysis

The findings of the fit indices for toxic leadership, cyberloafing, emotional exhaustion, and organisational commitment are shown in Table 2. It can be seen that the confirmatory fit indices for the four factors were satisfactory: $\chi^2 = 3474$, $df = 1214$, $\chi^2/df = 2.86$, $TLI = .91$, $CFI = .90$, $SRMR = 0.05$, $CFI = .92$, and $RMSEA = .06$.

Table 2. Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Model	X ²	df	X ² /df	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Hypothesised four-factor model	3474	1214	2.86	.91	.90	.06	.05
Three-factor model:	5490	1232	4.45	.73	.63	.11	.10
Two-factor model:	3856	1237	3.11	.56	.44	.17	.15
One-factor model	5647	1247	4.52	.42	.31	.31	.17

Note: X² = normal-theory weighted least-squares Chi-square. TLI is the Tucker-Lewis fit index, CFI is the comparative fit index, RMSEA is the root-mean square error of approximation, and SRMR is the standardised root-mean-square residual.

Table 3. Mean, Standard Deviation, Correlations and Reliability

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Gender	2.40	.51	-			
2. Age	2.56	.65	.023			
3. Experience	2.51	.71	.059	.001		
4. Education	3.04	.56	-.022	.034	-.016	
5. Toxic Leadership	3.74	.73	-.013	.042	.001	.436**
6. Cyberloafing	3.83	.64	-.021	.013	.024	.360**
7. Organisation Commitment	3.33	.74	.002	.042	.020	.115*
8. Emotional Exhaustion	3.41	.68	.011	.011	.013	.249*

Note: *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4. A full collinearity test

	Toxic Leadership	Cyberloafing	Emotional Exhaustion	Organisation Commitment
Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)	1.270	1.257	1.558	1.823

To find convergent validity, the study examined composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE). The results show that values were in the acceptable range (CR > 0.60 and AVE > 0.50) (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). In addition, the study compared maximum shared variance (MSV) with AVE to assess discriminant validity. The results show that AVE values were greater than MSV values. Hence, Table 2 shows that discriminant validity is established (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Mean, Standard Deviation, Reliability, and Correlation

The variables in Table 2 have alpha values greater than 0.70. This indicates high reliability. A correlation study aims to determine the degree of similarity between two or more independent variables. All of the variables in the research exhibited a degree of satisfactory internal consistency. The correlations between them went in the predicted directions. The correlation between toxic leadership and cyberloafing is (r = .455**). The correlation between toxic leadership and emotional exhaustion is (r = .335**). The correlation between toxic leadership and organisational commitment is (r = .325**). Cyberloafing to organisational commitment is (r = .221**).

Analysis

Direct Relationship and Mediation Analysis

A positive and significant relation between toxic leadership and cyberloafing ($\beta = .59, t = 6.80, p < 0.000$) and toxic leadership and emotional exhaustion ($\beta = 0.41, t = 7.56, p < 0.000$) was shown in Table 4. This supports hypothesis 1 and 2. Further, the study examines the mediating role of emotional exhaustion by using PROCESS macro Model 4 (Hayes, 2013). The PROCESS macro is a statistical tool that may be introduced as a modification to statistical programmes like SPSS. It is used to conduct regression analyses that include a variety of mediator, moderator, and covariate combinations. The results illustrate that emotional exhaustion mediates the proposed relationship (Effect = 0.36, SE = 0.10, LLCI = 0.1377, and ULCI = 0.4557). This supports hypothesis 3 (see Table 5).

Moderation Analysis

The PROCESS macro Model 1 (Hayes, 2013) has been applied to test the moderation. Table 6 shows the moderating effects of organisational commitment between emotional exhaustion and cyberloafing ($b = -.1181, SE = .0412, t = -2.8673, p = .0044, [LLCI = .0371, ULCI = .1992]$). This supports hypothesis H3a (see Figure 2). Moderator values are the mean and ± 1 SD, LLCI lower limit 95% confidence interval, and ULCI upper limit 95% confidence interval. The study tested the moderated mediation by analysing a combined model in which the value of a moderator (in this case organisational commitment) conditions the strength of the association between toxic leadership and cyberloafing due to emotional exhaustion. The interaction effect of toxic leadership and emotional exhaustion on cyberloafing through organisational commitment is significant. The conditional indirect effect is significant ($\beta .0787, p < .01, LLCI = .0371, ULCI = .1992$) as revealed by boots trapped results (see Table 7).

DISCUSSION

According to the findings of this study, toxic leadership styles have a positive correlation with cyberloafing. The SET posits that a positive attitude on the part of both the employee and employer is required to create a pleasant work environment. When employees experience mistreatment from their leader, they may engage in activities unrelated to work like cyberloafing (Mohammad et al., 2021). As noted by Hadadian and Zarei (2016), toxic leadership impacts the performance of the employee and the organisation. The COR explains how toxic leadership can lead to emotional exhaustion and stress among employees. It suggests that toxic leadership reduces employee motivation and productivity (Bhandarker & Rai, 2019; Kurtulmuş, 2020). When a leader displays an aggressive demeanor toward their employees, it can have negative effects on professional and personal lives (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996; Winn & Dykes, 2019).

According to this study, emotionally exhausted employees are more likely to engage in cyberloafing. Those who are devoted to their employers are less likely to demonstrate this behaviour. Thus, the moderating influence of organisational commitment may be at play. Dedicated employees have substantial professional loyalty and a deep connection with the organisation. Therefore, they

Table 5. Direct paths and mediation

IV→M		M→DV		IV→M→DV		IV→DV	
β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t
.41***	7.56	.63***	8.43	.36***	5.41	.59***	6.80
(LLCI=0.1377, and ULCI=0.4557)							

Note(s): ***p < 0.001; (IV: Toxic Leadership, M: Emotional Exhaustion, DV: Cyberloafing)

Table 6. Moderation

Model	B	SE	T	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	2.5178	.3967	6.3471	.0000	1.7373	3.2982
Emotion Exhaustion	-.2157	.1297	-1.6633	.0972	-.4707	.0394
Organisation C.	.1409	.1374	1.0259	.3057	-.1293	.4112
Interaction	.1181	.0412	2.8673	.0004	.0371	.1992

Figure 2. Moderation Examination

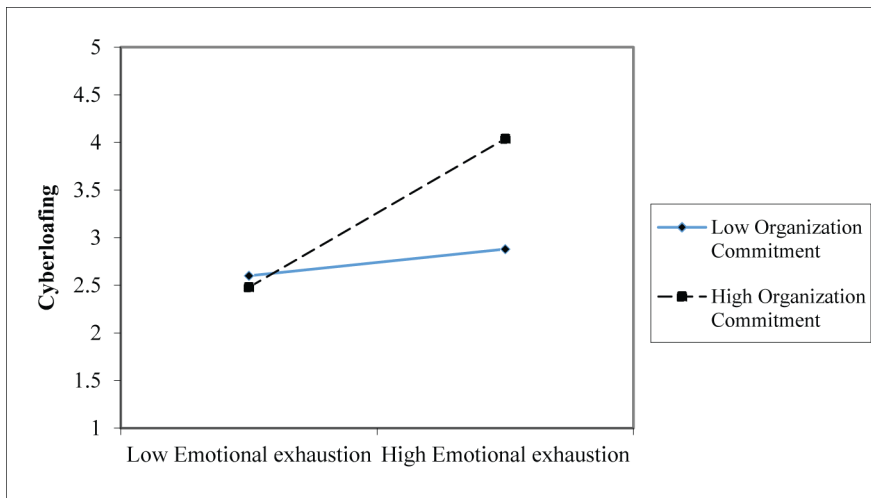


Table 7. Bootstrap Result of Moderated Mediation

Moderator (Organisation Commitment)	Level	Conditional indirect effect		Boot LL 95%	BootUL 95%
Low	3.0000	.2436	.0787	.0947	.4085
High	4.3422	.3122	.1055	.1196	.5316

Note: Moderator values are the mean and ± 1 SD

would not want to engage in behaviour detrimental to the organisation. In a similar vein, employees who are not committed to their organisations are more likely to engage in cyberloafing when feeling high levels of emotional exhaustion. This is because these individuals are not as engaged in their organisations and may leave at any time (Saeed et al., 2022; Webster et al., 2016).

This study concluded that the influence of emotional exhaustion as a mediator of the connection between toxic leadership and cyberloafing is tempered by an individual's commitment to their organisation. Toxic leadership and emotional exhaustion occur in workers with low commitment to their organisation (Khassawneh et al., 2022). Organisational commitment buffers the detrimental influence of toxic leadership on employee cyberloafing behaviour (Khassawneh & Abaker, 2022;

Saeed et al., 2022). If an organisation fails to address toxic leadership, workers will gradually lose their trust in the company and turn to cyberloafing. Cyberloafing offers mistreated employees an opportunity to take a short mental break from a stressful environment (Akca, 2017; Mohammad & Khassawneh, 2022b).

Most organisations find that cyberloafing is a leading impact for organisational productivity. Employees' job responsibilities will be negatively impacted when seeking online entertainment or news during work time. This study found that many public sector companies have locked the access to some websites. This, in turn, will prevent employees from spending time online or cyberloafing in their attempt to avoid emotionally draining circumstances (Andel et al., 2019; Khassawneh & Elrehail, 2022).

Practical Implication

Many organisations rely on the internet to reduce resources and increase production. Organisational operations use the internet to improve employee communication and enhance employee effectiveness. However, some workers take advantage of this digital opportunity by participating in non-work activities like cyberloafing (Koay & Soh, 2018b). Therefore, companies must investigate the circumstances that lead employee to engage in these behaviours.

The findings of this study indicate that toxic leadership is a primary factor in cyberloafing. According to the SET, an employee will become weary if treated unfairly. They will then engage in behaviours that reduce the effects of their exhaustion (Blau, 1964b). Leaders, therefore, play a significant role in creating a pleasant working atmosphere to decrease employees' non-work behaviours. When creating a pleasant atmosphere in the workplace, leaders should pay attention to employees' self-esteem. In addition, organisations should formulate online policies in the workplace to prevent or reduce cyberloafing behaviours and promote healthy attitudes. These factors will contribute to the long-term success of the organisation (Bhandarker & Rai, 2019; Saeed et al., 2022).

Theoretical Implication

The current literature on toxic leadership, emotional exhaustion, cyberloafing, and the moderating role of organisational commitment includes many theoretical contributions from this study. First, it was shown that emotional exhaustion caused by toxic leadership is a real phenomenon in China. This validates the results of prior studies in the same setting. Organisations must, therefore, provide a safe channel for employees to report toxic leaders (Akca, 2017). Second, this study found that organisational commitment moderated the connection between emotional exhaustion and cyberloafing (Durak, 2020). Prior research has demonstrated a positive association between psychological stress and cyberloafing. Organisational commitment influences the intensity of the relationship, which has not been studied by previous studies (Hadadian & Sayadpour, 2018). Emotional exhaustion and cyberloafing are very similar. Employers must ensure that workers are not under long-term stress because it can negatively affect their health and performance (Kayani & Alasan, 2021). Third, organisations must strengthen their engagement efforts with employees. This study found that the impact of toxic leadership on cyberloafing through emotional exhaustion differed depending on workers' organisational commitment. Fourth, according to the SET and COR, cyberloafing results from emotional exhaustion caused by toxic leadership. As a result, employees are more likely to experience stress and burnout due to toxic leadership. In turn, cyberloafing is used to alleviate stress by restoring their resources in a virtual environment. Many organisations view cyberloafing as a negative aspect of employee productivity. According to this study, cyberloafing may be used as an emotion-focused coping method. Cyberloafing is more common among employees who are mistreated by leaders on a regular basis. These employees seek a break to recharge their emotional batteries (Maqbool et al., 2023).

The negative consequences of cyberloafing should not be overlooked; however, the benefits should also be considered. Cyberloafing is difficult to eradicate from the workplace. Therefore,

companies may want to allow employees an opportunity to indulge in a brief period of cyberloafing as a micro-break to combat emotional exhaustion (Koay & Soh, 2019; Khassawneh, & Abaker, 2022).

Limitations and Future Direction

Certain limitations come with this study. First, the data for this research came from individuals in the corporate sector in China. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalised to other sectors or nations. The research model could be replicated on samples from sectors like information technology, banking, and textiles. Second, the monitoring system used to gather data was comprehensive. It did not record all instances of cyberloafing because employees may have used devices like mobile phones or tablets that were not linked to the organisation's internet. Third, future research may want to explore potential moderators (i.e., harmonious passion, job crafting) to explain the direct relationship between toxic leadership and cyberloafing. Fourth, this study did not incorporate emotional exhaustion as a control variable in the regression analysis. This is a major mediator of the association between toxic leadership and cyberloafing. Emotional exhaustion as a control variable should be included in future research to limit the possibility of false results.

CONCLUSION

Toxic leadership has consequences that negatively impact both the psychological well-being of employees and the productivity of the organisation. Toxic leaders want to build their teams with submissive, compliant employees. In doing so, toxic leaders can control the workplace atmosphere for their own benefit. Toxic leadership has detrimental effects on employees, including mental, emotional, and physical distress. As a result, a common behaviour associated with toxic leadership is emotional exhaustion. Employees then turn to cyberloafing to protect their mental satisfaction.

In conclusion, the results of this study support the claim that employees' level of commitment to their organisation moderates the effect of toxic leadership on cyberloafing via emotional exhaustion. Employees with poor organisational commitment are more prone to cyberloafing if they are exhausted by toxic leadership. Organisational productivity is negatively affected when workers are involved in non-work activities like cyberloafing. Thus, toxic leadership has substantial negative implications on employee performance and overall organisational efficiency.

ETHICAL STANDARDS

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaires

Age: _____ Gender: _____

Qualification: _____ Experience: _____

Items are rated on a five-point Likert scale response format.

Answers range between 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree.

Toxic Leadership

Items begin with the phrase “My current supervisor ...”

Drastically changes his/her demeanor when his/her supervisor is present

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Will only offer assistance to people who can help him/her get ahead

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Accepts credit for successes that do not belong to him/her:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Holds subordinates responsible for things outside their job description

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Publicly belittles subordinates

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Reminds subordinates of their past mistakes and failures

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Allows his/her current mood to define the climate of the workplace

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Expresses anger at subordinates for unknown reasons

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Varies in his/her degree of approachability

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Has a sense of personal entitlement

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Thinks that he/she is more capable than others

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Believes that he/she is an extraordinary person

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Controls how subordinates complete their tasks

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Does not permit subordinates to approach goals in new ways

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Determines all decisions in the unit whether they are important or not

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Cyberloafing

Sports-related websites

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Investment-related websites

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Entertainment-related websites

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

General news sites

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Non-job-related websites

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Download non-work-related information

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Shop online for personal goods

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Adult-oriented (sexually explicit) websites

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Check non-work e-mail

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Send non-work e-mail

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Receive non-work e-mail

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Emotional Exhaustion

I feel emotionally drained from my work

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

I feel used up at the end of the workday

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning to face another day on the job

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Working with people all day is a strain on me

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

I feel burned out from my work

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

I feel frustrated by my job

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

I feel I work too hard on my job

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Working with people directly puts too much stress on me

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

I feel like I am at the end of my rope

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Organisation Commitment

I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this organisation

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

I feel like “part of the family” at my organisation

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

I feel emotionally attached to this organisation

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Thank You

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