



# An Investigation of the Cyberloafing Mechanism in the Relationship between Workplace Incivility and Employee Expediency: The Moderating Role of Work Family Conflict

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Article Information	Abstract
<b>Article history:</b> Submitted: 17 <sup>th</sup> November, 2025 Accepted: 22 <sup>nd</sup> December, 2025 Published: 31 <sup>st</sup> December, 2025	<i>The COVID-19 pandemic has massively accelerated digitalization in the past few years and replaced human interactions with internet-based services. The dire need for the internet to perform work duties has opened up opportunities for cyberloafing. The aim of the empirical study is to examine: 1) incivility i.e. a behavioral aspect of knowledge workers leading to cyberloafing, 2) how cyberloafing can have a negative effect on the overall productivity of the organization through employee expediency, 3) analyze the mediating role of cyberloafing between incivility and employee expediency, 4) determine the direct effect of incivility on employee expediency 5) determine the extent to which WFC effects the: a) relationship between cyberloafing and employee expediency b) relationship between the overall mediated model of incivility resulting in employee expediency through cyberloafing. The time-lagged study comprised 300 employees from various schools. The results supported all the hypothesized relationships. The study widens the nomological network of cyberloafing by relating it to employee expediency. The study of expedient behavior itself is the first one in the Asian context.</i>
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## Introduction

The past couple of years have seen an explosion of digitalization driven by COVID-19. The pandemic has replaced human interactions with internet-based services that help with communication and the continuation of work responsibilities from home. Audio and video conferencing tools have become the ultimate solution. Remote work and enforced work-from-home have become the "new normal," and both have created virtual arrangements between employers and employees that have made monitoring and controlling difficult (Contreras et al., 2020). Amidst all this, the employees have found themselves at ease indulging in deviant behaviors

such as cyberloafing (Wang et al., 2021). The easy availability of the internet at the workplace had already blurred the lines between work and non-work-related activities at conscious and subconscious levels (Lim & Chen, 2012). The current arrangement, where communication and the delivery of work itself have been completely shifted to the internet, has made it impossible for employees to avoid a variety of easily accessible distractions, such as social networking sites, entertainment websites, news websites, etc. online enterprise networks (OENs) or enterprise social media (ESM) within companies such as IBM, Hewlett-Packard, and Schlumberger provide employees with official approval to use the internet for easy connectivity, replacing older email culture (Farivar & Richardson, 2020). Even in organizations where employees work from within, they are provided with distanced spaces and connected to the central hub via the internet. The availability of the internet to employees has become a necessity, and it only strengthens the likelihood of employees engaging in deviant behavior, i.e., cyberloafing. Hence, cyberloafing post-COVID-19 has once again become a hot topic, with adverse effects at both the individual and organizational levels (Itzkovich & Heilbrunn, 2016).

Individuals cyberloaf for multiple reasons, such as to overcome boredom or reduce job burnout, because of a perceived workplace norm to cyberloaf, or as part of a routine (Koay et al., 2017). Stress and punitive supervision can also lead to cyberloafing (Ahmed et al., 2025). Based on prior studies, Cheng et al. (2020) identified three main attributes of cyberloafing: harmfulness, universality, and crypticity. The three characteristics give cyberloafing its uniqueness amongst other counterproductive behaviors. If not destructive, Sheikh (2019) refers to cyberloafing as an unproductive job paid by the employer, focused on people's achievement in cyberloafing activities, which can be categorized into development, recovery, deviance, and addiction. Lim referred to it as an "IT way of idling on the job" (Lim et al., 2002). Job attitudes are an important factor resulting in cyberloafing (Liberman et al., 2011). Other factors that can lead to cyberloafing include job stress (Elrehail et al., 2021), hindrance stressors (Zhou et al., 2021), work place ostracism (Koay, 2018; Hu et al., 2021), workplace boredom (Pindek et al., 2018), perceived over qualification (Cheng et al., 2020), occupational burnout (Durak & Saritepeci, 2019), perceived crowding (Zoghbi-Manrique & Sharifiatashgah, 2020).

In general, the negative consequences of cyberloafing include fatigue (Wu et al., 2020), distraction from work leading to low performance and low satisfaction (O'Neil et al., 2014), increased feelings of negative affect at work due to stress related to limited time (Sonnettag et al., 2018), and reduced work engagement (Syrek et al., 2018). Nevertheless, past research has not entirely focused on the negative consequences of cyberloafing. Pertaining to the current study, in particular, the negative aspect of cyberloafing is studied amid the complexities of the Covid-19 situation, where there is a dire need to focus on covert and interpersonal behaviors that have become difficult to control due to the majority of work being shifted to online activities. Under such circumstances, we propose empirically investigating the role of cyberloafing as a mediator between incivility and employee expediency. Also, the role of work family conflict as a moderator between cyberloafing and employee expediency, or an overall proposed theoretical model, needs to be examined.

The theoretical background is based on the Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll & Jackson, 1991). The proposed antecedent of cyberloafing is incivility. Incivility is a "low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect" (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). The two differentiating characteristics of incivility from other forms of mistreatments are: 1) low intensity of the behavior in comparison to other forms of mistreatments and 2) the unclear intentions to harm the other

person (Cortina et al., 2001). Uncivil actions at the workplace include shouting, ignoring, accusing, giving aggressive stares, and making disrespectful remarks about the targeted individual (Abid et al., 2015; Cortina et al., 2013; Khan et al., 2021; Nawaz et al., 2022). Incivility has no boundaries and can be experienced by both select groups of people and anyone (Kabat-Farr et al., 2020). Keeping in view the COR theory (explained later), the study aims to suggest that cyberloafing is one of the consequences of incivility.

Moving on to employee expediency, it is "the use of unethical practices to expedite work for self-serving purposes. Activities involved in employee expediency include taking a shorter route to complete work, ignoring company procedures, and applying company rules only when they benefit oneself, and changing performance statistics to make them look more efficient (Greenbaum et al., 2018). Antecedents of employee expediency include individual initiative and burnout (Eissa, 2020). Little work has been done on employee expediency in the past, and so, using COR, we suggest that cyberloafing is an antecedent of employee expediency to add to the current literature.

Further, the overall mediating role of cyberloafing between incivility and employee expediency is suggested, along with the moderating role of work family conflict between the mediated proposed theoretical model. Work family conflict is "a form of multiple conflicts in which the role pressures of the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respects" (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Using the proposed model, this study examined the effect of incivility on employee expediency, with cyberloafing as a mediating variable and work family conflict as a moderating variable. The theoretical framework (Figure 1) shown below was developed through logical explanations.

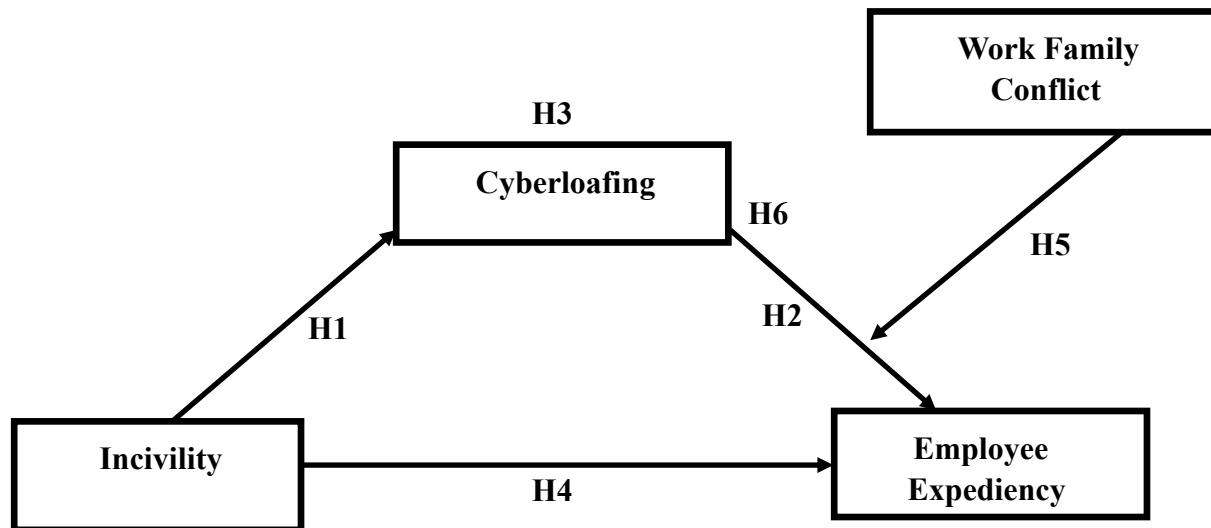


Figure 1. Theoretical Model

The current research provides many novel contributions to the already existing literature. The study focuses on an understudied area of research: the behavioral aspect of a knowledge-intensive employee that leads to cyberloafing (Sheikh, 2019). The rapid digitalization of work due to Covid-19 and technological advancements has opened a new window into learning about employee behavior online (Kabat-Farr et al., 2020). Manzoor et al. (2020) call for the need to study

incivility, particularly by employees, on the internet (Kabat-Farr et al., 2020). Hence, this study is designed to address his call and to add new insights to the existing literature.

Furthermore, the nomological network of employee expediency is expanded by addressing the call by Eissa (2020) to address unethical behaviors that are "covert and less morally intense" and to identify the antecedents of employee expediency. The current study also answers Eissa's (2020) questions about "why and under what conditions" individuals engage in unethical practices. Lastly, the current study is novel in nature, as far as the best of the knowledge, and would make a unique contribution to the literature on organizational behavior and applied psychology. The results can not only identify problematic behavior leading to deviant behavior but also prevent it through training and counselling of employees in the Asian context.

## **Theoretical Foundation and Hypotheses Development**

### **Conservation of Resource Theory (COR)**

We have used the conservation of resources theory (COR) to build our theoretical model, suggesting that cyberloafing serves as a mediator between incivility and employee expediency, and that work family conflict serves as a moderator. COR theory is one of the most widely used theories in the organizational behavior literature, providing a basic model for dealing with stress. The theory suggests that resources are salient for completing activities at the workplace, and individuals fear losing them and put effort into "retain, protect, and build" these resources (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll & Jackson, 1991). Resources are not bound and are universal, and a wider classification of resources by Hobfoll are "objects, energies, personal characteristics and conditions. Examples of resources from within these categories include skills, status, assets, money, time, beliefs, knowledge, self-esteem, positive feelings about oneself, family, etc. (Hobfoll, 1989).

As mentioned above, since COR theory suggests a stress coping mechanism, as identified by Hobfoll, stress can occur if either of the three scenarios occurs, i.e., 1) a fear of losing resources is created, 2) the resource is lost itself, and 3) no resource is obtained after an investment is made (Hobfoll, 1989). Relevant to our study, the two coping mechanisms that the COR theory explains are resource loss and resource gain. The two will form the basic backbone of the proposed hypothesis. The concept of resource loss is that, in the event of loss, the individual is most threatened by the loss of resources that are most valuable to him. Any resource that has zero effect on the individual and the individual does not feel threatened must not have been of much value to the individual, and vice versa. The theory suggests that, to avoid resource loss, individuals can do so by engaging in other resources, which serves as a distraction for them. This coping strategy of distraction can act as a source of resource depletion, since it would require resources for the process of distraction.

Resource loss or gain spirals can occur when an individual encounters either (Hobfoll, 2001a; Halbesleben et al., 2014). Since resource loss is a stressful process and has a greater effect than resource gain, as Hobfoll points out, individuals who have experienced it work to balance the losses. This stress makes them at risk of experiencing loss again, and once an individual encounters a loss, it becomes hard for them to reinvest. In the case of resource gain, it is an opposite scenario. Individuals who experience resource gain find it much easier to obtain resources and reinvest (Hobfoll, 2001b; Halbesleben et al., 2014).

Adding on to the existing concepts of COR, Hobfoll introduced the idea of resource caravan passageways (Hobfoll, 2011). In the organizational setting, caravan passageways are healthy environments, or organizational ecologies, that provide resources that nurture, motivate,

and protect the current resources of individuals or groups (Hobfoll, 2011). These are the means by which individuals or groups develop relationships with other members and try to fit into the organization's culture. These resource-caravan passageways are a source of motivation for employees and can be created and maintained by individuals and groups within their capabilities. Hobfoll has stressed the importance of sharing within organizations to maintain environments for all individuals and groups. They are called passageways because resources are shared within individuals and groups to create and maintain healthy ecologies (Hobfoll, 2011). It is upon the organizations to ensure that these resource caravans' passage ways are maintained for the long-term benefit of the organization. Important elements for creating and maintaining resource caravans are "stability, safety, and organizational support". Failure to create and maintain these resource caravans can lead to decreased productivity and counterproductive behaviors (Hobfoll, 2011).

### **Cyberloafing**

Cyberloafing is "any voluntary act of employees using their companies' internet access during office hours to surf non-job-related websites for personal purposes and to check (including receiving and sending) personal email, which is a misuse of the internet (Lim et al., 2002). Terms that can be used with cyberloafing include cyberslacking (O'Neil et al., 2018) and workplace internet leisure browsing (WILB) (Coker, 2013). Cyberloafing can be divided into two major types: minor and major cyberloafing. Activities involved in minor cyberloafing include sending and receiving personal emails, checking out finance and news websites, and shopping online. Other activities that fall under the umbrella of major cyberloafing include checking your own website, downloading music, gambling online, and communicating with people through social networking sites and online chat rooms (Blanchard & Henle, 2008).

### **Incivility and Cyberloafing**

Incivility is a "subtle, non-specific and non-physical" form of mistreatment (Cortina et al., 2001). Cortina refers to behaviors involved in incivility as "ostracizing, rude, and condescending" (Cortina et al., 2017). The term can be categorized into experienced, witnessed, and instigated incivility (Schilpzand et al., 2014). Sources of incivility at the workplace can include differences in power, such as gender and marital status (Cortina et al., 2001), social stigma against individuals (Cortina et al., 2017), and others. Hence, the work environment is a significant factor in determining whether employees in an organization are prone to experiencing incivility. To support this, studies in the past have shown that incivility is strongly related to organizational culture (i.e., clan culture, hierarchy culture, adhocracy culture, market culture) (Jelavic et al., 2021). Also, research has shown that individuals who do not experience incivility directly but instead witness it through their peers and co-workers also show similar consequences as those who experience it directly (Chui & Dietz, 2014; Miner & Eischeid, 2012; Porath & Erez, 2009; Reich & Hershcovis, 2015). Supervisors, workers, or customers can display uncivil behavior towards others at the workplace; however, our study focuses specifically on uncivil behavior by co-workers and supervisors (Schilpzand et al., 2014).

Incivility at work place can have disastrous effects as it can lead to turnover intentions (Manzoor et al., 2020), reduced quality of work life (Itzkovich et al., 2020), low work engagement and low job performance (Wang & Chen, 2020; Porath & Erez, 2009), burnout (Liu et al., 2019), job dissatisfaction (Penney & Spector, 2005). Furthermore, studies have revealed that, in many cases, individuals do not report uncivil behaviors, and many cases involving these behaviors are dispersed by organizations themselves (Cortina et al., 2017; Miranda et al., 2020). Factors

contributing to minimal reporting of incivility include employees' guilt and shame. A relationship was found between perceived responsibility and feelings of guilt and shame arising from incivility (Miranda et al., 2020). Certain personality traits and behaviors can lead to workplace deviant behaviors (Berry et al., 2007; Ellen et al., 2021; Harms & Spain, 2020; Kluemper et al., 2015; Pletzer et al., 2019), so our study also aims to find a relation between workplace behavior (incivility) and deviant behavior (cyberloafing).

A vast literature exists on the emotional and cognitive responses to workplace incivility (Cortina et al., 2017; Porath & Erez, 2007). Our study, in particular, proposes a new pathway in which one of the outcomes of cognitive processes caused by workplace incivility is suggested to be cyberloafing, supported by studies showing that incivility can lead to deviant behaviors (Itzkovich & Heilbrunn, 2016). Note that, given the current post-COVID-19 situation, the workplace may include employees working at a single station or in socially distanced settings, either at the organization itself or at home, depending on the organization's protocols. This arrangement, in which social distancing protocols are followed and individuals have easy access to the internet for communication and the transfer of important data, has made uncivil behavior easier to perform because of the online disinhibition effect (Suler, 2004). Keeping in view the proposed idea of resource caravans in COR theory, the online disinhibition results in the organization's failure to provide safety and stability to employees, thereby leading to counterproductive behaviors such as incivility.

In lieu of the COR, stress can occur due to incivility through 1) threat of resource loss and 2) resource loss itself (Hobfoll, 1989). Building on our proposed hypothesis, employees may view incivility as a threat to their resources at work or at home. Uncivil behavior can be directed towards the position, reputation, or quality of work at the workplace, or towards family, friends, close ones, or any personal affairs. As per the COR theory explained above, resources are important for the well-being of employees, and any form of resource loss, as in the case of energy loss resulting from incivility, can result in stress for employees. Also, past studies have shown that stress is an antecedent of incivility (Roberts et al., 2011) and that individuals who experience incivility exhibit greater stress (Beattie & Griffin, 2014). As a coping strategy to stress, Hobfoll suggested that individuals might turn to other resources that could provide them with pleasure (Hobfoll, 1989). Cyberloafing, a deviant behavior, has been found to relieve stress among employees (Wu et al., 2020; Lim & Chen, 2012). Given the work conditions and the need for internet at the workplace due to excessive digitalization and Covid-19, and building on Andel et al. (2019), who found that cyberloafing is an outcome of stress, we propose that incivility can lead to cyberloafing. So, we have our first hypothesis:

***Hypothesis 1: Incivility is positively related to cyberloafing.***

### **Cyberloafing and Employee Expediency**

Expediency is a relatively understudied topic in organizational behavior literature. The nature of expedient behaviors is such that they focus on the ends rather than the means through which tasks are achieved (Parks et al., 2010). Expediency can occur at supervisory levels (Greenbaum et al., 2017), employee levels (Eissa, 2019), team levels (Ren et al., 2021), and political levels (Bashir & Nisar, 2020). Particularly in our study, we focus on the employee-level expediency. Employee expediency is one of the "covert, less interpersonal and less morally intense" workplace behaviors (Eissa, 2019). Individuals indulging in it prioritize self-interest over the established set of organizational morals and rules (Greenbaum et al., 2017). They believe it is easy to mold organizational rules to improve performance, and they consider expediency a "harmless" form of behavior (Eissa, 2019). This belief motivates them to take shortcuts or bend

the rules. Furthermore, efficiency-related goals lead employees to engage in more expedient behaviors, even when these goals entail risks (Beck et al., 2016). Individual differences such as gender, psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and conscientiousness can affect how an individual engages in expedient behaviors (Jonason & Coonor, 2017). Furthermore, a study by Eissa (2019) revealed the distal and proximal antecedents of employee expediency as individual initiative and burnout. Adding to the literature, Yan et al. (2021) explained why people with a proactive personality engage less in expedient behaviors.

In accordance with the COR, although cyberloafing is a resource-replenishing activity (as mentioned earlier) and can result in improved mental health (Wu et al., 2020) and positive emotions (Lim & Chen, 2012), it can also involve resource depletion. Excessive use of the internet has shown to result in headaches, vision problems, health issues, and fatigue (Bener et al., 2019; Sert et al., 2019). Loss of another important resource as a result of cyberloafing includes time spent on various major and minor cyberloafing activities instead of the work itself for which the employee is paid (Koay et al., 2017). Researchers found a relation between cyberloafing and time management (Otken et al., 2020). Also, Sonnentag revealed that online interruptions can increase stress due to cautiousness about time scarcity (Sonnentag et al., 2018). Adding to the list of lost resources, cyberloafing can also place an excessive burden on internet bandwidth due to the traffic generated by cyberloafers (Koay et al., 2017). A delay in the transfer of emails, data, and information might compromise the organization's fast internet resource caravan for employees, hindering the development and maintenance of a healthy workplace ecology.

As a coping mechanism for stress, employees can engage in counterproductive work behaviors (Ahmed et al., 2025; De Clercq et al., 2019; Koay et al., 201), and we suggest employee expediency as one such counterbehavior resulting from cyberloafing. This suggestion is based upon the study by Parks et al. (2010), who revealed that employees indulge in expedient behaviors for two significant reasons: 1) to meet high expectations of the employer or 2) to look efficient (Sekerka & Zolin, 2007). As explained above, the list of unmet deadlines due to wasted time, poor performance due to bad vision, fatigue, headaches, etc., would be long due to cyberloafing activities. The employees would now look for simpler, more efficient ways to complete tasks and meet the employer's expectations. For this purpose, they would be willing to compromise on ethical standards to prevent any further disturbances, such as conflict with a supervisor over incomplete assigned work. Also, in line with COR, after every resource loss, an individual seeking resource gain can now take the form of appreciation from the employer for being efficient and effective. Hence, we propose the second hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 2: Cyberloafing is positively related to employee expediency.*

### **Incivility and Employee Expediency: A Mediated Process through Cyberloafing**

Our hypothesis 1 suggests that incivility and cyberloafing are positively related, followed by our hypothesis 2, which suggests that cyberloafing and employee expediency are positively related. To provide a complete representation of our theoretical model, we propose that cyberloafing mediates the relationship between incivility and employee expediency. The prediction (i.e., that cyberloafing mediates the relationship between incivility and employee expediency) is consistent with the COR theory principle relevant to loss spirals. The principle states that individuals who experience a loss can get caught in a loss spiral and find it difficult to gain or reinvest resources despite their efforts (Hobfoll, 2001; Halbesleben et al., 2004). In order to protect their resources, individuals take actions that often harm the organization as a whole. Hence, we suggest that once they encounter incivility, employees lose their resources (e.g., mental peace) and so they put their efforts into regaining, protecting, and reinvesting in them. For the

purpose of cyberloafing, which helps them relieve stress; however, the resources gained are not enough, and there is a loss spiral. Hence, to protect and regain their resources, employees once again put in effort. As an effort, they expedite work processes and protect resources (i.e., time, mental energy, internet bandwidth, etc.) that they previously failed to. Keeping in view the sequence of proposed events, we form the third hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 3: Cyberloafing mediates the relationship between incivility and employee expediency.*

### **Incivility and Employee Expediency**

As explained above, incivility is a resource-depleting activity that can result in stress, leading to burnout (Liu et al., 2019). In place of COR theory, to reduce the stress created, employees need to act in ways that protect and restore their resources (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll, 2011). They can do so either by trying to obtain the same resources or by investing in new resources to make up for the loss. As in the case of the path from incivility to cyberloafing, where we suggested that cyberloafing was a distraction-coping mechanism aimed at regaining new resources, we suggest that a direct path can exist in which employees indulging in uncivil activities try to cover up for the loss and overcome stress by expediting their work tasks. Eissa identified burnout as an antecedent of employee expediency, thereby demonstrating that the stress caused by incivility can result in employee expediency (Eissa, 2019). By taking shortcuts, the employee would be able to save time and energy (new resources), aiming to gain the employer's appreciation for being efficient and effective. Hence, we propose our fourth hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 4: Incivility is positively related to employee expediency.*

### **The Moderating Role of Work Family Conflict (WFC)**

Work family conflict (WFC) can be divided into three types: i.e., strain-based, time-based, and behavior-based (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). The direction of this conflict is bilateral, i.e., it can occur in either direction (from work to home or from home to work) (Elahi et al., 2022; Frone et al., 1992). The nature of jobs is becoming increasingly complex, and the excessive expectations to work from home have increased work family conflicts to levels never before seen (Liao et al., 2019). Organizational and social support play an integral role in reducing the effects of WFC when they are timely and available (Zhao et al., 2020). The factors leading to WFC can be categorized into the individual's personality, the work domain, and the family domain (Michel et al., 2011). Negative consequences of WFC include burnout, which can prevent individuals from following company protocols (Smith et al., 2018; Terry & Woo, 2021); employees leaving work early (Boyar et al., 2005); and job dissatisfaction (Terry & Woo, 2021).

Given WFC's negative nature, we suggest that cyberloafers, when triggered by WFC, may engage in deviant behavior that, although it may appear good on the surface, can have a detrimental effect on the organization. Koay et al. (2017) found that non-work domain responsibilities can lead to cyberloafing to meet private demands. In place of the COR theory, resources are essential for individuals, and workplace stress can occur due to a lack of resources or mismanaged resources across the two domains because of cyberloafing. Furthermore, as explained earlier, cyberloafing is a stress-generating activity that involves the loss of time, energy, internet bandwidth, etc. This stress, coupled with the inability to balance family duties and workplace obligations, may result in fear of losing a job or family status (Liao et al., 2019). To prevent themselves from the threatened loss, they might: 1) protect current resources or 2) reallocate their resources. However, if these resources are not sufficient, WFC can arise (Liao et al., 2019). Hence, we propose that, under such conditions, greater work family conflict would lead cyberloafers to take more shortcuts to

complete tasks more quickly due to the excessive stress produced by EFC. Hence, we propose our fifth hypothesis:

***Hypothesis 5:** The positive association between cyberloafing and expediency will be moderated by WFC such that the relationship is stronger (positive) for employees with a higher level of WFC.*

Also, based on similar concepts and theory, we check if WFC has an overall effect on the complete partially mediated model, so we propose the sixth hypothesis:

***Hypothesis 6:** WFC moderates the relationship between incivility and expediency through cyberloafing, such that the mediating effect is stronger when WFC is higher rather than lower.*

## Methods

The study employed both online and self-administered surveys to collect data from the educational sector of Pakistan, which is large and provides employment to a large segment of the population. Different registered private, government, and semi-government schools were included in the study. The participants comprised a majority of teachers (86.3%), while the remaining were coordinators (5.0%), administrative staff (4.7%), head mistresses (1.3%), campus in charges (1.0%), principals (1.0%), and directors (0.7%) from primary and secondary levels of school.

The data was collected in non-contrived settings with minimum researcher interference. The collection was done in two waves (i.e., T1 and T2, both at a week's time apart) to avoid common-method bias. All participants were given a unique code at T1 based on the first two initials of their surname, their mother's name, and their birth year. The unique code was matched with T2 responses to ensure the employees' confidentiality and anonymity. A total of 301 usable responses were collected, with unique codes matching (75.3% overall response rate).

The majority of respondents in the study were female (83.67%) and married (52.67%), while the remaining were either single (43%), divorced (1.67%), widowed (1.33%), or separated (1.33%). The participants' ages ranged from 20 to 52 years (mean=31.72 years, SD=8.11 years). Furthermore, the majority of the respondents were graduates (55.67%), followed by postgraduates (18.67%) and undergraduates (25.67%). The working experience in general of respondents was fair enough, with respondents having experience between groups of 0-5 years (49%), 6-10 years (31.67%), 11-15 years (7.33%), 16-20 years (6.67%), and 21 years and above (5.33%). The work tenure of respondents in this organization had a majority of respondents in groups of 0-5 years (80.33%), followed by 6-10 years (14.33%), and later 11-15 years (4.67%), 16-20 years (0.33%), and 21 years and above (0.33%). At Time 1 (T1), participants completed measures of incivility and cyberloafing. At Time 2 (T2), i.e., two weeks later, the same participants were required to complete measures of employee expediency, work family conflict, and social support.

## Measures

### **Incivility**

At T1, incivility was measured using a 5-item scale by Cortina et al. (2001). Based on employees' experiences with the supervisor and co-workers, the items on the scale asked about the employee's experiences, such as "have you been in a situation where you supervisors or co-workers have put you down or were condescending(rude) to you?" The 5-point Likert scale is anchored for these items with a range from 1 = never to 5 = every day.

### ***Cyberloafing***

At T1, cyberloafing was measured using a 6-item scale by Lim et al. (2002). The scale identified mailing and browsing activities carried out by employees at work and aimed at determining the frequency with which these activities are performed. A sample item from the scale is "How often do you view entertainment-related sites at the workplace". The 5-point Likert scale was anchored at 1= never to 5= every day.

### ***Employee expediency***

At T2, employee expediency was measured using a 3-item scale by Greenbaum et al. (2018). The scale comprised items such as "You change performance numbers to appear more successful." It was a 5-point Likert scale with values anchored at 1 = never to 5 = every day.

### ***Work family conflict***

At T2, work family conflict was measured using a 3-item scale by Gallie and Russel (2005). Based on the employees' experiences at home and at work, the scale comprised items that inquired about conflicts at home. Example of items included "You tend to feel too tired after work to enjoy the things you would like to do at home?". The Likert scale for the items ranged from 1 = never to 5 = every day.

### ***Control variables:***

The demographics were kept as control which included gender (0= male, 1= female), marital status (single= 1, married= 2, divorced= 3, widowed = 4, separated= 5), qualification (undergraduate= 1, graduate= 2, post graduate= 3), age (less than 20 years= 1, 20-29 years= 2, 30-39 years= 3, 40-49 years= 4, 50 years and above= 5), work experience (0-5 years= 1, 6-10 years= 2, 11-15 years= 3, 16-20 years= 4, 21 years and above=5) and tenure in the organization (0-5 years= 1, 6-10 years= 2, 11-15 years= 3, 16-20 years= 4, 21 years and above=5). These were kept under control to avoid their impact on any of the variables.

Apart from demographics, social support was also kept as a control variable. Social support "refers to the emotional (i.e., love, caring, and encouragement), informational (i.e., facts and advice), and instrumental (i.e., behavioral or material) assistance provided to an individual by significant others, such as families and friends" (Thoits, 2011). Studies have shown that social support affects exhaustion resulting from job demands and work family conflict (Pluut et al., 2018). Since our entire model is based on the level of exhaustion and stress it creates, and WFC is a proposed moderator in the mediated-moderated model, we have kept social support constant. Social support was measured using the 8-item scale by Zimet et al. (1998). The scale measured agreement or disagreement based on the level of support provided by participants' family, friends, or relatives. The scale items included statements such as "There is a special person who is around when I am in need." The Likert scale for this one in particular had been anchored at 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree.

Gender was kept constant as prior studies have revealed that females are more prone to experience incivility than males (Jelavic et al., 2021). Similarly, Jonason and Coonor (2017) found that men are more likely to exhibit expedient behavior than women. Hence, to prevent any influence of gender differences, it was kept as a control.

## **Results**

### **Descriptive Statistics**

Table 1 below presents correlations, reliabilities, means, and standard deviations for the study variables. The correlation coefficients provide us with the primary information to support our hypothesis. Aligned with our hypotheses, the result reveals that incivility is significantly and

positively related to cyberloafing ( $r = 0.302$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and employee expediency ( $r = 0.158$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Furthermore, cyberloafing and employee expediency are significantly and positively related ( $r = 0.264$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The results also show that there is a significant positive relationship between gender and work family conflict ( $r = 0.159$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), significant positive relation between gender and social support ( $r = 0.175$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), significant negative correlation between marital status and employee expediency ( $r = -0.132$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), significant negative correlation between age and incivility ( $r = -0.169$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and significant negative correlation between age and employee expediency ( $r = -0.124$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 1: Means, SD, and Correlations**

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Gender	0.84	0.37	1										
2. Marital Status	1.65	0.71	0.04	1									
3. Qualification	1.93	0.66	-.115*	0.01	1								
4. Age	2.74	0.83	-.194**	.485**	0.09	1							
5. Working Experience	1.88	1.14	-.333**	.340**	0.11	.753**	1						
6. Tenure in the Organization	1.26	0.59	-.203**	.153**	-0.06	.426**	.476**	1					
7. Cyberloafing	1.93	0.84	-0.06	-0.08	-0.08	-0.07	-0.05	0.04	(0.82)				
8. Incivility	1.99	0.81	-0.01	-0.06	-0.08	-.169**	-0.08	0.05	.302**	(0.81)			
9. Employee Expediency	2.21	1.12	0.04	-.132*	-0.11	-.124*	-0.10	0.01	.264**	.158**	(0.77)		
10. Work Family Conflict	2.87	1.07	.159**	-0.07	-0.07	-0.11	-0.06	0.05	.128*	.302**	0.09	(0.75)	
11. Social Support	3.96	0.75	.175**	-0.01	0.05	0.09	0.06	0.03	-0.05	0.03	-0.06	0.11	(0.88)

\*, Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

## Analytical Approach

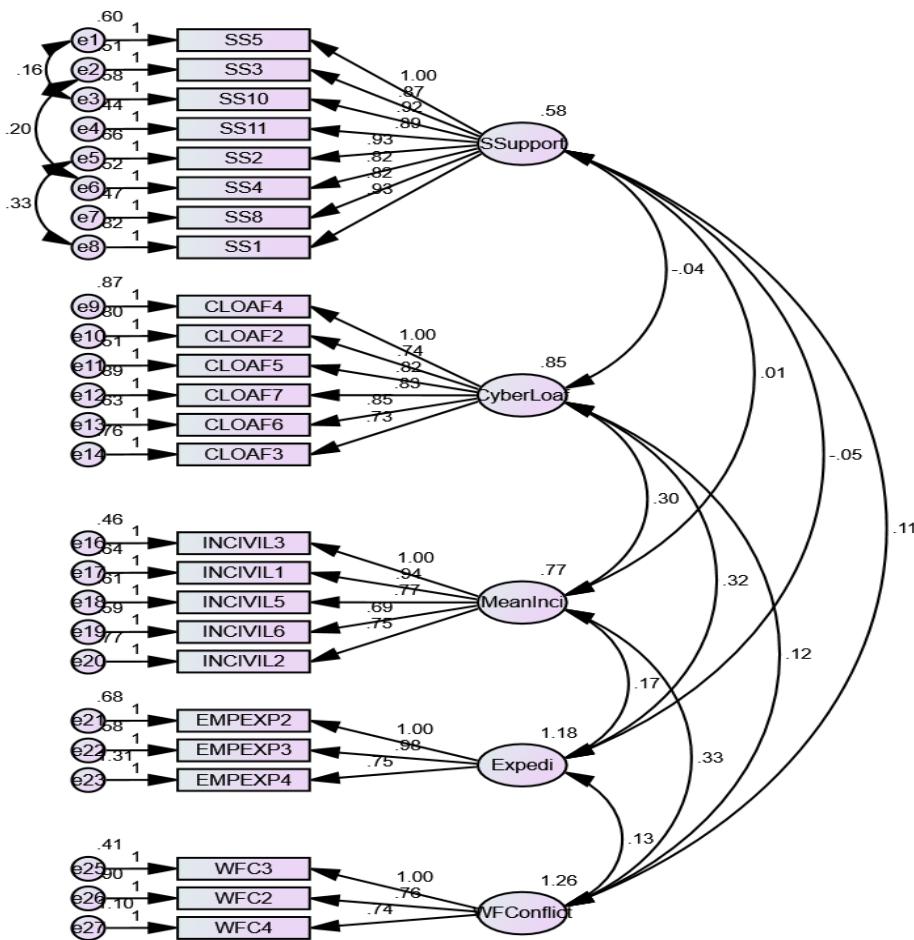
### Convergent and discriminant validity

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was run in AMOS 24, in which the items of our five study variables were allowed to correlate with their respective items. Fornell and Larcker's (1981) validity criterion was used to determine the instrument's and model's convergent and discriminant validity, and the model fit indices were examined for our full measurement model. The model fit indices for our hypothesized five factor model (cyberloafing, incivility, employee expediency, work family conflict, social support) showed that the model was a considerably good fit; such as Normed Chi-square ( $\chi^2/df = 1.99$ ), Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) = 0.079, Incremental Fit Index (IFI) = 0.91, Confirmatory Fit Index (CFI) = 0.90, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = 0.057. The indices lie in the required limit, i.e.  $\chi^2/df < 3$  (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2015), RMR < 0.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2015), IFI > 0.90 (Hu and Bentler, 1995, 1999), CFI > 0.90 (Hu & Bentler, 1995, 1999; Kline, 2015), and RMSEA < 0.08 (Holmes-Smith, 2000; Kline, 2015).

Factor analysis was run until all items loaded onto a single factor, as shown in Figure 2 below. Table 2 below shows the factor loadings of the selected items for variables with loadings greater than 0.60.

**Table 2: Factor Loadings**

Variables	No. of items	Factor Loadings
Cyberloafing	6	0.75,0.75,0.73,0.72,0.71,0.62
Incivility	5	0.81,0.79,0.70,0.68,0.67
Employee expediency	3	0.85,0.84,0.72
Work Family Conflict	3	0.85,0.81,0.72
Social Support	8	0.77,0.75,0.74,0.73,0.73,0.72,0.71,0.71



**Figure 2. Final Model Fit**

Furthermore, the table 3 below shows that the CR values of the variables are all greater than 0.7 and MSV values are greater than 0.5 aligned with the rules set out that each variable should have a value of factor loading greater than 0.6 (Field, 2013; Kline, 1994), the value of composite reliability should have a value greater than 0.70 and maximum shared variance should be greater than 0.50 (Hair et al., 2016).

**Table 3: Overall Reliability and Validity of the Constructs**

S#	Constructs	Convergent Validity		Discriminant Validity				
		CR	MSV	1	2	3	4	5
1	Employee expediency	0.701	0.125	<b>0.671</b>				
2	Social Support	0.870	0.023	-0.070	<b>0.675</b>			
3	Cyberloafing	0.819	0.136	0.354	-0.039	<b>0.656</b>		
4	Incivility	0.810	0.136	0.228	0.013	0.369	<b>0.680</b>	
5	Work Family Conflict	0.745	0.130	0.152	0.152	0.154	0.361	<b>0.708</b>

**Note:** Values in the diagonal represent the square root estimate of AVE; CR represents composite reliability; AVE represents the average variance extracted; MSV represents the maximum shared variance.

Lastly, the square root of AVE of the construct and its correlation with other constructs was used to determine the discriminant/divergent validity (the square root of AVE shown in bold in the above Table 3). As suggested by Fornell and Larker, our square roots for those constructs are greater than the correlations among the constructs (Fornell & Larker, 1981).

### Hypothesis Testing

The hypotheses of the study were explored in two steps. The first step comprised testing the simple mediation model, i.e., H1-H3, and the second step involved incorporating the moderator and checking for the moderated mediation model (H5, H6).

#### Tests of Mediation

A SPSS Process macro (model; Preacher & Hayes, 2008) was used to examine the influence of incivility (independent variable) on employee expediency (dependent variable) via cyberloafing (mediator). The bootstrap value was kept at 1000 for resampling with a 90% confidence interval. The results of the SPSS Process are shown in Table 4 below. The results revealed that the effect of incivility on cyberloafing (represented by path a in Figure 3) was positive and significant, as indicated by the unstandardized regression coefficient ( $\beta = 0.314$ ,  $t = 5.070$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), thereby supporting our Hypothesis 1. The effect between the two can be expressed on a regression line as shown below:

$$\hat{Y} = 1.304 + 0.314 X + ey$$

Where,  $Y$  = Cyberloafing,  $X$  = Incivility,  $ey$  = error term

Our second hypothesis (H2) is also supported, and the effect of cyberloafing on employee expediency (represented by path b in Figure 3) is found to be positive and significant when incivility is controlled, as indicated by a standardized regression coefficient ( $\beta = 0.316$ ,  $t = 4.340$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Adding on, the third hypothesis (H3) is also supported, and incivility leads to employee expediency (represented by path c', figure 3) when cyberloafing is kept as a controlled ( $\beta = 0.147$ ,  $t = 1.942$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The relation between incivility, cyberloafing, and employee expediency can be expressed on a regression line as shown below:

$$\hat{Y} = 1.281 + 0.147 X + 0.316 M + ey$$

Where,  $Y$  = Employee expediency,  $X$  = Cyberloafing,  $ey$  = error term

Finally, the fourth hypothesis (H4) was supported, and the effect of incivility on employee expediency was found to be positive and significant (represented by path c, Figure 3), as indicated by a standardized regression coefficient ( $\beta = 0.246$ ,  $t = 3.303$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The effect between the two can be expressed on a regression line as shown below:

$$\hat{Y} = 1.693 + 0.246 X + ey$$

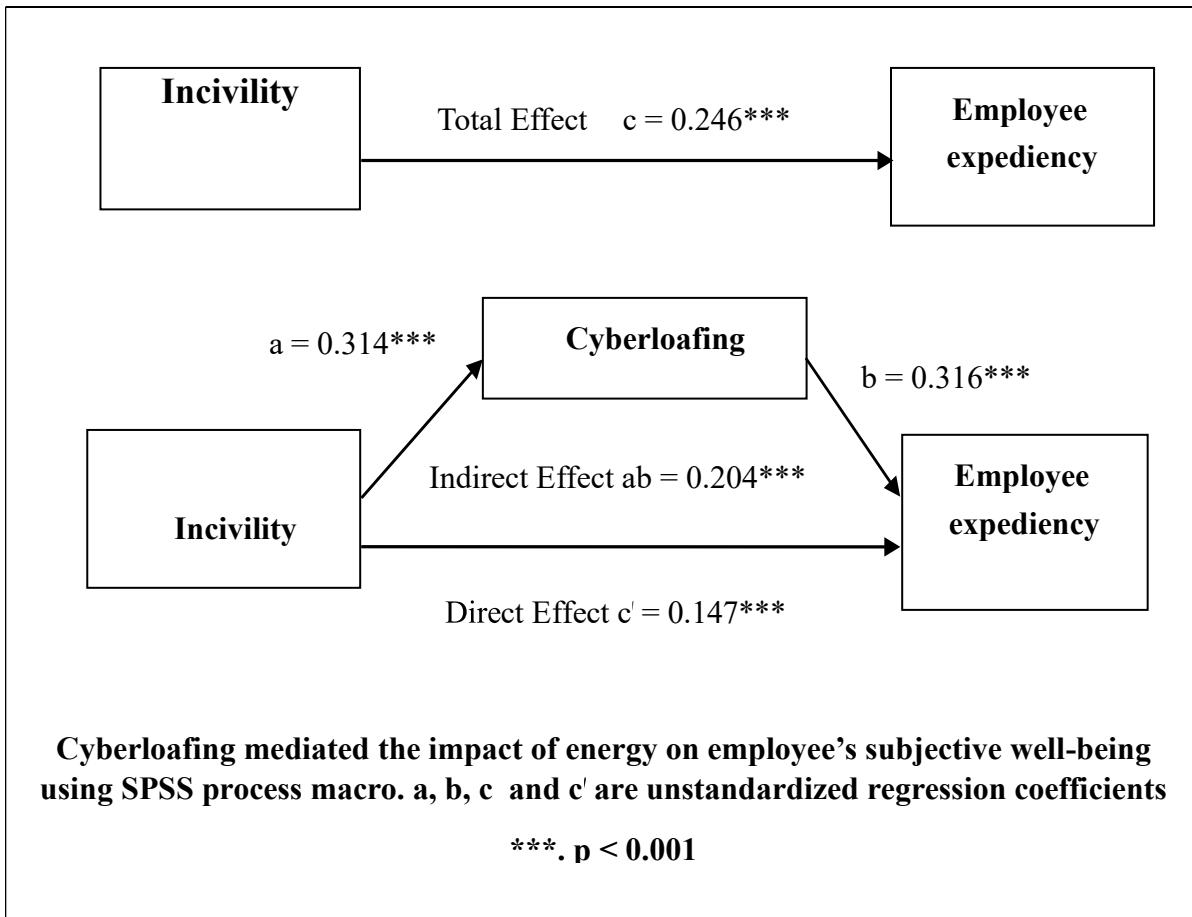
Where,  $Y$  = Employee expediency,  $X$  = Incivility,  $ey$  = error term

The Sobel test was also used to test the mediation model (Sobel, 1982). The predictor-criterion relationship via the mediator is determined using this test. The standardized indirect effect and significance using the normal distribution are significant, with a value of 0.099. The tests were confirmed using bootstrap confidence intervals, which gave the same result (shown in Table 4) at 90% confidence. Hence, our hypothesis 4 was supported.

**Table 4: Simple Mediation Model  
Results of the Simple Mediation Model Regressing  
Cyberloafing as a Mediator**

Direct Effect Model					
Predictor	Outcome = M(Cyberloafing)				
	$\beta$	SE	T	P	
X (Incivility)	A	0.314	0.057	5.465	0.000
Constant	i <sub>1</sub>	1.304	0.123	10.580	0.000
Direct Effect Model					
Predictor	Outcome = Y(Employee expediency)				
	$\beta$	SE	T	P	
X (Incivility)	c'	0.147	0.076	1.942	0.053
M(Cyberloafing)	B	0.316	0.073	4.340	0.000
Constant	i <sub>2</sub>	1.281	0.182	7.053	0.000
Total Effect Model					
Predictor	Outcome = Y (Employee expediency)				
	$\beta$	SE	T	P	
X (Incivility)	C	0.246	0.074	3.313	0.001
Constant	i <sub>3</sub>	1.693	0.159	10.619	0.000
Indirect Effect and Significance Using the Normal Distribution					
Sobel	Value	SE	LL 90% CI	UL 90% CI	P
	0.099	0.033	0.053	0.162	0.000
Bootstrap Results for the Indirect Effect of X on Y					
Effect	M				
	0.099	0.029	3.364	0.001	

**Note:** N = 300;  $\beta$  = Unstandardized Regression Coefficient; SE = Standard Error; Bootstrap Sample Size = 1000; LL = Lower Limit; CI = Confidence Interval; UL = Upper Limit



#### **Tests of Moderated Mediation:**

We tested whether the impact of incivility on employee expediency via cyberloafing was moderated by work family conflict, as hypothesized in our theoretical model (hypothesis 5). For this purpose, we employed Process model 14 macro with 90% confidence interval based on 1000 bootstrap models. Work family conflict interacts with cyberloafing to affect employee expediency. Cyberloafing is the predictor, employee expediency is the criterion, and work family conflict is the moderator between cyberloafing and employee expediency. Table 5 presents the beta values for the regression results on the outcome employee expediency. As shown below, the results are significant ( $\beta = 0.158$ , SE = 0.0657,  $t = 2.40$ ,  $p = 0.0171$ ). Furthermore, the moderating effect of WFC was examined in the complete model, i.e., incivility leading to employee expediency through the mediation of cyberloafing. The results from Process model 14 macro, with a 90% confidence interval based on 1000 bootstrap models, supported our hypothesis 6, and WFC was found to moderate the relationship between incivility and expediency through cyberloafing, such that the mediation relationship is stronger when

WFC is higher rather than lower. Table 5 shows the index of moderation in the mediation analysis. As shown below, the results are significant, with an index value of 0.0495 and SE=0.0255.

**Table 5: Regression Results for outcome Employee Expediency**

<b>Dependent Variable Model (DV = Employee Expediency)</b>				
<b>Predictor</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>P</b>
Cyberloafing x WFC	0.158	0.0657	2.40	0.0171
<b>Index of Moderated Mediation</b>				
<b>Mediator</b>	<b>Index</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>LL 90% CI</b>	<b>UL 90% CI</b>
Cyberloafing	0.0495	0.0255	0.0163	0.1018

### **Discussion**

Our study drew upon the COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll, 2011; Hobfoll & Jackson, 1991) to build our theoretical model and addressed the behavioral aspect of employees, i.e., incivility, which could lead to cyberloafing. Adding on, the study identified cyberloafing as an antecedent of employee expediency, both of which (the antecedent and consequence) are covert, less morally intense, and non-interpersonal forms of unethical practices, very relevant to the current time. The study's findings are discussed below.

In line with our *hypothesis 1*, we found that employees who experienced workplace incivility indulged in cyberloafing. The uncivil behavior posed a threat to their jobs (Li et al., 2020; Yariv & Galit, 2007) and consumed their emotional, social, and mental energy (Giumetti et al., 2013). This resulted in stress, as supported by prior studies linking incivility to job stress (Roberts et al., 2011; Beattie & Griffin, 2014). To overcome the stress, individuals engaged in cyberloafing (Andel et al., 2019; Lim & Chen, 2012; Wu et al., 2020).

Further, our *results supported hypothesis 2, indicating a positive relationship* between cyberloafing and employee expediency. Cyberloafing activities, although they release stress by having a positive impact on mental health (Wu et al., 2020), however, excess participation results in a loss of resources such as mental and physical resources (Bener et al., 2019; Sert et al., 2019), time (Sonnenstag, 2018), and internet bandwidth (Koay et al., 2017). In lieu of COR theory, resource loss holds much value (Hobfoll, 1989), and so individuals work to protect and retain these remaining resources through employee expediency. The results are supported by studies that found that cyberloafing can result in counterproductive behaviors (De Clercq et al., 2019; Koay et al., 2017).

Our *hypothesis 3* was also supported, and our proposed overall theoretical model was validated, suggesting a path from incivility to cyberloafing, followed by a path from cyberloafing to employee expediency. This was based on the principle of the loss spiral, which suggests that individuals who encounter a loss are more at risk of experiencing it again and so strive to protect themselves against such losses in the future (Hobfoll 2001; Halbesleben et al., 2004). Loss of resources due to uncivil actions puts individuals in a loss spiral: they attempt to prevent further loss through cyberloafing, yet again find themselves in a resource-loss event, and this time mitigate further loss through employee expediency.

Hypothesis 4 is also supported by regression analysis, which found a direct relationship between incivility and employee expediency. Uncivil behavior in the workplace is resource-depleting and results in burnout and stress (Liu et al., 2019). Employee expediency is a way individuals overcome the stress they create by creating new resources (time and energy saved) through shortcuts. Lastly, *hypothesis 5* is supported, and it is found that the extent of the indirect relationship between incivility and employee expediency through cyberloafing is based on WFC. The stronger the effect of WFC on cyberloafing, the greater the stress produced due to the inability to balance work and family life (Liao et al., 2019).

### Theoretical Contributions

A vast literature already exists based on cyberloafing, which identifies both its positive consequences (Coker, 2013; Farivar & Richardson, 2020; Lim & Chen, 2012; Mazidi et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2020) as well as negative consequences (O'Neil et al., 2014; Sonnentag et al., 2018; Syrek et al., 2018; Wu et al., 2020). The identification of antecedents (Durak & Saritepeci, 2019; Elrehail et al., 2021; Hu et al., 2021; Koay, 2018; Zoghbi-Manrique & Sharifiatashgah, 2020; Pindek et al., 2018; Zoghbi-Zhou et al., 2021) of cyberloafing has been of much interest. We contribute to the current organizational behavior literature by providing a nomological network among incivility, cyberloafing, employee expediency, and WFC, which, to the best of our knowledge, is entirely novel. We identified incivility as an antecedent and employee expediency as a consequence, a distinction not previously made in the literature. The relationship between incivility and employee expediency is also absent in the current literature.

Our study extends the employee expediency literature, which has received relatively little attention in the past and for which several scholars have called for empirical testing (Greenbaum et al., 2018; Eissa, 2019). A study by Eissa (2019) found a need to identify the antecedents of employee expediency. Our study identifies two antecedents of employee expediency, i.e., incivility and cyberloafing, both of which are relevant in the current times, and the findings are significant to the current literature. Also, as Sheikh (2019) identified, the behavioral aspect of cyberloafing warrants greater attention. The study focuses on it and on how incivility in behavior can result in cyberloafing, followed by a loss spiral, as individuals who have experienced loss are more at risk of losing again. Employee expediency is also a behavioral aspect that is followed up on and holds much value in itself, as mentioned above.

As mentioned earlier, incivility has become much easier online due to the online disinhibition effect (Suler, 2004). Amid COVID-19, when individuals have plenty of time and aggression builds from forced lifestyle changes, online displays of incivility can be one way to relieve stress. Manzoor, along with his colleagues, has focused on the need to study incivility, particularly online (Manzoor et al., 2020). This study has successfully answered its call by linking cyberloafing to workplace incivility and finding that workplace incivility is associated with a greater number of cyberloafing incidents.

### Practical Implications

The research focuses on three covert and less morally intense forms of unethical behavior. The three might not seem like much of a problem; however, if not curbed, they can have serious, detrimental effects. Hence, the study can help organizations understand these work behaviors, i.e. how one can lead to another, and come up with strategies that can help keep them in control. Covid-19 has led to many behavioral changes among individuals, primarily due to lifestyle shifts. Isolation protocols and limited mobility have resulted in aggression and irritability. The study is of immense value to managers and employees in understanding the complex behaviors of

individuals at the most critical times and in creating work environments or ecologies, as proposed by Hobfoll (1989), that are beneficial for all. The study highlights that, amongst many negative behaviors, incivility still exists. The association between incivility and cyberloafing is particularly relevant in light of the increasing need for internet access. Managers at these times can curb the adverse effects of cyberloafing by designing strategies to prevent uncivil attitudes in the workplace (Koay et al., 2017). Suggestions to prevent these activities include implementing strict company oversight through monitoring systems to ensure no one is a target of uncivil behavior, and maintaining an open-door policy so targeted individuals can report any such incidents of misbehavior without fear of losing their jobs or workplace relationships. Furthermore, cyberloafing can also be prevented by using anti-cyberloafing technologies; examples include blocking irrelevant sites at the workplace, such as social sites, which benefit by minimizing wasteful time and increasing focus at work (Tseng et al., 2019).

Additionally, the study highlights employee expediency, which is the taking of shortcuts with the aim of appearing efficient and effective. The covert nature of expediency has made its monitoring and control difficult. The study relates expediency to incivility and cyberloafing, which, although covert, are relatively easy to identify. Given the limited time and post-COVID-19, the gap in research to identify additional antecedents still exists and needs to be filled to add to the literature.

### **Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research**

All studies have limitations, and ours is no exception. Data were collected from the educational sector of Pakistan, particularly from primary, secondary, and higher-level schools. This restricts the results from generalizing to the particular sector. Future work needs to identify how the selected variables interact with one another across other sectors and industries, such as the banking sector, for which a lot of past work has been done. Adding to our study, the self-reported surveys have been shown to exhibit common method variance (Lindell & Whitney, 2001). This can result in the study variables being artificially deflated or inflated. To prevent this bias, we designed the study as a time-lag study. Data on predictor variables were collected at T1, followed by data collection on criterion variables at T2, as suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2003). Furthermore, to reduce any remaining biases, such as social desirability bias, we ensured anonymity for all participants. To further improve the study's results in the future, the researchers can take steps to reduce mono-method bias by using additional sources of data, such as peer/manager reviews of uncivil behaviors or observed cyberloafing activities.

Furthermore, this study is conducted in the Asian context, particularly the Pakistani community. The results can lead to generalization problems when applied in a Western community that, although it shares similar codes of conduct, has different lifestyles. Future researchers are called upon to use the same variables in a Western context to validate our study. Another generalizability issue consists of the fact that the majority of our participants were females (83.67%) since the educational sector of Pakistan has remained gender skewed for quite some time now. Future studies can overcome this problem by proposing samples that are more gender balanced. Although this study, particularly the call for identifying the antecedents of employee expediency, is not exhaustive, it is still useful. More work is still needed to identify additional antecedents of employee expediency, such as organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) (Eissa, 2019). Furthermore, it is not just the antecedents that need attention; more empirical work is required to identify the consequences of employee expediency relevant to the current times. A lot of work has been done in the past that highlights cyberloafing as a consequence of sequential events resulting from stress; however, there is a need to identify other factors that also result from

cyberloafing and bring about similar or different outcomes. The relationship between other counterproductive behaviors, such as poor attendance, poor work quality, inappropriate physical actions, and behaviors related to theft, needs to be identified with cyberloafing (Sackett, 2002).

In a nutshell, the study contributes significantly to the organization behavior sciences by presenting an integrated model that identifies a positive relationship between incivility and employee expediency, mediated by cyberloafing and moderated by WFC. The empirical findings were supported by COR theory, which suggests a positive relation between incivility and cyberloafing, between cyberloafing and employee expediency, and between incivility and employee expediency. The mediating and moderating roles of cyberloafing and WFC are also supported, and the study provides significant insight into workplace covert behaviors that require much attention.

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