Conference Name: PsyCon Bangkok–International Conference on Psychology & Psychiatry, 09-10 July 2025
Conference Dates: 09-Jul- 2025 to 10-Jul- 2025
Conference Venue: The Landmark Bangkok, 138 Sukhumvit Road, Bangkok, Thailand
Appears in: LIFE: International Journal of Health and Life-Sciences (ISSN 2454-5872)
Publication year: 2025

Mohammed Ali Marwah et.al, 2025

Volume 2025, pp. 25-42

DOI- https://doi.org/10.20319/icrlsh.2025.2542

This paper can be cited as: Mohammed Ali Marwah, A., Ali Alshowkan, A., Adel Shdaifat, E.(2025). The Impact of Cyberloafing on the Emotional Well-Being of Psychiatric Nurses in Saudi Arabia. PsyCon Bangkok–International Conference on Psychology & Psychiatry, 09-10 July,2025, Proceedings of Healthcare and Biological Sciences Research Association (HBSRA), 2025, 25-42

THE IMPACT OF CYBERLOAFING ON THE EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING OF PSYCHIATRIC NURSES IN SAUDI ARABIA

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Abstract

Cyberloafing, or the use of the internet in the workplace for non-work-related purposes, is an increasingly common problem in the field of professional development. Nurses face a variety of stressors, including workload and patient conflict, which can negatively affect their emotional wellbeing. While cyberloafing may provide some temporary relief, widespread use could lead to reduced productivity and increased disease transmission. This study aims to examine the impact of cyberloafing on the nurse's emotional wellbeing in Saudi Arabia. A cross-sectional study will be conducted among about 200 psychiatric nurses, randomly selected from mental health hospitals

in Saudi Arabia using sample size equation based on the expected cyberloafing prevalence from the similar study. Data will be collected using self-reported questionnaire including demographic and professional characteristics, Cyberloafing Scale and Positive and Negative Affect Schedule - Short Form (PANAS-SF). Data will be analyzed using SPSS version 28.0. Ethical issues will be considered. The study is expected to demonstrate that moderate levels of cyberloafing may be relieving in the short term, whereas excessive use may be associated with greater distress and dissatisfaction with the job. The findings will inform workplace policies on preventing cyberloafing and emphasize the relationship between nurses' emotional wellbeing.

Keywords:
Cyberloafing, Emotional Well-Being, Psychiatric Nurses, PANAS-SF.

1. Introduction

Mental health is a growing priority in Saudi Arabia, with increasing awareness and investment in improving psychiatric healthcare services. Psychiatric nurses have a crucial role in this development, providing essential care for individuals with mental disorders while facing high emotional and psychological demands (Parentela et al, 2021). Their work involves dealing with distressed and sometimes aggressive patients, managing crisis situations, and coping with heavy workloads, making them prone to stress. Ensuring their emotional well-being is vital, as it directly impacts the quality of patient care and the overall effectiveness of mental health services in the country. There is a growing need to study the challenges psychiatric nurses face in maintaining their well-being (Alotaibi et al, 2022).

Cyberloafing refers to the practice where employees engage in non-work-related internet activities during working hours. This can include browsing social media, checking personal emails, online shopping, or other personal web browsing. While often viewed negatively due to potential productivity losses, some research suggests that limited cyberloafing might help employees manage stress and prevent poor wellbeing **(Awan & Afzal, 2023)**.

Like other professionals, psychiatric nurses frequently face patient aggression, verbal abuse, and unpredictable behavior, which contribute to their psychological strain. **Arslan and Demir (2016)** reported that nurses utilize emotion regulation strategies to manage job-related stressors, mitigate workload pressures, and cope with workplace bullying—factors that intensified during the pandemic. As a result, some psychiatric nurses may turn to cyberloafing behavior as a mitigating mechanism, potentially increasing cyberloafing behavior and negatively affecting mental health outcomes **(Khan et al., 2023)**.

Emotional well-being is the ability to manage emotions effectively and maintain a sense of purpose and meaningful relationships. It involves recognizing, experiencing, and constructively managing a wide range of emotions. Positive emotional well-being is associated with lower risks of disease, improved mental health, resilience, and better performance at work. The impact of cyberloafing on the emotional well-being of psychiatric nurses in Saudi Arabia is a complex issue that involves both potential benefits and risks **(Attaran et al., 2019)**. Given the high-stress environment in psychiatric care, nurses often experience emotional exhaustion and compassion

fatigue. Cyberloafing, when used in balance, can serve as a relief that allows nurses brief mental breaks, helping them regulate stress and maintain their emotional well-being. Engaging in short online activities, such as browsing social media or reading news, may offer momentary relief from emotional strain, promoting resilience and enhancing emotional wellbeing **(Sheikh et al., 2015).**

Understanding the relative benefits and risks of cyberloafing is crucial for workplace policies that support psychiatric nurses' health and patient safety. Developing structured emotional wellbeing management programs and maintaining a supportive work environment can lead to increased stress (Neck et al., 2018). Therefore, addressing common workplace issues such as staff turnover, high turnover rates, and lack of support systems can help improve emotional well-being and well-being in practice (Sheikh et al., 2015).

In conclusion, cyberloafing is a wide range of behaviors that can have both positive and negative effects on mental health providers. While it may be a necessary short-term cognitive restraint, excessive exposure can lead to cognitive impairment, low emotional wellbeing, and potentially negative impacts on patient safety (Tandon et al., 2021). Due to the unique challenges faced by psychiatric nurses, especially in Saudi Arabia, understanding the role of counseling in their practice is of utmost importance. By implementing targeted workflows that promote emotional safety, healthcare organizations can ensure that mental health professionals receive the support they need while maintaining the highest standards of patient safety (Liberman et al., 2011).

2. Literature review

The impact of Cyberloafing on healthcare professionals, particularly psychiatric nurses, remains a subject of debate, with studies highlighting both the negative consequences and potential benefits of online engagement. While some research suggested that cyberloafing reduces productivity, others argue that it may serve to reduce stress and improve emotional well-being.

One of the main directions in discussion in the literature was on the relationship between cyberloafing and emotional well-being. Metin-Orta and Demirtepe-Saygılı (2023) examined different cyberloafing activities and found that accessing online content and engaging in gaming were linked to positive affect, while social media engagement correlated with negative affect. These findings align with Khan et al. (2023), who explored how digital addiction affects work

engagement. Their study indicated that excessive cyberloafing leads to reduced concentration and productivity, yet employees with higher self-control maintained better mental health. This suggests that while limited cyberloafing can have psychological benefits, excessive usage may undermine workplace engagement.

The role of cyberloafing in stress management is also debated. Stoddart (2016) found that online activities can provide short-term relief from stress, particularly among employees with heavy workloads. This is consistent with Ibrahim and Helaly (2022), who discovered that although nurses experience high levels of job-related anxiety, they engage in fewer cyberloafing activities compared to other professions, possibly due to the demanding nature of their work. The fact that only a small proportion of nurses in their study engaged in cyberloafing suggests that healthcare professionals may perceive such activities as detrimental rather than beneficial to their work environment.

Moreover, cyberloafing influences job performance and workplace dynamics remain contentious. Awan and Afzal (2023) demonstrated that cyberloafing among supervisors negatively impacted employee well-being, resulting in increased absenteeism and may related with poor emotional wellbeing. This raises concerns about whether cyberloafing by nurse leaders could inadvertently contribute to psychiatric nurse's staff productivity by setting a precedent for non-work-related digital activities. Similarly, Yildiz and Yildiz (2024) found that moderate cyberloafing helped employees manage emotional stress, but excessive use led to workplace incidents and disciplinary actions. These findings reinforce the notion that while controlled cyberloafing may be beneficial, uncontrolled usage presents significant risks, particularly in high-pressure healthcare settings like psychiatric institutions.

Additionally, workplace interactions and self-perception influence the extent of cyberloafing. Kaur et al. (2025) examined the effects of workplace gossip and self-esteem on cyberloafing and found that employees who felt disengaged due to negative work relationships were more likely to engage in cyberloafing as a coping mechanism. This parallels findings from Khan et al. (2023), who reported that employees experiencing digital addiction often suffered from lower job satisfaction and increased mental distress. In the context of psychiatric nursing, these

insights suggest that social and psychological factors contribute to cyberloafing behaviors, potentially affecting overall job performance and emotional resilience.

Taken together, these studies highlight the complexity of cyberloafing within healthcare environments. While some findings support its role in mitigating stress and enhancing short-term well-being, others caution against its excessive use, which may lead to low emotional wellbeing, decreased productivity, and workplace upset. The balance between using digital tools and ensuring optimal work performance remains a crucial consideration for healthcare institutions. Implementing workplace policies that address cyberloafing without overly restricting necessary mental breaks may offer a solution that protects both employee well-being and hospital efficiency.

Summary and Gap

The literature on cyberloafing and well-being among nurses highlights several challenges regarding its implementation in the workplace. Research has shown that while cyberloafing can be relaxing in the short-term, excessive use can lead to poor emotional wellbeing, job distress, and decreased concentration. Studies conducted across a range of professional backgrounds demonstrate the long-term effects of chronic stress. For instance, Khan et al. (2023) showed that frequent digital addiction leads to higher levels of anxiety and poor emotional wellbeing, and Stoddart (2016) found that digital users were more likely to be affected than those who are working on mental health. For example, Ibrahim and Helaly (2022) identified a strong link between digital use, resilience, and mental safety among nurses, further attenuating the negative effects real. Overall, these findings suggest that cyberloafing has a double effect, either as a temporary deterrent or, when unobserved, as an actual distress being present in the workplace.

Despite the growth of research on cyberloafing, there are gaps in the understanding of how nurses treat patients, especially in high-stress settings such as psychiatrists. Existing studies focus mainly on the general work environment, with limited exploration of how cyberloafing interacts with nurses' emotional variables. In addition, while most studies have highlighted the short-term mental health benefits of cyberloafing, few have examined the long-term effects or role of workplace culture truth as well as professionalism.

Moreover, studies such as Kaur et al. (2025) showed that workplace domains, such as communication and self-reflection, may interact with cyberloafing in ways that affect emotions. Future research should examine the factors influencing nurses' cyberloafing behaviors, the balance between cyber use and harm, and the development of workplace policies that promote health while maintaining equipment.

3. Problem Statement

The increasing integration of digital tools in healthcare has altered working conditions, raising concerns about cyberloafing among mental health nurses. While excessive cyberloafing reduces concentration and productivity, moderate use may help alleviate stress. However, its impact on mental health nurses remains underexplored, particularly in Saudi Arabia. Given their demanding roles, mental health nurses require focus and flexibility, yet uncontrolled cyberloafing may compromise productivity and job distress. Studies suggest employees spend up to three hours daily on mobile devices, blurring professional and personal use. This raises concerns about its effects on emotional wellbeing and engagement.

Some studies found that moderate cyberloafing reduces cognitive decline, while excessive adaptation correlated with workplace stress. Other research noted that psychiatric nurses use online activities as a coping mechanism, which may either relieve stress or heighten emotional exhaustion. This study aims to clarify cyberloafing's role—whether it serves as a temporary stress reliever or contributes to workplace strain. Findings will support strategies that balance digital engagement with professional efficiency, ensuring job satisfaction and patient care quality.

4. Justification

Psychiatric nursing is one of the most in-demand healthcare professions, requiring nurses to manage patients with complex mental health conditions and prevent significant healthcare needs and complications. Psychiatric nurses are more likely to experience patient bullying, verbal abuse, and a variety of other socio-economic sanctions as a result of patient stigma (Arslan & Demir, 2016). These stressors are exacerbated by many patients and nurses, unpredictable working hours, and unclear organizational support, all of which contribute to poor emotional wellbeing with their work (Ibrahim & Helaly, 2022). Addressing these issues is essential

to ensuring that nurses maintain high quality healthcare and achieve high quality patient care (Khan et al., 2023).

Cyberloafing, defined as the use of the internet in the workplace for non-work-related purposes, is increasingly becoming a topic of emotional well-being. While traditionally considered a distraction in the workplace, studies suggest that digital work, when done in short bursts, can be relaxing in the short term, allowing employees to protect themselves from workplace stressors (Demir et al., 2023). Yildiz and Yildiz (2024) found that low levels of cyberloafing behavior helped healthcare workers manage their stress levels through reflective practice, whereas high levels of workload led to destress. Similarly, Kaur et al. (2025) pointed out that digital engagement can increase negative workplace conflict. Despite these conflicting findings, little research has examined the role of digital services in helping, or hurting, the experiences of mental health professionals in Saudi Arabia. Given the increasing dependence on digital technologies in healthcare, the impact of digital technologies on healthcare is crucial. This study aimed to address this gap and provide evidence-based guidance for healthcare organizations to develop intervention strategies to balance nurses' distress with professional engagement, ultimately improving nurses retention, to improve wellbeing, and to promote overall mental health (Demir et al., 2023).

5. Aim

The aim of this study is to evaluate the effects of cyberloafing on the emotional well-being of psychiatric nurses in Saudi Arabia.

6. Specific Objectives

- To determine the level of cyberloafing among psychiatric nurses in Saudi Arabia.
- To evaluate the level of emotional well-being of psychiatric nurses and identify factors influencing their psychological health.
- To investigate the relationship between cyberloafing and emotional well-being

7. Hypothesis

There is a significant relationship between cyberloafing and the emotional well-being of psychiatric nurses

8. Study Question

What is the relationship between cyberloafing and the emotional well-being of psychiatric nurses in Saudi Arabia?

9. Methods

9.1 Study Design

This study will use a quantitative, cross-sectional design.

9.2 Study Setting

This study will be conducted in Erada Complex, Dammam, Saudi Arabia, which operate under the administration of the Eastern Health Cluster. This hospital provides specialized psychiatric and mental health services, catering to a diverse patient population with varying levels of mental health needs.

9.3 Study Duration

The study is expected to take place over a period of six months, including the preparation, data collection, and analysis phases.

9.4 Study Population

The target population for this study includes psychiatric nurses employed at the selected hospitals in Dammam.

Inclusion Criteria

This study includes psychiatric nurses actively employed in the study setting during the research period. Eligible participants must have at least six months of psychiatric care experience at the facility, provide direct patient care in psychiatric wards, and give informed consent to participate.

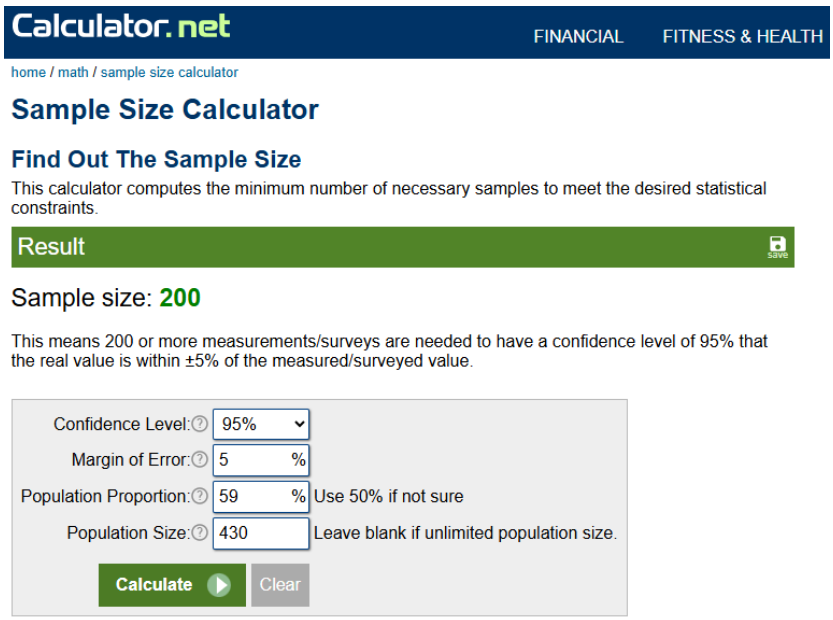
Exclusion Criteria

Nurses on leave during the study period, non-nursing staff (e.g., administrative personnel), and those with less than six months of experience in the selected setting will be excluded. Additionally, participants who decline or withdraw consent will not be included in the study.

9.5 Sampling

9.5.1 Sample size

The sample size for this study is 200 participants. This calculation was determined using a 95% confidence level, a 5% margin of error, and assuming a population proportion of 59% (Lai et al, 2023) with a total population size of 415.



This means that at least 200 measurements or survey responses are required to ensure that the results accurately represent the population within a ±5% margin of error at a 95% confidence level.

9.5.2 Sampling Technique

A convenient sampling method will be used

9.6 Data Collection

9.6.1 Data Collection Tool

The data collection tool will consist of three main parts to ensure comprehensive coverage of the study variables and provide a well-rounded understanding of the participants' demographic, professional, and behavioral characteristics:

Part 1: Demographic and Professional Characteristics

The first section of the data collection focuses on gathering demographic and professional information about the nurses. Variables include age, gender, marital status, educational qualification, years of experience in psychiatric nursing, employment type, work area or department, and average weekly working hours.

Part 2 of the study utilizes the Cyberloafing Scale

Developed by Blanchard and Henle (2008) to assess the frequency and types of cyberloafing activities among nurses. This 22-item scale covers various online behaviors, including checking and sending non-work-related emails, browsing news websites, engaging in online shopping or auctions, using social media platforms, and visiting entertainment or inappropriate websites. Participants will rate these activities on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Almost Never" (1) to "Almost Always" (5), providing valuable insights into the prevalence and patterns of cyberloafing behaviors in the workplace. In their study, Blanchard and Henle reported a Cronbach alpha of 0.80.

Part 3: The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule - Short Form (PANAS-SF)

Developed by Watson, Clark, and Tellegen (1988), is a validated tool used to assess emotional well-being. The PANAS-SF consists of 20 self-report items divided into two subscales: Positive Affect and Negative Affect. Participants rate their experiences on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Very Slightly or Not at All" (1) to "Extremely" (5). The scale has demonstrated good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.86 to 0.90 for the

Positive Affect subscale and 0.84 to 0.87 for the Negative Affect subscale. Test-retest reliability over an 8-week period yielded correlations between 0.47 and 0.68 for Positive Affect and between 0.39 and 0.71 for Negative Affect.

9.6.2 Data collection procedure

The data collection process will begin by identifying eligible psychiatric nurses based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, followed by obtaining informed consent. Participants will complete the Cyberloafing Scale and Positive and Negative Affect Schedule during working hours, with both paper-based and digital (Google Forms) options available to ensure accessibility and confidentiality. The surveys will be conducted over two weeks, allowing flexibility to minimize work disruptions. Once completed, responses will be securely stored, entered into a database, and subjected to quality checks for accuracy. Ethical approval will be secured from the institutional review board, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation.

10.7 Data Analysis

The data will be analyzed using SPSS (version 28), with descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) summarizing participant demographics, cyberloafing prevalence, and workplace stress levels. Inferential statistical tests, including Pearson correlation, will assess relationships between the scores cyberloafing, emotional well-being, and demographic factors. A significance level of $p < 0.05$ will be applied to determine statistical relevance.

10.8 Ethical Considerations

This study will adhere to strict ethical guidelines to ensure the rights and well-being of the participants. Ethical approval will be obtained from the relevant institutional review board prior to data collection. Participants will be provided with a clear explanation of the study purpose, procedures, and their rights, including the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants before their inclusion in the study.

Data confidentiality will be strictly maintained, with no identifying information linked to the responses. Anonymized data will be securely stored and used solely for research purposes.

Efforts will be made to minimize any potential risks or discomfort to participants, and they will have access to mental health resources if they experience any distress during the study.

9.9 Budget

Self-funded by the researcher.

9.10 Timeframe

Task	2025					
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Ethical approval and permissions						
Tool preparation and pilot testing						
Participant recruitment						
Data collection						
Data entry and cleaning						
Data analysis						
Report writing and submission						

9.11 Expected Results

This study is expected to provide valuable findings regarding the quality of life of mental health nurses in Saudi Arabia. Findings will determine whether cyberloafing serves as a short-term recovery mechanism or leads to increased stress and disengagement from the workplace.

First, it is expected that cyberloafing will be more prevalent among psychiatric nurses, with varying levels of vulnerability such as job destress. Physicians who work long hours or deal with high patient volumes may engage in online work more frequently as a way of managing their stress.

Second, the study is expected to show a significant relationship between cyberloafing and depression. Moderate levels of digital engagement may be associated with a range of positive outcomes, helping nurses regain cognitive and emotional well-being. Furthermore, excessive cyberloafing is associated with a variety of negative effects such as stress, decreased job satisfaction, and reduced work engagement.

Third, demographic and professional characteristics such as age, years of employment, and job satisfaction are expected to moderate the relationship between cyberloafing and mental health. Younger or busier physicians may be more reliant on electronic resources, whereas experienced physicians with better supervision may be less likely to be associated with electronic services.

Finally, the study is expected to provide actionable guidelines for substance abuse prevention in mental health care settings. The findings will help healthcare managers to identify appropriate workplace policies that identify the benefits of short-term digital adoption and identify the risks of short-term adoption reduced humidity. This will ultimately help improve nurses' emotional well-being, and patient care in healthcare settings.

9.12 Study limitations

The study is expected to have several limitations, including the use of randomized controlled trials, which may limit the causal relationship between emotional wellbeing and cyberloafing. In addition, reliance on self-reports may introduce bias, such as subjective goals or underreported behavior. The study findings may also be limited to the cultural and nursing community in Saudi Arabia, reducing generalizability to other regions or populations. Future research with longitudinal designs and objective measures is recommended to address these limitations.

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