Work Stress Mediates the Effect of Role Conflict on Cyberloafing Behaviour

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	Cyberloafing is a form deviant workplace behaviour that has become increasingly prevalent, particularly among Generation Z employees. This study aims to examine the effect of role conflict on cyberloafing behaviour, as well as the role of work stress as a mediating variable in this relationship. The research employed a quantitative approach involving 90 respondents who are Generation Z employees in Sidoarjo. Data were collected through questionnaires and analysed using the Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) method with the assistance of SmartPLS software. The result indicate that role conflict has a positive and significant effect on cyberloafing behaviour. Furthermore, work stress was found to have a significant mediating role in bridging the relationship between role conflict and cyberloafing behaviour.

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INTRODUCTION

Advances in information and communication technology have made the internet an essential part of people's lives, including professional activities. Indonesia has experienced a significant increase in internet penetration, as reported by the Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia (2024), which recorded that 79.50% of the population is connected to the internet, with Generation Z contributing the largest proportion at 34.40%. As a generation born and raised in the digital era, Generation Z demonstrates a high dependence on technology (Mihelič dkk., 2023).

Generation Z is currently at a productive age and has begun to take roles in the workforce, bringing distinctive characteristics that differentiate them from previous generations. They are accustomed to fast paced, flexible, and interconnected environments (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2022). This condition enables them to adapt naturally to the dynamics of the modern workplace. One of the regions that has experienced the dominant presence of this generation is Sidoarjo, a strategic area that serves as a key supporting zone for the Surabaya metropolitan region (Kompas.com, 2023). The substantial participation of Generation Z in the workforce in this area highlights the importance of examining how they adapt and make use of internet access within the dynamics of contemporary work.

Cyberloafing refers to employees' intentional use of internet access for personal purposes during working hours (Lim & Teo, 2022). This activity can be classified into two categories, namely minor and serious. The tendency to engage in cyberloafing may increase when employees observe colleagues or even supervisors engaging in similar behaviour (Askew dkk., 2019). In addition, according to Nuraeni dkk. (2023), the emergence of cyberloafing behaviour can also be influenced by the level of work stress experienced by individuals.

Work stress is a condition of mental tension that commonly occurs as a result of physical, environmental, and social pressures in the workplace (Sari & Iryanti, 2024). When the workload is disproportionate to an individual's capacity and there is a lack of support from supervisors or colleagues, employees are more likely to experience psychological strain. Accumulated work pressure can result in emotional exhaustion, making cyberloafing one of the ways employees seek to restore their emotional resources (Zhou dkk., 2023). In addition to work stress, a study by Jamaluddin dkk. (2023) explains that role conflict is also one of the factors that can influence individual behaviour in the workplace.

Role conflict is a condition in which individuals face contradictory work demands, making it difficult to perform tasks optimally (Astuti dkk., 2023). Such misalignment may arise when employees are required to complete tasks quickly while at the same time adhering to complex and time consuming procedures. According to Maden-Eyiusta (2019), inconsistencies between expectations received from various parties, such as supervisors, colleagues, or organisational systems, create confusion that can ultimately trigger psychological stress. In certain cases, role conflict may also take the form of dual role conflict, where individuals must balance at home and in the workplace (Olanda & Swasti, 2023). However, in the present study, the concept of role conflict more specifically refers to the misalignment between job demans and the expectations attached to the role performed.

Based on the results of a preliminary questionnaire, it was found that most respondents engaged in cyberloafing. The majority admitted to using the internet for personal purposes during working hours. This high percentage indicates that non work activities in the workplace, such as accessing social media or online entertainment, are common among Generation Z employees in Sidoarjo. Furthermore, most respondents reported experiencing work stress due to the large volume of tasks that needed to be completed on time. In addition, the majority stated that they experienced role conflict as a result of receiving different instructions from several supervisors and often feeling there were differences in understanding regarding the tasks assigned. These findings clearly indicate the presence of psychological strain caused by overlapping expectations and disproportionate workloads. The combination of these issues has the potential to trigger negative compensatory behaviours such as cyberloafing.

This is supported by research conducted by Jamaluddin dkk. (2023), which found that role conflict has a positive and significant effect on cyberloafing behaviour. A study by Mishra & Tageja (2022) also showed that work stress has a positive and significant effect on cyberloafing behaviour. These findings indicate that the higher the level of work stress experienced by employees, the greater their tendency to engage in cyberloafing. Based on the phenomena described above, this study seeks to examine whether there is an effect of role conflict on cyberloafing behaviour through work stress. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to analyse the effect of role conflict on cyberloafing behaviour and the role of work stress as a mediating variable. The results are expected to contribute to company management in formulating human resource management strategies, particularly in addressing role conflict and work stress that have the potential to encourage cyberloafing behaviour among Generation Z employees in Sidoarjo.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cyberloafing Behaviour

Cyberloafing refers to employees' use of the internet in the workplace for personal purposes or activities unrelated to their job tasks, whether through company owned devices and networks or through personal devices and connections (Batabyal and Bhal, 2020). Cyberloafing behaviour can be understood as any form of internet use carried out when an individual is supposed to be focusing on their work (Lim and Teo, 2022). The indicators of cyberloafing behaviour include entertainment, interaction, transaction, and recreation (Nurtjahjanti et al., 2024).

Role Conflict

Role conflict is one of the most common forms of conflict in the workplace, referring to a condition in which individuals face conflicting expectations or demands in carrying out their tasks (Robbins and Judge, 2024). This conflict arises when individuals are required to meet two or more contradictory demands, where fulfilling one demand may hinder the fulfilment of the other(s) (Rahim, 2023). The indicators of role conflict include differences in approaches to completing tasks, conflicting tasks, violations of rules to complete tasks, and differences in task perceptions (Yulianti and Putra, 2021).

Work Stress

Work stress is a condition that often arises from an imbalance between job demands and an individual's capacity to cope with them (Fauquet Alekhine and Erskine, 2023). Work stress occurs due to pressures originating from physical, environmental, and social interaction factors in the workplace (Sari and Iryanti, 2024). The indicators of work stress include excessive job demands, time pressure or urgency, low supervisor support, poor work climate, low job control, value misalignment, and organisational change (Rezeki, 2023).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is based on a quantitative research approach. The independent variable is role conflict, the mediating variable is work stress, and the dependent variable is cyberloafing behaviour. The research was conducted among Generation Z employees in Sidoarjo, with a total of 90 respondents. The sampling technique employed was purposive sampling, which involves selecting respondents based on specific criteria, namely individuals classified as Generation Z and residing in Sidoarjo. Data were collected through an online questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale. The data were analysed using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) method with the assistance of SmartPLS software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Result

Based on the collected data, the demographic analysis in this study involved a total of 90 respondents, all of whom were Generation Z employees working in Sidoarjo. Regarding gender composition, the sample was predominantly male, with 54 individuals representing 60% of the total, while the remaining 36 respondents (40%) were female. In terms of age distribution, the largest proportion of participants fell within the 20 – 24 age range, totalling 59 individuals (65.56%), followed by those in the 25 – 28 age group, which comprised 31 individuals (34.44%). With respect to length of service, the majority of respondents had been employed for less than one year, accounting for 43 individuals (47.78%), while the remaining respondents had worked for longer periods exceeding one year. These demographic patterns provide a clearer understanding of the sample profile, serving as a contextual foundation for interpreting the study's subsequent findings.

Convergent Validity Test

Table 1. Outer Loadings

	Cyberloafing Behaviour (Y)	Role Conflict (X)	Work Stress (Z)
X.1		0.826	
X.2		0.718	
X.3		0.828	
Y.1	0.869		
Y.2	0.835		
Y.3	0.851		
Z.1			0.879
Z.2			0.870
Z.3			0.859

Source: Output SmartPLS, 2025

The table above show that all reflective indicators have a factor loading value greater than 0.07, indicating that they can represent the construct well. Therefore, all reflective indicators are considered valid and meet the requirements for convergent validity.

Reliability and Validity Test

Table 2. Construct Reliability and Validity

Construct reliability and validity Overview	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_a)	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Cyberloafing Behaviour (Y)	0.811	0.812	0.888	0.725
Role Conflict (X)	0.704	0.722	0.834	0.628
Work Stress (Z)	0.838	0.839	0.903	0.756

Source: Outer SmartPLS, 2025

This study assesses construct reliability and validity. The result show that the AVE value for each construct exceeds 0.50, indicating convergent validity. Construct reliability, measured using the composite reliability value, is above 0.70 for all construct, demonstrating that all indicators are consistent in measuring their respective latent variables and are therefore reliable.

Discriminant Validity Test

Table 3. Discriminant Validity

Discriminant Validity Fornell-Larcker Criterion	Cyberloafing Behaviour (Y)	Role Conflict (X)	Work Stress (Z)
Cyberloafing Behaviour (Y)	0.851		
Role Conflict (X)	0.729	0.792	
Work Stress (Z)	0.722	0.775	0.869

Source: Output SmartPLS, 2025

Discriminant validity is achieved if the square root of the AVE is greater than the variable's correlation with other variables. For example, the Cyberloafing Behaviour (Y) variable, with indicators Y.1 to Y.3, has an AVE square root of 0.851, which exceeds its correlation with other variables, indicating that it meets discriminant validity. Overall, all research variables, namely Cyberloafing Behaviour, Role Conflict, and Work Stress, have AVE square root values greater than their correlations with other variables, thereby fulfilling the discriminant validity requirement.
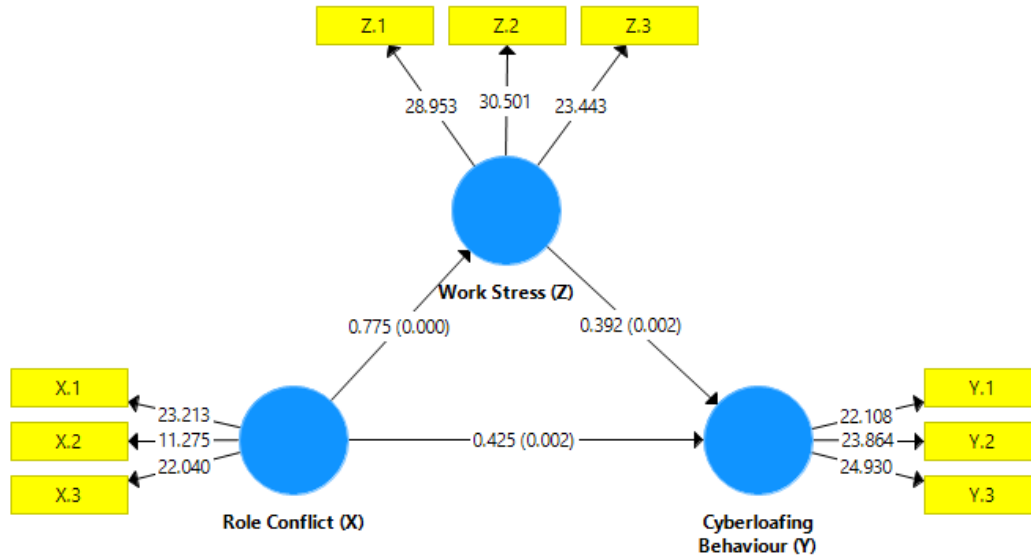
Inner Model

Figure 1. Path Diagram (Inner Model)

R-square Test

Table 4. R-square

R-square Overview	R-square	R-square Adjusted
Cyberloafing Behaviour (Y)	0.593	0.583
Work Stress (Z)	0.601	0.597

Source: Output SmartPLS, 2025

The R-square value indicates how much the independent variables explain the dependent variable. An R-square of 0.70 is considered strong, 0.50 moderate, and 0.25 weak (Savitri dkk., 2021). In this study, the R-square for cyberloafing behaviour (Y) was 0.593, meaning role conflict (X) and work stress (Z) explain 59.3% of its variance, which falls into the moderate category. The R-square for work stress (Z) was 0.601, indicating that role conflict explains 60.1% of its variance, also categorised as moderate.

Hypothesis Test

Table 5. Path Coefficients and Specific Indirect Effect

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T-Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P-Values
Role Conflict (X) -> Cyberloafing Behaviour (Y)	0.425	0.435	0.136	3.131	0.002
Role Conflict (X) -> Work Stress (Z) -> Cyberloafing Behaviour (Y)	0.304	0.302	0.102	2.955	0.003

Source: Output SmartPLS, 2025

Based on the result of hypothesis testing, the interpretation of the causality test is as follows:

H1: Role conflict has a significant positive effect on cyberloafing behaviour with a path coefficient of 0.425 where the *p*-value = 0.002 is less than α = 0.05 (5%).

H2: Work stress significantly mediates the relationship between role conflict and cyberloafing behaviour with a path coefficient of 0.304 and *p*-value = 0.003 is less than α = 0.05 (5%).

Discussion

Role Conflict on Cyberloafing Behaviour

This study revealed that role conflict contributes to cyberloafing behaviour among Generation Z employees in Sidoarjo. The findings indicate that the lower the level of role conflict experienced by employees, the lower their tendency to engage in cyberloafing.

Task perception discrepancies emerged as the most dominant aspect influencing the level of role conflict, while entertainment-related activities were identified as the most prominent factor driving cyberloafing behaviour. In other words, employees experience misunderstandings or inconsistencies regarding the tasks or responsibilities assigned to them, they are more likely to feel confused, pressured, or directionless at work. In such situations, Generation Z employees tend to watch videos, browse social media, or access non-work-related content as a way to relieve tension or fill gaps in work focus.

These results are consistent with the studies of Husna dkk. (2022), Jamaluddin dkk. (2023), and Wambrauw dkk. (2024), which also found a positive and significant relationship between role conflict and cyberloafing behaviour. However, they contrast with the findings of Kiroh dkk. (2023), which reported a negative effect of role conflict on cyberloafing behaviour.

Work Stress Mediates the Effect of Role Conflict on Cyberloafing Behaviour

This study demonstrates that work stress mediates the relationship between role conflict and cyberloafing behaviour among Generation Z employees in Sidoarjo. In other words, a higher degree of role conflict can increase work stress, which in turn heightens the likelihood of employees engaging in cyberloafing activities.

The result show that differences in task perception are the primary contributor to role conflict. When employees and supervisors have differing understandings of assigned tasks, confusion and uncertainty are likely to arise. This situation, combined with excessive work demands that are the main cause of work stress, creates a pressurised work environment. For Generation Z employees, who are highly connected to digital platforms and more sensitive to psychological strain, cyberloafing often becomes a means of relieving stress or diverting attention from work pressures.

These findings indicate that unclear task assignments and disproportionate workloads can increase stress levels, thereby encouraging cyberloafing. Organisations can minimise this risk by ensuring clear communication, aligning tasks with employee capacity, and managing workloads effectively.

This findings are in line with prior studies, including Lismawati dkk. (2022) and Yulianti & Putra (2021), which found that role conflict positively affects work stress, as well as (Mishra & Tageja, 2022; Novianti & Roz, 2023; Nuraeni dkk., 2023), which confirmed that work stress significantly influences cyberloafing. Collectively, these findings support the role of work stress as a mediator between role conflict and cyberloafing behaviour.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion and research findings, it can be concluded that role conflict contributes to an increased tendency for cyberloafing behaviour among Generation Z employees in Sidoarjo, primarily due to differences in task perception. Furthermore, this study confirms that work stress serves as a mediating factor, indicating that role conflict can trigger work stress experienced by Generation Z employees in Sidoarjo, which in turn leads to a higher tendency for cyberloafing behaviour. Therefore, organisations are advised to develop more structured task descriptions, strengthen communication between supervisors and employees, and adjust workloads proportionally to individual capacity through job analysis. This study may serve as a reference for future research by incorporating additional variables such as self-control, job boredom, and job satisfaction. Moreover, expanding the geographical scope is essential to obtain more comprehensive results.

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