The two sides of *Cyberloafing*: A qualitative analysis of workers' perceptions of the negative and positive consequences of ICT usage behavior for personal purposes in the workplace

https://doi.org/10.56238/sevened2024.018-010

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ABSTRACT

Abstract: There is a growing interest on the part of organizations and researchers in understanding the use of ICTs for personal purposes in the workplace, a phenomenon called *cyberloafing*. In this sense, the present research aimed to investigate the perception of ICT users in organizations about the negative and positive consequences of *cyberloafing* behavior. A qualitative study was carried out through interviews that were submitted to a content analysis. Five companies in the ICT sector located in Rio Grande do Sul were adopted as contexts of analysis, which differed in terms of the number of employees, time of operation in the market and positioning in relation to *cyberloafing* behavior. In these companies, 20 workers who admitted to engaging in such behavior were established as the unit of analysis. Regarding the negative consequences of *cyberloafing* behavior, losses in productivity and efficiency were perceived by the interviewees. Although this aspect was manifested in a significant way, positive consequences were also perceived, such as recovery in situations of fatigue and stress and the balance between the personal and professional spheres. Therefore, when considering the context in which the phenomenon occurs, it can be inferred that its negative and positive effects coexist and both affect the individual's productivity.

Keywords: *Cyberloafing*, Work environment, Consequential, Positive, Negative.

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INTRODUCTION

In view of the increasing access to various information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the contemporary workplace, *cyberloafing* behavior is a topic of increasingly prevalent interest in organizations and management research in recent years (Pindek, Krajcevska, Spector, 2018). In general, *cyberloafing* can be described as the "set of behaviors in the workplace in which an employee engages in activities mediated by electronic devices, particularly through the use of the *internet*, which his immediate supervisor would not consider work-related" (Askew *et al*., 2014, p. 510).

Data demonstrate the breadth of the phenomenon. In the United States, a survey of 3,200 workers found that 64% reported practicing *cyberloafing* activities daily throughout their workday. Among this portion, 39% said they spend only one hour or less per week on online practices unrelated to work, while 29% spend up to 2 hours, 21% up to 5 hours, and 3% spend 10 hours or more using ICTs for personal purposes in a period of one week (Salary.com, 2018). In Brazil, the scenario is no different: in a sample of 1,200 professionals, seven out of ten claimed to engage in *cyberloafing* behavior, whose sum of the duration of their online activities for personal purposes can represent up to 30% of their work time (Lumiun, 2017). Many companies, when faced with such percentages, start to treat *cyberloafing* as a modern form of counterproductive behavior in the workplace, in which instead of stealing company assets, the employee starts to steal the company's productive time by using technologies for purposes unrelated to work (Kim *et al*., 2016).

This negative perspective on *cyberloafing* has been discussed in academia since the beginning of studies on behavior, seeking to understand its different antecedents (Sheikh, Atashgah and Adibdadegan, 2015), the possible effects (Koay; Soh; Chew, 2017), and ways to mitigate it (Khansa *et al*., 2017). Among the negative consequences explored in the literature, inefficiency and decreased work performance can be mentioned (Ramayah, 2010; Andreassen, Torsheim and Pallesen, 2014), financial losses (Salinas and Farfán, 2017) and threats to organizational information security (Hadlington and Parsons, 2017).

However, although fewer in number, there is also a strand in academic research on *cyberloafing* behavior that aims to relate it to possible positive consequences. Aspects such as work-life balance (König and de La Guardia, 2013; Soh, Koay and Chew, 2017), Reestablishment in situations of fatigue / stress / boredom (Ng, Shao and Liu, 2016; Arshad, Aftab and Bukhari, 2016; Pindek, Krajcevska, Spector, 2018), innovative behaviour at work (Derin and Gökçe, 2016) and promotion of social capital (Cao *et al*., 2016).

In this sense, Koay and Soh (2018) conducted a literature review to highlight that both the existence of negative and positive consequences of cyberloafing have been empirically proven in academic research, arguing that the behavior should be analyzed from both perspectives. Also

starting from a joint view, Kim and Christensen (2017) built a theoretical model to propose that cyberloafing exerts negative and positive effects on organizational results and addressed possible conditions that would mitigate or strengthen these effects.

However, although the studies by Koay and Soh (2018) and Kim and Christensen (2017) theoretically assume that both negative and positive points of view of *cyberloafing* behavior are coexisting, the authors have not conducted empirical research on the perception of individuals who practice it or live with it in their work routines. In this sense, considering the aspects mentioned above, the present study emerged from the following questions: What are the negative and positive consequences of *cyberloafing* behavior perceived by workers who use technologies in organizations? Are both consequences of behavior perceived by them as coexisting?

Thus, in order to answer these questions, the general objective was established: To investigate the perception of ICT users in organizations about the negative and positive consequences of *cyberloafing* behavior. It is justified to carry out this research in order to contribute to the results of Koay and Soh (2018) and Kim and Christensen (2017), providing empirical evidence that corroborates or contests their theoretical propositions, presenting the feasibility of the joint analysis of the negative and positive consequences of *cyberloafing behavior*.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

According to Jandaghi *et al*. (2015), the concern about *cyberloafing* behavior was initially addressed in 1995 in a text published in *New York's Daily News*. In his article, Tony Kamins questioned the use of new technologies, especially the *internet*, by workers for private purposes during working hours, warning that this use could be negative and result in organizational losses. In academia, the theme became more prominent with the study by Lim (2002, p. 677) who defined "any voluntary act of employees using their company's Internet access during office hours to browse non-work-related websites for personal purposes and to check (including receiving and sending) personal *emails* as a misuse of the *Internet*" and coined the term *cyberloafing* to refer to such acts.

Continuing Lim's (2002) research, academic production on the subject has been developing over time, and it is possible to mention various terminologies adopted to refer to *cyberloafing behavior*, such as *cyberslacking* (O'neill, Hambley and Bercovich, 2014), *non-work-related computing* (Son and Park, 2016), *personal web usage* (Ramayah, 2010) and, in Portuguese, cybervagrancy (Cappellozza, Moraes and Muniz, 2017). In this sense, behavior has also been analyzed in a multidimensional way, assuming that it can vary between more innocuous activities, with the intention of seeking some entertainment (watching videos on *YouTube*, browsing virtual social networks, etc.), personal utilitarian activities (paying an online bill, making a purchase through *e-commerce*, etc.), learning (watching a video lesson, reading educational content, etc.) to more

problematic activities (accessing *pornographic* sites, illegally *downloading* files, etc.) (Blanchard and Henle, 2008).

In view of the variety of activities that can be practiced due to different intentions, it is evident that this behavior can be perceived from both negative and positive points of view (Holguin, 2016). Both perspectives are presented in the following topics.

THE "DARK SIDE": NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF *CYBERLOAFING BEHAVIOR*

When analyzing the possible consequences of *cyberloafing* behavior from a negative perspective, it can be inferred that the main aspect highlighted by scholars on the subject is the imminent damage to the organization as a whole. In this sense, engaging in this behavior can significantly impact the worker's performance, productivity, and efficiency, which leads to financial losses, but can also lead to the organization's exposure to electronic, legal, and image threats (Jandaghi *et al*., 2015; Hadlington and Parsons, 2017; Koay and Soh, 2018).

By spending the time and attention that should be related to the work in the use of ICTs for personal purposes, the professional exposes himself to inefficiency (Ramayah, 2010; Andreassen, Torsheim and Pallesen, 2014). Thus, in moments of distraction or procrastination, workers can open gaps for failures in the execution of tasks, meeting deadlines or serving customers (Jandaghi *et al*., 2015). Messarra, Karkoulian and McCarthy (2011) also point out that generally in smaller organizations that have fewer resources, this improper use can overload ICTs, affecting productivity.

In addition, this behavior can subject the organization's ICT network to a condition of vulnerability due to the vast existence of virtual threats (Hadlington and Parsons, 2017). Various activities such as accessing pornographic content sites or *online games* or downloading content from piracy sites can compromise organizational security by exposing it to cyber viruses. In addition to harming the full functioning of ICTs, viruses in the form of *spyware* can defraud confidential company information, causing even more serious damage (Hadlington and Parsons, 2017). This context may also involve legal inconveniences that can harm both the organization and the workers. In case of illegal practices in the use of ICTs carried out by professionals in the workplace, the organization may be required to be legally involved in such crimes. On the other hand, *cyberloafing* practices contrary to organizational norms can lead, legally, to dismissal for just cause (Salinas and Farfán, 2017).

In short, the aforementioned consequences may imply significant direct costs, reflected in financial losses. However, the authors also point out that there are indirect costs such as the potential to tarnish the organization's reputation before its customers and society in general (Messarra, Karkoulian and McCarthy, 2011).

THE "LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL": POSITIVE CONSEQUENCES OF *CYBERLOAFING BEHAVIOR*

Although the consequences mentioned above are worrying, *cyberloafing* behavior can also be analyzed from a positive perspective. This view encompasses consequences that favor the worker in terms of productivity and development and, consequently, the organization. The most cited beneficial aspect among researchers on the subject is the feasibility of the behavior becoming an escape or recovery valve for the worker in situations of fatigue, stress or boredom. On these occasions, using ICTs for personal purposes during working hours in a controlled and responsible manner can regain the individual's spirit and disposition and, consequently, contribute to their productivity (Ng, Shao and Liu, 2016; Arshad, Aftab and Bukhari, 2016; Pindek, Krajcevska, Spector, 2018).

In addition, a positive relationship was also identified between the professional's *cyberloafing* behavior and their innovative behavior at work. Innovative behavior at work comprises the individual's creative reasoning and ability to provide ideas and solutions aimed at the development of the organization. Thus, by using ICTs for personal purposes during working hours, workers can stimulate their creativity and come up with new ideas that can somehow benefit the organizational dynamics (Derin and Gökçe, 2016).

In a complementary way, in a more collective view, *cyberloafing* behavior can promote the organization's social capital since it facilitates the sharing of knowledge among employees. This is because ICTs have the potential to strengthen the bonds of the labor network in terms of trust, enriching the performance of professionals and, as a result, the labor dynamics (Cao *et al*., 2016).

In addition to these consequences related to the development of the worker, benefiting the organization, *cyberloafing* behavior can be a way for the individual to balance the personal and professional domains of his life. The routine of contemporary society is increasingly accelerated and overloaded and, in this sense, ICTs can be essential tools for human beings in maintaining personal life, even if they are physically in the work environment (Konig and De La Guardia, 2013; Soh, Koay and Chew, 2017).

Figure 1 shows a synthesis of the different negative and positive consequences found in the literature on *cyberloafing behavior*.

Figure 1. Different negative and positive consequences of *cyberloafing behavior*

Negative	Positive
Losses in productivity and efficiency (Ramayah, 2010; Andreassen, Torsheim e Pallesen, 2014; Jandaghi *et al*., 2015)	**Restoration in situations of fatigue and stress** (Ng, Shao, and Liu, 2016; Arshad, Aftab and Bukhari, 2016; Pindek, Krajcevska, Spector, 2018)
ICT overload (Messarra, Karkoulian e Mccarthy, 2011)	**Innovative behavior at work** (Derin e Gökçe, 2016)
Exposure to cyber threats (Hadlington and Parsons, 2017)	**Promotion of social capital** (Cao *et al*., 2016)
Legal upheavals (Salinas and Farfán, 2017)	**Balancing the personal and professional spheres** (Konig and De La Guardia, 2013; Soh, Koay and Chew, 2017)
Compromise of the organization's reputation (Messarra, Karkoulian e Mccarthy, 2011)	

Source: Prepared by the authors

The consequences of *cyberloafing behavior* identified in previous studies were presented in order to investigate in the present research which of these are perceived by workers who use ICTs in organizations and whether such consequences are perceived in a coexisting way. Thus, the following topic presents the methodological procedures adopted in order to achieve the delimited objective.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

Aiming to achieve the established general objective, a descriptive research was carried out, portraying the consequences of *cyberloafing* behavior perceived, both negative and positive, by ICT users in organizations, specifying their particularities (Sampieri, Collado and Lucio, 2013). Consequently, also by virtue of its purpose, the present study was developed from a qualitative approach, proposing to investigate *cyberloafing* behavior within its natural context, trying to understand, or interpret, its consequences in terms of the meanings that its practitioners attribute to it (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). In this sense, the individuals adopted as the unit of analysis were allowed to feel free to express their individual perspectives in the most authentic way possible, without limiting themselves to a pre-defined set of closed answers. Thus, although such results may not represent the general in its entirety, they contribute details and subjectivities and provide real situational examples that could be covered by metrics and quantifications (Stake, 2016).

The data necessary for the present research were collected through individual interviews using a semi-structured script prepared by the authors based on the theoretical framework on 1) perceptions about their *cyberloafing behavior* and the behavior of other colleagues (Askew *et al*., 2014; Sheikh, Atashgah and Adibdadegan, 2015); 2) perceptions about negative consequences of their *cyberloafing* behavior and the behavior of other colleagues (Messarra, Karkoulian and McCarthy, 2011; Hadlington and Parsons, 2017); and 3) perceptions about positive consequences of their *cyberloafing behavior* and the behavior of other colleagues (Derin and Gökçe, 2016; Cao *et al*., 2016; Soh, Koay and Chew, 2017). When inquiring aspects related to the behaviors of other colleagues, the researchers based themselves on projective data collection strategies that are used in studies on themes that have

some social concern involved and, therefore, may not be reported by the interviewees in a precise and sincere way. Thus, it is a way of inferring hidden motivations, intrinsic to the individual, of which he describes another individual and not himself (Hair *et al*., 2005). The interview script was analyzed and reviewed by an expert on the subject in order to validate it.

The choice of the contexts of analysis was based on contact with 265 organizations listed on the website of the Union of Information Technology and Data Processing Companies of the State of Rio Grande do Sul (SEPRORGS) seeking to verify availability to participate in the research and characteristics such as number of employees, time in the market and the way the company deals with *cyberloafing* behavior. The SEPRORGS website was adopted as the basis for the search, considering that the companies contained in it are located in the state of Rio Grande do Sul – Brazil, for the convenience of the researchers, and operate in the Information and Communication Technology sector, consequently, implying intense contact with different ICTs by the individuals inserted in it, which can be characterized as contexts conducive to investigation on the behavior of *cyberloafing*. From this contact, among the companies that demonstrated assertiveness in carrying out the survey, five companies were chosen in order of response, seeking to achieve a variety in relation to the number of employees, time in the market and organizational positioning in relation to *cyberloafing behavior*. The companies are described in the topic of presentation and discussion of the results.

In view of how the choice of the contexts of analysis was made, the delimitation of the units of analysis is made explicit, since the investigation took place at an individual and not an organizational level. With the criterion of being ICT users and claiming to engage in *cyberloafing* behavior, four workers were determined as units of analysis in each organization, seeking that at least one of them occupy a management position, totaling twenty interviewees. Like companies, such individuals are duly presented in the following topic.

In this sense, a visitation protocol was followed in each context of analysis for data collection. Upon arriving at the company at the beginning of the workday, the researcher recognized the company with its manager in order to understand its contextual characteristics. Then the interviews began and, in the interval between them, observations of the work dynamics were carried out. The researcher's notes on her visits to the companies were compiled with the data from the interviews, which were recorded in audio and later transcribed and printed for analysis.

A content analysis was carried out by categorizing the raw data obtained according to the knowledge of the theory and sensitivity of the researcher in relating his corpus of analysis. This categorization occurs *a priori*, defining categories previously according to the researcher's specific search, or *a posteriori*, emerging from the content collected and the author's transition between the corpus of analysis and theory (Bardin, 2011; Franco, 2008). In the present study, the theme of consequences of *cyberloafing* behavior was categorized a priori by the researchers as 1) negative

consequences and 2) positive consequences. Based on the data collected, subcategories were defined *a posteriori* referring to the aspects highlighted by the interviewees in their statements: a) losses in productivity and efficiency; b) recovery in situations of fatigue and stress and c) balance of the personal and professional spheres. It is noteworthy that aspects related to the other consequences mentioned in the literature, such as ICT overload, Exposure to virtual threats, Legal disorders, Compromise of the organization's reputation, Innovative behavior at work and Promotion of social capital were not manifested in the statements of the interviewees and, therefore, were kept out of the a *posteriori* categorization. The categorization performed can be seen in figure 2.

Figure 2. Categorization for content analysis of collected data

Theme	**Categories (defined *a priori*)**	**Subcategories (defined *a posteriori*)**
Consequences of *cyberloafing behavior*	Negative Consequences	Losses in productivity and efficiency
	Positive Consequences	Restoration in situations of fatigue and stress
		Balance of the personal and professional spheres

Source: Prepared by the authors based on research data

To validate the qualitative analysis carried out, the interviewees were sent via *e-mail* the transcript of their interview and a preliminary analysis of the respective data obtained so that they could verify the content and credibility of the interpretations, mitigating erroneous interpretations of the meaning attributed to the phenomenon investigated. After the consent of the interviewees, the data analysis continued, which was submitted to external verification of the process and product of the report by an expert to validate the categorization (Creswell, 2014).

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Although the present research has focused on the individual and not the organizational level, it is important to characterize the five companies in the ICT sector defined as contexts of analysis, denominated as Alpha, Beta, Omega, Delta and Gamma. In this sense, it is possible to see in figure 3 the main area of activity of each company contained in this study, the region of the state of Rio Grande do Sul in which they are located, the number of employees, time of operation in the market, the way they deal with *cyberloafing* behavior and the interviewees who work in them represented by the labels used to refer to them throughout this research.

Figure 3. Characterization of the contexts of analysis

Enterprise	Alpha	Beta	Omega	Delta	Range
Area of expertise in the ICT sector*	Software Development and Services Bureau	Fábrica de *software*, *business intelligence*, *mobile* e *outsourcing*	Website development and *digital* marketing	Desenvolvimento de *software*	*ERP* software *development* and *back office* for *e-commerce*
RS Region	Metropolitan of Porto Alegre	Metropolitan of Porto Alegre	Northwest	Metropolitan of Porto Alegre	Northeast
Collaborators	17	96	35	88	37
Acting time	23 years old	4 years	11 years	4 years	7 years
Positioning in relation to *cyberloafing*	Permissive	Permissive	Permissive	Restrictive	Restrictive
Respondents	E1, E2, E3 and E4	E5, E6, E7 and E8	E9, E10, E11 and E12	E13, E14, E15 and E16	E17, E18, E19 and E20

* According to the SEPRORGS website (http://www.seprorgs.org.br/pt/associados/associados)
Source: Prepared by the authors based on research data

Thus, considering that the interviewees referred to as E1, E2, E3 and E4 work in the company Alfa, the interviewees E5, E6, E7 and E8 in the company Beta, the interviewees E9, E10, E11 and E12 in the company Omega, the interviewees E13, E14, E15 and E16 in the company Delta, and the interviewees E17, E18, E19 and E20 in the company Gama, Figure 4 shows their individual characteristics.

Figure 4. Characterization of the individuals units of analysis

Interview with the	Sex	Age	Marital status	Offspring	Function	Acting time
E1	M	38	Married	Yes	Managing partner	19 years old
E2	M	38	Married	Yes	Responsible for customer prospecting	9 years
E3	F	32	Married woman	No	Marketing Analyst	6 years
E4	F	44	Stable Union	Yes	Commercial Manager	11 years
E5	M	53	Married	Yes	Managing partner	4 years
E6	F	44	Married woman	Yes	Business Intelligence Analyst	2 years
E7	M	27	Single	No	Administrative Assistant	1 year
E8	F	41	Stable Union	Yes	Human Resources Manager	2 years
E9	M	30	Single	No	Managing partner	11 years
E10	F	30	Married woman	Yes	Project Analyst	10 years
E11	M	32	Single	No	Creative Manager	8 years
E12	F	24	Single	No	Digital Marketing and Intelligence Manager	1 year
E13	M	28	Single	No	Managing partner	3 years
E14	F	27	Single	Yes	Support Analyst	3 years
E15	F	39	Single	No	Human Resources Manager	1 year
E16	F	26	Single	No	Endomarketing Intern	1 year
E17	M	48	Married	Yes	Managing partner	7 years
E18	M	36	Married	Yes	Marketing *and Partnerships* Manager	1 year
E19	F	26	Stable Union	No	Marketing Analyst	2 years
E20	M	38	Single	No	Infrastructure Manager	7 years

Source: Prepared by the authors based on research data

As shown in figure 3, the five ICT companies adopted as contexts of analysis vary in relation to the number of employees, with the Alpha, Omega and Gama companies having a smaller number and the Beta and Delta companies with a larger number. As for the time of operation in the market, it

is verified that the Beta and Delta companies are relatively young, while the Alpha and Omega companies have a longer period of operation and the Gama company is in the middle ground. Regarding the way to deal with *cyberloafing* behavior, a variation can also be perceived: while the companies Alpha, Beta and Omega demonstrated that they broadly allow the use of ICTs for personal purposes by their employees, the companies Delta and Gama claimed to restrict this behavior, blocking access to content such as virtual social networks (*Facebook*, *Instagram*, *Twitter*, etc.), *YouTube*, *news and sports* sites, and *streaming apps* (*Spotify*, *Netflix*, etc). It is considered that achieving a certain diversity is important so that the results are not restricted to a specific scenario.

As can be seen in figure 4, among the twenty interviewees there are ten female individuals and ten male individuals, an average of thirty-five years of age, eleven individuals married or in a stable union and nine single individuals, ten having at least one child and ten without children. In each of the companies characterized above, a manager and three employees with different functions were interviewed, responsible for the areas of *marketing*, human resources, commercial/customers, *business intelligence*, projects, infrastructure and administrative. Individuals who have been working in the respective companies for only one year are verified to individuals who have been working for nineteen. As in relation to the characteristics of the companies, it is considered that a diversity of respondents' profile was achieved, which can contribute to the results.

In addition to the individual characteristics mentioned above, it is considered relevant to present the profile of *cyberloafing* behavior of the interviewees. Therefore, a positioning matrix was elaborated according to the different practices of use of ICTs for personal purposes in the work environment that each individual unit of analysis manifested to perform, presented in figure 5.

Figure 5. Positioning matrix of *cyberloafing* practices manifested by individuals analysis units

Cyberloafing *Practices*	Interviewed																				T
	E 1	E 2	E 3	E 4	E 5	E 6	E 7	E 8	E 9	E 10	E 11	E 12	E 13	E 14	E 15	E 16	E 17	E 18	E 19	E 20	
Access virtual social networks	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	×	✓	×	✓	✓	×	16
Participate in conversations on virtual social networks (*chat*)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	20
Check/Receive/Send *emails* not work-related	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	19
Access *news* sites / apps	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	18
Watch video lessons	×	×	×	×	×	✓	×	×	✓	×	×	×	✓	✓	×	×	×	✓	✓	×	6
Study/Read *Online*	×	×	×	×	×	×	✓	×	✓	×	✓	×	✓	✓	×	×	✓	✓	✓	✓	9
Watch series / movies	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	✓	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	1
Watch videos	×	✓	×	×	✓	×	✓	×	✓	×	✓	×	✓	×	×	×	✓	×	×	✓	8
Listen to music	×	✓	×	×	×	✓	✓	×	✓	×	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	12
Log in / buy in E-commerce *Websites* / *Apps*	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	×	✓	×	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	×	×	✓	✓	×	×	12
Access *finance/banking* websites/apps	✓	×	×	×	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	×	×	×	✓	✓	×	12
Search for a job	×	×	×	×	×	✓	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	1
Download personal content	✓	×	×	✓	✓	×	×	×	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	×	×	×	✓	✓	✓	×	10
t	7	7	5	5	8	8	9	5	11	7	11	2	11	9	2	5	8	10	9	5	

Legend: ✓ = Practiced; × = Not practiced; T = Total number of respondents who practice each activity (n / 20); t = total activities practiced by each interviewee (n / 13);

Source: Prepared by the authors based on research data

In view of the data shown in figure 5, it can be seen that there was a significant manifestation of *cyberloafing* practices by the interviewees, with thirteen individuals reporting that they performed seven or more different *cyberloafing* practices. Among these practices, participation in conversations in virtual social networks (*chat*) stands out, referred to as an activity practiced by all interviewees, who highlighted the use of *WhatsApp* and Facebook *Messenger*; checking, receiving or sending *emails* not related to work, practiced by nineteen; access to *websites* or *apps* of news practiced by eighteen and access to virtual social networks practiced by sixteen. It should be noted that individuals who work in companies that restrict the personal use of ICTs through blockades claimed to engage in *cyberloafing* behaviors using their *smartphones* and *private mobile* internet plans.

Knowing the contexts and units of analysis of the present study, the following topics present and discuss the results regarding perceptions about the consequences of cyberloafing behavior.

PERCEPTIONS OF NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF *CYBERLOAFING BEHAVIOR*: LOSSES IN PRODUCTIVITY AND EFFICIENCY

The contemporary organizational environment permeated by technological devices and made up of individuals increasingly engaged with such technologies is characterized by experiencing a constant and complex challenge. At the same time that technological advancement and the intense

human-technology relationship provide several opportunities for companies, this context may involve some threats, mainly behavioral (Tarafdar *et al*., 2015; Venkatraman *et al*., 2018).

In this sense, despite the myriad of benefits provided by ICTs to organizations, which are fundamental for obtaining competitive advantage, these technologies also arouse deviant behaviors on the part of individuals in the workplace. Koay and Soh (2018) relate this issue to the productivity paradox brought to light by Brynjolfsson in 1993, since ICTs implemented to improve productivity and efficiency may be used inappropriately, generating the opposite effect to the desired one.

Therefore, by engaging in *cyberloafing* behavior, the individual may suffer losses in their productivity and efficiency. These losses can affect both the professional and the company as a whole, since such practices open loopholes for failures in the execution of tasks and in meeting deadlines (Ramayah, 2010; Jandaghi *et al*., 2015; Andreassen, Torsheim and Pallesen, 2014). One of the reasons why the behavior can have negative effects is digital distraction, since the use of these technologies for matters not pertinent to organizational interests causes a deviation of concentration and focus, which can compromise the achievement of their demands in quantity and quality (Cappellozza, Moraes and Muniz, 2017).

Losses in productivity and efficiency as a negative consequence of *cyberloafing behavior* were perceived by the interviewees of the present research. In their speeches, these individuals highlighted, above all, the imminent distraction and lack of concentration generated by the technological devices and functionalities provided by the *internet*, demonstrating that they were aware of the possible losses involved.

> "Oh, I think there's the harm of distraction, right, that you end up using technology a lot and blur yourself. People are working, in a meeting, in a business and are distracted by their cell phones, with Facebook on their cell phones beeping there. So I think that when you're not focused the quality of your work drops, you miss some detail. For example, you're homologating some value, you didn't homologate it correctly, you didn't evaluate it right, right, for these reasons of distraction". (E6)

> "I see a lot of distraction. That is very clear. They (ICTs as virtual social networks) end up being a distraction and you lose focus on your main objective, which would be your work, you stop performing tasks to distract yourself on social networks. Waste your productive time in the truth." (E11)

> "If I'm in the middle of an important task and suddenly a message comes on my cell phone and I go to look at it, it has already broken my line of reasoning. Here, all tasks require concentration, In basically everything, from customer service, or you're developing code, or you're working on a project and you need unique attention. So, whenever there is distraction at times when you need a lot of concentration, it's very bad, it's going to explode somewhere." (E17)

> "It's a problem, because it occupies you, it takes you time on top of that business that often doesn't bring you important differential information, it's just a time killer. It generates lack of concentration, lack of focus, the guy takes longer to do an action or keeps postponing the beginning, I think that this part of distraction that these sites generates in us within the work environment is quite negative. But it is not easy to measure how much productivity has been

> lost, as in a manufacturing process, for example. When we deconcentrate, productivity drops." (E18)

In this sense, it can be seen in the reports of the interviewees that smartphone notifications and social networks are the aspects that most cause distraction and, consequently, losses in productivity and efficiency. In addition, the damage to the continuation of the organizational demands of the team as a whole was highlighted, since the distraction by cyberloafing behavior can delay the processes of other employees.

> "Especially this issue of leaving the demands for later and staying on social networks in a place where you need, many times, a task that is yours, that another person to continue, needs this conclusion. It depends on someone else. So, while this person is distracted on social networks, he does not do this task and the other person cannot continue. So this ends up affecting a whole cycle if you don't focus on the tasks, I see this a lot". (E12)

> "Because here if you don't supply your colleague with the next information or system, we don't get to the next step. Then no one can deliver the projects, the tasks within the established deadlines". (E9)

It was also found that the losses of concentration and time due to the cyberloafing behavior mentioned by the research participants were related by them to aspects related to the lack of self-control, in which the individual ends up not limiting the time spent. This lack of self-control may originate, in more severe cases, from a compulsion to use such devices, constituting a problematic use (Yan and Yang, 2014; Keser, Kavuk and Numanoglu, 2016).

> "Facebook, social networks, I think that during working hours is something that demands a lot of self-control. I don't know if people nowadays have all this self-control. In fact, I think there is a lack of self-control in relation to the time of use and then they get lost, it becomes exaggerated and harmful". (E1)

> "Oh, there's that feeling of wanting to always be on top of what's happening and sometimes even things that don't relate to the moment you're there, right, the work environment. But it's that compulsion for technology. I think it's exaggerated, the person loses the limit like that, right, let's say, the notion. (E4)

> "When the cell phone is beeping and then that little blue light is flashing and you are in agony to know what's going on, right. That's why I use it a lot, I use it inside and I use it outside too. I think I use it too much. I think I use a higher percentage than I should and I end up getting in the way of using more than I should." (E6)

> "What they can limit is that it takes away my concentration, sometimes you: ... 'Oh, I'll take a look', but you end up staying a long time. Sometimes, maybe I 'just want to take a look', but when you see it, I'm looking too much. When you see it, I've been there for an hour sailing and then I lose this work time". (E10)

It is highlighted in the literature that ICTs as virtual social networks are developed through strategies to captivate their users promptly, attracting their attention for long periods. Developers increasingly use infinite scrolling (presenting content on a single page instead of spreading it over a series of pages) and gamification (using gaming experience to perform activities) instigating their

users to consume more time than intended (Neyman, 2017). In this sense, notifications and the possibilities of social interactions activate a reward system in the individual's brain, generating a positive response in their psychology capable of directly interfering in the individual's professional performance and productivity, since it causes loss of concentration and interruption in the execution of work activities (Cappellozza, Moraes and Muniz, 2017).

In summary, it can be seen in the reports of the interviewees that they perceive the losses in productivity and efficiency as a negative consequence of the cyberloafing behavior, especially with regard to the distracting power of ICTs such as virtual social networks and the smartphone and the lack of self-control in relation to the time spent in this use, causing them to lose focus and also hindering the continuation of the demands of the work and processes of the other team members. Considering this negative consequence, the following are the positive consequences perceived by the interviewees of this study.

PERCEPTIONS OF POSITIVE CONSEQUENCES OF CYBERLOAFING BEHAVIOR: RECOVERY IN SITUATIONS OF FATIGUE AND STRESS AND BALANCE OF THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL SPHERES

In the context of the ICT sector, characterized by technological organizational environments and complex dynamics, the functions and demands of work require dedication and intense efforts from workers. In these cases, it is common for individuals to feel overloaded in their mental processes, presenting symptoms of stress and fatigue in the work environment (Carlotto, 2010). In this sense, cyberloafing behavior can be considered an imminent outlet or recovery for the individual in situations of fatigue or stress. Thus, the use of these technologies for particular purposes in a controlled manner and with the objective of regaining mood and disposition, allows the worker to recover (Coker, 2013; Jandaghi et al., 2015; Salinas and Farfán, 2017). This positive consequence of cyberloafing behavior is perceived by the interviewees in the present research and manifested in their statements.

> "It's part of what we do, the type of work, to stop at a certain moment, to relax, to see a site that is more interesting, to access a social network, to reduce a little what you're doing, that task that is stressing, to be able to relax and then come back. I think it's an interesting thing to de-stress, to be able to take a breather. To be able to engage the next task or continue in an activity that demands a lot of energy". (E1)

> "I use it a lot, in the sense of using WhatsApp when I'm stressed about something, talking to a friend, talking to my husband, looking for a sister or someone to give support in the sense of: ... 'Oh I'm stressed, I need to change the subject and talk about other things'. WhatsApp for me is an escape in that sense, okay. I can get away from my routine of the stress of work there with this, right. I also participate in some groups on WhatsApp and this makes me able to disconnect a little in this sense". (E6)

> "We do not give up technology even if the fruit of that stress has been generated by the use of technology. I think that technology always helps in some way, for example, any lighter

> content that we access helps us to de-stress and unwind, listen to music, watch a video, it works in these cases". (E13)
>
> "There is no such thing as a person who only works, works, works, right? You have to have these moments to de-stress, relax, it's also super positive in the work environment. Wow, I'm very stressed about one thing, I'm going to take a break, I'm going to have a coffee, I'm going to look at my social networks, I'm going to look at some photos, something I'm going to do that I recharge and that I think is really cool. It helps because sometimes you end up yielding less because of your own fatigue, right". (E17)

Although cyberloafing behavior characterizes a challenge for contemporary organizations due mainly to the imminent loss in productivity, the phenomenon in question can be analyzed from a positive perspective. In this sense, in view of the numerous functionalities provided by ICTs, the possibility of such behavior allowing a recovery in situations of fatigue and stress is highlighted, benefiting the worker and the company as a whole, and may even favor the individual's productivity (Coker, 2013; Jandaghi et al., 2015; Salinas and Farfán, 2017).

This paradoxical relationship is explained by the fact that individuals who are stressed or tired due to their work demands and the dynamics of the organization or sector in which they work may become ineffective or less productive. This is because these feelings generate physiological and psychological effects that inhibit the worker from performing his or her activities fully as expected (Jex et al., 2007). Thus, although the interviewees perceive the negative side related to the loss of time and concentration when engaging in cyberloafing, they emphasize the importance of using technologies for personal purposes in the work environment at times when they are feeling stressed or tired, in order to recover and resume their tasks.

Still related to the contemporary organizational routine, which is characterized by being more accelerated and intense, which can overload individuals, it should be emphasized that this dynamic is not restricted only to the work environment, since individuals act socially in different roles, which includes their family relationships. In this sense, considering that the social roles of individuals coexist in parallel, they experience a constant challenge: to balance the personal and professional domains of their lives so that both needs are met. Thus, the number of personal and professional demands and the importance attributed to each one by the individual will define how much it will permeate both spheres, whether in the work or family environment (Clark, 2000).

In this context, it is verified that cyberloafing behavior can be positive since it helps workers to manage their private life while physically being in the organization (Konig and de La Guardia, 2013; Soh, Koay and Chew, 2017). Thus, in the present research, it was perceived by the interviewees that the use of ICTs for personal purposes in the work environment contributes positively to their efforts to balance their family and professional demands.

> "It helps me to solve things at home, like, my husband works the same time as me so I can use the cell phone, talk on Whats, these things are good for us to get organized, like: ... 'Oh,

> I'm going to have lunch at home today'... 'Can you pass the super for me?' These things to organize your personal life." (E3)
>
> "I use Whats a lot at work to communicate mainly with my daughter. And this is positive for me because I even work more relaxed knowing that my daughter answered me a Whats that everything is fine on her day. If I didn't have WhatsApp and contact with her, I would already be more worried. So this whole issue even helps me to perform my professional activities better, because I will be calm, as if I were there with my daughter". (E4)
>
> "I have a small son, he is months old, I just came back from leave to work, so I would be very anxious if I didn't hear from him during the day, right. Everyone asks: ... 'Oh, how was your return to work?'. And I always say that I thought it would be harder, you know? But as I can get news of my son, like, in real time, so it reassures me a lot and I work better for sure, knowing everything that's happening with my son." (E7)
>
> "I think it's important not to disconnect from family, I think this is a point to think about, it makes a lot of sense to me. Nowadays we spend most of our day here at the company and being able to be in contact with the family, even if far away, it is important to keep this contact with my family while I am not with them, knowing my son, my wife, in short, it is something that I do not give up". (E18)

By analyzing the statements of the interviewees, it can be seen that the importance attributed by individuals to the use of ICTs in the work environment as a way to meet their personal demands, especially family ones. Such perceptions can be related to the concept of mobility provided, mainly, by the smartphone which, connected to some form of internet network, enables the individual to overlap contexts in which he can exercise his different social roles in a broad way, regardless of the time and space in which he finds himself (Corso, Cavedon and Freitas, 2015). In this sense, the accessibility to these devices allows the personal and family demands of individuals to be met during their working hours (time) and in their work environment (space).

Added to this is the synchronous communication facilitated by software such as WhatsApp. This technological resource has as its main characteristic the intimate and immediate communication whose users exchange information in real time privately with one or more people (Church and Oliveira, 2013). Therefore, WhatsApp can contribute to the management of aspects of individuals' personal lives, even in a work environment, with the advantage of enabling instant communication.

These aspects become even more beneficial considering the fact that personal and family demands and professional demands can be conflicting for the individual, since resources such as time and energy are finite and that, in some situations, there is a need to prioritize one domain over the other (Halbesleben and Zellars, 2007). In this sense, cyberloafing behavior emerges as an alternative to achieve balance between work and family, raising positive effects both for the individual and his loved ones and for the organization in which he works, since such conflict can harm both spheres of his life.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In view of the results obtained, it can be concluded that the general objective proposed by this research was achieved, to investigate the perception of ICT users in organizations about the negative and positive consequences of *cyberloafing behavior*.

Among the negative consequences of *cyberloafing* behavior found in the theory on the subject, the individuals perceived units of analysis and manifested in their reports losses in productivity and efficiency (Ramayah, 2010; Andreassen, Torsheim and Pallesen, 2014). In the interviewees' statements, the distractions caused by *smartphone* notifications and social networks were highlighted as the aspects that most cause losses in productivity and efficiency, even harming other teammates in the pursuit of their tasks (Cappellozza, Moraes and Muniz, 2017).

Although this negative consequence of *cyberloafing* behavior was manifested in a significant way, positive consequences were also perceived by the interviewed workers, such as the recovery in situations of fatigue and stress and the balance between the personal and professional spheres. In this sense, it was found that the use of ICTs for personal purposes in the work environment can help workers to reestablish themselves and return to work demands, in addition to allowing them to meet their family demands during working hours (Konig and De La Guardia, 2013; Ng, Shao and Liu, 2016; Arshad, Aftab and Bukhari, 2016; Soh, Koay and Chew, 2017).

It is noteworthy that the results were collected from individuals who varied in terms of age, gender, family structure, function in the organization in which they work and time of work, and that the phenomenon was investigated in contexts of companies that allow the use of ICTs for personal purposes in the work environment and in companies that restrict such use. Despite this diversity, the fact that perceptions are similar allows us to infer that *cyberloafing behavior* emerges, at first, from a society increasingly linked to technologies that experiences organizational environments also equipped with different *hardware* and *software* essential for the realization of its business (Koay and Soh, 2018). In this context of intense and extensive contact with ICTs, the phenomenon becomes commonplace. It is also worth highlighting the aspects of excessive use of ICTs found in some statements, causing the individual to lose their self-control and start to use such devices impulsively in an excessive way and at inappropriate times, such as between work demands that require severe attention (Yan and Yang, 2014; Keser, Kavuk and Numanoglu, 2016).

Therefore, when considering the context in which the phenomenon occurs, it is possible to infer its negative and positive effects coexist and both affect the individual's productivity. On the unfavorable side, *cyberloafing* behavior is capable of distracting individuals during the execution of their work tasks, causing them to lose time and focus. On the other hand, it can provide benefits to their productivity and well-being by contributing to the recovery of the individual in situations of

fatigue and stress arising from work issues and to achieving a balance between their professional and family demands.

In this sense, it is not appropriate to draw a definitive conclusion about the negative and positive consequences of *cyberloafing*, nor to make a value judgment about which side would stand out from the other. This is because rapid technological advancement gives rise to different types of behavior related to the use of ICTs as well as there are different situational/environmental or individual antecedents and each of these can have a different effect on the individual and organization (Koay and Soh, 2018).

This reflection on the joint perception of the positive and negative consequences of *cyberloafing* by ICT users is proposed by the present research as a contribution to the theory on the subject. It was intended to contribute to the theoretical studies of Koay and Soh (2018) and Kim and Christensen (2017), empirically emphasizing that individuals who practice and live with such behavior perceive both sides of the use of ICTs for personal purposes in the workplace. As for management practice, what is proposed with the results presented is a comprehensive look at *cyberloafing*, without treating it only as a deviant behavior but also without neglecting its potential adverse effects. Especially with regard to the design of organizational policies related to the use of ICTs for personal purposes, since a very rigid position can lead to dissatisfaction among employees, who may start to circumvent the control mechanisms (Messarra; Karkoulian; McCarthy, 2011; Koay and Soh, 2018).

Although it has achieved the established objectives, contributing to the advancement of management theory and practice, it is recognized that the present study has limitations. As it is a qualitative study with a small number of research participants, the results obtained and the interpretation made by the researcher cannot be considered extensive to other realities, since they may be particular to the individuals analyzed. Therefore, it is suggested for future research to combine the results of this research with the model proposed by Kim and Christensen (2017) so that an instrument for collecting quantitative data can be developed and validated, allowing analysis from both angles of *cyberloafing* with a significant sample of individuals.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We thank CAPES for its support in the development of the research.

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