



# Why and When can CSR toward Employees Lead to Cyberloafing? The Role of Workplace Boredom and Moral Disengagement

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## Abstract

Researchers have recently indicated that employee perceptions of their firm's corporate social responsibility (CSR) may shape their work behaviors. However, why and when CSR perceptions lead to counterproductive work behavior, such as cyberloafing, remains unclear. In this article, we first investigate the mediating role of workplace boredom in explaining the effect of perceived CSR toward employees on cyberloafing behaviors. We further examine the moderating role of moral disengagement in this process. Overall, the results of our cross-sectional, experimental, and three-wave studies provide strong evidence for our hypothesized relationships. Our research suggests that moral disengagement weakens the effect of internal CSR on workplace boredom, such that for employees high in moral disengagement, the level of internal CSR has a weaker effect on workplace boredom.

**Keywords** Perceived CSR · Moral disengagement · Workplace boredom · Cyberloafing

## Introduction

Over the past two decades, cyberloafing has become an important topic in organizational research (Cheng et al., 2020; She & Li, 2022; Tandon et al., 2021; Zhong et al., 2021). Indeed, smart devices, such as smartphones and

laptops, have become an essential part of everyday professional life. Despite facilitating employees in accomplishing job assignments, these devices can also negatively affect employee productivity by affording the opportunity to engage in cyberloafing behavior. Cyberloafing refers to “any voluntary act of employees’ using their companies’ internet access during office hours to surf non-job-related websites for personal purposes and to check personal e-mails” (Lim, 2002, p. 677). In practical terms, the cost of cyberloafing has been estimated at around 85 billion dollars per year (Zakrzewski, 2016) and a 40% reduction in employee productivity (Lieberman et al., 2011).

It is thus important to understand when and why employees start engaging in cyberloafing (Wu et al., 2020). Acknowledging the prevalence and significance of cyberloafing in the workplace as a form of counterproductive work behavior, researchers have identified mainly individual factors that lead to cyberloafing, such as the Big Five personality traits, or demographic variables (Tandon et al., 2021). However, sustainable organizational policies and practices have not been considered as triggers of cyberloafing. For example, perceptions of corporate social responsibility (CSR) may be an important factor predicting cyberloafing behaviors, as research reveals that organizational CSR practices have a significant impact on employee behaviors and attitudes (Rupp et al., 2006). CSR refers to corporate

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policies and actions that go beyond the organization's economic interests and aim to positively affect stakeholders (Turker, 2009). Employee CSR perceptions can be decomposed according to how the organization treats its different stakeholders (El Akremi et al., 2018). In this sense, CSR initiatives can be directed at external (communities, environment, investors, consumers) and internal (employees) stakeholders. CSR toward employees, the focal variable of our research, thus refers to internal CSR and the human resource practices leading to favorable employee evaluations and reactions (Chatzopoulou et al., 2021).

In this research, we propose an emotional mechanism to justify the relationship between CSR toward employees and cyberloafing behaviors. We explain that companies displaying low CSR toward their employees may cause disengagement from work and workplace boredom, in turn fostering cyberloafing behaviors as a coping strategy. We use workplace boredom as the emotional mediator for three reasons. First, researchers consider boredom an important work-related emotion (Sousa & Neves, 2021; van Hooff & van Hooff, 2014). Second, despite the apparent reduction in monotonous tasks, boredom in the workplace has intensified (Mael & Jex, 2015). Third, boredom may result from unmet employee expectations of their job as interesting and making sense, thus potentially related to CSR (Mael & Jex, 2015). Taken together, workplace boredom can be a unique explaining process of employees' cyberloafing.

Finally, despite that CSR perceptions may be significantly associated with cyberloafing through workplace boredom, not all individuals who perceive that their organization does not consistently engage in CSR practices experience higher levels of workplace boredom. Therefore, we introduce moral disengagement as a boundary condition that might amplify or buffer (i.e., moderate) the strength of the relationship between perceived CSR and workplace boredom. Moral disengagement theory suggests that individuals develop personal moral standards as a self-regulation process, helping them behave positively or negatively (Bandura et al., 1996). Morally disengaged employees deactivate the moral self-regulatory process by readjusting the conditions in a way that permits them to explain and validate specific behaviors that are misaligned with moral values (Newman et al., 2020; Samnani et al., 2014). In particular, morally disengaged employees might experience a lower level of workplace boredom in case of poor internal CSR. In short, when an organization does not genuinely address its social obligations toward its employees, morally disengaged employees are less likely to experience workplace boredom. Therefore, the association between perceived internal CSR and workplace boredom may be weakened for high morally disengaged individuals.

By opening the black box of the relationship between internal CSR and boredom, this study makes several

contributions to the literature. First, we contribute to the micro-CSR literature by providing evidence on the understudied negative consequence of low CSR perceptions (Gond et al., 2017). In particular, the explanation offered here is that individuals engage in cyberloafing because they have a negative perception of their work environment that decreases their engagement from work, something that tends to occur when internal CSR practices are poor. In addition, we provide an original explanation of this relationship in terms of emotions. Specifically, we show how boredom resulting from poor internal CSR practices can increase employees' motivation to engage in cyberloafing. Poor internal CSR *might create an unpleasant state for employees that can make employees feel unchallenged and bored at work* (Van Tilburg & Igou, 2012). *To overcome emotional strain and conditions of this nature, they may engage in other non-work-related activities such as cyberloafing because this help them to cope with boredom* (Pindek et al., 2018). Finally, whereas most moral disengagement studies consider the direct link with potential outcomes, we contribute to this literature stream by providing evidence of the importance of moral disengagement as a potential buffering factor (Newman et al., 2020). Indeed, in case of poor internal CSR practices, employees with low level of moral disengagement are more likely to develop an unpleasant state that may take the form of workplace boredom.

## Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

### Employee CSR Perceptions and Cyberloafing

Cyberloafing is defined as employees' use of the company's internet for non-work-related purposes during working hours (Andel et al., 2019; Lim, 2002). Specifically, emailing and browsing websites constitute counterproductive work behaviors that can negatively affect organization and stakeholders (Mercado et al., 2017; Spector et al., 2006). Indeed, internet misuse is reported as one of the most common sources of employee deficiency and deviant organizational behaviors (Sheikh et al., 2015).

Considering the negative consequences of cyberloafing behaviors and their prevalence in the work context (Tandon et al., 2021; Zhong et al., 2021), it is crucial to advance theory and thereby understand the main determinants. Several predictors of cyberloafing behaviors have been documented in the literature, such as job involvement, managerial support, and job design (Lieberman et al., 2011), formal control and punishment structures (de Lara et al. 2006), dissatisfaction, perceived control, and routinized internet use (Vitak et al., 2011), as well as organizational injustice (Lieberman et al., 2011; Lim, 2002). In this study, we examine perceived CSR toward employees as an important antecedent of

employee cyberloafing behaviors. CSR perceptions toward employees relates to the internal CSR perspective and how employees as beneficiaries perceive and experience responsible practices and the implications on their well-being (Golob & Podnar, 2021; Turker, 2009).

Employee CSR perceptions are found to have a significant effect on employee attitudes and behaviors (Rupp et al., 2006). While most of the outcomes studied are positive (Gond et al., 2017), we expect that CSR perceptions might lead to deleterious consequences, such as cyberloafing. Employees may behave negatively in response to their organization's CSR policies and practices because of social exchange and reciprocity (Blau, 1964). Social exchange relationships are based on mutual trust and expectations that benefits will be exchanged over time (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). For example, in the workplace, employers expect that employees will perform work tasks and assume certain work responsibilities and duties. Employees expect that, in exchange for performing these work tasks, employers will reciprocate by offering pay, rewards, and treat them in an appropriate manner. When employees receive benefits from their employer's CSR practices, they may 'pay back' to their employer in terms of performing at their higher level and engaging in extra role behavior. In our case, poor internal CSR is regarded as an environment where employees are not treated well by their organization. Employees do not receive support in achieving goals and their financial, social, and environmental concerns are not addressed. They may thus negatively evaluate their work environment (Colbert et al. 2014). As a reciprocative action, employees may engage in counterproductive work behaviors such as cyberloafing behaviors. Prior research attests that when organizations do not treat their employees justly, the probability of negative behaviors is higher (Blau et al., 2006; Liberman et al., 2011; Lim, 2002). Andreoli and Lefkowitz (2008) show that the absence of an ethical climate can enhance counterproductive work behavior. Other studies show that unfair organizational practices (Kim et al., 2016; Restubog et al., 2011) or an unsupportive work environment (Fida et al., 2015) negatively influence counterproductive work behaviors. We thus expect a positive relationship between employee perceptions of poor internal CSR and cyberloafing.

### Perceived CSR and Workplace Boredom

Individuals perceiving, they work for a socially responsible organization may exhibit higher levels of commitment, trust in the organization, loyalty, engagement, and job satisfaction (Brammer et al., 2007; De Roeck & Delobbe, 2012; Glavas & Kelley, 2014). Contrarily, individuals perceiving they work for an organization that does not take care of them in case of hardship are more likely to behave in a way that is harmful to the organization and

its members (Bruursema, et al., 2011; Van Hooff & Van Hooff, 2014). Despite these significant effects of perceived CSR on employee attitudes and behaviors, the current debate neglects the role of emotions in perceived CSR and the related impact on employee behaviors (Ng et al., 2019). Emotions are crucial for understanding the relationship between CSR and counterproductive work behavior, as individuals' emotions can play an important role in understanding why people choose to engage in counterproductive work behaviors (Bauer & Spector, 2015).

One such emotion is workplace boredom. This is the propensity to make employees feel unchallenged and deprived of meaning at work (van Hooff & van Hooff 2016). Workplace boredom is a basic human emotion that can lead to unfavorable individual and organizational outcomes, such as counterproductive work behavior (Bruursema et al., 2011; Mael & Jex, 2015; Skowronski, 2012; Spector et al., 2006). It is thus surprising that to date very little research has been conducted on this specific emotion. While typically considering workplace boredom as an outcome of unvaried work environments (Loukidou et al., 2009), it is also recognized as employee ill-being, which may manifest in different work contexts (Harju et al., 2018).

Failure to perceive CSR toward employees may lead to workplace boredom. CSR is regarded as an organization's investment in enhancing social welfare and relations with internal stakeholders (Farooq et al., 2014). When employees perceive that their organization does not pursue initiatives for their welfare, adverse consequences from organizational members ensue (Shockley & Allen, 2007; Wayne et al., 2013). Expressed differently, failure to receive support through an organization's internal CSR practices may produce negative emotions such as workplace boredom (Gkorezis & Kastritsi 2017). Empirical evidence supports this relationship. For example, Fisher (1993) demonstrates that an organization's policies and practices may inhibit behavior in such a way that it decreases employees' engagement in their work assignments. Relatedly, Rupp et al. (2006) report the impact of employee perceptions of CSR on their subsequent emotions and attitudes. In this vein, Spector et al. (2006) find a negative relation between the treatment received by employees and workplace boredom.

In this view, an organization's internal CSR initiatives serve to provide its employees with a strong support, including financial assistance, an equitable work environment, guidelines (Weaver et al., 1999), assistance in case of hardship (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2015), training and development opportunities (Stevens et al., 2005), and work meaningfulness (Aguinis & Glavas, 2019). Internal CSR practices are thus a strong source of engagement for organizational members, providing them with a sense of meaningfulness through work, safety, and value (Aguinis & Glavas, 2019).

Conversely, in the absence of internal CSR practices, employees might sense they are not treated well by their organization, with, for example, feelings of no new learning and lack of career enhancement. This can then cause them to feel meaningless at work, a dearth of value additions and aimlessness (Van Tilburg & Igou, 2012). As a result of this lack of engagement, employees may suffer emotionally. Indeed, because an unsupportive work environment can generate irritable/unpleasant feelings among employees (Harju et al., 2018; Reijseger et al., 2013), the absence of strong CSR practices toward employees may lead to workplace boredom.

We therefore propose the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1** Employee perceptions of internal CSR are significantly and negatively related to workplace boredom.

### Workplace Boredom and Cyberloafing

Employees feeling the emotional strain of boredom might willingly transition into non-work-related technological activities in a bid to distance themselves from boring activities they consider boring (Paulsen, 2015). Therefore, we also expect that a positive relationship exists between workplace boredom and employee cyberloafing. From an organizational perspective, some of the boredom's outcomes indicate low arousal (e.g., depressed feelings and dissatisfaction), and others are more indicative of high arousal (e.g., aggression and frustration) (van Hooff and van Hooft 2018). In this vein, prior research indicates that workplace boredom is related to a number of negative work outcomes, including counterproductive work behavior (Bauer & Spector, 2015; Bruursema et al., 2011; Wan et al., 2014). When employees feel bored, they try to find ways to cope and manage boring situations by actively creating interest or stimulation in job assignments and work environments. Some employees choose to engage in cyberloafing, even if destructive for the organization (Andel et al., 2021). These behaviors may allow individuals to engage in alternate and satisfying activities. It allows bored employees to carry out activities that restore their sense of meaning (van Tilburg & Igou 2017). For example, when employees have nothing to do, they may start browsing the web during working hours to alleviate boredom. In this sense, Bauer and Spector (2015) find a positive relation between workplace boredom and socially undermining behaviors intended to harm the reputation or success of others. Spector et al. (2006) find a positive link between boredom and counterproductive work behavior. Finally, Pindek et al. (2018) demonstrate that cyberloafing is an effective way to cope with workplace boredom. We therefore hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 2** Workplace boredom is positively related to employee cyberloafing behaviors.

### The Mediating Role of Workplace Boredom

Integrating the aforementioned arguments into the analysis serves to highlight the mediating role that workplace boredom plays in the relationship between internal CSR and cyberloafing. Those arguments suggest that working conditions deemed unfavorable due to the absence of employer CSR initiatives (e.g., training opportunities, well-being considerations) can undermine employees' engagement from work and generate a negative emotional state that, in turn, may well trigger emotional meaninglessness – one example of which is boredom. In other words, employees regret the lack of implementation of internal CSR practices, which might justify their negative emotions of workplace boredom. To mitigate their boredom, they might engage in extraneous online activities (using social media like Instagram or Facebook, doing personal e-mails) diverting their attention from their own workplace boredom (Pindek et al., 2018).

Combining these arguments, we presume that workplace boredom is one of the key mediators by means of which employees' perceptions of an organization's CSR influences their cyberloafing behavior. We therefore hypothesize that:

**Hypothesis 3** Workplace boredom mediates the relationship between perceived internal CSR and employee cyberloafing behaviors.

### The Role of Moral Disengagement

Moral disengagement is “a set of cognitive mechanisms that allow an individual to disassociate with his/her internal moral standards and behave unethically without feeling distress” (Newman et al., 2020). Moral disengagement is an extension of social cognitive theory explaining how individuals justify their actions and commit immoral behaviors (Bandura, 1999). In other words, moral disengagement highlights how individuals decide to engage in human atrocities, such as political and military violence (Bandura, 1999), or corporate transgression and dishonesty (Bandura et al., 2000; Moore, 2008), without suffering the pain of self-condemnation. Bandura (1999) proposes four types of moral disengagement practices whereby individuals use one or more mechanisms to disassociate their moral standards from their actions, permitting them to engage in immoral conduct without censure or guilt (Bandura, 2002; Claybourn 2010). The first type of disengagement includes rationalizing behavior so that it is not considered immoral (Bandura, 2002). In the second type, individuals blame others by minimizing the role they play in immoral conduct. The third type includes minimizing or ignoring the negative consequences

of their actions. The fourth type involves blaming the recipients of the mistreatment to exonerate themselves of responsibility. In using one (or more) of these moral disengagement mechanisms, individuals justify their behaviors (Bandura, 1999; Detert et al., 2008).

Based on these arguments, employees' ability to morally disassociate using different justifications may lead them to engage in counterproductive work behaviors (Ogunfowora et al., 2021; Samnani et al., 2014). Indeed, moral disengagement is considered an important predictor of several negative and deleterious behaviors, such as aggression (Kokkinos et al., 2016), bullying (Gini et al., 2011), workplace deviance (Huang et al., 2017), and unethical behavior (Egan et al., 2015). Accordingly, we argue that employees with high levels of moral disengagement are more likely to act in a way that is misaligned with moral values compared to those with low levels of moral disengagement (Samnani et al., 2014). Specifically, morally disengaged employees are more likely to use internet and e-mail services for non-work purposes during working hours. We therefore posit:

**Hypothesis 4** Moral disengagement positively influences employee cyberloafing behaviors.

We then further predict a moderating effect of employee moral disengagement on the negative relationship between the presence of internal CSR practices and workplace boredom. Moral disengagement has recently been shown to be important in understanding cyberloafing as a phenomenon (Koay et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2020). We posit that the negative effect of strong internal CSR practices on workplace boredom will be weaker for morally disengaged employees. Indeed, moral disengagement may well influence the value and perception of internal CSR practices. First, people with different levels of moral disengagement may perceive the company's internal CSR in a variety of ways. As such, they will experience different levels of fear and uncertainty about what their company is doing, resulting in dissimilar levels of boredom. Indeed, employees with high moral disengagement are less likely to notice and care about the immoral acts of authority figures (Bonner et al., 2016). Since ethical principles are less salient to them, they will have more difficulty detecting the ethical actions of others (Dang et al., 2017). Because they don't consider the organization's CSR engagements as morally relevant, and thus they don't see any larger meaning or purpose there, their work becomes dull and boring. Conversely, employees with low moral disengagement are more conscious about moral principles and the well-being of others (Detert et al., 2008), thus more attentive to their organization's treatment of employees. The organization's CSR engagements allow them to see the larger meaning and purpose of their work and prevent boredom emerging for them. In addition to this difference in the

observation of CSR policies and practices, the reaction may also differ depending on the level of moral disengagement. Individuals with high moral disengagement will react less strongly to the organization's immoral behavior (Bandura, 1999) and may more easily justify and minimize the deleterious practices of authority figures (Bonner et al., 2016). In sum, morally disengaged employees may be less concerned about the potential consequences of CSR toward employees and hence have less emotional reactions. As such, they may have less of a tendency to consider poor internal CSR as something affecting them negatively that will result in less workplace boredom.

Second, the potential negative consequences of poor internal CSR in terms of engagement might be less important for morally disengaged employees. Indeed, because they can better rationalize their immoral behavior and feel less self-condemnation in case of unethical behavior, morally disengaged employees more easily count on themselves to obtain what they want (Ogunfowara et al. 2021; Samnani et al., 2014). Perceptions of poor internal CSR may thus be less problematic for highly disengaged employees, as they counterbalance the unsupportive work environment with their own immoral actions, such as cheating, loafing, and other unethical behaviors that help them achieve their expectations. Contrarily, low morally disengaged employees may need comparatively more advantageous policies and practices that take care of them. As the negative effects of CSR toward employees is less important for morally disengaged employees, we expect that perceptions of poor internal CSR will lead to weaker workplace boredom. In short, an absence of internal CSR practices represents less of a disengagement mechanism for highly morally disengaged employees. That being the case, where internal CSR is poor, high moral disengagement is less likely to cause emotional strains such as workplace boredom. Thus, we posit:

**Hypothesis 5** Moral disengagement moderates the negative relationship between perceived internal CSR and workplace boredom such that the relationship is weaker under high moral disengagement than low moral disengagement.

## Method

### Overview of our Studies

We conducted three studies to investigate our hypotheses. Study 1 is a cross-sectional field study intended to test the mediating role of workplace boredom in the relationship between CSR toward employees and cyberloafing behaviors (H1–H3). Study 2 is an experimental study based on a between subject vignette procedure where we manipulated CSR toward employees to examine its effect on workplace

boredom depending on the level of moral disengagement of participants. We designed this study to causally test the relationship between CSR toward employees and workplace boredom (H1) and the moderating effect of moral disengagement (H5). Finally, Study 3 is a three-wave field study that replicates the results of Studies 1 and 2, and tests the full model (H1–H5). All data, surveys, and experimental materials are available by following this link: [https://osf.io/m3c28/?view\\_only=4c8175c33eac4d0e915a1ade02c88eb0](https://osf.io/m3c28/?view_only=4c8175c33eac4d0e915a1ade02c88eb0).

## Study 1

### Sample and Procedure

We recruited participants via Prolific, a UK crowdsourcing platform. To take part in the study, participants had to live in the United Kingdom, be native English speakers, be employed full time, and not be students. As a token of appreciation, participants earned £0.75 through Prolific. 499 participants completed our survey including 241 women 237 men, one declared as “other,” and 20 did not indicate their gender. Most (37.9%) were between 29 and 38 years old, with a mean organizational tenure of 8.96 years ( $SD = 7.73$ ).

### Measurement Items

All measures were adapted from literature, and we measured each item with 7-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

**Internal CSR** Internal CSR was measured with 4 items adapted from El Akremi et al. (2018); a sample item is “Our company implements policies that improve the well-being of employees at work.” Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.87$ .

**Boredom** Boredom was measured with 4 items derived from Pindek et al. (2018), such as “At work, time goes by very slowly.” Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.92$ .

**Cyberloafing** Cyberloafing was measured with 7 items adapted from Wu et al. (2020); a sample item is “When I need to take a break from work, I use social media (e.g., Facebook/Twitter) during working hours.” Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.92$ .

**Control Variable** We controlled for age, gender, tenure, and organizational size. However, the analyses showed that only age and gender have a significant link with cyberloafing. Therefore, in our model, we only take into account age and gender, and their relationship with cyberloafing. Integrating other control variables did not change the interpretation of our results. We thus removed them in the subsequent analyses for reasons of parsimony.

### Study Results

Table 1 reports the descriptive statistics and correlations among all study variables. Internal CSR is significantly and negatively related to workplace boredom ( $r = -0.25$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) and, in turn, workplace boredom is significantly and positively correlated with cyberloafing ( $r = 0.32$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). These preliminary results warrant the test of the mediation model. We use structural equation modeling as it allows simultaneous analysis of all the variables in a unique model and integrates latent factors for a better consideration of the constructs of interest. Prior to testing our hypotheses, we conducted a set of confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) with Mplus 8.4 and the maximum likelihood estimator to examine the factor structure of our variables. We first fit a three-factor model to the data in which items loaded onto their respective latent variables, providing a reasonably good fit ( $\chi^2(87) = 413.26$ , CFI = 0.94, TLI = 0.93, SRMR = 0.05, RMSEA = 0.09). Our 3-factor measurement model fit the data better than alternative models, including a 1-factor model in which all the variables loaded on a single factor ( $\chi^2(90) = 3632.47$ , CFI = 0.38, TLI = 0.27, SRMR = 0.25,

**Table 1** Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among variables (Study 1)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Gender	1.50	0.50	–						
2. Age	2.43	1.10	– 0.23**	–					
3. Tenure	8.96	7.73	– 0.16**	0.57**	–				
4. Organizational size	6.88	2.26	– 0.04	0.08	0.12**	–			
5. CSR	4.50	1.48	0.02	– 0.04	– 0.04	0.14**	(0.87)		
6. Workplace boredom	3.06	1.62	– 0.05	– 0.14**	– 0.13**	0.01	– 0.25**	(0.92)	
7. Cyberloafing	3.26	1.60	0.15**	– 0.22**	– 0.19**	– 0.05	0.04	0.32**	(0.92)

Reliability alpha values are on the diagonal. Gender coded 1 for male, 2 for female. Organizational size coded 1 for 1–4 employees, 2 for 5–9 employees, 3 for 10–19 employees, 4 for 20–49 employees, 5 for 50–99 employees, 6 for 100–249 employees, 7 for 250–499 employees, 8 for 500–999 employees, 9 for more than 1000 employees

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$

RMSEA = 0.28). We can thus trust the reliability of our variables.

We then used bootstrapping (10,000) to test the structural model. The fit of the model with workplace boredom mediating the relationship between internal CSR and cyberloafing is good ( $\chi^2(115) = 491.78$ , CFI = 0.93, TLI = 0.92, SRMR = 0.05, RMSEA = 0.08). Results (unstandardized coefficients) are described in Fig. 1. Internal CSR is negatively and significantly related to workplace boredom ( $\beta = -0.26$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), meaning that a 1-point increase in CSR reduces workplace boredom by 0.26 unit, supporting H1. Workplace boredom and internal CSR are both related to cyberloafing ( $\beta = 0.47$ ,  $p < 0.001$  and  $\beta = 0.15$ ,  $p = 0.02$ , respectively), showing that an increase of 1-point in workplace boredom (internal CSR) engender a modification of cyberloafing of 0.47 (0.15) unit, providing support for H2. Finally, in accordance with H3, the indirect effect of workplace boredom is significant ( $b = -0.12$ , BC 95% CI = [-0.19; -0.07]). This indirect effect means that a 1-point increase in CSR reduces cyberloafing by .12 unit through the effect of workplace boredom.

### Study 2

#### Sample and Procedure

The sample consisted of undergraduate students enrolled in an online management course at a large business school. Students could take part in the study in exchange for extra credit. The participants received an invitation by email that contained a web link to a vignette study. As Aguinis and Bradley (2014) and Klotz and Bolino (2016) recommend, they were then asked to recall the relations they had

entertained with a company, organization, or association for which they have worked. This approach enhanced immersion within the scenario. They were next randomly assigned to one of the two hypothetical vignettes. The vignettes were used as a manipulation of the level of internal CSR. The scenarios used an adapted version of CSR manipulation developed by Bridoux et al. (2016). The two scenarios described a work context where participants assumed the role of employee of company ABC that sells electronic goods and is doing well financially. Internal CSR was manipulated by changing the treatment received from the company in each scenario. After reading through the scenario, respondents indicated whether they had carefully read the scenario before responding to several items asking how they would feel if they worked in that company. The survey also included three realism check items. We received a total 355 valid answers (176 for the low CSR condition and 179 for the high CSR condition). This sample includes 194 females and 160 males plus a respondent who chose “other” as gender.

#### Measurement Items

Each item was measured with a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The measures of internal CSR (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.89) and workplace boredom (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.91) were the same as in Study 1.

**Moral Disengagement** Moral disengagement was measured with 8 items from Moore et al. (2012); a sample item is “Playing dirty is sometimes necessary in order to achieve noble ends.” Cronbach’s alpha = 0.79.

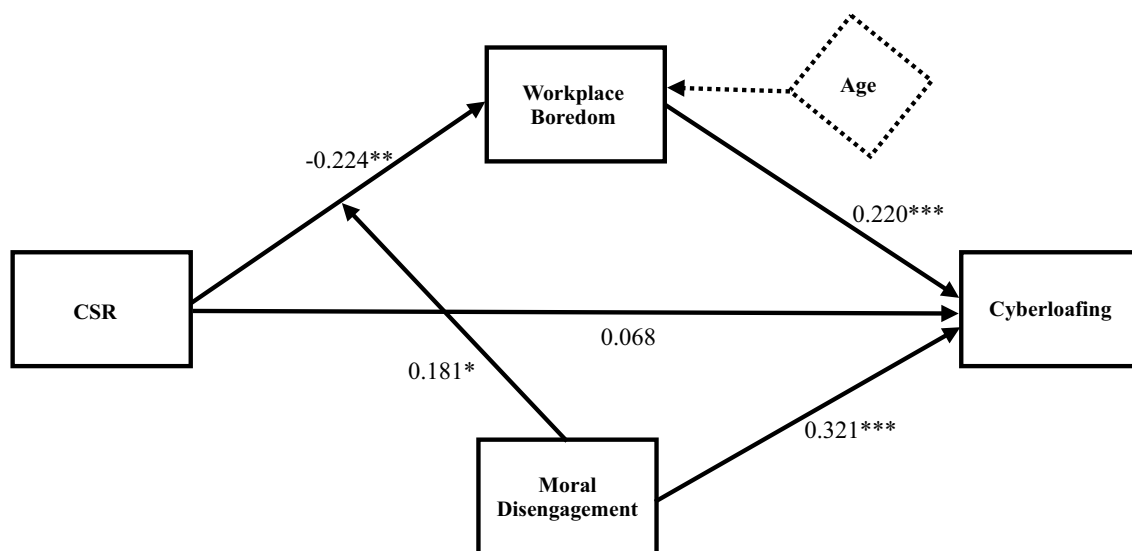


Fig. 1 Structural model and variables

**Realism check.** We used 3 items from Klotz and Bolino (2016) to assess the realism of the two hypothetical vignettes; a sample item is ‘The situation described was realistic.’ The mean response for the low CSR scenario is 5.82, and the mean response for the high CSR scenario is 4.67, suggesting that participants considered the scenarios realistic.

**Hypothesis Testing** To ensure that the justice manipulations were perceived correctly, we compared internal CSR perceptions across the low CSR and high CSR conditions. The effect of CSR manipulation was significant ( $t$ -test for equality of means,  $p < 0.001$ ), with significantly higher scores in the high CSR condition (mean = 5.10) than in the low CSR condition (mean = 3.27). We are thus confident that the manipulation was perceived as intended.

We then calculated the interaction of internal CSR and moral disengagement on workplace boredom. The results confirm the relationship between internal CSR and boredom in addition to the moderating role of moral disengagement. The effect of internal CSR on workplace boredom is  $-1.22$  ( $p < 0.001$ ), confirming H1. The interaction effect of moral disengagement on the relationship between internal CSR and workplace boredom is  $0.34$  ( $p = 0.02$ ). It means that an increase of one point in moral disengagement increases the effect of internal CSR on workplace boredom by  $0.34$ . We plotted the interaction effect in Fig. 2 showing that for those with low moral disengagement, the negative influence of internal CSR on workplace boredom is stronger

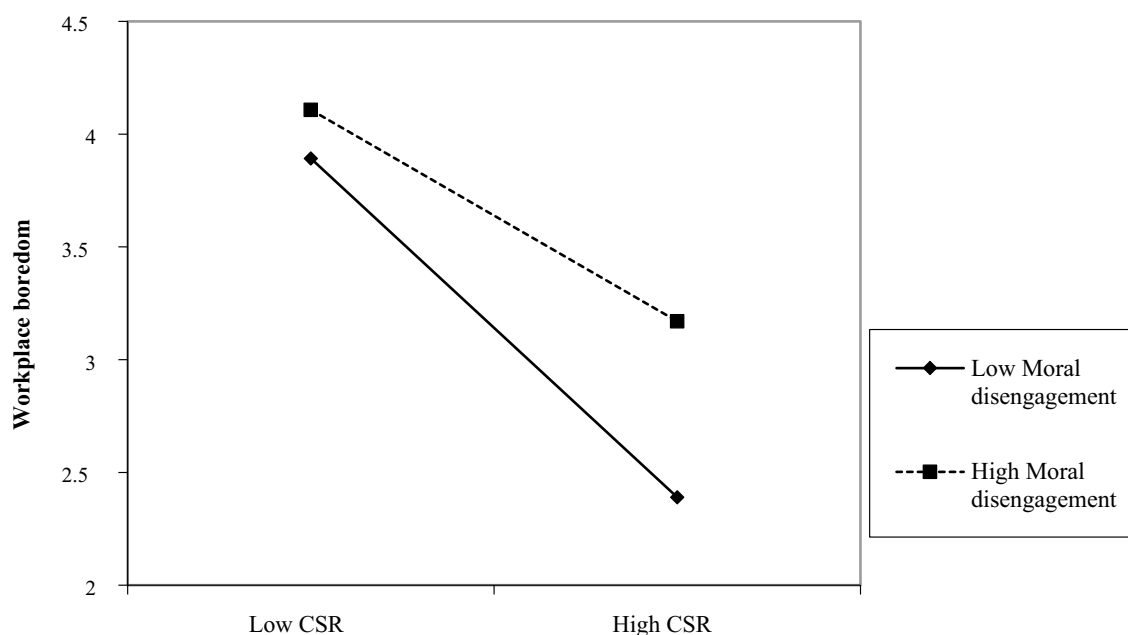
than for those with high moral disengagement. Thus, H5 is supported.

### Study 3

#### Sample and Procedure

To test the full model, we targeted fulltime employees working in the US. We collected the data through the Amazon Mechanical Turk platform, deemed appropriate and highly reliable (Hauser & Schwarz, 2016). We collected data over three measurement time points with a one-week time lag between each wave. Each variable was measured only once at one specific point in time (internal CSR and moral disengagement at T1, workplace boredom at T2, and cyberloafing at T3). To encourage the participants to complete this 3-wave survey, we rewarded them for their participation (US \$1.25 at Time 1, US \$1.25 at Time 2, and US \$2.00 at Time 3). We considered only participants who took part in all three waves. Out of 300 participants who responded at time T1, 235 participated at time T2, and 156 at T3, yielding a total respondent rate of 52%. Table 2 presents the demographic profile of all respondents.

We tested the difference between early and later respondents for each wave that helps to detect a potential non-response bias. We found no significant difference between early and later respondents except for age at Time 3. Therefore, non-response bias might not be a concern in this study.



**Fig. 2** Moderating effect of moral disengagement (study 2)



**Table 2** Demographic profile of participants in Study 3

Characteristics ( <i>N</i> = 156)	Number	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	85	54.5
Female	66	42.3
Other	1	0.6
Missing	4	2.6
Age		
18–28	26	16.7
29–38	70	44.9
39–48	26	16.7
48–58	18	11.5
≥ 59	14	9.0
Missing	2	1.3
Tenure (in years)		
≤ 5	86	55.1
6–10	33	21.2
11–15	20	12.8
> 15	16	10.3
Missing	1	0.6
Number of employees		
< 10	13	8.3
10–49	31	19.9
50–499	47	30.1
500–999	13	8.3
≥ 1000	52	33.3
Missing	0	0.0

### Measurement Items

We measured each item with a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The measures of internal CSR at time 1 (Cronbach's alpha = 0.87), moral disengagement at time 1 (Cronbach's alpha = 0.90), workplace boredom at time 2 (Cronbach's alpha = 0.91), and cyberloafing at time 3 (Cronbach's alpha = 0.93) were the same as in Study 1 and 2.

*Control variable.* We controlled for age, gender, tenure, and organizational size. However, the analyses showed that the control variables had no significant relationship with the outcome variables (boredom and cyberloafing), except for age linked with boredom. This is consistent with research showing that age is related to boredom (van Hooff & van Hooff, 2014). In our model, we thus only take into account the age–boredom relationship. Integrating other control variables did not change the interpretation of our results, and we thus removed these in the subsequent analyses for reasons of parsimony.

**Table 3** Estimation of the measurement model parameters

Construct/items	Composite reliability (CR)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Moral disengagement	0.918	0.586
CSR	0.912	0.722
Workplace boredom	0.938	0.790
Cyber loafing	0.943	0.701

### Study Results

For this study, we applied variance-based partial least squares (PLS) structural equation modeling using Smart-PLS 3.3.3. Compared with covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM), PLS is more powerful for analyzing complex models with a small sample size (Hair et al., 2019), as in this study (*N* = 156). We conducted the following model analysis in two parts: measurement model assessment and structural model evaluation.

### Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model assessment includes reliability and validity tests. In line with Hair et al. (2019), we checked four key indicators: indicator loadings, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Except for one moral disengagement item (loading of 0.659), all the indicator loadings are above the threshold of 0.708, demonstrating acceptable item reliability (Hair et al., 2019). As removing the item loading slightly below the threshold did not significantly change our results, we kept it for the subsequent analyses. In addition, we examined composite reliability (CR) (Jöreskog, 1971) to assess internal consistency reliability, since the CR indicator measures reliability more precisely and less liberally (Hair et al., 2019). The results in Table 3 show that all the composite reliability values are above the 0.70 threshold, indicating satisfactory to good composite reliability of each construct. Furthermore, we analyzed the average variance extracted (AVE) to estimate the convergent validity of all constructs (see Table 3). All AVE values are above the limit of 0.5, attesting that each construct has adequate convergent validity (Henseler et al., 2009).

Finally, we used the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio as the key metric to evaluate discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). As indicated in Table 4, all the HTMT values are lower than the 0.85 threshold, demonstrating each construct has adequate discriminant validity.

**Table 4** Discriminant validity coefficients (HTMT)

	Age	Boredom	CSR	Cyber loafing	Moral disen- gement
Age					
Workplace boredom	0.252				
CSR	0.050	0.316			
Cyberloafing	0.185	0.307	0.062		
Moral disen- gement	0.070	0.281	0.159	0.386	1

**Table 5** Quality of the structural model

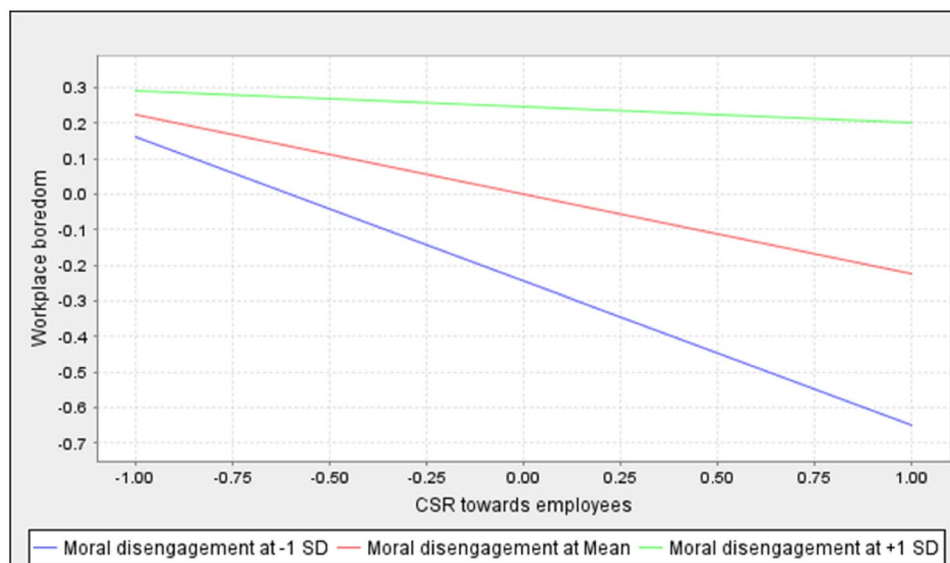
	R Square	Q square
Workplace boredom	0.225	0.165
Cyber loafing	0.181	0.119

### Structural Model Evaluation

We examined our structural model by testing three indicators: explanatory power, predictive power, and the statistical significance and relevance of the path coefficients. We employed the  $R^2$  value and  $Q^2$  value to, respectively, measure the explanatory and predictive power of this model (Table 5). The explanatory power of boredom ( $R^2=0.225$ ) and cyberloafing ( $R^2=0.181$ ) are both acceptable. In addition, the predictive power of these two constructs is supported with  $Q^2$  values above 0.

We then used bootstrapping (subsamples 10,000) to calculate the standardized coefficients and  $p$ -values of each path. Figure 1 reports the results of the structural model testing

demonstrating that the impact of CSR toward employees on boredom is significantly negative ( $\beta = -0.224$ ;  $p = 0.002$ ), meaning that an increase in one standard deviation in internal CSR decreases boredom by 0.224 standard deviation, supporting H1. Moreover, boredom has a significant impact on cyberloafing ( $\beta = 0.220$ ;  $p = 0.008$ ), meaning that an increase in one standard deviation in boredom increases cyberloafing by 0.220 standard deviation thus supporting H2. Internal CSR has no direct impact on cyberloafing ( $\beta = 0.068$ ;  $p = 0.390$ ). To test H3 and the mediating role of workplace boredom, we calculated the 95% bias-corrected and accelerated (BCa) bootstrap to check whether zero belongs to the confidence interval. The indirect effect of CSR toward employees on cyberloafing through workplace boredom is significant (indirect effect =  $-0.49$ , 95% BCa CI [ $-0.10$ ;  $-0.01$ ]), which means that an increase in one standard deviation of internal CSR decreases cyberloafing by 0.49 standard deviation through boredom. H3 is thus supported. Furthermore, moral disengagement has a significant positive effect on both boredom ( $\beta = 0.246$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ) and cyberloafing ( $\beta = 0.321$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), meaning that an increase in one standard deviation in moral disengagement increases boredom by 0.220 and cyberloafing by 0.321 standard deviation, hence supporting H4. Finally, we tested the moderating effect of moral disengagement on the effect of internal CSR on boredom. The result indicates that moral disengagement can strengthen the negative link between internal CSR and boredom ( $\beta = 0.181$ ;  $p = 0.035$ ), meaning that an increase of one standard deviation in moral disengagement increases the effect of internal CSR on workplace boredom by 0.181. Figure 3 shows the moderating effect of moral disengagement on the relationship between internal CSR and workplace boredom. These results again show that the internal CSR and workplace boredom relationship is stronger for employees

**Fig. 3** Moderating effect of moral disengagement (study 3)

with low moral disengagement compared to employees with high moral disengagement.

## Discussion

The primary goal of the present research is to expand our understanding of how, why, and when employee perceptions of CSR might promote or inhibit employee cyberloafing behaviors. We develop a theoretical model to determine how the absence of organizational CSR practices impairs employee behaviors through the workplace boredom mechanism. In line with our predictions, we find an indirect effect of perceived internal CSR on cyberloafing through workplace boredom. Furthermore, we find moral disengagement weakens the effect of internal CSR on workplace boredom, such that for employees high in moral disengagement, the level of internal CSR has a weaker effect on workplace boredom. Our results also indicate that moral disengagement also plays an important role in engaging in cyberloafing. Our findings have both theoretical and practical implications.

## Implications for Theory

Our study contributes to the CSR literature in several ways. First, this research confirms the importance of employee perceptions of their company's CSR in determining individual attitudes and behaviors (Gond et al., 2017). In particular, it highlights the importance of specific stakeholders when considering CSR (El Akremi et al., 2018). Indeed, the effects of CSR may well differ depending on the beneficiary stakeholders (Farooq et al., 2017; Zhao et al., 2022). In this research, we focus on CSR benefiting employees, a type of CSR with higher effects on employees (Zhao et al., 2022). By considering internal CSR as a strong source of engagement for employees, this article introduces workplace boredom as an underlying mechanism of the CSR–outcome relationship, providing a new lens through which to view CSR. It contributes to the literature by testing the full chain from internal CSR to cyberloafing. We are now urging researchers to integrate new approaches to improve their understanding of that phenomenon. Unlike previous research that revolve around the relationship between an individual and his organization, with workplace boredom, the response to the organizational internal CSR focused on the relationship between the individual and his work. The mechanism is no longer only geared toward the organization but also toward how the employee experiences its work. What the present study demonstrates is that employees' negative reaction to lack of internal CSR materializes in a negative emotion of boredom. To recover from the boredom's emotional strain, employees will start engaging in non-work-related activities of cyberloafing.

Second, we integrate a new mechanism explaining the effects of CSR perceptions. Our study answers the call to integrate emotion-based mechanisms in micro-CSR research (Zhao et al., 2022). Specifically, the present study provides new insights into the emotional processes by means of which CSR perceptions affect attitudes and behaviors, exemplified here by cyberloafing. Indeed, we bring to light the role of the emotion of boredom as a potential path through which employee perceptions of their organization's CSR toward employees influence cyberloafing. In this regard, we contribute to the very limited research on emotional mediation mechanisms that help explain how CSR perceptions affect employee attitude and behaviors, to date limited to pride (Edwards & Kudret, 2017; Ng et al., 2019). Here again, the emotion in question (pride in an organization) relates directly to a person's relationship with their organization. The present paper has been able to introduce the boredom emotion which is relative to how the employee experiences its work. Our research therefore encourages exploring new emotion-based mechanisms related to negative emotions, such as moral outrage or guilt directly deriving from an ethical theoretical framework, or sadness and fear deriving from personal experience of work.

Third, the present study contributes to micro-CSR literature by providing empirical evidence of the negative consequences of poor internal CSR perceptions. To date, most research in the field has examined the positive consequences of CSR perceptions, while research on the deleterious consequences is scarce (Gond et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2020). This article, on the other hand, introduces the construct of cyberloafing, an original form of counterproductive work behavior that serves as a mechanism helping people to cope with the negative emotional consequences of CSR. It therefore goes one step further than its counterparts by demonstrating that the absence of CSR not only obviates any possibility of beneficial effects for employees and/or the organization but might also have a deleterious impact: on employees insofar as it can foster boredom; and for the organization, because of the cyberloafing that ensues.

Fourth, our results also extend counterproductive work behavior research by identifying CSR toward employees as a novel predictor of cyberloafing. In most CSR (Gond et al., 2017; Zhao et al., 2022) and cyberloafing review studies (Mercado et al., 2017; Tandon et al., 2021), perceived CSR is not considered as an antecedent of cyberloafing. Although researchers have advocated for organizational justice triggering cyberloafing through a reciprocity mechanism (Lim, 2002), how organizational factors lead to cyberloafing is poorly understood. Our results suggest that cyberloafing is affected by organizational factors through CSR and its emotional consequences. Thus, our findings contribute to the counterproductive work behavior literature by showing that CSR toward employees can strengthen boredom, in turn

increasing cyberloafing. In other words, perceived internal CSR is a noteworthy antecedent of counterproductive work behaviors in general, and cyberloafing in particular. We encourage future research to better integrate emotions in the social exchange framework in order to explain how the treatment received by employees can trigger counterproductive work behaviors (Colquitt et al., 2013). Indeed, it might be the case that morally engaged employees will both notice and respond to the employer's lack of support for them and will reciprocate with diminished attention to their work engendering boredom and in turn cyberloafing.

Finally, our research contributes to the moral disengagement literature. Our study extends prior research by highlighting the moderating role of moral disengagement in the relationship between CSR as perceived by employee and cyberloafing behaviors. The present study complements the existing approaches by highlighting their dependence on moral engagement with the work context. It suggests that the perceived lack of a favorable environment through internal CSR combined with moral disengagement is critical to understanding the relationship between employee perceptions of CSR and workplace boredom. It is reasonable to assume that employees' reactions to moral situations in an unsupportive work environment are linked to their sense of morality. Specifically, our study provides evidence that for employees high in moral disengagement, the level of internal CSR has a weaker effect on workplace boredom. As such, this study extends prior research on moral disengagement by treating it as a moderating variable that interacts with other variables to influence work outcomes. Indeed, scant research indicates a potential moderating role of moral disengagement (Gini et al., 2015; Samnani et al., 2014) yet empirical evidence of this effect is lacking (Newman et al., 2020). Our study thus encourages considering moral disengagement as a moderating factor influencing the relationship among other variables. The paper also contributes to business ethics literature by demonstrating that morally disengaged employees can be a double-edged sword for companies. Whereas employees with a high level of moral disengagement will naturally display more counterproductive work behavior—if only because their lesser moral engagement does not stop them from lowering their standard of work (Newman et al., 2020) – they will also be less sensitive to their company behaving badly; hence feel less boredom at work; and therefore, engage in less cyberloafing. All of which demonstrates that it is advantageous for companies to engage in a moral behavior that is congruent with their employees' own level of moral engagement. In that sense, our study is the first to show that companies need to be particularly cautious about their employees' level of moral engagement before implementing or removing any employee-focused CSR practices. Indeed, where employees are characterized by a high level of moral engagement, the effects of poor CSR may be

amplified—a proposition opening the door to future research into how the (in)congruence of a company and its employees' moral (dis)engagement might impact upon counterproductive work behavior.

## Implications for Practice

Our findings also have several significant implications for practice, since employee cyberloafing behaviors are a serious concern for companies, and thus a key priority for business leaders around the world (Tandon et al., 2021; Zhong et al., 2021). Our findings inform managers about why and when employees feel bored at the workplace, engaging in cyberloafing when realizing that their organization does not care about their welfare, and under which conditions individuals are more likely to engage in cyberloafing behaviors.

Our findings are a cautionary reminder that the absence of CSR activities in an organization may generate feelings of boredom, and bored employees find ways to reduce their boredom by engaging in cyberloafing. Managers should thus pay attention to this possibility and focus on CSR activities, as CSR pays off in the form of not only creating competitive advantage by developing a more industrious, helpful, and loyal workforce (Farooq et al., 2017), but also by reducing employee boredom that ultimately leads to cyberloafing. As we find that workplace boredom plays an important role in transferring the harmful effects of the perceived absence of CSR on employee cyberloafing, organizations are advised to develop policies to reduce boredom, and consequentially cyberloafing behaviors. In the absence of CSR activities, employees may find their life and behavior rather meaningless (Van Tilburg & Igou, 2012). Companies are required to establish CSR policies and practices that allow employees to find meaningfulness through work (Liu et al., 2021; Raub & Blunschi, 2014). To reduce employee boredom, organizations need to create an environment that helps employees with family issues through supporting sports clubs, non-discrimination, fair remuneration, diversity, a safe and healthy working environment, and transparent communications. Undoubtedly, employees perceiving that their organization implements internal CSR initiatives will lead to a sense of meaning in their work and reduce the feeling of boredom, in turn not engaging in cyberloafing.

Furthermore, it is important for organizations to hire socially responsible employees (e.g., by considering individual CSR values in recruitment), provide CSR-related training and seminars, recognize social performance in appraisals, and link these to financial rewards. An organization's effective CSR communication can help employees pay attention to the organization's attitude toward CSR initiatives, encourage them to participate in CSR programs, and behave in accordance with the CSR norms. When employees notice that an organization's CSR practices create goodwill

among internal stakeholders, they tend to avoid engaging in activities that harm the organization's well-being, such as cyberloafing.

Finally, our findings show that moral disengagement weakens the effect of internal CSR on workplace boredom. Based on this finding, we suggest that organizations use HRM practices in selecting employees with low moral disengagement, especially for ethically sensitive jobs (Detert et al., 2008). Considering the strong association between moral disengagement and unethical conduct, organizations might also support employees' awareness of the moral value of being concerned about others to maximize the potential advantages of CSR initiatives. For example, organizations could introduce interventions or training to reduce the tendency to morally disengage.

### Limitations and Future Research Directions

Our study has some limitations that should be addressed in future research. First, our data are self-reported, thus vulnerable to common method bias, potentially inflating the relationships among the key study variables (Podsakoff et al., 2003). However, to minimize this issue, one week separated the three data collection waves in our third study. Second, we acknowledge that our experimental vignette is subject to biases such as the halo or dilution effects that preclude a causal reading of the presented evidence. We also acknowledge that boredom is a complex phenomenon (Loukidou et al., 2009) that can be difficult to study via experimental vignette methodology. Despite the multi-methods approach and the different samples used in this research, we cannot thus strictly attest for causality in our model. Indeed, our result cannot rule out potential reverse causality whereby people who are bored and engage in cyberloafing perceive lower internal CSR or those who are prone to cyberloafing have stronger perceptions of workplace boredom. Future investigations might thus replicate the effects found in this article via a longitudinal research design or other well-crafted experimental studies in order to establish causality between the variables.

Third, we consider workplace boredom as a mediating mechanism following the theoretical support outlined in the literature. However, there may be other relevant mediators for understanding how perceived CSR affects employee cyberloafing behaviors. For example, self-control capacity (Baumeister & Exline, 2000) could be such a mechanism, as the individual's ability to control and regulate desires, emotions, and other behaviors is a main characteristic of the self (Blackhart et al. 2015). Accordingly, it is reasonable to presume that an unsupportive work environment will deplete self-control capacity, and individuals with low self-control capacity likely further trigger cyberloafing behaviors.

Therefore, further research should continue to explore other theory-driven mediators.

Fourth, while our study focuses on one specific boundary condition (i.e., moral disengagement), other boundary conditions may exist. Thus, future research is needed to examine other salient individual boundary conditions that help explain different coping behaviors that individuals adopt when the organization does not care about their personal or work-related issues. For instance, personality traits, such as optimism, may buffer the effect of CSR perceptions on boredom, as optimistic employees are less likely to consider the absence of CSR toward employees as something deleterious for them.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, in this paper, we have examined the possible negative effect of the absence of CSR on employee cyberloafing behaviors. We find that an absence of perceived CSR may generate negative emotions, such as workplace boredom, and that bored employees are likely to engage in cyberloafing behaviors. Finally, moral disengagement weakens the effect of internal CSR on workplace boredom, such that for employees high in moral disengagement, the level of internal CSR has a weaker effect on workplace.

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**Data availability** The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding authors upon reasonable request.

### Declarations

**Conflict of interest** The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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