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## Work from home can be distracting: Exploring the moderation role of transformational leadership on teleworking and cyber-slacking

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the association between teleworking and cyber-slacking among lecturers in higher institutions of learning in Uganda. Further emphasis is to investigate the moderation role of transformational leadership on the association. Quantitative data was collected using self-administered questionnaires from 240 academic staff from higher institutions of learning from in Uganda. Data were analyzed using Process Macro version 3.2 to ascertain the moderation role of transformational leadership on the association between teleworking and cyber-slacking. The results indicate a significant positive association between teleworking and cyber-slacking. It also found out a negative significant association between transformational leadership and cyber-slacking. Furthermore, the study found out that transformational leadership moderates the association between teleworking and cyber-slacking. Institutions of higher learning should invest in leadership training programs aimed at developing transformational leadership competencies among academic and administrative leaders. These programs should focus on enhancing communication skills, fostering a supportive work environment, and promoting a culture of accountability and empowerment. Leaders should communicate clear expectations regarding teleworking arrangements, including performance standards, communication protocols, and acceptable internet use policies. The study is one of a kind and first to investigate the role of transformational leadership on the association between teleworking and cyber-slacking especially amongst institutions of higher learning putting emphasis on a developing nation like Uganda.

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## Introduction

The landscape of work has undergone significant transformations, with the advent of technology enabling remote work arrangements to become increasingly prevalent (Sengupta & Al-Khalifa, 2022). This shift has been particularly noteworthy in the realm of academia especially after the covid era, where lecturers in institutions of higher learning are increasingly embracing teleworking as a means of flexibility and efficiency in their professional roles (Dwivedi et al., 2020; Watermeyer et al., 2023). However, with the rise of teleworking comes the potential for cyber-slacking, wherein employees engage in non-work-related activities during work hours, leading to decreased productivity and performance. In the context of Ugandan higher education institutions, the phenomenon of teleworking and its potential consequences, including cyber-slacking, among lecturers remains relatively understudied.

When an employee uses technology to work remotely or virtually for a portion of their working hours, this is known as teleworking (also known as virtual or remote work) (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Kyambade, Kagere, et al., 2024). According to Weinert et al. (2015), telework gives workers the freedom to be independent and flexible in their work activities. Research has shown that teleworking enhances productivity, work-life balance, reduces fatigue and stress, and decreases employee withdrawal behaviors

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(Allen et al., 2015; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Additionally, it has been noted that teleworking requires adjustments to the way people perform their jobs on a mental and physical level, which may have an effect on people's energies (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Sardeshmukh et al., 2012). When working from home, one must balance the demands of their job and their home life. Working from home reduces the amount of work completed in a given day and may raise perceived demands from both work and life because individuals are more likely to handle problems at home during times, they would typically be at the office rather than setting aside a set number of hours to go into the office. This can be draining and lead to the person engaging in counterproductive work behaviors, like cyber-slacking (Becker et al., 2022; Golden, 2012; Kniffin et al., 2021). When workers are made to work from home, they react negatively more often.

This was a common occurrence in Uganda during the Covid-19 outbreak where many workers were compelled to work from home in order to stop the virus from spreading (Kyambade, Mugambwa, Namuddu, Namatovu, Kwemarira, 2024; Turnbull et al., 2021). Even after covid-19, institutions of higher learning have still adopted a blended teaching of physical and online teaching (Finlay et al., 2022), however most lecturers in these institutions continue to prefer working from home minus attending to any physical classes. Cyber-slacking is the improper and selfish use of company resources, such as work devices and the internet, for personal gain while the employee is on the job (Luqman et al., 2020). Workers use the internet for four to six hours a day on average, and over 30 million Americans are thought to engage in cyber-slacking each year, costing the economy billions of dollars.

This research seeks to explore the dynamics of teleworking and cyber-slacking among lecturers in institutions of higher learning in Uganda, with a specific focus on the moderation of transformational leadership. Transformational leadership, being characterized by its emphasis on inspiration, motivation, and individual development, has been recognized as a key factor in shaping employee behavior (Kovjanic et al., 2012). While transformational leadership has been widely studied in various organizational contexts (Gui et al., 2020; E. J. Kim & Park, 2020; Kyambade, Namatovu, Namubiru, et al., 2024; Peng et al., 2021), its role in moderating the relationship between teleworking and cyber-slacking remains relatively unexplored, particularly within the context of higher education especially in a developing nation like Uganda. Existing research on leadership in academia has primarily focused on traditional face-to-face work arrangements (Purvanova & Bono, 2009), overlooking the potential influence of transformational leadership in shaping teleworking behaviors and outcomes among lecturers.

Research on teleworking and cyber-slacking has predominantly focused on Western countries, often neglecting the unique contexts of developing nations, including Uganda. While teleworking has become a widespread phenomenon globally, driven by technological advancements and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of empirical studies have been conducted in developed economies with well-established digital infrastructures (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Kyambade, Abdul, et al., 2023). This oversight fails to account for the different socio-economic, cultural, and infrastructural challenges faced by teleworkers in developing countries like Uganda (Blount, 2015; Ollo-López et al., 2021). Therefore, there is a significant gap in understanding how teleworking dynamics, such as cyber-slacking, manifest in higher education institutions within the African context. Most studies on teleworking and cyber-slacking have concentrated on corporate and business environments rather than educational institutions. Research has often examined how teleworking affects productivity, work-life balance, and employee behavior in sectors like finance, technology, and healthcare (Golden & Eddleston, 2020; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010). However, the higher education sector presents unique challenges and dynamics, particularly regarding the interaction between faculty members and the extensive use of digital platforms for teaching and administrative tasks (Dahlstrom et al., 2014). This sector-specific context can influence the prevalence and impact of cyber-slacking differently compared to other industries. Hence, the lack of focused research on educational institutions, especially in the context of teleworking, represents a critical gap.

While transformational leadership has been extensively studied for its positive impacts on employee motivation, innovation, and organizational commitment (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Bass & Riggio, 2006), its moderating role in the relationship between teleworking and cyber-slacking has not been adequately explored. Previous research has established that transformational leaders can mitigate negative behaviors and enhance positive outcomes in various organizational settings (Judge & Piccolo, 2004;

Podsakoff et al., 1996). However, the specific dynamics of how transformational leadership influences the propensity of employees to engage in cyber-slacking while teleworking remain under-researched. This gap is particularly relevant in the context of higher education, where leadership styles can significantly affect faculty engagement and performance (Balwant, 2016). The majority of studies on transformational leadership have also been situated in Western contexts, overlooking how cultural and organizational differences in developing countries like Uganda might affect leadership effectiveness (Rockstuhl et al., 2012; Walumbwa et al., 2011). Given that leadership styles can be influenced by cultural norms and values, there is a need to investigate how transformational leadership operates within Ugandan higher education institutions and its potential moderating effects on teleworking and cyber-slacking behaviors. While this study provides valuable insights into teleworking and cyber-slacking in Ugandan higher education, it has limitations worth noting. The cross-sectional design restricts the ability to establish causal relationships, indicating a need for longitudinal studies. Additionally, reliance on self-reported data may introduce biases, affecting the accuracy of responses. The focus on a specific context may also limit the generalizability of the findings to other settings. Future research should address these limitations by exploring additional moderating and mediating factors across diverse educational environments.

In summary, the current literature on teleworking and cyber-slacking shows significant gaps. First, there is a lack of research focusing on the African context, particularly in developing nations like Uganda. Second, studies have largely ignored educational institutions, focusing instead on corporate environments. Third, the moderating role of transformational leadership on the relationship between teleworking and cyber-slacking remains unexplored. Addressing these gaps is crucial for developing a comprehensive understanding of how teleworking affects employee behavior and performance in higher education institutions in Uganda. By investigating the interplay between teleworking, cyber-slacking, and transformational leadership among lecturers in Ugandan institutions of higher learning, this study aims to contribute to both theoretical understanding and practical implications for organizational management and leadership practices. Through a comprehensive examination of these dynamics, insights can be gained into effective strategies for promoting productivity, accountability, and employee engagement in teleworking environments. Furthermore, this research has the potential to inform the development of tailored interventions and policies aimed at optimizing the benefits of teleworking while minimizing the risks of cyber-slacking, ultimately enhancing the overall effectiveness and performance of higher education institutions.

## Literature review

### *Theoretical review*

The Social Exchange Theory (SET) postulates that individuals engage in social relationships and interactions based on the expectation of mutual benefit or reciprocity (Tsai & Kang, 2019). In the context of teleworking and cyber-slacking among lecturers in institutions of higher learning in Uganda, this theory can help elucidate the dynamics of the relationship between teleworking behaviors, such as cyber-slacking, and the leadership style exhibited by supervisors, particularly transformational leadership. According to the Social Exchange Theory, employees may engage in teleworking and cyber-slacking behaviors based on their perceptions of the benefits and costs associated with these actions (Khorakian et al., 2024). Transformational leadership, characterized by its emphasis on inspiring and motivating followers, providing individualized consideration, and fostering a supportive work environment, can influence employees' perceptions of the benefits and costs of teleworking. For example, if lecturers perceive their supervisors to be supportive, communicative, and empowering, they may be more inclined to view teleworking as a positive opportunity for flexibility and autonomy, reducing the likelihood of engaging in cyber-slacking behaviors (Kyambade, Mugambwa, Namuddu, & Namatovu, 2024). Conversely, if lecturers perceive their supervisors to be less supportive or communicative, they may perceive teleworking as a less favorable option, increasing the likelihood of engaging in cyber-slacking as a form of disengagement or dissatisfaction. Therefore, SET provides a basis for understanding how the quality of the leader-member exchange relationship, as influenced by transformational leadership behaviors, can shape employees' attitudes and behaviors related to teleworking and cyber-slacking.

Moreover, the application of Social Exchange Theory (SET) to this context highlights the importance of trust and perceived fairness in the leader-employee relationship during teleworking. Transformational leaders, by fostering trust and demonstrating fairness, can enhance employees' sense of obligation and loyalty, thereby reducing counterproductive behaviors like cyber-slacking. This theoretical lens also explains how transformational leadership can encourage reciprocal behaviors, where employees, feeling valued and supported, are motivated to align their work habits with organizational goals. In this way, SET underscores the reciprocal nature of leadership dynamics and teleworking behaviors, providing a nuanced understanding of how transformational leadership mitigates the challenges of cyber-slacking in telework settings.

### ***Teleworking and cyber-slacking***

Teleworking, or remote work, has become increasingly prevalent in today's digital age, offering employees the flexibility to work from locations outside the traditional office setting. However, along with the benefits of teleworking come challenges, including the phenomenon of cyber-slacking, wherein employees engage in non-work-related activities during work hours using digital devices and internet access. While research on teleworking and cyber-slacking has expanded in recent years, there remain gaps in the literature that warrant further investigation (Amponsah-Tawiah et al., 2023). Numerous studies have highlighted the benefits of teleworking, such as increased flexibility, improved work-life balance, and reduced commuting time and costs. For example, research by Allen et al. (2015) found that teleworking can enhance job satisfaction and organizational commitment among employees. Similarly, an analysis by Simeli et al. (2023) demonstrated positive effects of teleworking on productivity and performance. Despite these benefits, teleworking also presents challenges, including concerns about decreased supervision and accountability, feelings of isolation, and potential distractions. Research by Contreras et al. (2020) identified challenges related to communication and collaboration in teleworking environments, with some employees reporting difficulties in maintaining connections with colleagues and staying focused on work tasks.

Cyber-slacking refers to the phenomenon of employees engaging in non-work-related activities using digital devices and internet access during work hours. These activities may include browsing social media, checking personal emails, shopping online, or watching videos, among others. While occasional breaks or personal tasks may be inevitable, excessive cyber-slacking can have negative implications for productivity, job performance, and organizational outcomes. Several studies have explored the prevalence and manifestations of cyber-slacking in various organizational contexts. For example, a study by Charoensukmongkol and Puyod (2024) examined the extent of cyber-slacking among office workers, finding that a significant proportion of employees engaged in non-work-related internet use during work hours. Similarly, research by Tandon et al. (2022) investigated the impact of cyber-slacking on employee productivity, highlighting the potential consequences of excessive internet use for work-related tasks. Much of the existing research on teleworking and cyber-slacking has focused on general trends and patterns, with limited attention to context-specific factors that may influence teleworking behaviors and outcomes. There is a need for studies that explore the unique challenges and opportunities associated with teleworking in specific organizational settings, such as higher education institutions in Uganda. While transformational leadership has been identified as a potential moderator of the relationship between teleworking and cyber-slacking, empirical research in this area is limited. There is a need for studies that investigate the role of leadership behaviors, such as communication, support, and empowerment, in shaping teleworking behaviors and mitigating the risks of cyber-slacking.

According to Askew et al. (2014), cyber-slacking is a counterproductive behavior and one of the socially acceptable deviant behaviors. Cyber-slacking by employees is seen as a means of managing their well-being, but it has a detrimental impact on an organization's efficacy (K. Kim et al., 2016; Lim, 2002). In a study on the effects of remote work on employee productivity, Mustajab et al. (2020) discovered that while remote work is not feasible for most types of work, it can actually lower employee output if it is promoted. Cyber-slack is less of an in-person deviation and more of a virtual one. In other words, when they are online, employees use these behaviors (Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara, 2012). Holland et al. (2016) report that employees who work remotely often participate in a higher frequency of

counterproductive behaviors specific to remote work. An investigation into employees' cyber-slacking while working remotely was carried out by O'Neill et al. (2014), who found a negative correlation between job satisfaction and cyber-slacking.

While the existing literature provides valuable insights into teleworking and cyber-slacking, several gaps and limitations remain. Much of the research has been conducted in developed countries, with limited focus on developing contexts like Uganda, where socio-economic, technological, and organizational dynamics may differ significantly. For instance, studies often fail to account for the unique challenges faced by higher education institutions, such as resource constraints, limited internet access, and cultural attitudes toward work and technology. Moreover, while the role of transformational leadership in addressing teleworking challenges has been acknowledged, empirical studies exploring its influence on mitigating cyber-slacking behaviors are sparse. Critically, prior research has tended to focus on general patterns without examining how leadership behaviors such as fostering trust, providing clear communication, and empowering employees, interact with teleworking to shape outcomes. Addressing these gaps, this study seeks to explore the intersection of teleworking, cyber-slacking, and transformational leadership within Uganda's higher education sector, providing context-specific insights that are currently underrepresented in the literature.

**H1:** Teleworking positively relates with cyber-slacking

### ***Transformational leadership and cyber-slacking***

Transformational leadership is a leadership style characterized by its ability to motivate and inspire followers, foster individual growth and development, and create a supportive and empowering work environment. While transformational leadership has been associated with several positive outcomes in the workplace, including increased job satisfaction, employee engagement, and organizational commitment (Kyambade, Mugambwa, Namuddu, & Namatovu, 2024; Kyambade, Mugambwa, Nkurunziza, et al., 2024; Kyambade, Namatovu, Mugambwa, et al., 2024), its relationship with cyber-slacking remains relatively unexplored in the literature. Numerous studies have highlighted the benefits of transformational leadership in various organizational contexts. For example, research by Jung et al. (2003) found that transformational leaders are more effective in influencing organizational culture and promoting innovation compared to other leadership styles. Similarly, a meta-analysis by Judge and Piccolo (2004) and Kyambade, Namuddu, Mugambwa, and Namatovu (2024a) demonstrated positive effects of transformational leadership on employee performance and satisfaction. Transformational leaders exhibit several key characteristics, including charisma, intellectual stimulation, vision, individualized consideration, and inspirational motivation (Moghadam et al., 2020). These leaders motivate and inspire their followers to achieve their full potential, challenge the status quo, and work toward common goals, thereby fostering commitment and a sense of purpose and among employees. Cyber-slacking refers to the phenomenon of employees engaging in non-work-related activities using digital devices and internet access during work hours (Tandon et al., 2022). These activities may include browsing social media, checking personal emails, shopping online, or watching videos, among others. While occasional breaks or personal tasks may be inevitable, excessive cyber-slacking can have negative implications for productivity, job performance, and organizational outcomes.

Despite the extensive research on transformational leadership and its positive effects on employee outcomes (Kyambade, Namuddu, Mugambwa, & Namatovu, 2024b; Kyambade, Nkurunziza, et al., 2024), there is a notable literature gap regarding its relationship with cyber-slacking. While transformational leaders are known for their ability to motivate and inspire employees, it is unclear how their leadership style may influence employees' propensity to engage in cyber-slacking behaviors. Much of the existing research on transformational leadership and cyber-slacking has focused on general trends and patterns, with limited attention to context-specific factors that may influence the relationship between these variables. While some studies have examined the prevalence and consequences of cyber-slacking, fewer studies have explored the psychological and behavioral factors that contribute to this phenomenon in the context of transformational leadership (Dust et al., 2014). There is a need for research that

investigates the motivations, attitudes, and perceptions underlying cyber-slacking behaviors among employees who are led by transformational leaders.

Despite the extensive body of research on transformational leadership and its positive impact on employee outcomes, the relationship between transformational leadership and cyber-slacking remains underexplored, particularly in context-specific settings like higher education in developing countries. Most studies have overlooked how transformational leadership characteristics such as fostering trust, providing individualized support, and inspiring shared goals, might mitigate or exacerbate employees' tendencies toward cyber-slacking. Additionally, while cyber-slacking has been widely studied in terms of its prevalence and consequences, little attention has been paid to the underlying psychological and contextual factors that interact with leadership styles to shape such behaviors. Addressing these gaps, this study contributes to the literature by examining how transformational leadership can influence the attitudes and behaviors of employees regarding cyber-slacking, with a focus on the unique challenges faced by higher education institutions in Uganda.

**H2:** Transformational leadership negatively relates with cyber-slacking

### ***Moderation of transformation leadership on the association between teleworking and cyber-slacking***

Teleworking is associated with both positive and negative outcomes. On one hand, it can enhance productivity and job satisfaction by offering flexibility (Charoensukmongkol & Puyod, 2024). On the other hand, the lack of direct supervision can lead to increased cyber-slacking, where employees use work time for personal internet activities (Wang & Dong, 2024). The flexibility and autonomy inherent in teleworking environments can make it easier for employees to engage in cyber-slacking without immediate repercussions. Transformational leaders motivate and inspire their followers, foster individual growth and development, and create a supportive and empowering work environment (Kyambade, Tushabe, & Namatovu, 2024). Transformational leaders exhibit charisma, vision, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation, which can positively impact employee engagement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Khan et al., 2022). Transformational leaders inspire and motivate employees, fostering a work environment that promotes engagement, creativity, and commitment (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Kyambade, Namuddu, et al., 2023).

While teleworking can increase the risk of cyber-slacking, transformational leadership has the potential to mitigate this risk. Transformational leaders can reduce cyber-slacking by enhancing employee motivation, commitment, and engagement (Tautz et al., 2024). They create a sense of accountability and purpose, which can discourage employees from engaging in non-work-related activities during hours of work. Most studies on teleworking and cyber-slacking have been conducted in Western contexts, often neglecting the unique challenges faced by employees in developing countries. For instance, the infrastructural and technological limitations in developing countries like Uganda can impact the effectiveness of teleworking and the prevalence of cyber-slacking (Blount, 2015; Kyambade, 2023). Understanding these contextual differences is crucial for developing effective strategies to manage cyber-slacking. While transformational leadership is well-documented for its positive impacts on employee behavior (Kyambade, Tushabe, Namatovu, & Oyella, 2024), its specific moderating role in the relationship between teleworking and cyber-slacking is underexplored. Existing studies have primarily focused on direct effects rather than interaction effects, leaving a gap in understanding how leadership styles can influence teleworking outcomes (Torner, 2023). Research on teleworking and cyber-slacking has largely focused on corporate environments, with limited attention to educational institutions. Lecturers and academic staff have unique work dynamics that can affect how teleworking and cyber-slacking manifest (Dahlstrom et al., 2014). Understanding these dynamics within educational settings is critical for developing sector-specific interventions.

While research has separately examined teleworking, cyber-slacking, and transformational leadership, there is a literature gap regarding the moderation of transformational leadership on the association between teleworking and cyber-slacking. Most scholars have focused on the direct effects of teleworking on cyber-slacking (Amponsah-Tawiah et al., 2023; Mercado et al., 2017) or the impact of transformational

leadership on employee outcomes (Hussain et al., 2018; Saira et al., 2020) without considering their interaction. Existing research has primarily focused on general trends and patterns, with limited attention to context-specific factors that may influence the relationship between teleworking, cyber-slacking, and transformational leadership. There is a need for studies that explore these dynamics in specific organizational settings, considering the unique challenges and opportunities present. Few studies have examined the underlying psychological mechanisms that may explain how transformational leadership influences teleworking behaviors and subsequent cyber-slacking (Rahimnia & Mazidi, 2015). Understanding employees' motivations, attitudes, and perceptions in teleworking environments led by transformational leaders is essential for developing targeted interventions.

**H3:** Transformational leadership moderates the association between teleworking and cyber-slacking

## Methodology

### *Design and sample*

The study adopted a quantitative research methodology and a cross-sectional research design to investigate the relationship between cyber-slacking, teleworking, and transformational leadership. Higher education institutions in Uganda, especially those in the central region, hosted the study. This is so because the majority of universities are found in these populated areas. The Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) Process Macro was used to analyze the data. 8,592 employees from Makerere University, Kyambogo University, and Kampala International University made up the population. To ensure that every university and category of academic staff was equally represented, the population was further divided into smaller groups. Higher education institutions served as the analytical unit in this study, and the academic staff members working there served as the inquiry unit. Using a stratified random sampling technique, the researchers divided the respondents into smaller groups according to their roles and universities. 240 employees in total were selected from three different levels of the university systems that's professor level, lecturer level, and teaching assistant level at Makerere University, Kyambogo University, and Kampala International University. At Makerere University, the proportional method was used to determine 34 professors ( $185/8592 \times 240$ ), 82 lecturers ( $351/8592 \times 250$ ), and 30 teaching assistants ( $149/8592 \times 250$ ). Additionally, at Kyambogo University, we employed a proportional approach to arrive at 16 professors ( $110/8592 \times 250$ ), 45 lecturers ( $225/8592 \times 250$ ), and 9 teaching assistants ( $34/8592 \times 250$ ). Kampala International University also employed a proportional approach, arriving at 03 professors ( $48/8592 \times 250$ ), 19 lecturers ( $105/8592 \times 250$ ), and 02 teaching assistants ( $42/8592 \times 250$ ). Additionally, the researcher employed a stratified sampling technique to choose respondents from various clusters of professor, lecturer and teaching assistant. To ensure that every respondent has an equal chance of taking part in the study, the researchers employed a basic random sampling technique.

To address potential biases in self-reports, the study employed several strategies. Anonymity was guaranteed to respondents, encouraging honest and unbiased responses. Additionally, the use of closed-ended questions minimized the ambiguity in responses, reducing the risk of misinterpretation. By framing questions neutrally and avoiding leading language, the researchers aimed to mitigate response bias. The data collection process also included a pilot test with a smaller group of respondents to identify and rectify any biases or misunderstandings in the questions prior to the full-scale survey. These measures collectively enhanced the credibility of the findings and ensured a robust analysis of the relationships between cyber-slacking, teleworking, and transformational leadership.

### *Variable measurement*

Teleworking was measured using a modified measurement scale of López-Igual and Rodríguez-Modroño (2020) with a sample "Do you frequently engage in teleworking arrangements", cyber-slacking was assessed using a modified scale from Nusrat et al. (2021) with a sample "Do you use the internet during your designated work hours for non-work-related purposes", whereas transformational leadership was assessed using a modified tool used by earlier scholars of Bass and Riggio (2006) with a sample "How

would you rate the effectiveness of your supervisor/manager in inspiring and motivating employees to perform at their best". A questionnaire was employed by the researcher to gather primary data. The questionnaire had a five-likert scale with a score range of 1 to 5, where 1 represented strongly agree, 2 represented agree, 3 represented Not Sure, 4 represented disagree, and 5 represented strongly disagree. There were only closed-ended questions on the questionnaire.

### **Validity and reliability**

The questionnaire asked a range of queries about the study variables on the connection between cyberslacking, teleworking, and transformational leadership in order to ensure content validity. To determine what responses are appropriate, the questions were developed using data from previous instruments and tools as well as information found in the literature. Experts were asked to rate the relevance of the questionnaire's questions regarding the study variables, and the content validity index (CVI) was initially used to assess the questionnaire's validity. The objectives' computed CVIs are higher than 0.7. Measurements were taken of the data gathered to find consistency in the answers. Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess the internal consistency reliability of the measurement used in this study after SPSS was run. According to Cronbach (1951), 'Cronbach's Alpha is a measure of internal consistency, or how closely related a set of items as a group' (Table 1).

### **Ethical considerations**

Prior to conducting the study, ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Makerere University Business School to ensure that all research activities adhered to ethical standards and guidelines. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their involvement, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. To ensure confidentiality, all collected data were anonymized, and personal identifiers were removed to protect participants' identities. Data were stored securely in password-protected files accessible only to the research team. Additionally, participants were assured that their responses would be aggregated and reported only in a manner that maintains anonymity, thereby safeguarding their privacy throughout the research process. These ethical measures were implemented to promote trust and encourage honest participation among respondents.

## **Results**

The data for this study were analyzed using SPSS version 26.0. Two parts made up the data analysis. Preliminary analysis, comprising bivariate correlation and reliability analysis, was the first section. Testing of hypotheses was the focus of the second section.

### **Initial examination**

Our study examined the normality and reliability of the three variables it used: cyberslacking, transformational leadership, and teleworking. For every variable, factor analysis was performed in order to verify factor loadings and assess the caliber of the scales that were employed for data collection. Table 2 presents the kurtosis and skewness values obtained from the different covert constructs. It was noted that the majority of the constructs fell within the recommended range of  $-2$  to  $+2$ . This indicates that the distribution of the data set was normal. Regression analysis in the standard sense was used to analyze the first two hypotheses. The PROCESS macro version 3.2 developed by Hayes (2013) was used to

**Table 1.** Reliability and Validity results.

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Content validity index
Teleworking	.725	.793
Cyber-slacking	.783	.728
Transformational leadership	.719	.803

Source: Authors Field Data.

**Table 2.** Skewness, kurtosis and bivariate relationships.

Constructs	Skewness	Kurtosis	1	2	3
Teleworking	-1.00	1.23	-		
Transformational leadership	0.48	0.66	0.02	-	
Cyber-slacking	1.01	0.92	-0.10**	0.20**	-

Relationship is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed) (N = 240).

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

**Table 3.** Summary of regression.

Model	B	Standard error	Beta	t	Sig
(Constant)	31.14	3.56		7.70	0.00
Teleworking	0.04	0.02	0.03	1.28	0.00
Transformational leadership	0.64	0.06	0.27	7.88	0.00

R<sup>2</sup> = 0.077; (p < 0.05); Dependent variable = Cyber-slacking.

\*\*p < 0.00.

test the third. Before analysis, the following presumptions about multicollinearity, linearity, normality, and singularity were verified:

**Hypothesis 1:** There's a positive association between teleworking and cyber-slacking.

**Hypothesis 2:** There's a negative association between transformational leadership and cyber-slacking.

Table 3's findings demonstrated a statistically significant positive correlation ( $b = 0.03$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ) between teleworking and cyber-slacking. This supported H1, which predicted that there would be a strong positive correlation between cyber-slacking and teleworking. This suggests that an employee's propensity for cyber-slacking increases with their level of telework. Our findings support Hypothesis 1 (H1), indicating a strong positive correlation between cyber-slacking and teleworking, suggesting that as employees engage more in teleworking, their likelihood of participating in non-work-related online activities increases. This can be attributed to the reduced direct supervision and greater autonomy that teleworking offers, which may lead some employees to become distracted and prioritize personal tasks over work responsibilities. H2 is also supported; cyber-slacking and transformational leadership were found to be significantly negatively correlated. Conversely, Hypothesis 2 (H2) is also supported, as we found a significant negative correlation between cyber-slacking and transformational leadership. This indicates that when transformational leadership is present, employees are less likely to engage in cyber-slacking behaviors. Transformational leaders inspire and motivate their teams, fostering a culture of accountability and focus that discourages non-work-related activities. The implications of these results suggest that while teleworking can enhance flexibility, it also poses challenges to productivity due to increased opportunities for distraction. In contrast, effective transformational leadership can mitigate these risks by promoting engagement and commitment among employees. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for organizations seeking to optimize teleworking arrangements while maintaining high levels of employee performance and satisfaction. This indicates that it will be more successful to deter followers from engaging in cyber-slacking if leaders demonstrate higher levels of transformational leadership behaviors ( $b = 0.27$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ). 77% of the variation in the cyber-slack behaviors of employees was explained by this model:

**H3.** Transformational leadership moderates the association between teleworking and cyber-slacking.

Table 6 shows the results of testing for the moderating role of transformational leadership on the association between teleworking and cyber-slacking using the SPSS Process Macro version 3.2 applying the 5,000-bootstrap sampling with a confidence interval of 95% as per Hayes (2013).

Based on Hayes (2013), moderation testing was done, with a focus on transformational leadership, which was identified as a moderator (W) causally interacting with teleworking (X) and cyber-slacking (Y) as the criterion variable. The direct effects of cyber-slacking and teleworking were examined in our study. The outcome showed that teleworking had a significant impact on cyber-slacking ( $\beta = .2071$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

**Table 4.** The effect of transformational leadership on the association of teleworking and cyber-slacking.

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.6587	.4339	.2856	53.6621	3.0000	210.0000	.0000
Model						
	Coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	3.8376	.0553	69.3960	.0000	3.7286	3.9466
Teleworking	.2071	.1061	1.9644	.0508	-.0007	.4178
Transformational leadership	.2605	.0944	2.8674	.0046	.0846	.4567
Int_1	.3280	.0321	10.1175	.0000	.2515	.4023

Product terms key:  
Int\_1: Teleworking x Transformational leadership

Source: Authors field data.

**Table 5.** Direct and moderation effects.

Estimates of the covariance matrix for regression parameters:					
	Constant	teleworking	transformational	leadership	Int_1
Constant	.0031	-.0010	.0000	-.0014	
Teleworking (X)		-.0010	.0113	-.0092	.0008
Transformational leadership (W)	.0000	-.0092	.0089	.0000	
Int_1	-.0014	.0008	.0000	.0011	
Test of highest order unconditional interaction(s):					
	R2-chng	F	df1	df2	p
X*W	.2611	104.6428	1.0000	210.0000	.0000

Focal predict: Teleworking (X)  
Moderating variable: Transformational leadership (W)

Source: Authors field data.

**Table 6.** Conditional effect of the focal predictor at values of the moderator.

Transformational leadership	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
-1.2059	-.2003	.1044	-1.9185	.0564	-.4061	.0055
.0000	.2071	.1061	1.9644	.0508	-.0007	.4178
1.2059	.6173	.1218	5.0696	.0000	.3773	.8574

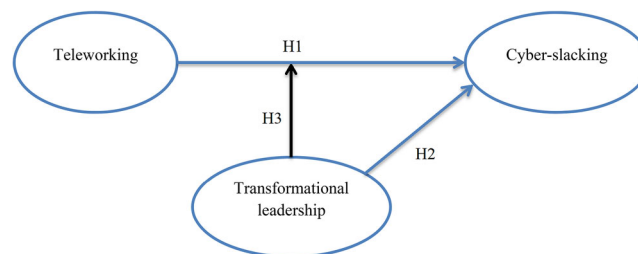
Source: Authors field data.

The outcome additionally demonstrated that the direct impact of transformational leadership on cyber-slacking was negligible ( $\beta = .2605$ ,  $p > .001$ ) (Table 4). The next step of the study was to determine how transformational leadership affected the relationship between cyber-slacking and teleworking. According to Table 5, the relationship between teleworking and cyber-slacking was found to have a significant conditional effect of transformational leadership ( $\beta = .3280$ ,  $SE = .0321$ ,  $t = 10.1175$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $CI = .2515, .4023$ ).

The mode of interactions between teleworking and cyber-slacking at three levels of transformational leadership further explained the conditional effect of transformational leadership on the association between teleworking and cyber-slacking. At three different levels, the conditional effect showed varying degrees of significance. Table 5 illustrates that transformational leadership had a greater moderating effect at the modest mean level ( $\beta = .2071$ ,  $SE = .1061$ ,  $t = 1.9644$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $CI = -.0007, .4178$ ), high mean level ( $\beta = -.2003$ ,  $SE = .1044$ ,  $t = -1.9185$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $CI = -.4061, 0.0055$ ), and lower mean level ( $\beta = .6173$ ,  $SE = .1218$ ,  $t = 5.0696$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $CI = .3773, .8574$ ). Table 5 illustrates how the model explains 26.11% of the variance in cyber-slacking ( $\beta = -.105$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .2821$ ,  $F = 104.6428$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ).

Transformational leadership moderates the association between teleworking and cyber-slacking, indicating that low levels of teleworking correlates with low cyber-slacking and vice versa (Table 6). Hence, when transformational leadership is high and teleworking level is high, cyber-slacking produces low level results. Figure 1 below shows that by offsetting low levels of teleworking, transformational leadership reduces the results of cyber-slacking. The figure below shows the theoretical tested moderating model of transformational leadership.

As a result, the tested model serves as the foundation for the discussion that is expanded upon in the section that follows. This section draws on contextual realities and offers fresh perspectives based on the consistency and inconsistency of the findings relative to the conclusions of earlier research.



**Figure 1.** Moderating model.  
*Source:* Authors own creation.

## Discussion

Consistent with expectations, our analysis uncovered a statistically significant positive relationship between teleworking and cyber-slacking among employees in institutions of higher learning in Uganda. This finding indicates that as the prevalence of teleworking increases, so does the incidence of cyber-slacking among academic staff. This indicates that working from home or teleworking is the cause of cyber-slacking. For instance, faculty in the humanities might find themselves distracted by social media or personal interests related to their research areas, leading to decreased productivity. In contrast, those in STEM fields may be more prone to engage in cyber-slacking by browsing online forums or engaging in personal coding projects instead of focusing on their academic responsibilities. People who telework tend to exhibit a sense of self-determination, making them susceptible to counterproductive activities that diverge from organizational objectives. In a similar vein, teleworkers are effectively managed through transformational leadership behaviors, as leaders set predetermined goals that employees are motivated to meet. This dynamic helps mitigate the urge to engage in cyber-slacking. These results are consistent with previous research suggesting that teleworking environments can facilitate behaviors such as cyber-slacking due to reduced direct supervision and increased autonomy. The positive relationship between teleworking and cyber-slacking aligns with findings from several earlier studies. For instance, O'Neill et al. (2014) found that employees who work remotely are more likely to engage in non-work-related online activities, primarily due to the lack of physical oversight. Similarly, Vitak et al. (2011) identified that the flexibility and autonomy associated with teleworking can lead to distractions and misuse of internet resources, resulting in increased cyber-slacking. This indicates that working from home or teleworking is the cause of cyber-slacking. People who telework tend to be very irresponsible due to their sense of self-determination, which makes them want to engage in activities that are counterproductive to the organization's objectives. In a similar vein, by reaching consensus on the goals, teleworkers are successfully managed through transformational leadership behaviors. They therefore have predetermined goals to meet and cannot afford to fall short of them. As a result, even though they have freedoms, cyberslacking seems absurd. These results are consistent with earlier research showing that when teleworking, employees are more likely to directly participate in cyber-slacking activities (Holland et al., 2016; O'Neill et al., 2014; Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara, 2012). This finding suggests that Teleworking offers employees the flexibility to work from remote locations, allowing them to balance professional and personal responsibilities more effectively. However, this increased autonomy can also create opportunities for distractions and non-work-related activities, leading to cyber-slacking behaviors (Nusrat et al., 2023). For example, administrative staff in higher education may struggle to delineate between work and personal time, leading to temptations such as household chores during working hours. Furthermore, the blurred boundaries between work and personal life inherent in teleworking arrangements may exacerbate cyber-slacking tendencies (Klingelhoefler & Meier, 2023). Without the physical separation of a traditional office environment, employees across disciplines may struggle to maintain discipline and self-regulate their online activities, resulting in increased instances of cyber-slacking. Employees may succumb to the temptation of checking social media, browsing the internet, or engaging in personal tasks during work hours, thereby compromising their productivity and focus. Furthermore, the blurred boundaries between work and personal life inherent in teleworking arrangements may exacerbate cyber-slacking tendencies (Klingelhoefler & Meier, 2023). Without the physical

separation of a traditional office environment, employees may struggle to maintain discipline and self-regulate their online activities, resulting in increased instances of cyber-slacking.

Teleworking inherently involves less direct supervision compared to traditional office settings. This reduced oversight can create opportunities for employees to engage in non-work-related activities without immediate consequences (O'Neill et al., 2014). The physical separation from supervisors and colleagues may lower the perceived need to adhere strictly to work tasks. While autonomy is often beneficial for job satisfaction and productivity, it can also lead to increased cyber-slacking if not managed effectively (Golden & Gajendran, 2019). Employees with greater control over their schedules may be more tempted to take breaks and engage in personal internet use during work hours. The home environment typically lacks the structured settings of the workplace, making it easier for employees to get distracted by non-work-related internet activities (Peters & Batenburg, 2015). The availability of personal devices and the ease of switching between work and leisure activities can contribute to higher levels of cyber-slacking. Teleworking blurs the lines between work and personal life, making it challenging for employees to maintain clear boundaries (Allen et al., 2015). This blurring can lead to increased cyber-slacking as employees navigate between work responsibilities and personal interests throughout the day.

While the positive relationship between teleworking and cyber-slacking has been documented in various contexts, the findings of this study are particularly significant for institutions of higher learning. Academic staff, including lecturers, often has flexible schedules and a high degree of autonomy in their work. This autonomy, while beneficial for academic creativity and productivity, can also facilitate cyber-slacking if not managed effectively. Our findings underscore the need for effective management strategies to address cyber-slacking in teleworking environments. Institutions should consider implementing measures such as clear guidelines on internet use, regular check-ins, and performance monitoring to mitigate the risks of cyber-slacking. Professional development programs aimed at enhancing self-discipline and time management skills among academic staff can help reduce cyber-slacking. By fostering a culture of accountability and providing support for effective teleworking practices, institutions can enhance productivity and maintain high standards of academic performance. Our findings reveal a statistically significant positive relationship between teleworking and cyber-slacking among academic staff in Uganda, consistent with prior studies such as those by O'Neill et al. (2014) and Vitak et al. (2011), which established that reduced supervision in teleworking environments often leads to increased engagement in non-work-related online activities. This alignment suggests that the challenges of maintaining productivity while teleworking are not unique to our context; rather, they reflect a broader trend observed in various organizational settings.

Further, our results reveal a statistically significant negative association between transformational leadership and cyber-slacking. This finding suggests that as the level of transformational leadership increases, the incidence of cyber-slacking decreases. These results are consistent with the theoretical framework of transformational leadership, which emphasizes the role of leaders in inspiring and motivating employees, thereby fostering a work environment that discourages counterproductive behaviors such as cyber-slacking. The negative association between transformational leadership and cyber-slacking aligns with previous research on the broader impacts of transformational leadership on employee behavior. Transformational leaders are known to enhance employee engagement, satisfaction, and commitment, which are factors negatively correlated with cyber-slacking (Bass & Riggio, 2006). For example, Podsakoff et al. (1996) found that transformational leadership behaviors, such as providing vision and intellectual stimulation, reduce workplace deviance and increase organizational citizenship behaviors. These positive outcomes reduce the likelihood of employees engaging in non-work-related activities during hours of work. These findings challenge conventional wisdom regarding the positive impact of transformational leadership on employee behaviors. It suggests that leaders who exhibit transformational leadership behaviors may be effective in discouraging cyber-slacking among their followers. Transformational leaders typically inspire and motivate their teams, foster a sense of accountability, and create a supportive work environment conducive to productivity (Rao & Kareem Abdul, 2015). Within the context of cyber-slacking, transformational leaders may exert a positive influence by promoting a strong work ethic, setting clear expectations, and fostering open communication channels. Employees who perceive their leaders as supportive and transformational are more likely to internalize organizational values

and prioritize their work responsibilities over non-productive activities (Wen et al., 2021), thereby reducing the incidence of cyber-slacking. Therefore, employees may be less inclined to engage in cyber-slacking behaviors in the presence of transformational leaders who set clear expectations and provide guidance and support.

Transformational leaders inspire employees by creating a compelling vision and demonstrating commitment to that vision. This inspiration increases employee engagement and motivation, reducing the temptation to engage in cyber-slacking (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). When employees are deeply engaged and motivated, they are more likely to focus on their work tasks and less likely to be distracted by non-work-related internet use. Transformational leaders build trust and create a culture of accountability by acting as role models and fostering a sense of responsibility among employees (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013). This culture of accountability discourages cyber-slacking, as employees are more conscious of their actions and their impact on the organization. By providing individualized consideration and support, transformational leaders address the specific needs and concerns of their employees (Bass, 1985). This personalized approach helps in identifying and mitigating factors that may lead to cyber-slacking, such as boredom or lack of resources. Transformational leaders often emphasize the importance of organizational values and aligning personal goals with those of the organization. This alignment reduces cyber-slacking by fostering a strong sense of purpose and commitment among employees (Dvir et al., 2002).

While the negative association between transformational leadership and cyber-slacking is consistent with findings from Western contexts, this study also highlights the importance of considering cultural and organizational factors specific to developing countries like Uganda. The unique socio-economic and infrastructural challenges in such settings can influence the effectiveness of transformational leadership (Walumbwa et al., 2011). For instance, limited access to reliable internet and technology in some areas may inherently reduce opportunities for cyber-slacking, while the presence of transformational leadership can further reinforce this effect by promoting disciplined use of available resources. Additionally, socio-economic factors such as low levels of education and inadequate training can hinder the development of transformational leadership competencies. Leaders may face challenges in effectively communicating their vision and motivating employees due to a lack of resources for professional development. Furthermore, socio-economic instability can affect employee morale and engagement, making it more difficult for transformational leaders to foster a positive work environment. The impact of economic disparities on employee motivation and job satisfaction must also be considered, as employees dealing with financial insecurity may prioritize immediate concerns over organizational goals. These socio-economic challenges can limit the potential for transformational leadership to flourish, necessitating tailored strategies that address the specific context of Ugandan educational institutions. The findings have significant implications for higher education institutions, particularly in developing countries. Transformational leadership can be a crucial tool in minimizing cyber-slacking among lecturers, thereby enhancing productivity and the quality of education. Educational leaders should focus on developing and implementing transformational leadership practices to create a more engaged, motivated, and accountable faculty. Training programs and leadership development initiatives can be designed to equip academic leaders with the skills necessary to inspire and motivate their staff effectively. Our results also indicate a significant negative association between transformational leadership and cyber-slacking, corroborating earlier research that highlights the beneficial impact of transformational leadership on employee behavior (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Podsakoff et al., 1996). This consistency suggests that effective leadership remains a crucial factor in mitigating cyber-slacking, regardless of the working context.

Lastly, our analysis identifies a significant moderating role of transformational leadership on the relationship between teleworking and cyber-slacking. Specifically, the presence of transformational leadership reduces the incidence of cyber-slacking among teleworking lecturers. This finding suggests that transformational leadership can effectively mitigate the potential negative impacts of teleworking, such as increased cyber-slacking, by fostering a more engaged and accountable work environment. Specifically, the positive association between teleworking and cyber-slacking is weaker for employees who perceive higher levels of transformational leadership within their institutions. This finding suggests that transformational leaders may play a crucial role in mitigating the risks associated with teleworking by fostering a supportive and empowering work environment that encourages responsible internet use

and maintains performance expectations. The moderating effect of transformational leadership aligns with the broader body of research that highlights its positive influence on employee behavior and organizational outcomes. Transformational leadership has been associated with reduced workplace deviance, increased job satisfaction, and enhanced organizational commitment (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Podsakoff et al., 1996). Previous studies have demonstrated that transformational leaders can inspire and motivate employees, thereby reducing counterproductive behaviors (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013). Transformational leaders can mitigate the negative effects of teleworking by providing clear direction, offering ongoing support, and fostering a sense of belonging among teleworking employees (Günther et al., 2022). Through creating a shared vision and promoting a sense of ownership and responsibility, transformational leaders empower employees to self-regulate their behaviors and maintain high levels of productivity, even in the absence of direct supervision.

Transformational leaders inspire employees through a compelling vision and intrinsic motivation, which can increase their engagement and reduce the temptation to engage in cyber-slacking (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). When employees are motivated and see their work as meaningful, they are less likely to divert their attention to non-work-related online activities. Transformational leaders build a culture of trust and accountability by demonstrating integrity and setting high standards (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This culture encourages employees to adhere to professional norms and reduces the likelihood of cyber-slacking. Employees who trust their leaders and feel a sense of accountability are more likely to stay focused on their tasks. By providing individualized consideration and support, transformational leaders address the personal and professional needs of their employees (Bass, 1985). This supportive environment can alleviate stress and distractions that might lead to cyber-slacking. Employees who feel supported are more likely to be productive and less likely to engage in non-work activities during hours of work. Transformational leaders emphasize aligning employees' personal goals with organizational values (Dvir et al., 2002). This alignment can foster a strong sense of purpose and reduce cyber-slacking. When employees internalize organizational values, they are more likely to prioritize work over personal internet use. Notably, while previous studies emphasize the positive effects of transformational leadership, our findings also highlight its moderating role in the relationship between teleworking and cyber-slacking. This nuance adds to the literature by suggesting that strong leadership can diminish the propensity for cyber-slacking in remote work environments. Overall, the similarities between our findings and previous research reinforce the notion that while teleworking can lead to challenges like cyber-slacking, the presence of transformational leadership can counteract these tendencies. Our results contribute to the understanding of employee behavior in teleworking contexts, particularly in developing countries, and underscore the importance of effective leadership in promoting accountability and productivity among remote workers.

The findings of this study are particularly relevant in the context of higher education institutions in developing countries. Teleworking in these contexts can be influenced by unique socio-economic and infrastructural factors (Walumbwa et al., 2011). The moderating role of transformational leadership can help address some of these challenges by promoting disciplined use of resources and enhancing employee commitment despite the lack of direct supervision. The results have significant implications for higher education institutions, especially in developing countries like Uganda. Implementing transformational leadership practices can help mitigate the negative effects of teleworking, such as cyber-slacking. Educational leaders should focus on developing transformational leadership skills through training and development programs. By fostering a more engaged and accountable workforce, higher education institutions can enhance productivity and maintain high standards of teaching and research.

In the context of higher education institutions in Uganda, the implementation of teleworking policies significantly impacts academic staff behaviors, particularly concerning cyber-slacking. Clear guidelines and expectations within these policies are essential to mitigate risks associated with non-work-related online activities, as existing literature suggests that institutions with well-defined teleworking frameworks experience lower instances of cyber-slacking. Moreover, transformational leadership plays a critical role in the successful implementation of these policies. Leaders who embody transformational characteristics can effectively communicate the importance of teleworking guidelines, fostering employee motivation and engagement. By promoting a shared vision and setting clear expectations, transformational leaders reinforce organizational values and cultivate a culture of accountability, thereby minimizing the negative

impacts of teleworking. Therefore, educational institutions should develop comprehensive teleworking policies that incorporate elements promoting accountability, such as regular performance assessments and check-ins. Additionally, professional development initiatives aimed at enhancing self-discipline and time management skills among academic staff can further reduce the incidence of cyber-slacking. By integrating effective leadership practices with well-defined teleworking policies, institutions can create a supportive and structured environment that enhances productivity among academic staff, ensuring that the benefits of teleworking are maximized.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on the impacts of transformational leadership by demonstrating its moderating role in the relationship between teleworking and cyber-slacking. The findings underscore the importance of adopting transformational leadership practices to create an engaged, motivated, and accountable workforce, particularly in higher education institutions. Addressing the unique challenges of teleworking in developing countries through effective leadership can help enhance productivity and reduce counterproductive behaviors like cyber-slacking.

## Conclusion

With the advancement of technology in today's workplace, the idea that an organization is simply a group of two or more people working toward a common objective rather than an architectural structure has gained greater significance than before. For an organization to succeed, it's not always necessary for them to be in one place. Organizations can leverage employees' creative and innovative potential and enhance their psychological well-being for greater benefits by implementing practices like teleworking. It is important to note, though, that not every employee can telework or be empowered. This study has provided valuable insights into the complex interplay between teleworking, cyber-slacking, and transformational leadership within institutions of higher learning in Uganda. Through a quantitative analysis, we uncovered significant relationships that shed light on the dynamics of practices of working remotely and leadership behaviors in the academic context. The findings revealed a positive association between teleworking and cyber-slacking, highlighting the need for organizations to implement strategies to mitigate the risks associated with remote work arrangements. Additionally, the study identified a surprising negative association between transformational leadership and cyber-slacking, underscoring the importance of examining leadership dynamics in shaping teleworking behaviors. Crucially, the moderating role of transformational leadership on the association between teleworking and cyber-slacking suggests that effective leadership can play a pivotal role in fostering responsible teleworking practices and maintaining productivity among remote employees. By cultivating a supportive work environment, setting clear expectations, and providing technological support and training, transformational leaders can empower teleworking employees to thrive in their roles while minimizing the incidence of cyber-slacking. Ultimately, this study contributes to the body of knowledge on teleworking, cyber-slacking, and transformational leadership, offering actionable insights for organizational leaders, policymakers, and practitioners seeking to optimize remote work practices and enhance organizational effectiveness in the academic sector.

## Implications and practical recommendations

The study's conclusions offer factual evidence to support the practice of flexible work schedules, especially teleworking, among African organizations, many of which are still staunchly conservative and support the practice. Data from the study suggests that both transformational leadership and teleworking can enhance workers' psychological well-being, which in turn boosts their capacity for productivity. Businesses stand to gain a great deal from teleworking and ought to be perceived as designing their operations to capitalize on this benefit. The results of this study have dispelled the myth surrounding teleworking and cyber-slacking, which has discouraged leaders in the educational sector, especially in the African region, from engaging in teleworking. Teleworking does, in fact, psychologically empower the person by granting them some discretion in making decisions and holding them accountable for their deeds and inactions. Therefore, transformational leadership is the management philosophy that most aligns with this strategy. Organizations that want to implement teleworking should understand

that it is based on the transformational leadership philosophy, which sets SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound) goals with employees and provides them with the tools they need to achieve them. It has been observed that this act of self-determination activates a sense of accountability and responsibility, making it harder for workers to engage in cyber-slacking when they haven't finished the assigned task. Clarifying the often-stated teleworking-cyber-slacking mantra is the responsibility of transformational leadership. When offered the opportunity to work remotely, people will only engage in cyber-slacking behaviors when their leaders show no concern. To effect transformational leadership behaviors and fully benefit from teleworking, it is crucial to create an environment that creates balance and harmony between the worker and the task. For example, teleworking could be enjoyable rather than just tolerated under the right circumstances, such as those for true empowerment, which include setting realistic targets, training, recognition, and support.

Our findings have important implications for leaders and policymakers within institutions of higher learning in Uganda seeking to optimize the benefits of teleworking while minimizing the risks of cyber-slacking. Firstly, there is a need to recognize the potential impact of transformational leadership behaviors in shaping employee behaviors, including cyber-slacking tendencies. Institutions should invest in leadership development programs aimed at promoting transformational leadership competencies among supervisors and administrators. Additionally, leaders should communicate clear expectations regarding acceptable internet use and performance standards for teleworking employees, providing ongoing support and feedback to ensure adherence to organizational standards. Moreover, organizations should implement technological solutions and policies to monitor and manage cyber-slacking behaviors effectively. This may include the use of monitoring software, time-tracking tools, and cyber-security measures to detect and address instances of inappropriate internet use during work hours. Through fostering a culture of accountability, trust, and collaboration, transformational leaders can create a work environment where teleworking employees feel empowered to fulfill their responsibilities while minimizing distractions and maintaining productivity.

The practical implications of this study underscore the necessity for educational institutions to adopt strategic measures that leverage transformational leadership and teleworking to enhance employee performance while mitigating cyber-slacking. By prioritizing leadership training programs focused on developing transformational competencies, institutions can equip leaders to foster a supportive environment that encourages accountability and self-regulation among teleworking staff. Additionally, setting clear performance expectations and providing ongoing feedback are essential for guiding employee behavior in a remote work setting. Implementing monitoring tools and technologies can further help manage cyber-slacking risks, ensuring that employees remain focused and productive. Ultimately, by creating a balanced and empowering teleworking environment, institutions can harness the benefits of flexible work arrangements, leading to improved psychological well-being and enhanced overall performance.

Transformational leaders play a critical role in shaping employee behavior in teleworking environments by fostering a culture of open communication, support, and empowerment. By clearly communicating expectations regarding acceptable internet use and performance standards, leaders help employees understand their responsibilities while teleworking. Ongoing support and encouragement from transformational leaders enhance employees' psychological well-being, which is vital for maintaining productivity. Additionally, by involving employees in goal-setting processes and promoting self-discipline, transformational leaders empower them and cultivate a sense of ownership over their work. This accountability reduces the likelihood of cyber-slacking, as employees are motivated to meet established targets. Therefore, the key aspects of transformational leadership (communication, support, and empowerment) create an environment of accountability and engagement that mitigates the risks of cyber-slacking. Educational institutions should prioritize leadership development programs that focus on these essential components to optimize the benefits of teleworking.

### **Limitations and future research**

Although this study provides valuable insights, it also has limitations that should be addressed in future research. The cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causality. Longitudinal studies are needed to confirm the causal relationship between transformational leadership, teleworking, and cyber-

slacking. Additionally, future research should explore other potential moderating and mediating factors, such as personality traits, job satisfaction, organizational culture and technological support, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics involved. Future research endeavors should explore the nuanced relationships between teleworking, cyber-slacking, and transformational leadership in other sectors other than education sector. Longitudinal studies could track changes in teleworking behaviors and leadership practices over time, while qualitative inquiries could delve into the lived experiences of teleworking employees and their perceptions of leadership support. Additionally, comparative studies across different academic disciplines and institutional types may shed light on the factors that influence the effectiveness of teleworking initiatives and leadership interventions.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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