

SOCIAL LOAFING ON EMPLOYEES: THE INFLUENCES OF INDIVIDUAL LEVEL AND GROUP LEVEL FACTORS

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ABSTRACT

The success of group is determined by the completion of the tasks assigned to each member. However, not all group members can contribute as they should. Passive and less motivated individuals in completing group tasks refer to social loafing. This study aims to determine influence of individual and group factors on employees' social loafing. This study conducted a quantitative approach with analyzing data from 30 employees. Our findings show that individual factors (task interdependence, task visibility, distributive justice, and procedural fairness) and group factors (group cohesiveness and perceived coworkers social loafing) do not influence social loafing behavior.

ABSTRAK

Keberhasilan kelompok ditentukan dengan terselesaikannya tugas yang diberikan kepada setiap anggotanya. Namun, tidak semua anggota kelompok dapat berkontribusi sebagaimana mestinya. Perilaku individu yang cenderung pasif dan kurang termotivasi dalam menyelesaikan tugas kelompok disebut social loafing. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui seberapa besar pengaruh faktor-faktor individual dan kelompok terhadap perilaku social loafing pada karyawan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan menyebarkan skala pada 30 karyawan. Hasil analisis data menunjukkan bahwa faktor individual (interdependensi tugas, visibilitas tugas, keadilan distributif, dan keadilan prosedural) dan faktor kelompok (kohesivitas kelompok dan penerimaan terhadap kemalasan anggota kelompok) tidak memberikan pengaruh terhadap perilaku social loafing.

INTRODUCTION

Organization can be defined as a formal group consisted of individuals who work together for shared goals. Generally, organization is a fusion of several work units that ideally would work together. Another thing that shares the same definition is a group—a batch of people that work together for the same purpose. One characteristic that is often found in group is task division. The task division within the group guides every member to fulfill the group's purpose; hence every member of the group should have done their own portions of work. An effective group performance can be achieved when every member of the group able to work together and fulfill their respective responsibilities. If one task is left unfinished, then the performance would be affected, even lead to failure. Therefore, every member of the group is expected to contribute for the group's goals (Johnson & Johnson, 1991). However, in some cases not all members contribute as they should have. Some members act passively instead, not contributing as they should have. This particular passive unmotivated behavior in fulfilling the group's goal is known as social loafing.

Social loafing is a decreased motivation of a group member that leads to less effort exerted when working as a group compared to working individually (Myers, 2009; Baron & Branscombe, 2017). On individual level, social loafer might feel that their effort is insignificant when other member have contributed more. Consequently, social loafer lost the chance to have upgraded knowledge nor increased competence from their work. If social loafing goes on, the group performance will be ineffective and the group's function itself is diminished (Anggraeni & Alfian, 2015). A study by Jassawalla *et al.*, (2009) revealed that social loafer is apathetic – meaning that they are inattentive to task, lazy, and heavily dependent on other members. Such apathetic behaviors may lead to individual, group, and even institutional loss. Another study added that social loafing can inhibit the employee's creativity during work (Shih, Shao, & Wang, 2017). Myers (2009) stated that other characteristic of a social loafer is passive behavior. Passive behavior refers to the lack of member's participation and contribution in completing group task. Social loafer lacks of understanding that their performance is greatly needed for the group as a whole. If a social loafer still lacks of contribution, then the group performance is hampered (Harkins, 1987; Harkins & Szymanski, 1989). Accordingly, this phenomenon of social loafing is urgently needed to be investigated. A group performance is a reflection of every member's skills added together in a collaborative way. The first study on social loafing is conducted by Ringelmann (see Harkins *et al.*, 1980). Ringelmann experimented using a tug-of-war game. He discovered that people tend to exert their effort 50% lower in a group than the total of effort exerted individually. The growing interest in social loafing field has enabled more researches conducted on different populations, such as students (Aminah, 2017; Sumantri & Pratiwi, 2020) and employees (Meyer, Schermuly, & Kauffeld, 2015; Shih & Wang, 2016). The main similarity among those previous studies strengthened Ringelmann's notion that a group task done collectively potentially lead the members to give less effort. Social loafing phenomenon is not only observed in physical activities, but also found in cognitive tasks (Latané *et al.*, 1979; Simms & Nichols, 2014).

Despite all of the previous explanation on group tasks may lead to social loafing, not all groups would perform that way. In fact, there also exist several studies stating that tasks that are finished collectively actually boost the group goals' completion and lead to a more cohesive group. An experiment was conducted by Karau & Williams (1997) to investigate the effect of group cohesiveness on social loafing and social compensation. The result showed that when a member doing the group task with high group cohesiveness, social loafing is diminished. This is in line with Lam (2015)'s study that stated the quality of communication and cohesiveness in finishing group task significantly decrease social loafing by 53%. Another study added that institution's effort to encourage friendship among group members can lower the social loafing tendency (Shih & Wang, 2016). Social loafing behavior is caused by several factors. Liden, *et al.* (2004) classified social loafing based on the antecedents, namely individual-level antecedents of social loafing and group-level antecedents of social loafing. Individual-level antecedents of social loafing consisted of four dimensions: task interdependency, task visibility, distributive justice, and procedural justice. On the other hand, group-level antecedents of social loafing consisted of three dimensions: group size, group cohesiveness, and perceived coworking loafing. Task interdependency is the degree of distinction between one's effort and others' in completing their tasks (Shea & Guzzo, 1987). When task interdependency is perceived high and a member fail to finish their part, the group performance would be hampered. Low task

interdependency may also cause social loafing. This is due to the group task being described as a collective work rather than personalized individual goals aligned with the group goals. According to Aminah (2017), social loafing happened because members get confused to understand which tasks they should work on. Therefore, it is important to add details for individual tasks that aligned with the group's goals in order to increase group performance.

Task visibility refers to individual belief that there are other people supervise one's effort as distinct from others. The stronger the belief, the more effort is optimized (Liden, *et al.*, 2004). If task visibility is perceived high, individuals believe their effort will be noticed so they have to work harder. This aligns with Lount & Wilk (2014)'s discovery that when employees are required to upload their performance report, their productivity increased. This happened in consequence of every employee is comparing themselves with one another. Karau & Wilhau (2020) affirmed that it is important to encourage employee believing their effort is meaningful for the final results. This can be done with rewarding an incentive when the group's goal is achieved or punishment when the goal is not achieved. Distributive justice is the suitability of one's efforts and wages. Individuals will increase, or at least, maintain their effort when they receive an equitable amount of rewards (Leiden, 2004). Some of the economy literatures suggest that reward or fair compensation correlate negatively with social loafing on employees. Whereas in organizational behavior literatures, distributive justice is proven to be able to motivate individuals exert their effort. Procedural justice involves a perceived fairness in a procedure used for decision-making attempts (Liden, *et al.*, 2004). In addition, Karau & Williams (1993) disclosed that perceived procedural justice can affect performance and expected results. A perceived fair procedure may encourage one to work hard. One study found that social loafing tendency can be avoided when individuals perceive they are paid fairly according to their work hours and given a fair promotional chance (Etemadi *et al.*, 2015). Group cohesiveness is known to correlate with social loafing (Liden *et al.*, 2004). If members of a group are incohesive, there is a higher probability social loafing is happening. On the contrary, when members of a group share a united feeling, social loafing can be diminished. A thorough study conducted by Lam (2015) showed that communication and cohesiveness in completing group tasks significantly lowered social loafing by 53%.

Another group-level antecedent is perceived coworking loafing. Every member has the rights to observe other group members' work, but the observation may affect one's behavior. In other words, one move from a group member may change the workflow of the group performance. According to Schnake (in Liden *et al.*, 2004), when a group member believes that another member is doing social loafing, then there is a chance other members would follow the behavior. Other than those, there are also other factors that affect group members' tendency to do social loafing, such as conflicts in group (Singh, Zhu, & Wang, 2018), subgroup formation (Meyer, Schermuly, & Kauffeld, 2015), perceived distributive justice and procedural justice for promotion (Etemadi, *et al.*, 2015). Based on the previous explanations, we are interested to investigate factors that contribute to social loafing on employees from one educational institute. This research is focused to individual-level factors, such as task interdependency, task visibility, distributive justice, and procedural justice. Meanwhile, group-level factors include group cohesiveness and perceived coworking loafing. We tested our hypothesis that "there is an effect of task interdependency, task visibility, distributive justice, procedural justice, group cohesiveness, and perceived coworking loafing on employees' social loafing".

RESEARCH METHOD

This research applied a quantitative approach with correlational research design. Data were collected in scales. There are two variables involved, namely social loafing as the dependent variable; meanwhile individual level and group level factors as the independent variable. Our operational definition for social loafing variable is the tendency of group member to act passive or choose to be silent and let other members to give effort and finish the group task. Task interdependency is the degree of distinction between one's effort and others' in completing their tasks. Task visibility refers to individual belief that there are other people supervise one's effort as distinct from others. Distributive justice is the suitability of one's efforts and wages. Procedural justice involves a perceived fairness in a procedure used for decision-making attempts. Group cohesiveness is the degree of closeness of group members and their willingness to stay together. Last, perceived coworking loafing refers to the belief that there is a group member who does social loafing.

Population in this research consisted of employees (educational staffs) in an educational institution in Makassar. The total of respondent is 30 people. That amount has sufficed based on estimated size of sample from application *G*Power* 3.1, which is 23 people. The instrument in this research used Likert scale with seven optional answers: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = a bit disagree, 4 = neutral, 5 = a bit agree, 6 = agree, 7 = strongly agree. The measured variables are translated into indicators. Then, the indicators is used for compiling instrument items in forms of statements. Statements include positive/favorable statement and negative/unfavorable statement. This research applied seven adapted scales, namely social loafing scale (George, 1992), task visibility scale, perceived coworking loafing scale (George, 1992), task interdependency scale (Pearce & Gregersen, 1991), distributive justice scale and procedural justice scale (Welbourne, Balkin & Gomez-Mejia, 1995), and group cohesiveness scale (Carron *et al*, 2002). The total of items in this research's scale is 64. In quantitative research, the data analysis technique is statistical analysis. This research applied inferential statistic. This research also conducted a trial in testing the instrument's validity and reliability. Parametric statistical test requires some assumption tests before applying the statistical formula (Ismail, 2018). Some types of the classical assumption tests include normality test, linearity test, multicollinearity test, and heteroscedasticity test (Ismail, 2018; Ansofino, *et al.*, 2016). Finally, the data is analyzed using multiple regression analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The collected data from scales can be seen from the following table.

Table 1. Percentage of the respondents on each variable

Variable	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
Social loafing	7%	23%	10%	53%	7%
Task visibility	7%	10%	63%	13%	7%
Procedural fairness,	3%	30%	27%	33%	7%
Distributive Justic	6%	20%	37%	30%	7%
Task interdepedency	10%	10%	47%	30%	3%
Perceived coworker social loafing	10%	16%	37%	37%	0%
Group cohesivity	13%	10%	37%	37%	3%

Firstly, 53% of the respondents showed a high-category level in social loafing. This means that more than a half of total respondents have a high tendency of social loafing. Secondly, 63% of respondents showed a moderate-category level in task visibility. Task visibility refers to individual belief that there are other people supervise one's effort as distinct from others. Thirdly, 33% of respondents showed a high-category level in procedural justice. Procedural justice involves a perceived fairness in a procedure used for decision-making attempts. Fourthly, 37% of respondents showed a moderate-category level in distributive justice. Distributive justice is the suitability of one's efforts and wages. Next, 47% of respondents showed a moderate-category level of task interdependence. Task interdependency is the degree of distinction between one's effort and others' in completing their tasks. After that, 37% of respondents showed moderate and high-category levels of perceived coworking loafing. Perceived coworking loafing refers to the belief that there is a group member who does social loafing. Lastly, 37% of respondents showed moderate and high-category levels of group cohesiveness. Group cohesiveness is the degree of closeness of group members and their willingness to stay together. Based on the results of classical assumption tests (normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity) on 30 respondents, data are normally distributed, have a linear relationship, no symptoms of multicollinearity and heteroscedasticity. All of those prove that the collected data meet the requirements for parametric statistical tests using the multiple regression analysis.

Table 2. Multiple regression analysis

Variable	N	R	R Square	Sig
Task interdependency, Task visibility, Distributive justice, Procedural fairness, Perceived coworker social loafing, Group cohesivity Social loafing	30	.619	.383	.062

The result of the multiple regression analysis showed that the correlation index (R) of the task interdependency, task visibility, distributive justice, procedural justice, group cohesiveness, perceived coworking loafing variables on social loafing is 0.619. The positive correlation value indicates that the higher the task interdependency, task visibility, distributive justice, procedural justice, group cohesiveness, perceived coworking loafing, the higher the social loafing among educational staffs. Vice versa, the lower the task interdependency, task visibility, distributive justice, procedural justice, group cohesiveness, perceived coworking loafing, the lower the social loafing. The correlation index value of 0.619 means that the variables have strong correlation.

R square value of 0.383 indicates the value of contribution from task interdependency, task visibility, distributive justice, procedural justice, group cohesiveness, perceived coworking loafing on social loafing. This value indicates that task interdependency, task visibility, distributive justice, procedural justice, group cohesiveness, perceived coworking loafing variables contribute to social loafing by 38.3%. Meanwhile, 61.7% are influenced by other factors not investigated in this study. In addition, the significance value showed from this regression analysis is 0.062 (> 0.05) which means that the contribution of task interdependency, task

visibility, distributive justice, procedural justice, group cohesiveness, perceived coworking loafing on social loafing is not significant.

This study showed that the contribution of the tested factors to social loafing is not significant. We aim to explain the results by reviewing first the applied method in this study. This study used a scale with seven optional answers ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree to collect the data needed. The use of scale or questionnaire has a flaw in which respondents might not provide accurate data representing themselves. Generally, respondents tend to give answers that make themselves look good or better than they actually are. In other words, socially desirable (Steenkamp, De Jong, & Baumgartner, 2010). There is a high chance this happened because one of our tested variables is social loafing, one of the behaviors which considered undesirable. Hence, respondents may feel hindered from giving answers that represent the actual situation. Another explanation for the result derived from Meyer, Schermuly, & Kauffeld (2015)'s study. They found that within a large group size, there is a tendency for more-homogenous subgroups to form as well. Individuals who feel more attached to these subgroups tend to do social loafing, even when they perceive their whole group as cohesive. The existence of these subgroups can decrease group productivity due to decreased task-relevant discussions. According to the data from the involved educational institute, some respondents stated that the work unit size may vary greatly. For example, there is a work unit only consisted of two members, while other work unit can reach up to a hundred members. As a result, this condition may affect the results of this study. Another reason for our result may be caused due to other factors aside from the ones we investigated. Examples such as negative emotions and leadership have been stated to have influence on social loafing based on previous studies. Singh, Wang, & Zhu (2018) elaborated that negative emotion experience could trigger individual's mind to believe that other group member is doing social loafing. This stems from task-related conflict that leads to relational conflict. In addition to that, Stouten & Liden (2020) emphasized the importance of a leader to suppress the tendency of social loafing among other members. Their literature review indicated that the spread of the social loafing depends on the presence of a leader.

In particular, leaders with servant leadership are considered capable to suppress the social loafing tendency among other members. This is possible because a servant leader is oriented to the satisfaction of group members (Stouten & Liden, 2020). On the contrary, if there is no leader who mediates the differences of each group member's motivation to work, neglect may occur. Neglect over the other group members might occur because the group is heavily concerned with reputation or honor. This could mean that the group let away the members who do not contribute as long as the group tasks still completed (Aminah, 2017). This attitude encourages social loafing to occur. After reviewing our method's limitation, we would like to suggest that further study should apply a different method to investigate social loafing (or other socially undesirable behaviors), such as observation. The observation should be accompanied by a recording technique called rating scales. Rating scales allow visible behaviors to be quantified (Kusdiyati & Fahmi, 2017). Other than that, the depth-interview method may also be applied. These efforts can minimize the flaws from current research's method.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, literature reviews stated that there are some factors that can affect individual social loafing in a group performance. The mentioned factors are task interdependency, task visibility, distributive justice, procedural justice (on individual level); group size, group cohesiveness, perceived coworking loafing (on group level). Our analysis from statistical test affirmed that all of those factors correlate with social loafing, but gave insignificant contribution to social loafing. Suggestions for further study involve the application of different method or exploring other factors outside of the scope of this study.

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