

# EXPLORING THE OBSCURE PROCURATORS OF SOCIAL LOAFING BEHAVIOR -INDIVIDUAL'S PERSONALITY ORIENTATIONS AND MOTIVES

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## ABSTRACT

*We know that individual's behavior and performance is highly influenced by one's personality, traits, beliefs, motives and experiences. Therefore, any rhetoric on Social Loafing – group work behavior attributed to the individual, would be incomplete without a detailed analysis of the basic source of individual's behavior -the dimensions of one's personality, one's personal beliefs and orientations. Moreover, there is the fact that the individual behavior is dynamic -being consistently shaped by an interplay of individual's personality and motives. A review of literature reveals that the contribution of personality dimensions and motivational orientations have not been investigated with full vigor and zest though several situational or organizational factors affecting Social Loafing have been explored time and again. This study is an attempt to gather these strands to present an exhaustive picture of Social Loafing behavior.*

**Key Words:** *motives, organizational citizenship behavior, organizational concern & prosocial values, personality, social loafing.*

Today, when maximizing productivity through optimum utilization of resources is the topmost agenda in organizations, the workplace phenomena of social loafing behavior presents, a form of group productivity loss. There is no denying to the fact that numerous studies have highlighted the positive role of groups in tackling problems that are too large or complex for individuals solve alone. The underlying reason, as quoted by Ulke & Bilgic(2011) is that groups outperform individuals when the tasks require multiple skills, judgment and experience. According to them, the individuals who make up the team bring unique resources to it, such as knowledge, skill, abilities and energy. It is difficult to find such a variety of resources in a single individual. Ziapour et.al.,(2015) have rightly postulated that like other parts of the society, staffs possess special individual differences, talents, motivation, propensity and inclinations. They have different interests and capabilities and enjoy attitude, knowledge and value system of different kinds....these different traits affect their performance and behavior and this personality effect is ultimately effective on their decisions and organizational behavior. Ilgen(1999) highlighted the increased research attention on group productivity and group productivity loss. Tan and Tan (2008) have implied that "in the current organizational paradigm, many group tasks are collective and require the pooling of individual member's inputs to form a single product. Because collective work setting are pervasive and indispensable in today's economy, it is imperative to determine which factors affect productivity in these collective contexts.

We know that individual's behavior and performance is highly influenced by one's personality, traits, beliefs and experiences. Therefore, any rhetoric on Social Loafing - work behavior attributed to the individual, would be incomplete without a detailed analysis of the basic source of individual behavior-the dimensions of one's personality, one's personal beliefs and orientations. Erdheim et al.(2006) have asserted that given the fact that the first and foremost part of organizational system are human resources carrying different personality, thus motivations, capabilities, tendencies, beliefs and thoughts which shape most of the human personality will determine the scope of expectation of individuals from each other and the organization.

**Personality** is the set of psychological traits and mechanisms within the individual that are organized and relatively enduring and that influence his or her interactions with, and adaptations to, the intra psychic, physical, and social environments (Larsen & Buss 2005). Various dimensions of personality have been detailed by different theorists but the big five concept of McCrea and Costa(1999 )provides ample information about personality in work contexts.

**Conscientiousness** has been defined by McCrea and Costa(2008) as a dimension of personality within their Big five factor model as being a basic tendency containing five facets namely competence, self discipline, order, dutifulness, achievement striving and deliberation. McCrea & John (1992), had suggested Conscientiousness to be associated with traits such a dependency and thoroughness, with planning & with being organized, reliable & responsible. In a group task, highly conscientious performances are more likely to maintain Impulse control or self discipline, to delay gratifications (Colquitt& Simmering, 1998) and they even persevere for longer period than performers who are low on conscientiousness (Meyer & Cuomo,1962).On the other hand, Tan and Tan (2008) found that individuals low on conscientiousness generally try to hide in crowd and try to escape as much to pool effort in group setting because evaluation potential is low. Similarly, high conscientious performers have consistent positive impact on motivation (Mount & Barrick 1995) and are less prone to indulge in social loafing (Klehe and Anderson 2007).

**Agreeableness:** Ulke and Bilgic(2011),describe traits commonly associated with this dimension of personality as being courteous, flexible, trusting, good natured, cooperative, forgiving, soft hearted and tolerant. Agreeableness, according to big five theory has been described as comprising of friendly compliance (Digman ,1990), social adaptability and likeability (Hogan & Hogan, 1992). Studies done by various researchers (Hurtz& Donovan 2000) show that agreeableness is related to performance at individual's level. Investigations have repeatedly found that people who are more agreeable are less likely to display Social Loafing behavior. According to Klehe and Anderson (2007), agreeableness is an effective buffer against demotivating effects of situations that would otherwise invite social loafing. Bolin (2002) showed that group members' personality trait of Agreeableness was negatively related to Social Loafing. Earlier, Kichuk & Wiesner (1997) suggested that teams having agreeable member is more successful than those with fewer agreeable members. Bolin (2002) found agreeableness dimension of the personalities of group members reduced their chances of social loafing. However, Ulke and Bilgic(2011) found that although the relationship between agreeableness and Social Loafing was negative, yet it was not statistically significant. They attributed it to the nature of jobs becoming increasingly more defined and segmented leading to less interaction among the employees as members of a group.

### **I. OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE**

According to big five theory, common facets of 'openness' are people who are cultured, intelligent, broadminded and artistically sensitive. One might think that individuals high on openness would be willing to take on new tasks and try new learning opportunities and would not display social loafing behavior. Moreover, openness is a characteristic of high performing groups while social loafing is not. Neuman et.al.,(1999) found that a group's average openness score was positively related to the group's performance. However, the relationship between social loafing and openness is subject to the nature of the job involved. Various studies (Lepine 2003; Lepine et.al.,2000) suggested that openness to experience is a vital factor for performance in job that require adaptation to change. Thoresen et.al.,(2004)also found openness to be an important indicator of performance for jobs which were still in transitional stage. Interestingly, Ulke and Bilgic (2011) observed that there may be positive relationship between personality dimension of openness and Social Loafing in jobs that include monotonous tasks. It means that people high on openness were likely to indulge in Social Loafing if they perceived their jobs to be monotonous. In a study investigating the role of the big five on the social loafing in information technology workers, they did not find any significant relationship between openness and social loafing (Bolin,2002). On the whole, it can be safely concluded that the personality characteristic of openness to experience in members of a group may motivate them to abstain from social loafing behavior only when the nature of their jobs is such that they have an opportunity to learn and adapt.

### **II. NEED FOR COGNITION**

Cacioppo & Petty 1982 proposed that need for Cognition is stable individual difference in tendency to engage in and enjoy cognitively-effortful activities across wide range of domains. Within the Big Five model of personality, need for cognition has been found to relate positively to openness to experience most strongly and to a more moderate extent to conscientiousness, particularly the competence and achievement striving facets, and to relate inversely to an extent to neuroticism( Fleischhauer et.al.,2009). Smith et. al., (2001) showed that in collective settings, those individual who are high on need for Cognition were less likely to engage in Social Loafing.

### **III. NEED FOR ACHIEVEMENT**

This personality trait is characterized by an enduring and consistent concern with setting and meeting high standards of achievement. Interestingly, this need is influenced by internal drive for action (intrinsic motivation), and the pressure exerted by the expectations of others (extrinsic motivation).Need for achievement motivates an individual to succeed in competition, and to excel in activities important to him or her(McCllelland,2014).The collective effort model by Karau and Williams (1993, 2001) details that individuals who are more motivated are more likely to engage in social facilitation (that is, to increase one's efforts when in the presence of others) whereas those who are less motivated are more likely to engage in social loafing( Forsyth,2009). Hart et.al., (2004)studied achievement motivation, expected coworker performance, and collective task motivation and found that participants low in achievement motivation engaged in social loafing,

but only when expected coworker effort was high, whereas participants high in achievement motivation did not engage in social loafing, regardless of expected coworker effort

## IV. DE INDIVIDUALIZATION

(Henduja 2008) suggested that de individualization is state in which individuals are extricated from responsibility for their actions simply because they no longer have unique sense of awareness of themselves and others. Chidambaram & Tung (2006) found that de individualization occurs because others cannot single out of each member's behavior result in low individual identifiability resulting in high social loafing and therefore great performance losses.

## V. INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

Intrinsic motivation is the belief of an individual that his work is meaningful and significant and that his efforts are crucial contribution to the employing organization (George 1992) Cacioppo and Petty's (1982) also recorded laboratory finding that social loafing did not happen in task which people could make a unique contribution. Similarly, George(1992) found out that Intrinsic involvement was associated with low social loafing. **Intrinsic Involvement** comprises the feeling of inner pleasure in the performance of the activity itself. Intrinsic involvement was associated with low social loafing (Brickner et. al., 1986)even in low visibility task situations (George 1992)and that people don't social loaf when they feel that they are making a unique contribution to the group goal(Harkins and Petty's 1982).

## VI.PERSONAL HABITS, BELIEFS AND ORIENTATIONS

Various personal beliefs and orientations are important determinants of the occurrence and extent of Social Loafing behavior. For example, **Procrastination** is a personality orientation similar to social loafing (Blunt and Psychyl, 2000); and is positively correlated with social loafing (Ferrari and Psychl,2012). Studies also found procrastinators to be low on conscientiousness-a personality dimension that mitigates Social loafing behavior(Watson,2001;Lay 1997); and that conscientiousness may as well be a source trait for the maladaptive behaviors like social loafing(Ferrari and Psychl, 2012).**Narcissism** was found to be a moderator of social loafing on a physical performance task -narcissists performed better when identifiability was high and socially loafed when no such opportunity was available((Wallace and Baumeister,2002;Woodman et al.,2013). Studies have contemplated possible decreases in overall group performance when a narcissist's efforts are diffused among group members. Felty, 2012 observed that narcissist individuals possess traits that may impede effective team functioning. **Perfectionism** is conceptualized as a multidimensional characteristic (Yang et.al.,2012) People may conserve their effort (i.e., socially loaf) until they feel that there is a time when giving maximal effort will increase the likelihood of receiving praise in the social environment. Maladaptive perfectionists (in comparison to adaptive perfectionists) may be more inclined to engage in social loafing behaviors (i.e., hide in the crowd) in group settings where group failure appears likely (Vaartstra,2012). Cooper,(2006) considers narcissism as a self-perceived form of perfectionism. **Locus of Control**, a personality orientation is an important element towards job satisfaction and job performance (Judge et. al.,2003). Shin(2015), observes individuals with external LOC are likely to perform less well on goal pursuit task than those with internal LOC.

Similarly, *collectivist personality orientation* in comparison to an individualistic one might insure the members of the group from a tendency to social loaf. Karau & Williams (1993) suggested that individuals with a collectivistic orientation would continue to exhibit efforts even in situations that would otherwise offer themselves for social loafing. Klehe and Anderson (2007); Ulke and Bilgic (2011) further concluded that “individualists are more inclined to social loafing than collectivists”.

## VII. EGO-ORIENTED OR TASK ORIENTED PERSONALITIES

Task orientation is related to task mastery and focuses on personal improvement and therefore subjective success. Perceptions of goal accomplishment, is referenced in task orientation (Nicholls & Miller,1984). By contrast, individual high in ego orientation perceive success as being better relative to others on a normative challenging task (Duda ,1989,1995). Hoigoard & Ommundsen,(2007) found out a positive relationship between an ego oriented achievement goal and perceived social loafing , which means people who try to show themselves as better than others around them are more prone to social loafing as compared to task oriented people.

## VII. ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR

Organizational citizenship behavior(OCB) is defined as work behavior that exceeds formally required work expectation (Organ,1988). Linden et.al.(2004); Rioux & Penner(2001) emphasized that both social loafing and OCB are affected by factors that are essentially motivational. Tan & Tan(2008) asserted that factors that give rise to high tendency of an individual to display OCB may simultaneously result in low tendency to engage in social loafing.

## VIII. LACK OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONCERN & PROSOCIAL VALUES:

PV motives are related to desire to be helpful towards peers & be socially accepted. (Batson & Powell 2003) defined prosocial behavior as comprising broad range of actions intended to benefit one or more people other than oneself-actions such as helping, comforting, sharing and cooperation. A lack of PV indicates low tendency for individual to help coworkers and increases the likelihood that the individual may engage in social loafing or shrink responsibility Likewise Organizational Concern(OC) motive is concerned with sense of pride and identification of individual towards organization. Tan & Tan (2008) found OC to be significantly and negatively correlated with social loafing, which indicates that people high on organizational concern are less likely to engage in social loafing.

## IX. CONCLUSIONS

Social Loafing has been an important topic of investigation because it holds the key to maximizing output in group work situations. Modification of organizational climate and handling contextual factors can help keeping social loafing in check. However, a clear picture of the prospective employee’s personality and beliefs can nip social loafing in the bud by ensuring that only those people are chosen to work in group situations, who will be less likely to indulge in social loafing behavior. Thus, the human potential can be efficiently tapped and work

output maximized for the benefit of the employees and the organization. This information will not only help at the stage of employee selection but also in the assignment of the existing personnel for variety of tasks involved. Finally, a thorough comprehension of the concept of social loafing can help realize the very sought-after goals of human resource management.

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