Research Article

Social Loafing Behavior of Students in the Group Learning Process in Faculty of Economics and Business Universitas Islam Bandung

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Abstract.
Social loafing is influenced by factors like the absence of individual contribution evaluation, unclear responsibility distribution, and intrinsic motivation. Equity theory posits that individuals compare inputs and outcomes with others and respond to eliminate inequity. When one group member engages in social loafing, others may reduce their efforts to avoid being perceived as "suckers." Conversely, if one member overachieves, others may free-ride on their efforts. This behavior threatens group productivity and should be balanced among members. A survey revealed that many students felt some group members were unproductive, indicating social loafing behavior. The study examined the impact of equity on social loafing behavior, hypothesizing that equity negatively affects social loafing. Linear regression analysis was employed, and data were collected from 106 students. The findings indicate a significant negative relationship between equity and social loafing, supporting the hypothesis. Inadequate equity perceptions can lead to the spread of social loafing, impacting group performance. In conclusion, equity plays a crucial role in mitigating social loafing behavior in group learning processes. Clear rules and guidelines for group assignments can help maintain equity perceptions among students, ultimately fostering a more productive and collaborative learning environment.

Keywords: social loafing behavior, students, group work

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1. INTRODUCTION

At present, the role of technology in the higher education learning process is crucial, where technology must be capable of helping maintain student motivation and their cognitive engagement [1]. Additionally, this technology must also support the interactions that occur in student learning. Student-student interaction, in this context, can be

described as a series of group learning activities involving presentations, participating in group discussions, analyzing assigned tasks or cases, and providing feedback and further discussions in the class [2]. The interactions that take place during student group learning activities require strong competencies and a sense of relatedness among students. If this is not strong, some students within their learning group may contribute minimally, which is known as social loafing behavior. Social loafing behavior has a negative impact on the group itself, causing stress, individual tension, decreased motivation due to boredom, reduces the sustained efforts and collaboration [3]–[5]. Factors contributing to social loafing include the absence of individual contribution evaluation, unclear responsibility distribution, group structure, group interaction, lack of performance feedback, loss of coordination, tasks that are not intrinsically motivating [6]–[9].

Social loafing is the tendency of individuals to exert less effort when working collectively compared to working alone [8], [10]. In 1983, Kerr hypothesized that when one group member engages in social loafing behavior, other group members would reduce their efforts in the project to avoid being perceived as "taken for a sucker" [11]. Price, et.al, 2006 explain that social loafing can be a common factor that reduces sustained effort and collaboration among students, as well as the effectiveness and performance within a group [5]. Additionally, if one group member consistently puts in more effort in the group project, other members are more likely to engage in a "free ride" behavior because they believe the success of the group project is guaranteed based on the overachieving member's efforts [12]. Social loafing directly threatens the group's productivity and should be balanced among all group members [13]. Students who exhibit social loafing behavior can negatively impact the group's productivity because they do not put in maximum effort to complete the group's tasks, which can disrupt collaboration within the group.

Motivation is the process of considering the intensity, direction, and persistence of one's efforts to achieve a goal [13]. There are many motivation theories to date, including intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Deci, 1975, and Ryan, 1985, explain that intrinsic motivation refers to engaging in an activity purely for the pleasure and satisfaction obtained from doing the activity, while extrinsic motivation pertains to various behaviors engaged in to achieve an end and not for their own sake[14] [15]. Another motivation theory is the equity theory. According to Adams, 1965, individuals compare the inputs and outcomes of their work with others, then respond to eliminate any act of inequity [13].

This theory states that views of fairness are related to inputs, outputs, and comparisons with others, as shown in Figure 1 [16].

$$\frac{\text{Outcome (self)}}{\text{Inputs (self)}} \quad \text{Compared with} \quad \frac{\text{Outcomes (other)}}{\text{Inputs (other)}}$$

Figure 1: The Equity Comparison.

Adams states that views of fairness are related to inputs, outputs, and comparisons, where inputs are contributions used to obtain some type of return on personal invest-ment, outputs are the results or returns on inputs, and comparisons in Equity Theory are about how one views others who are providing similar inputs or who have similar outputs [17]. According to the Equity Theory, if students perceive inequity, they will make one of six choices, and if they perceive equity, they will be motivated to maintain the current situation, as shown in Figure 2[13], [16].
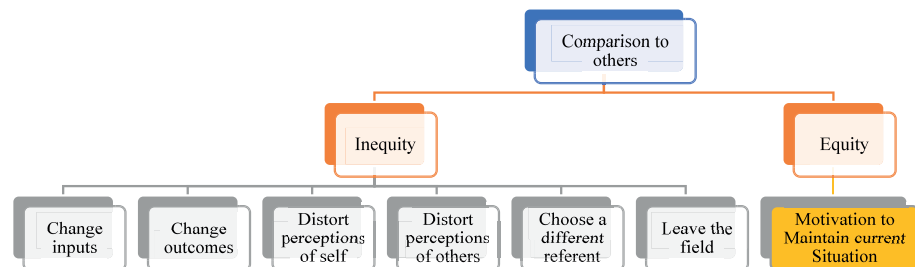

Figure 2: Responses to Perceptions of Equity and Inequity.

The results of a pre-survey conducted by the authors on 97 students found that approximately 49.14% or about 48 students felt that they didn't require some group members because those group members tended to have low productivity. Based on this explanation, low productivity is one of the characteristics of "social loafing" behavior. This can have a detrimental impact when one person in the group has high productivity, but other members have low productivity. In such cases, the high-productivity member may perceive inequality, which can then lead to the spread of "social loafing" [18]. Ultimately, if left unchecked, this can have a negative impact on the overall productivity of the group. Social loafing behavior is associated with several reasons, including attribution and equity, submaximal goal setting, and evaluation errors [8], [19]. The gap described above prompted the authors to examine the effect of equity on social loafing behavior. Therefore, the hypothesis of this study is that equity has a significant negative effect on social loafing behavior in group learning processes.

2. METHODS

This study is quantitative and employs the verification method with linear regression analysis using IBM SPSS version 25 software. The study involves one independent variable, which is Equity. Equity is measured by adopting the Attendance-Attitudes Scale (AAS) developed by [17]. The Attendance-Attitudes Scale (AAS) in this study consists of 3 instruments: Costs/Inconvenience with 5 items, Coercion with 7 items, and Educational with 3 items. The dependent variable is Social Loafing Behavior, and the instrument for this variable is adopted from [20]. This instrument combines 3 items from Mulvey & Klein, 1998 [21] and 6 items from George, 1992 [22]. The Mulvey & Klein instrument is used to measure "free rider," while the George instrument is used to measure the "sucker effect". It is measured using a 6-point Likert scale (1 for strongly disagree, 6 for strongly agree).

The primary data collection technique in this study is an online survey using Google Forms questionnaires. The study population consists of undergraduate students from the class of 2021 in the Faculty of Economics and Business at Universitas Islam Bandung, encompassing three study programs: Management, Accounting, and Development Economics. In each study program, one of the courses with group assignments or projects was selected as a sample. In the Management Study Program, the Advanced HR Management course was chosen, with a total class population of 250 students. The Accounting Study Program selected the Digital Business course with a total class population of 151 students. The Development Economics Study Program used the Population and Human Resource Economics course, with a total population of 80 students.

The total population in this study amounted to 481 students. The samples in this study utilized the Slovin formula with an acceptable Margin of Error (e) of 10%, resulting in a minimum sample of 83 participants. Sampling was conducted using a proportionate stratified random sampling design technique, as outlined by Sekaran & Bougie, 2021. According to this sampling technique, the sample size for the Management Study Program was 43, 26 for the Accounting Study Program, and 14 for the Development Economics Study Program.

Table 1 below is the contents of the questionnaire given to respondents:

KnE Social Sciences

TABLE 1: Item Questionnaire.

Variable	Instrument	Item
Equity measured by Attendance-Attitudes Scale (AAS)	Costs / Inconvenience	I have difficulty adjusting my schedule with the group work time, so my group rarely does group work.
		During group work, it is always rushed, resulting in some points being missed in the results.
		When doing group work, my group members demand too much from me, so I feel pressured.
		I have difficulty balancing my responsibilities for group assignments with my other responsibilities (such as assignments from other courses).
		Participating in group work is just a waste of my time.
	Coercion	I must participate in group work because if I don't, I will face problems.
		I must participate in group work because if I don't, my group members will be disappointed in me.
		I feel inequality if my group members are absent during group work.
		I feel compelled to participate in group work.
		I feel that attending group work is not important; the most important thing is to complete the group assignment.
		I feel happy when group work is done together in the same place.
		Participating in group work provides me with a pleasant experience.
	Educational	Group work activities provide me with an understanding of the relevant course.
		In my opinion, participating in group work in person can provide a better understanding of the relevant course.
		In my opinion, participating in group work in person can provide additional insights into the relevant course.
Social Loafing	Free Rider	The members of my group always make a strong effort and contribute to the best of their abilities.
		Some members of my group sometimes do not contribute and always rely on others to complete the group assignments. In other words, they are just riding along without actively participating.
		Some members of my group contribute less than I expected.
		Based on their abilities, all members of my group consistently show their best contributions.
	Sucker Effect	Some members of my group occasionally delegate their responsibilities to other members within the group.
		Some members of my group sometimes reduce their efforts when working on tasks together.
		Some members of my group do not fulfill their share of the work.
		When all group members are present for group work, some members of my group request to leave early.

TABLE 1: Continued.

Variable	Instrument	Item
		Some members of my group occasionally neglect their duties and tend not to assist other members in completing group tasks.
		Some members of my group work with less contribution, resulting in lower quality work for their assigned tasks.
		Some members of my group are inclined to make substantial contributions to the group's work if other members are willing to do the same.

The questionnaire items will be further subjected to validity testing, reliability testing, and influence testing, which will be continued in the results and discussion section.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the validity and reliability testing of all questionnaire items in Table 1 above, it was found that some items were not valid, resulting in low reliability scores. For the variable "equity," the invalid questionnaire items are numbers 6, 7, and 8. Meanwhile, for the variable "social loafing," the invalid questionnaire items are numbers 4 and 11. Therefore, these invalid questionnaire items will not be included in the subsequent testing phases.

The number of respondents who answered the distributed questionnaire was 106 students who are students of the Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Islam Bandung, Class of 2021. Based on the average calculation of respondents' answers, the data for each item is as follows:

Based on the values from Table 2 above, it indicates the "Good Enough" category for the instruments of Costs / Inconvenience, Free Rider, and Sucker Effect. The average values for each instrument in Costs / Inconvenience are relatively small compared to the other instruments. This is because the respondents feel discomfort in completing group tasks due to the difficulty of balancing their group job responsibilities with responsibilities in other courses. As for the variable Social Loafing, the average questionnaire items fall into the "Good Enough" category. This is because respondents perceive that some members of their group are not performing well. Respondents feel that some group members are not contributing as expected due to a lack of responsibility for the tasks assigned. This lack of responsibility is manifested in delegating tasks to other members. This has an impact on the quality of the results obtained in the execution of group tasks.

TABLE 2: Average Questionnaire Results From the Respondents.

Variable	Instrument	Result			Category	
Equity measured by Attendance-Attitudes Scale (AAS)	Costs / Inconvenience	Item 1	70,00%	Good	73,92%	Good
		Item 2	63,02%	Good Enough		
		Item 3	76,79%	Good		
		Item 4	69,06%	Good		
		Item 5	90,75%	Very Good		
	Coercion	Item 9	86,98%	Verry Good	81,51%	Good
		Item 10	79,25%	Good		
		Item 11	80,75%	Good		
		Item 12	79,06%	Good		
	Educational	Item 13	84,34%	Verry Good	82,08%	Good
		Item 14	81,13%	Good		
		Item 15	80,75%	Good		
Social Loafing	Free Rider	Item 1	25,09%	Good	32,83%	Good
		Item 2	36,60%	Good Enough		
		Item 3	36,79%	Good Enough		
	Sucker Effect	Item 5	34,53%	Good Enough	32,80%	Good
		Item 6	37,55%	Good Enough		
		Item 7	26,60%	Good		
		Item 8	33,21%	Good		
		Item 9	29,81%	Good		
		Item 10	35,09%	Good Enough		

The next stage in the conducted testing is to perform an influence test, the results of which can be seen in Table 3 below.

Next, a t-test was conducted, as seen in Table 3 above. It can be observed that the calculated t-value is -5.541, which is greater than the tabulated t-value of 1.659. Therefore, the variable "equity" has a negative influence on the variable "social loafing," meaning that as equity in group work activities increases, it will decrease social loafing behavior by 5.541. When students feel that some of their group members contribute inadequately or engage in free riding, it can affect their own contributions, potentially

TABLE 3: t-Test Result.

Coefficients[a]					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	38.309	3.232		11.854	.000
Equity	-.480	.087	-.477	-5.541	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Social Loafing					

leading to the sucker effect [11]. One of the causes of this behavior, according to equity theory proposed by Adams in 1965, is that individuals perceive inequality in the inputs and outcomes they provide compared to those of other group members [16]. When one of these inputs or outcomes is perceived as unequal, it can lead to low motivation and eventually result in social loafing behavior [13], [16], [23].

The findings of this study indicate that students' perceptions of fairness in group work activities regarding social loafing behavior fall into the "good enough" category. This is evidenced by the respondents' average scores falling into the "good" category, and the t-test results showing a negative influence, meaning that higher perceptions of fairness result in reduced social loafing behavior. However, it's important to note the instruments of Costs / Inconvenience, Free Rider, and Sucker Effect, where the average values in these instruments are in the "good enough" category. In the Costs / Inconvenience instrument, some respondents mentioned that they felt rushed to complete group tasks, leading to some points being missed in the tasks. This is because respondents found it challenging to balance their responsibilities in group tasks with responsibilities in other courses. This should be a concern because when this is overlooked, it can lead to a decrease in motivation for group members who have already contributed maximally. They might perceive that other members contribute less, as indicated by some missed points in the group tasks. These members with maximum contributions may perceive other members as free riders. In such cases, members with maximum contributions will alter their perceptions of themselves and their behavior by adjusting the inputs they provide to make them feel equivalent to the outcomes they receive. This aligns with one of the possible actions' individuals take when they perceive inequality, as described by Adams in the equity theory. When someone perceives inequality in their work, they may change their perception of themselves and their behavior by reducing their effort

because they perceive that other group members contribute less than they should but receive outcomes that are potentially equal to what they receive.

According to Griffin, et.al, there are three things that lecturers in the classroom, as the party assigning group assignments, should consider regarding the concept of equity. First, every student in the group assignment needs to know the points that will be used as components of assessment or rewards in the group assignment. Second, each student has diverse views on rewards or outcomes (extrinsic rewards and intrinsic rewards). And finally, students will base their actions in carrying out group assignments based on the existing reality, so when students perceive injustice in the assessment or reward process, it will create a perception of inequity among the students [16]. There are several ways to prevent social loafing behavior: (1) setting group goals so that the group has a common goal to strive for; (2) increasing competition between groups in the class by focusing on the results achieved by the group; (3) providing evaluations for fellow group members; (4) selecting members who have high motivation in working within the group; and (5) the rewards received by the group are mostly based on the unique contributions of each member [13].

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results presented, several conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, equity components such as Costs/Inconvenience, Coercion, and Educational have a negative and significant impact on social loafing behavior. This study's findings indicate that equity is a crucial factor in preventing social loafing behavior because the higher the perception of equity among students in group work, the less social loafing behavior occurs. Secondly, the descriptive results of social loafing behavior are relatively minor. Although the results are minor, social loafing behavior can spread to every group member when one of these members behaves as a free rider. If this free rider behavior is allowed to continue, it can lead to a sucker effect on other students and potentially contribute to the rapid spread of social loafing behavior. The findings from this research can provide guidance for instructors to design clear rules for group assignments, particularly concerning input, outcomes, and comparisons. Rules regarding input should specify what each group must do, including provisions for submitting group assignments, processing time, the number of group members, references, and other relevant aspects. Outcome rules should detail what students will receive upon completing the group assignment, such as grades and awards. Additionally, comparison rules should address the process of working on group

assignments. Instructors are advised to create rules that foster perceptions of equity among students, as in practice, each student will compare the results of their work with those of other students, whether they are in the same group or different groups.

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