

Self-Efficacy, Collectivism and Social Loafing of University Workers in Southwest Nigeria: Implications for Staff-Students' Social Interactions

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Abstract. Social loafing, a group behaviour, has been identified as the bane of productivity in corporate organisations. This has been attributed partly to employees' psychological factors (self-efficacy and collectivism) amongst others. This study adopted the descriptive design and three federal universities in the south-west were purposively selected. Five hundred and sixty-five non-academic staff in the three distance learning centres/institutes participated in the study. Collectivism ($r = 0.40$) and self-efficacy ($r = 0.30$) had positive correlations with social loafing. Self-efficacy ($\beta = -.17$, $t = 3.07$) and collectivism ($\beta = .30$, $t = 5.53$) made contribution to the reduction of social loafing among workers. Workers should extend pleasant personalities to academic staff of the universities, and to their students because of their maturity and the nature of the programme.

Keywords: Self-Efficacy, Collectivism, Social Loafing

1. Introduction

Social loafing has been attributed to many causes. These include factors as equitable contribution, that is, that team members believe that others are not putting forth as much effort as themselves. Since they feel that the others in the group are slacking, they lessen their efforts too (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). This leads to a

downward cycle that ends at the point where only the minimum amount of work is performed. Another cause is sub-maximal goal setting. Group members may perceive that with a well-defined goal and with several people working towards it they can work less for it. The task then becomes optimizing rather than maximizing.

Loafing begins or is strengthened in the absence of an individual evaluation structure imposed by the environment (Plaks & Higgins, 2000). This occurs because working in the group environment results in less self-awareness. Unequal distribution of compensation in the workplace in monetary forms, and promotions and in academics in the form of grades or positive feedback can cause social loafing. Goddard & Skrla (2006) assert that if an individual believes compensation has not been allotted equally amongst group members, he will withdraw his individual efforts. Social loafing can also result from a non-cohesive group. A group functions effectively when members have bonded and created high-quality relationships. If the group is not cohesive members are more prone to social loafing since they are not concerned about letting down their teammates (Goddard, 2003).

Social loafing has effects on both groups and individuals. As found in the Ringlemann's

theory, output decreases with increased group membership, due to social loafing. This effect is demonstrated in another study by Latane, *et al.* (1979). In this experiment, subjects were asked to yell or clap as loudly as possible. As in Ringlemann's study, the overall loudness increased while individual output decreased. In this study, there was no block effect (indirectly tiredness or lack of practice). As a result of loafing, average output for each individual decreases. The decrease has been due to the perception that others in the group are not putting forth as much effort as the individual.

Social loafing also has an impact on the individuals that comprise the group. One potential side effect that individuals may experience is the lack of satisfaction that a member of the group might experience, thereby becoming disappointed or depressed at the end of project. When a member of a group becomes a social loafer, the member reduces any opportunity he might have had to grow in his ability and knowledge (Knobloch & Whittington, 2002). The ability of an individual to participate in social loafing increases as the group increases in number. However, if these groups remain small the individual will not have the opportunity to become invisible to the group and their lack of input will be readily evidence. The lack of indentifiability in a group is a psychological production that has been documented in several studies (Kristof-Brown & Stevens, 2001).

Social loafing can also negatively impact individuals in the group who perform the bulk of the work. For example, school teams are usually made up of children of varying capacities. Without individual accountability, often only one or a few group members will do most of the work to make up for what the other students lack. In these instances, group work can be detrimental to the student(s) who feel resentment and frustration from carrying the weight of the work. In situations where members of the group are of differing abilities, social loafing negatively affects group members who carry the weight of the group.

The Nigeria societies cannot be said to be totally individualistic or collectivist. This is because the individualistic perspectives of the Western societies have not been fully integrated into the cultures and institutions of the erstwhile colonized societies. To a large extent, most of Nigeria's social institutions have been fashioned alongside those of the Western societies. In effect, incidences of social loafing as are found in the Western cultures might have found their footings among Nigerian societies. But just as people in collectivist societies sometimes show less or no social loafing, will there not be situations in which social loafing decreases or even disappears in Western contexts and, by implication, in Nigerian contexts.

1.1 Research Questions

- What is the composite effect of self-efficacy and collectivism on social loafing among workers of Distance Learning Centres in selected Nigerian Universities?
- What is the relative effect of self-efficacy and collectivism on social loafing among workers of Distance Learning Centres in some selected Nigerian Universities?

1.2 Hypotheses

Ho1. There is no significant relationship between self-efficacy and social loafing among workers of Distance Learning Programmes in Universities in Southwest Nigeria.

Ho2. There is no significant relationship between collectivism and social loafing among workers of Distance Learning Programmes in Universities in Southwest Nigeria.

2. Social Loafing and collective efficacy of Distance Learning Centre Workers

Team members may believe that others are not putting forth as much effort as themselves. Since they feel that others are slacking, they lessen their efforts too. This causes a downward cycle that ends at the point where only the minimum amount of work is performed (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Team members may perceive that with a well-defined goal, which is usual with a good organization, and with several people

working towards it, they can work less for it. The task then becomes optimizing rather than maximizing. This situation has been referred to as submaximal goal setting (Cox & Brobrowski, 2000).

Lessened contingency between input and outcome can also lead to social loafing. Where team members feel they can hide in the crowd and avoid consequences of not contributing social loafing may occur. Or, a team member may feel lost in the crowd and unable to gain free cognition for his contributions. Where such people are driven by their uniqueness and individuality but lose such individuality and the recognition that comes with their contributions in a group setting, such members may lose the motivation to offer their full ability since it will not be acknowledged (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000).

Moreover, large group sizes can cause individuals to feel lost in the crowd. Davies and Holah (2007) have noted that with so many individuals contributing, some may feel that their efforts are not needed or will not be recognized. Group size has generally been seen to affect the relative performance of groups and individuals (Murphy, Wayne, Liden & Erdogan, 2003). Lack of evaluation is another cause of social loafing. Loafing begins or is strengthened in the absence of an individual evaluation structure imposed by the environment. Goddard and Goddard (2001) believe that this occurs because working in the group environment results in less self-awareness. For example, the efforts of most members of Distance Learning Centres are not usually assessed. Rather, people within and outside the organization use to pass a holistic assessment on the management. Unequal distribution of compensation can also lead to loafing. In the workplace, compensation comes in monetary forms and promotions, and in the Distance Learning Centres it is usually in form of praise or positive feedback. Goddard and Skrla (2006) assert that if an individual believes compensation has not been allotted equally amongst group members, he will withdraw his individual efforts.

Group cohesion also affects loafing. A group, according to Carron, Burke and Prapavessis (2004), functions effectively when members have bonded and created high-quality relationships. If the group is not cohesive, members are more prone to social loafing since they are not concerned about letting down their teammates. In most cases, the job of those in the Distance Learning Centres involves group cohesion such as admission exercise for the students. It is the sole aim of the organization to achieve the desired goal collectively. Self-beliefs or self-concepts can equally lead to social loafing. People's collective effort depends in the words of Goddard (2001), on the extent to which they distinguish themselves as better than others. As claimed by this author, this again suggests that a concern for self-validation or self-enhancement is a significant component of social loafing. Thus, the degree to which people are motivated to self-validate, for example, to see themselves as unique as and better than others, makes a difference in collective work contexts.

Social loafing is more likely to occur in societies with a focus on the individual rather than the collective group. A collectivistic orientation places group goals and collective action ahead of self-interest. People in this orientation view their individual actions as an important contribution to the group's well-being. They also gain satisfaction and feelings of accomplishment from group outcomes. Further, collectivists anticipate that other group members will contribute to the groups' performance and so they choose to do the same in return (Goddard & Skrla, 2006).

Collectivism is any philosophic, political, religious, economic, or social outlook that emphasizes the interdependence of every human being in a society or civilization. Collectivism is a basic cultural element that exists as the reverse of individualism in human nature (in the same way high context culture exists as the reverse of low context culture). Collectivist orientations stress the importance of cohesion within social groups and in some cases, the priority of group goals over individual goals. Collectivists often focus on community, society, nation or country.

It has been used as an element in many different and diverse types of government and political, economic and educational philosophies throughout history and most human societies in practice contain elements of both individualism and collectivism. Some examples of collectivist cultures include India and Japan. (Davies & Holah, 2007)

Collectivism as a cultural syndrome and an analytical dimension that captures the relative importance people accord to personal interests and to shared pursuits was investigated for its relations with various organizational parameters. As defined by Goddard (2002), individualism is the condition in which personal interests are accorded greater importance than are the needs of groups. Individualists look after themselves and tend to ignore group interests if they conflict with personal desires. The opposite of individualism, collectivism, occurs when the demands and interests of groups take precedence over the desires and needs of individuals.

3. Social Loafing and collectivism of Distance Learning Centre Workers

People's collective effort has been found to depend on the extent to which they distinguish themselves as better than others (Black, 2002). The idea that people's tendency to self-validate plays a role in social loafing has been suggested in previous research. This role however has never been examined in the perspective of a dispositional factor.

Dyer (2006) for example, have found that people are less likely to loaf on collective tasks (even though individual outcomes cannot be evaluated) if they believe the performance of their group is being compared with the performance of other groups. According to these authors, this suggests that even members of short-lived co-acting groups are concerned by how one's group stacks up against other groups. This provides support for Deal and Peterson (2000) notion that people can use group evaluations as a means of obtaining self-validation. Similarly, Kristof-Brown and Stevens (2001) have shown that when participants expect their coworkers to be

unreliable, or unwilling, or unable to perform well on the task, they may actually increase their effort to attain a respectable group product if that will result in a positive evaluation of themselves (a finding called 'social compensation effects'). As claimed by these authors, this again suggests that a concern for self-validation or self-enhancement is a significant component of social loafing. Complementary to, rather than competing with these previous works, it is suggested by Kozlowski and Klein (2000), that the degree to which people are motivated to self-validate for example, to see themselves as unique and better than others, makes a difference in collective work context.

There are occasions in the life of individuals where they will need to work as members of a group or a team. In places of work, colleagues are often required to work together on various projects, and group projects and cooperation are highly valued in such setting. Today, more and more scholars and educationalists are advocating that emphasis should shift from individual efforts to group achievements. Moreover, many educational institutions now focus on group projects and make use of groups in their administration. One of such educational systems is the Distance Learning which, today, has centres and programmes in many universities in Nigeria.

Studies of groups and group size have centred around two concerns, one practical and one theoretical. De Vita (2001) observes that the practical concern has been to determine the efficiency, productivity, stability or satisfaction that could be found in the group, for a given type of task. The theoretical concern has been to determine what kinds of variables differentiate the smaller group from the larger in terms of the nature of interaction, the structure of relationships, and the types of stress that may arise. Effectiveness was one of the earliest questions investigated by small-group research workers. Indeed, what is often claimed to have been the first controlled experiment in social psychology, that of Triplett in 1898 (Taggar & Seijts, 2003), might be regarded as an example of such work.

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1 Bandura Self-efficacy Theory

This theory provides basis for self-efficacy as a psychosocial factor of social loafing. The self-efficacy as Self-Efficacy is defined as a person's belief about their ability to organize and execute courses of action necessary to achieve a goal. In other words, persons with strong efficacy beliefs are more confident in their capacity to execute a behavior. Beliefs about self-efficacy have a significant impact on our goals and accomplishments by influencing personal choice, motivation, and our patterns and emotional reactions. For example, we tend to avoid threatening situations that we believe exceed our coping skills. Perceived self-efficacy also affects how successfully goals are accomplished by influencing the level of effort and persistence a person will demonstrate in the face of obstacles. That is, the stronger the perceived self-efficacy, the more active our efforts. Higher self-efficacy is also associated with more persistence, a trait that allows us to gain corrective experiences that reinforce our sense of self-efficacy.

Because of its effect on personal choice, motivation, effort, and persistence, self-efficacy has severe implications for health behaviors, such as condom use, nonsmoking, among others. For example, high self-efficacy influences whether or not a person commits to condom use in the face of social obstacles. Using evidence-based interventions, we can influence self-efficacy through several channels:

i) Performance accomplishments are one's personal mastery experiences, defined as past successes or failures. These experiences form expectations that are generalized to other situations that may be similar or substantially different from the original experience. For example, strong efficacy expectations are developed through repeated success of a behavior, and reduced efficacy expectations can result from failures. We can increase personal mastery for a behavior through participant modeling, performance exposure, self-instructed

performances, and performance desensitization, the process through which aversive behavior is paired with a pleasant or relaxing experience.

ii) Vicarious experience, which is observing others perform threatening activities without adverse consequences, can also enhance personal self-efficacy by demonstrating that the activity is "do-able" with a little effort and persistence. Vicarious experience can be enhanced through live modeling (observing others perform an activity), or symbolic modeling.

iii) Verbal persuasion. People are led to believe they can successfully accomplish a task or behavior through the use of suggestion, exhortation, or self-instruction. However, because verbal persuasion is not grounded in personal experience, it is a weaker inducer of efficacy and may be extinguished by histories of past failures.

iv) Emotional arousal. We can enhance perceived self-efficacy by diminishing emotional arousals such as fear, stress, and physical agitation since they are associated with decreased performance, reduced success, and other avoidance behaviors. Emotional arousal can be mitigated with repeated symbolic exposure that allows people to practice dealing with stress, relaxation techniques, and symbolic desensitization.

5. Methodology

This study employs *ex-post facto* research design. Purposive Sampling technique was used to select Distance Learning Programmes in Southwest Nigeria that were involved in this study. The criteria used for the selection is that the Programme must have been accredited by the National University Commission (NUC). All the Programmes accredited in South West were involved and 500 staff of these programmes were sampled.

S/N	Name of DLC Programme	State of Location	Number of ODL Staff	Number of questionnaire administered	Number of questionnaire retrieved
1	DLC University of Ibadan, Ibadan (U.I.)	Oyo	130	130	110
2.	DLI University of Lagos, Akoka (UNILAG)	Lagos	67	67	61
3.	DLC Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife (OAU)	Osun	68	68	60
4.	National Open University (NOUN) Abeokuta Programme	Ogun	100	100	90
5.	National Open University (NOUN) Akure Programme	Ondo	100	100	89
6.	National Open University (NOUN) Ado-Ekiti Programme	Ekiti	100	100	90
TOTAL			565	565	500

The instruments used were validated DLC Workers’ Collective Self-efficacy Social Loafing Scale (DWCSLS, $r = 0.93$) and DLC Workers’ Collectivism Social Loafing Scale (DWCSLS, $r = 0.74$). Multiple regression analysis was used to answer the research questions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics embedded in multiple regressions was employed to test hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance.

6. Results

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of each of each of the variable of the study.

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Social Loafing	27.442	4.104	500
Self-efficacy	31.178	5.626	500
Collectivism	60.474	10.310	500

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the respondent responses on each of the variables in the study. Collectivism has the highest means (60.474) followed by self-efficacy (31.178).

Table 2 Correlation Matrix of all the variables of the study.

Variables	Social Loafing	Self efficacy	Collectivism
Social loafing	1.000	.401*	.404*
Collective self-efficacy	.401*	1.00	.622*
Collectivism	.404*	.622*	1.00

*Significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed) N=500

Table 2 shows that there was significant positive relationship between the independent and dependent variables of the study; self-efficacy ($r = 0.401$; $p = 0.05$), collectivism ($r = 0.404$; $p = 0.05$) and social loafing of DLC Staff of Southwest Universities.

Research Question One: What are the composite contributions of efficacy and collectivism on social loafing among workers of Distance Learning Centre in selected Nigeria University?

Table 3: Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis showing composite contribution of the predictor variables and social loafing of DLC staff in selected Nigeria University.

Source of Variation	Sum of square	DF	Meaning of Square	F- ratio	P
Regression	1990.569	2	284.366	21.810	.000*
Residual	6414.759	497	13.038		
Total	8405.318	499			

*denotes significant correlation @ 0.05 significant level.

Multiple R=0.487, Multiple R²=0.237, Multiple adjusted R²=0.0226,

Standard Error of estimate = 3.611

Table 3 shows that there was a joint contribution of the independent variables self-efficacy and collectivism on social loafing among staff of distance learning centre in selected Nigeria University ($R=0.457, P=0.05$) The combination of the independent variables accounted for 22.6% adjusted $R=0.226$) of the total variance in the social loafing of DLC Staff. The analyze of variance of the multiple regression yielded an F-ratio value of ($F_{(2,497)}=21.810, p<0.05$) which was significant at 0.05 level.

Research Question Two: What is the relative contribution of self-efficacy, collectivism and social loafing among workers if Distance Learning Centre in selected Nigeria University?

Table 4: Relative contribution of the independent variables to the prediction of social Loafing

Variable	Unstandardized B	Std Error	Standardized coefficient Beta	t	S
(Constant)	16.667	1.656		10.064	.000*
Self-efficacy	.218	.039	.299	5.526	.000*
Collectivism	.102	.023	-.255	4.4642	.000*

* significant correlation @ 0.05 significant level.

Table 4 indicates the contributions of each of the independent variables to the prediction of social loafing among workers of DLC in the selected University. In terms of magnitude of the contribution, self-efficacy contributed most to the prediction of social loafing ($B=0.299, t=5.526, P=0.05$) followed by collectivism ($B=0.102, t=2.332; P=0.05$).

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between self-efficacy and social loafing among Distance Learning centre in University in Southwest Nigeria.

Table 4.6: The relationship between self-efficacy and social loafing of DLC staff in selected University

Variables	N	Mean	Std Deviation	r	P
Social Loafing	500	27.442	4.104	.401	.000*
Collective self-efficacy	500	31.178	5.627		

* correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 4.6 shows the relationship between self-efficacy. The result reveals = value observed .401, $P<0.05$ hence a significant relationship exist between social loafing and self-efficacy of DLC staff.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between collectivism and social loafing among workers of Distance Learning centres in Nigeria University in Southwest Nigeria.

Table 4.9: The relationship between social loafing and collectivism of DLC staff in selected University.

Variables	N	Means	Standard Deviation	r	P
Social Loafing	500	27.442	4.104	.404	.000*
Collectivism	500	60.474	10.310		

*Correlation is significant at the the 0.05 level (2 tailed)

Table 5 reveals the relationship between social loafing and collectivism. The result shows observed (r-value of 0.404 $P<0.05$) hence a significant relationship exist between social loafing and collectivism among DLC staff.

7. Discussion

There is no significant relationship between self-efficacy and social loafing among workers of Distance Learning Programmes in Universities in Southwest Nigeria.

The results showed a significant relationship between social loafing and collective self-efficacy among DLC staff. This conforms with the study of Black (2002) who found out that self-efficacy propels workers to keep trying to accomplish their goals, and make good decisions that translate into meaningful achievements. To Ojedokun (2008), individuals with higher work self-efficacy are more likely to look forward to, and to be successful in workplace performance. Furthermore, work accomplishments are believed, to increased self-efficacy through a feedback loop tying subsequent performance to augmented self-efficacy beliefs. The results of the finding also give credence to the position of Adebayo and Ogunsina (2011) who assert that self-efficacy contributed to the political skill necessary to cope with strain relationships inside an organization. Previous research such as Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000), and Adeyemo and Afolabi (2007) also found significant relationship between self-efficacy and ability to cope with pressure. Team members may believe that others are not putting forth as much effort as themselves. Since they feel that others are slacking, they lessen their efforts too. This causes a downward cycle that ends at the point where only the minimum amount of work is performed. Team members may perceive that with a well-defined goal, which is usual with a good organization, and with several people working towards it, they can work less for it. The task then becomes optimizing rather than maximizing. This situation has been referred to as submaximal goal setting (Cox & Brobrowski, 2000).

There is no significant relationship between collectivism and social loafing among workers of Distance Learning Programmes in Universities in Southwest Nigeria.

The result of the study also showed a significant relationship between social loafing and

collectivism of DLC workers. This finding was in agreement with the study of Dyer (2006) who sees collectivism as a cultural syndrome and an analytical dimension that captures the relative importance people accord to personal interests and to shared pursuits was investigated for its relations with various organizational parameters. Thus, a driving force within a collectivistic culture is cooperation so as to attain group goals and safe-guard group welfare (Davies & Holah, 2007). To Olawoyin (2000), people's collective effort has been found to depend on the extent to which they distinguish themselves as better than others.

In congruence with the finding of the study, Salami and Omole (2005) found that people are less likely to loaf on collective tasks (though individual outcomes cannot be evaluated) if they believe the performance of their group is being compared with the performance of other groups. This provides support for Deal and Peterson (2000) notion that people can use group evaluations as a means of obtaining self-validation. Similarly, Kristof-Brown and Stevens (2001) have shown that when participants expect their coworkers to be unreliable, or unwilling, or unable to perform well on the task, they may actually increase their effort to attain a respectable group product if that will result in a positive evaluation of themselves. Kozlowski and Klein (2000) confirms that the degree to which people are motivated to self-validate for example, to see themselves as unique and better than others, makes a difference in collective work context.

8. Recommendations

Alongside the modes of delivery being used presently, course materials can be delivered through other interactive media like radio, TV, internets, CD, VCD etc which are more accessible to ODL learners. No national educational system can rise above its teachers' quality; hence teachers of ODL should be well trained to improve their effectiveness and efficiency in the teaching/ learning process. Administrative staff should also be motivated in order for them to improve on their job. When employees work together, they start helping each

other and responsibilities are shared and thus it reduces the work load and work pressure. In view of this, job harmony and group work behaviour should be improved upon by all workers. Collectivism rather than individualism, cooperation rather than competition should be pursued in the workplace. Teamwork must be encouraged at workplace as it strengthens the bond among the employees and the targets can be met at a faster pace. Workload is shared and individuals feel motivated to perform better than his team members.

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