IJACSS

The phenomenon of social loafing in high school students

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Abstract

Adolescents tend to join social groups based on similarities and comfort. In group learning, all members are expected to participate equally; however, this is not always the case. Individuals often exert less effort in groups compared to working independently, a phenomenon known as *social loafing*. This study aimed to describe students' *social loafing* based on two dimensions: *dillution effect* and *immediacy gap*. Using a quantitative descriptive method, the study involved 216 high school students selected through proportional random sampling from a population of 440 students. Data were collected using a validated *social loafing* scale. Results indicated that *social loafing* based on the *dillution effect* dimension was categorized as low (48.15%), while *social loafing* based on the *immediacy gap* dimension was categorized as medium (54.63%). School counselor are encouraged to mitigate *social loafing* through information services, individual counseling, and group counseling interventions.

Keywords:*Social loafing*, students, study groups

Introduction

Adolescence is a stage where individuals will feel a great need to form or enter groups to learn about others and find their own identity (Luo et al., 2021). The choice of group that teenagers will join is also based on the similarities they have, including the comfort of being in the group, so that conformity in the group is the most important thing for teenagers (Salsabiila, 2024; Sherif, 2022). In a group, there must be something called a task, the tasks in the group are certainly different and work together with each other. The group task itself consists of one work group. According to Iswanto (2020) a work group is a social unit consisting of two or more people, who work together and interact to achieve common goals. Tasks carried out in groups are common in student life (Naila et al., 2021).

Some individuals will put in less effort when they are in a group and some will rely on other members (Nur'aini et al 2024). Research conducted by Hall and Buzwell (2012) found that students tend to take assignments lightly when they know that they are not doing the assignment alone. In addition to affecting group outcomes, social loafing can also affect students' comfort in learning and their ability to absorb knowledge and information in group activities. Social loafing can also disrupt the cohesiveness of group members, hindering the success and achievement of goals in the group (Hatiti et al., nd; Kim et al., 2023).

Various factors have been identified as determinants of social loafing, including personality factors, the presence of observers, and the individual's level of self-esteem (Bokhari & Aftab, 2022; Iswanto, 2022). Given its significant impact on group performance, social loafing behavior needs to be minimized or prevented proactively through a structured and evidence-based approach. Therefore, it is important to understand more about this phenomenon so that effective intervention strategies can be designed and implemented.

Method

This research method is a quantitative research with a descriptive type. This study aims to describe social loafing with two dimensions, namely the dilution effect and the immediacy gap dimension. The population in this study was 440 students with a research sample of 216 students of SMA 1 Lembah Gumanti in the 2024/2025 academic year. The sampling technique for this study was using *proportional random sampling.*

Table 1. Overall Description of Social Loafing

No	Class	Class Group	Number of Samples
1.	XI	XI. F4	32 People
		XI. F5	31 People
		XI. F7	32 People
	Amount		**95 People**
		XII. F1	30 People
		XII. F3	30 People
2.	XII	XII. F5	30 People
		XII. F6	31 People
	Amount		**121 People**
	Total number		**216**

Data collection was conducted using a social loafing scale for students. The validity of the social loafing scale was tested and after conducting the validity test it was found that out of 39 statements given, 33 statements were valid. Then a reliability test was also conducted and the results of the reliability test were 0.920, which means that the social loafing scale can be used. The data analysis used in this study was descriptive statistics.

Results and Discussion

A. Overview of Social Loafing of High School Students

1. Overview of social loafing as a whole

Tabel 2. Research Sample Data

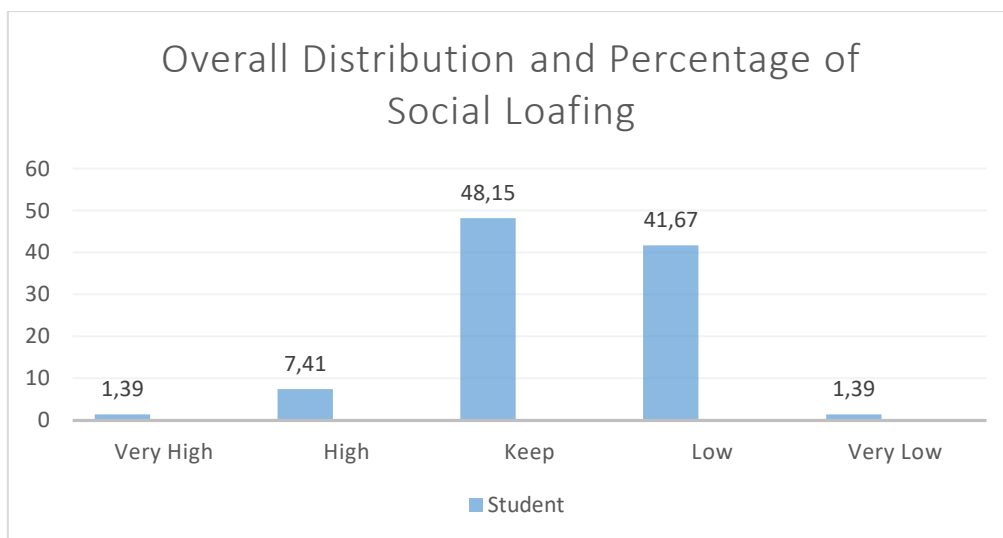| Group	Interval	f	%
Very high	≥137	3	1.39
High	111 – 136	16	7.41
Keep	85 – 110	104	48.15
Low	59 – 84	90	41.67
Very low	≤ 58	3	1.39
Amount		**216**	**100**

Figure 1. Distribution graph and percentage of social loafing overall (n=216)

Based on the chart, it shows that the average result of the respondent's assessment of social loafing at SMA N 1 Lembah Gumanti, the score is 104. So it can be concluded that the social loafing of SMA N 1 Lembah Gumanti students is in the moderate category. This means that in general, many students still tend to reduce their efforts in completing assignments when in groups compared to working individually.

2. Description of Social Loafing based on the Dilution Effect dimension

Table 3. Research data based on the dilution effect dimension

Group	Interval	f	%
Very high	≥ 68	1	0.46
High	55 – 67	14	6.48
Keep	42 – 54	80	37.04
Low	**29 – 41**	**104**	**48.15**
Very low	≤ 28	17	7.87
Amount		**216**	**100**

Based on the research conducted, it was obtained that social loafing of SMA N 1 Lembah Gumanti in terms of the dilution effect aspect was in the low category. This means that the possibility of individuals feeling that their contributions will be ignored or unimportant is getting smaller.

3. Description of social loafing based on the immediacy gap dimension

Table 4. Research data based on the dimensions of the proximity gap

Group	Interval	f	%
Very high	≥ 73	4	1.85
High	59 – 72	17	7.87
Keep	45 – 58	118	54.63
Low	31 – 44	73	33.80
Very low	≤ 30	4	1.85
Amount		**216**	**100**

Based on the research conducted, it was obtained that social loafing of SMA N 1 Lembah Gumanti in terms of the immediacy gap aspect was in the moderate category. This means that students will feel alienated in a group if they do not have closeness with other group members, so that students reduce their efforts in the group.

B. Implications in Guidance and Counseling Services

1. Information Services

Information services are specifically related to the function of counseling services, namely the function of understanding, by understanding various information that can be used as a solution to problems experienced by students to develop and maintain their potential (Cymek & Manzey, 2022). The information obtained by individuals is very necessary to make it easier for individuals to make plans and make decisions (Elshaer et al., 2023). The purpose of information services is to help individuals obtain information, develop the knowledge possessed by students so that individuals become more independent in leading themselves (Tianti et al., nd). Based on the research conducted, there are students who have very high and high social loafing behavior, to overcome this problem, information services are needed by School counselor to students to reduce social loafing in high school students.

In this case, students who will receive information services are students with a moderate level of social loafing by utilizing classical counseling guidance methods. There are several themes that can be given to students in this classical counseling guidance with several topics such as: the importance of group diversity, managing conflict in groups, the importance of an open and flexible attitude.

2. Individual Counseling Services

Individual counseling services are services that aim to help individuals overcome the problems they face, thus enabling them to develop optimally (Flobamorata & 2021, nd). Tianti (2024) stated that in individual counseling, the main goal is to help individuals recognize and understand their own behavior, including the tendency to engage in social loafing. By increasing self-awareness, individuals can better understand how their behavior affects group dynamics and the outcomes achieved.

Some strategies that can be provided by School counselor to help students in order to reduce social loafing such as cognitive behavior therapy (CBT), solution-focused brief therapy (SFBT), and improving learning skills. So, School counselor can choose various appropriate techniques for providing services so that clients are able to overcome their problems related to social loafing. This individual counseling service is intended for students with high and very high levels of social loafing. It is hoped that there will be changes in students so that the level of social loafing can decrease and make students more interested in the tasks given in groups.

3. Group Guidance Services

Group guidance is a relationship between group members in which the process is led by a professionally trained counselor who is able to foster and overcome problems that arise and develop within the group (Pratiwi, 2022). Salsabila's research (2024) stated that group guidance is very effective in helping individuals achieve their developmental tasks, because there is a process of exchanging ideas, experiences, planning, and problem solving. So it is hoped that students will be able to reduce social loafing behavior in the school environment. Based on Hatiti's research (2021), it shows that group guidance services using a clear role division approach (Role Clarity Approach) in groups can reduce social loafing. When group members know their specific roles and expected contributions, they are more likely to try harder.

Therefore, with the existence of guidance and group services, it is expected to be useful in improving the character of students' responsibility towards group assignments. Through this group guidance service, School counselor can provide services with assignment topics in the form of: tips for playing an active role in study groups, the need to provide opinions in groups.

4. Group Counseling Services

Group counseling services are interpersonal processes led by professional and trained School counselor in dealing with various types of individuals who are facing various problems that focus on what is thought, felt, attitudes, values, life goals, behavior of individuals and groups (Sukma, 2018) Topics discussed in group counseling are topics in the form of problems raised by service participants (clients) (Ahmad, 2013). Each participant

needs to believe that the group atmosphere built and developed by the BK teacher is the right atmosphere for solving their problems.

Based on research by Lou Z (2021) shows that open discussion and reflection can reduce social loafing, because each individual feels more involved. When members are given the opportunity to talk about their experiences and share with others, they are more likely to feel valued and recognized, which encourages them to participate more actively. In group counseling, School counselor can use reflective discussion techniques, where each member is given time to speak or provide responses to certain topics, with the aim of encouraging more equitable participation across group members.

In the group counseling service process, the group together discusses the causes, effects and ways to avoid social loafing behavior. Each group member is asked to provide a response to social loafing that occurs in schools. So that students can realize and instill a character of responsibility in their surroundings.

Conclusion

This study identified the level of social loafing of students at SMA Negeri 1 Lembah Gumanti in the moderate category, with the dilution effect dimension showing a low level and the immediacy gap at a moderate level. This indicates that individual contributions in groups are generally still appreciated, although there are obstacles to emotional closeness that affect optimal student involvement. These results emphasize the importance of implementing guidance and counseling services, such as information services, individual counseling, group guidance, and group counseling, to increase individual responsibility and group cohesion. This approach can contribute to mitigating social loafing, thereby supporting the success of group work and the effectiveness of collaborative learning.

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