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The Social Loafing Phenomenon

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Abstract--- Social loafing is a behavioral condition when one of the members in a group feels like he only needs

to contribute at the very least, while all group members should have an equal amount of work. The phenomenon of social loafing usually occurs in a large group in which the group members have different characteristics. By

applying a qualitative method and phenomenological approach, this study aims to observe the motive, meaning, and

experience of someone who exhibits social loafing behaviors. The study finds that students with social loafing

behaviors have a motive to be a passive member in an existed group. They usually join the groups which are most

influential in the classroom in terms of score achievement. Moreover, the communication experience of students

with social loafing behaviors is often rejected by their fellow members. They are also received unpleasing

treatments for most of the time.

Keywords--- Social Loafing Behaviors, Group Communication, Self-concept.

I. INTRODUCTION

Social loafing is a phenomenon that occurred in a group when one of the members gives the least contribution to

the group works or tasks. Some students often complain that the members of their group do not contribute at all to

the group projects given by the lecturers; the more difficult the group project is, the lazier they are and the less

contribution they give. However, other fellow members in the same group still have to include and mention their

names on the project report and assessment.

Social loafingis a tendency of an individual to give less effort when they work in a group than when they work

alone (Stark, Shaw, & Duffy, 2007). Social loafingoccurs more frequently as the group members increase

(Chapman, Gale, & Payne, 1982). In total, the results of group works are less than the individual works. As a result,

instead of getting better collaborative work, the members-only give an outcome that is not optimal at all for a group

or organization.

According to the study on a group of medical students, it can be concluded that there is a significant correlation

between high-achieving motivation with social loafing behavior on the students (Dewi, 2017). Some students with

social loafing behaviors are not interested in asking questions when the lecturer gives them a chance to ask or

provide the time to share their ideas during a class discussion. They prefer to give those opportunities to their other

friends to share ideas, concepts, or other given assignments.

An individual can achieve the goal of finishing their works more efficiently in a cooperative group works.

However, in the real phenomenon, not all students engage and contribute to the group assignments.

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In group work, some people give their maximal contributions, while some others do not feel eager to contribute. This phenomenon can be triggered by the presence of smarter group members that are assumed to do all the works, so other members are lazy or afraid to make mistakes when working on the assignments. Such an assumption is express by Novi (not the actual name), a student with social loafing indication.

Self-esteem becomes one of the main factors that can decrease the social loafing phenomenon. Based on the research data analysis, it can be concluded that self-esteem and efficacy have a percentage of 57.2% to decrease the degree of social loafing (Bagus, Narotama, & Made, 2019). The higher self-esteem and efficacy of someone is, the fewer symptoms of social loafing they will experience. One student involved in that research expressed that he has high self-esteem, and thus, will feel bad when he did not contribute his best works to the group. In other words, he will feel ashamed or embarrassed if he has no contribution to the group assignments.

The number of group members also becomes another supporting factor that can emerge in the social loafing phenomenon. Consequently, groups with large numbers of members can decrease the function of each member as an individual, causing blocked communication results in the internal groups (Aminah, 2017). Social loafing does not only give adverse effects to a group, but also to the individuals who are known by the term social loafer. The social loafer's ability to absorb knowledge and information will also decrease (Hall & Buzwell, 2013). Limited creativity, restricted knowledge absorption, and low achievement is some adverse effects caused by the social loafing phenomenon; those conditions may influence the quality of a student in higher education. An individual with social loafing will also lose the chance to train their ability and develop themselves. This results in lower productivity in the workgroup contexts (Liden, Wayne, Jaworski, & Bennett, 2004).

The belief that the lecturers giving the assignments will not check who do the group works becomes one of the causes why the members of the group refuse to contribute to a work-study activity. This reason is confessed by Fahmi(not the actual name), who answered the question of why he becomes a social loafer. The social loafing phenomenon is interesting to examine using the phenomenological approach, which aims to describe the meaning of individuals' life experiences about a particular concept or phenomenon. This study is conducted in a natural setting (Creswell, Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003)because individuals cannot be separated from their environmental context. Thus, there is no boundary on how the phenomenon is observed. Besides, this method helps the researchers to understand the reality or phenomenon experienced by individuals to develop a new perspective of understanding (Glesne & Peshkin, 2006). The study aims to reveal the motive of social loafers, the meaning of groups according to them, and the communication experience they are going through when working on the third-semester assignments in the Communication Sciences program study of Singaperbangsa University. This study is essential to conduct since it can be used as an input for lectures during the teaching-learning process or when they give the assignments to the students.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining the word communication is not as easy as it seems. People from different backgrounds can define this word in different ways. In this regard, the definition is needed to assist the study. The symbol in communication language is something used to show another thing, based on the agreement reached in a group of people (Sobur,

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2002). Therefore, the word communication can be defined as a process that humans do to respond to typical behaviors from other people. Language, word, gesture, sign are the parts of symbols that humans use to define or share something with other human beings. How language, words, gestures, and signs are used to become the focus of communication studies, including the implication of those symbols (Westerik, 2009). The communication done by humans comes in various forms, such as interpersonal communication, group communication, public

communication, and mass communication.

Group communication is a study about everything that happens to individuals when they interact in small groups. It is not a description of how communication should occur and not about a set of advice on how communication should take on. Group communication is an interaction that happens between one individual to other individuals who share the same goal in a particular group. Each individual needs a verbal and nonverbal language to interact and share messages to make a similar perception to achieve shared agreement and purposes. Rakhmat claimed that group communication is used to exchange information, gain knowledge, strengthen or change attitude and behavior,

developmental health, and increase consciousness (Rakhmat, 2011).

Meanwhile, Heider explained that an unbalanced matter would result in unfair and strained situations, which often lead to the pressure in a relationship. The balanced condition can be achieved when the relationship between those three aspects have positive attitudes in all of them or else, two negatives, and one positive attitude. The combinations other than that are considered unbalanced (Newcomb & Heider, 1958). Group communication is

needed to balance human life by filling the void and synchronizing the common goals.

The social loafing phenomenon is a symptom when a member of the group gives less contribution to the group works that require equal contribution and participation from all members. The phenomenon is caused by particular reasons and motivations, which can block the teamwork process that should happen. The working process done by a group of people to achieve their common goals is the meaning of a group, according to Woodcock(Wheeler & Stoller, 2011). Working in a group on one side can make the problem-solving process more comfortable, but on the other side, it can degrade individuals' motivation because of other people's involvement in that group. The degradation of individuals' motivation when working in a group goes by the term social loafing. The emergence of this phenomenon can diminish the function of a group as an effective and efficient medium to achieve the learning

objectives (Pang et al., 2014).

It is crucial to reduce the number of social loafing students so that the university can produce competent graduates that can gain knowledge properly. For this reason, there are several things to underline when it comes to forming a learning group. One of the aspects is the composition of group members. In order to form an active group, the numbers of group members should range from five to nine persons. According to Peterson(Robbins, Judge, Odendaal, & Roodt, 2016), the ideal numbers of active group members should be between six to twelve persons. If the members are less than six, the group does not have a wide range of opinions. Conversely, if it has more than 12 persons, the group will be more challenging to come into an agreement (Wheeler & Stoller, 2011).

In a study conducted by Sutanto et al., a group assignment in the university may trigger social loafing on the students. Social loafing is an individual tendency to reduce their efforts were working in a group than when they are

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evaluated personally. The students' intention to experience social loafing is arguably related to their adversity quotient. It is defined as a person's ability and endurance to face and overcome their problem, obstacle, and difficulty. This study aims to find out the correlation between adversity quotients with the students' intention of social loafing in group assignments. The research subjects are 85 students of Psychology Faculty of KatolikWidya Mandala University, Surabaya. The data was obtained using a social loafing intention scale and an adversity quotient scale. The analysis result shows a score of -0.299 with p < 0.001; thus, it can be concluded that there is a significant correlation between adversity quotient with social loafing in group assignments. The higher the adversity quotient of a student is, the lower their intention to perform social loafing behavior during the group assignments. In this regards, the lecturers are advised to give particular assignments that can stimulate the students' adversity quotient, so that it can reduce the social loafing tendency (Sutanto & Simanjuntak, 2015).

Social loafing is an individual tendency to give less effort when they work in a group than when they work alone. This tendency will increase in larger groups, so when it is summed up, the results of group works are lower than the total of individual works. The group's workload is supposed to be handled by all members equally to produce better and more ideas in both quality and quantity. However, in a social loafing phenomenon, what happens is the opposite. The researchers' observation in the pre-study finds out that there are many cases of social loafing occurred in various workgroups, from students, lecturers, and institutes; they do not want to make an effort, take a role, or give their energy optimally when working in a group. Therefore, this study selects the phenomenological approach that can be used to reveal subjective personal experiences that are involved in PPM, dig up the effects of PPM groups on the individuals, the group effects on the task performance, and the social loafing behaviors on the PPM group. The result finds out that the job descriptions of PPM include: recognizing the actual problems in the society, as well as identifying and solving them. As the number of group members increases, the social influence will decrease because the extreme demands focus on many targets. There is also an arousal reduction that encourages the PPM efforts. PPM members who assume that they give less significant input in a collective achievement produce fewer efforts than those who believe that they have significant roles(Aminah, 2017)

III. METHODOLOGY / MATERIALS

In some cases, qualitative research is defined as research that utilizes an open interview to study and understand the attitude, opinions, feeling, and behaviors of an individual or a group of people (Mulyana, 2010). According to the Oxford English Dictionary, what it means by a phenomenology is: (a) the science of phenomena as distinct from being (ontology) and (b) division of any science which describes and classifies its phenomena (Kuswarno, 2009).

The following are some essential characteristics of qualitative research which is relevant to the position of phenomenon methodology and different from quantitative research (Kuswarno, 2009):

- 1. Recognizing the values of a human's life experience.
- 2. The study focuses on a whole, not on the parts or sections that form it.
- The study aims to find the meaning and essence of experiences, not only looking for the explanation or degrees of quality.
- 4. I am gaining life depiction from the first-person point of view through formal and informal interviews.

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5. The collected data is used as a base of scientific knowledge to understand human behaviors.

6. The questions asked in the interview should reflect the researchers' importance, involvement, and

commitment.

7. The study looks at the experience and behavior as a whole matter, whether it is the unity between subject

and object, or between each part as a whole.

The characteristics of qualitative studies mentioned above are related to the features of phenomenological

research below:

1. Focusing on visible matters, going back to the actual essence, going of the routine, and coming out from

what people believe as truth or habit in their daily life.

2. Phenomenology is interested in the whole thing by observing the intensity from a different point of view and

perspective until reaching out to the essence of experience or phenomenon being observed.

3. Phenomenology finds out the meaning and reality from the appearing matters with the intuition and

reflection on conscious behaviors and experience. This meaning later brings out the right ideas, concepts,

assessments, and understanding.

4. Phenomenology describes experiences, not explains or analyses them. A phenomenon description is closely

related to authenticity (texture, quality, and behaviors) of something. The description will hold onto that

phenomenon like the way it is while prominently show the natural behavior and meaning behind it.

Additionally, such descriptions make the phenomenon "live" in the actual and complete terms. In other

words, what appears in the conscious matter and what has been seen by the five senses have the same degree

of life.

5. A phenomenon comes from the questions that are directly linked to the meaning of things that are being

observed. Therefore, a phenomenological researcher will draw close to the observed phenomenon. By

analogy, the research becomes a piece of the puzzle from a biography.

6. Both subject and object are integrated. The researcher's perception will be equal or similar to what they

see/hear. The experience of behavior will turn the object into the subject, and conversely, a subject into an

object.

7. In the investigation which is conducted within the intersubjective frame, the reality is a part of the whole

process.

8. The collected data (through thinking, intuition, reflection, and assessment) becomes the primary proves of

the main knowledge.

9. The researcher's questions should be formed carefully, including the choice of words. The selected words

should be prioritized to be the primary ones so that it can result in the most primary meanings.

Therefore, it is clear that phenomenology is strictly relevant to the qualitative study rather than the quantitative

in terms of revealing the reality (Kuswarno, 2009). In a phenomenological study, the criteria of the good informants

are "all individuals studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon" (Kuswarno, 2009). According

to Becker (Becker, 2017), when preparing a field observation, the researcher should decide the respondents they are

going to observe after selecting the research location and time.

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researchers to the observed groups or individuals.

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In some studies about the social loafer phenomenon, the respondents can be defined more clearly by the researcher. However, in some particular cases, the groups or individuals as the respondents cannot be defined clearly. In such a condition, the researchers find it challenging to decide who should be observed. Some researchers overcome this situation by using the sampling snowball technique. They use the key informants to introduce the

Burgess (Burgess, 1982) also explains that the key informants in field research do not only provide detailed and specific data from a particular setting but also help the researchers to find other vital informants or open complete access to the observed respondents. Therefore, in particular situations and conditions where the research questions of social loafing phenomenon narrow down into more specific ones, the researcher is challenging to find and identify the respondents that they should observe. To deal with this problem, sampling snowball technique as one of the non-probability sampling techniques can be used to collect data and answer the research questions. By using this technique, the research can be conducted and finished more easily.

In the social loafer study, the selected respondents are students of Communication Sciences program study that are assumed as social loafers. This finding is done by giving repeated group assignments that are unsupervised at first, and later, the assignments should be submitted on a tight deadline. The initial group is formed in large numbers with more complex and detailed job descriptions. In the next stage, each member of the groups should represent present their assignments without any presentation aid. Social loafers cannot explain in detail about what they do in the assignment because they do not pay attention to the working process. In the later stage, the students are given more assignments with fewer numbers of group members. They are then asked to point out the members who are involved in the assignment. At first, there is only one student in the classroom who has a social loafer tendency. However, after interviewing with other classmates, the researcher found five students who exhibit social loafer behaviors.

IV. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This study involves third-semester students of the Communication Science study program at Singaperbangsa University as the respondents. The respondent selection is made using a snowball method. Third-semester students of Communication Science are classified into five classes. Each class consists of approximately 40 students. The students in each class are later classified into four groups of 10 members. Then, they are given a relatively tricky group assignment that should be done within a week. The assignment is submitted via email during class hours, but there is an impromptu presentation session where every student should present their works without any preparation. The materials that they should present include the assignment process from start to finish. Students with social loafer behaviors are not able to explain the detailed assignment because they are not involved in the process. After conducting this experiment, the researcher sets an interview with social loafing students to find a key informant, which is a student that never contributes to almost every group assignment given by the lecturer.

The formation of student groups in the classroom is supposed to make group communication easier so that the given assignments can be done more easily and quickly. To do so, supporting pillars are needed to ensure the process of the SCL method in medical school or other universities; one of them is group work (Kompasiana.

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Retrieved January 15, 2017, from Kompasiana: http://www.kompasiana.com/eka- imel-melyana/konsep-scl_55281b7df17e61f6188b45ca). Group work has been represented in a variety of SCL methods, including small group discussion, cooperative learning, collaborative learning, role-play, and simulation, as well as project-based learning (Triyana, 2018).

Based on the cone of experience proposed by Dale in Sanjaya (Sanjaya, 2015), a more concrete learning process will make students gain more experience. A history study session that discusses past events tends to be a teacher-center learning process. Less concrete materials also make them feel abstracted when learning. Because of this reason, a history teacher should be able to overcome the problem by setting a learning plan according to the students' condition and needs analysis. The use of proper and suitable learning model can help teachers to deal with such problems.

Additionally, a good learning model can assist teachers to present the materials not only verbally, but also with more variations. As a result, it can increase the students' learning motivation and their learning outcome. A learning process will be successful when proper motivation emerges (Sardiman, 2014). Learning can also be defined as an activity that can change students' behavior as a result of their interactions with the environment (Santyasa, 1980).

Social loafing cases in university occur when college students assume that their lecturers will not check-in details who have submitted the group assignments. This confession is brought in by Fahmi, a Communication Science student who exhibits social loafer behaviors. Such behaviors make someone feel lazy or not interested in working in groups. They also assume that group work is not needed as long as they can deal with the assignment on their own. Individuals who receive group assignments feel like they do not get the result personally. Therefore, they will view the assignment as something that should be done dependently from one group member to the others.

The research and observation identify five social-loafing college students that rarely contribute to the group assignments. Those social loafers think that they do not have enough understanding of the given assignments, which becomes the primary motivation why they cannot involve in the group works. The social loafers also feel that other members of the group are smart enough to do the assignments on their own. The social loafers' belief and motivation are some of the leading causes of their unwillingness to contribute to the group assignments. They also encourage self-efficacy to decide the right behaviors in dealing with group assignments. Legowo, Yuwonodan Rustam (Legowo, Yuwono, & Rustam, 2009) states that self-efficacy can determine how much effort should be given and how strong an individual endure to overcome their obstacles. One aspect of self-efficacy that can be linked to that statement is strength. It refers to the level of individuals' beliefs and power regarding their ability. Individuals with high self-efficacy will have strong stability when working on group assignments, even when they find some obstacles along the way, such as fellow group members with social loafing behaviors. Self-efficacy does not only influence how healthy an individual's belief when facing the obstacles, but also determine their motivation to contribute to the group works and set the common goals. With high self-efficacy, the individuals will have a strong motivation to work on the assignments with their groups in any situation while setting the objectives. Meanwhile, individuals with low self-efficacy will not put much care into the assignments. They are also lack of motivation to work on group assignments.

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A team is a group of people that work together to solve problems in which each member of the team should play their roles to balance the strengths and weaknesses of other members. However, this concept does not apply to social loafing students. For them, working in groups is a difficult thing to do because not all college students have similar ability and smartness, especially when they are asked to communicate and share ideas. Students who feel that they are not smart enough to be working in a group find difficulties in communicating their ideas. Therefore, social loafers assume that they do not have to contribute as long as other members can help. Some social loafers see that group work is a demanding task; all college students should be given the same ability and opportunity, so they prefer to work on their own rather than being demanded to work together in groups. In line with this, some other social loafers assume that group work is like a form of ex-communication because not many people want to be in the same group with them. This condition is caused by the fact that those social loafers are the kind of students that rarely share their opinions. According to their confessions, they actually want to give bits of help to other members of the group. However, the other group members never listen to their opinions and hardly ever give them a chance to help. It reflects the phenomenon that not all people can adapt easily and quickly in a particular group.

In the process of life, human beings always need to adapt to their society and environment. The length of adaptation varies in different people; some people can adapt easily and quickly, while some others are more difficult to do so. Adaptation itself is a process that positively influences human health. This process includes all forms of human interaction with their environment. SoerjonoSoekanto states that there are several boundaries in the social adaptation: 1) The process of overcoming obstacles from the environment, 2) The adjustment of norms to channel tense situations, 3) The process of adaptation with changing situations, 4) The changing process to suit prepared conditions, 5) The use of limited sources to fulfill the needs of system and environment, 6) The adjustment of cultures and other aspects as a result of scientific selection (Bungin & Burhan, 2009).

The communication experience can happen because of communication activities. Communication is the most important aspect of maintaining the existence of individuals and their interpersonal relationships. Frank Dance describes this communication process using a spiral model. He believes that the communication experience is cumulative and influenced by past experiences. He also states that experiences in the present times will influence someone's future, meaning that the communication process is not linear. For this reason, communication can be regarded as an altering process that changes over time and varies between people who form the interaction (Turner, 2017). The communication experience of social loafer is divided into two types: positive and negative experience. The social loafers' positive communication experience is the acknowledgment from their fellow group members, even when they do not contribute much to the assignments. This situation somehow boosts their confidence and gives them the motivation to contribute to the next assignment. Meanwhile, the negative communication experience includes the negligence of their friends and their difficulty to involve or contribute to the group works.

V. CONCLUSION

Social loafing is a negative result that comes from a group assignment given to college students. The phenomenon of social loafer in a group should be reduced as minimal as possible because it can decrease the students' creativity and bring adverse effects to the educational institute. Some of the reasons why social loafers do

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not give enough contribution to the group assignments are their assumptions that there are smarter group members that can do the assignments and that the lecturers will not check the works in detail. For social loafers, group work is like a form of demanding task in which all group members should have the same ability and knowledge. The social loafers' communication experience includes friends' acknowledgment (positive) and negligence (negative).

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