

Social Impact Theory and Social Loafing

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ABSTRACT:

Two psychology theories that examine how social circumstances affect people's behaviour and performance are the Social Impact Theory and Social Loafing. An overview of these ideas and their consequences for comprehending group dynamics and individual contributions in a social environment are given in this abstract. According to the Social Impact Theory, people's actions are impacted by the existence, potency, and proximity of social sources. It implies that social influence has a greater effect when there are many sources influencing someone, when those sources are nearby, and when those sources are seen as significant or reliable. The theory also emphasises how social power plays a part in determining social effect, with more powerful sources having a bigger impact on other people. The phenomena known as "Social Loafing," on the other hand, is when people work less hard in a communal setting than they do on their own. It implies that people could exert less effort if they think their contribution is less significant or if they feel less responsibility in a group situation. Social loafing may have detrimental effects on teamwork and productivity.

KEYWORDS:

Dynamics, Individual, Influence, Impact, Loafing.

I. INTRODUCTION

Two crucial psychological theories Social Impact Theory and Social Loafing help us understand how social circumstances might affect how people behave when they are in a group situation. These theories assist us understand how social impact and group environment may change our behaviours by offering insights into group dynamics, motivation, and individual contributions. The Social Impact Theory, first out by Bibb Latané in the 1980s, explores the ways in which the existence and qualities of social sources affect people's behaviour. The presence of sources, their proximity or immediateness, and the perceived power or significance of those sources are the three key variables that define the effect of social influence, according to this theory. According to the hypothesis, the power of social influence becomes greater as the number of sources rises, particularly when those sources are near and highly reputable. The intricate interactions between social power, social influence, and individual behaviour are acknowledged by the social impact theory[1], [2]. On the other side, Social Loafing focuses on people's propensity to put up less effort while working in a group as opposed to alone. It implies that people could exert less effort if they think their individual contributions are less significant or if they feel less personally responsible in a collective setting. Social loafing may happen when people think their efforts will go unnoticed or when they think others aren't giving their full contribution. The effectiveness, efficiency, and cohesiveness of the group may all suffer as a result of this phenomena[3], [4].

Effective group management and leadership need an understanding of Social Impact Theory and Social Loafing. Leaders may put tactics into place to improve motivation, engagement, and individual contributions within a group context by being aware of the variables that affect social impact and social loafing. Establishing clear expectations and duties within the group, encouraging a feeling of personal responsibility, and building a supportive and inclusive atmosphere are all part of this. We will go more deeply into the basic principles of Social Impact Theory and Social Loafing in the parts that follow, examining how social power, group dynamics, and individual perspectives affect these occurrences. We

will also go into the practical ramifications for managers and leaders, such as developing organisational cohesion, individual accountability, and a feeling of shared purpose[5], [6].

Leaders may build an atmosphere that maximises individual contributions, inspires group members, and improves total group performance by understanding the dynamics of social influence and social loafing. Higher engagement, higher productivity, and enhanced team cohesiveness may all be the results of these principles being managed well. However, it is crucial to recognise that Social Impact Theory and Social Loafing are not the only elements affecting interpersonal relationships and group dynamics. To get a thorough knowledge of group dynamics, they should be taken into account with other theories and frameworks. Social Loafing and Social Impact Theory provide important new perspectives on the intricate dynamics of collective behaviour. Leaders may adopt tactics to encourage participation, responsibility, and the best group results by acknowledging the impact of social variables on individual behaviours and motivation within a group environment. Understanding these ideas improves our capacity to successfully traverse and control group dynamics. Social Impact Theory and Social Loafing have received extensive study and empirical validation in addition to their practical applications. Numerous studies have looked at the circumstances in which social influence is most potent and the elements that lead to social laziness. Further evidence for the applicability and significance of these ideas in comprehending group behaviour is provided by this corpus of research[7], [8].

Additionally, the ideas of social impact and social loafing have consequences for a variety of fields, such as organisations, sports teams, and social movements, as well as for education. Leaders, educators, and managers may apply measures to maximise individual contributions and build a healthy group dynamic by having an understanding of how social influence influences individual behaviour and how social loafing can impair collective performance. Additionally, both theories stress how crucial it is to take into account the social environment when examining an individual's behaviour. They draw attention to the fact that our behaviours are impacted by others' presence and perceptions as well as by our own motives and capacities. This concept undermines the conventional individualistic viewpoint and promotes a more comprehensive comprehension of human behaviour within a social environment. It's crucial to recognise these ideas' limits, however. Although Social Loafing and Social Impact Theory provide important insights into social dynamics, they fall short of capturing the whole complexity of human behaviour. Individual variations, cultural norms, and environmental variables may also have an impact on collective behaviour. By include these elements in the research, group dynamics and individual contributions may be better understood overall[9], [10].

In conclusion, Social Impact Theory and Social Loafing provide important insights into how social circumstances affect people's behaviour in groups. They emphasise how important group dynamics, social power, and social influence are in determining how we behave. Leaders and managers may create methods to improve team performance, boost motivation, and promote a collaborative and effective work environment by understanding these notions. Further study and implementation of these ideas may further our comprehension of human behaviour and help to foster the development of more favourable and inclusive group dynamics.

II. DISCUSSION

Social psychologist Bibb Latané first proposed the concept of social impact theory as a possible unified explanation of social influence processes in 1981. It offers a framework for examining how social and environmental elements that might affect the relative strength of different possible sources and targets of influence can affect social influence efforts or circumstances' effects. According to the theory, the strength (such as status or expertise), immediacy (such as physical or psychological distance), and number of people in the influencing group will all be multiplicative functions of the magnitude of social influence in the case of a group of people attempting to influence a specific individual. If someone is trying to persuade someone else, that person's influence should be distributed among those others in an inverse proportion to their power, promptness, and population. in the intended audience. A variety of group, interpersonal, and organisational phenomena have been studied using this approach. The expansion and advancement of studies on social loafing, which is the propensity for people to work less

hard on group or collective activities than on individual ones, has been one significant area of application. The main ideas of social impact theory are explained in this page along with examples of the many phenomena it has been applied to, a discussion of its significant significance in the study of social loafing, a history of its recent evolution into a dynamic model, and a short summary of its contributions to theory and practise.

Fundamentals

With the help of a small number of basic concepts, social impact theory offers a comprehensive, integrative approach that has the capacity to explain a variety of social influence circumstances. Latané defined social effect as any impact that one's physiology, emotions, motives, cognitions, or behaviour may be affected by the actual, suggested, or fictitious presence or behaviour of others. This extensive spectrum of possible social or interpersonal phenomena is covered by this broad scope. Latané based his viewpoint on the broad metaphor of social forces acting inside a social framework or social force field (similar to physical forces like gravity, light, or sound). He reasoned that depending on their relative size and the salient social characteristics that affect the strength or amplitude of their respective social impacts, both individuals and groups are capable of exerting social influences on one another. Three important ideas concerning the dynamics of social influence are specifically put out by social impact theory. First, the theory states that an individual's social effect is a function of the strength, proximity, and number of influence sources, as shown by the equation.

$$I = f(SIN)$$

Strength is the ability or significance of a source of influence, which may be influenced by elements such as one's standing, reputation, or position of authority. Immediacy is defined as a proximity in time or space that may be influenced by physical distance or by the presence or absence of barriers, filters, or delays in communication. The number indicates the number of persons making an influence effort. Second, the idea contends that when groups are small as opposed to big, increases in the number of sources should have a greater effect on the targets. In particular, it suggests that a psychosocial law exists, which is represented by the equation.

$$I = sN^t$$

Where the quantity of effect felt by a person is determined by multiplying some power, t , by the total number of sources, N , plus a scaling factor, s . Furthermore, it is projected that the exponent's value will be smaller than one. Therefore, as the number of influence sources grows, so should the social effect felt by the person? However, as N becomes greater and larger, this incremental rise in impact should decrease. Thus, when the number of sources goes from two to three as opposed to from twenty to twenty-one and so on, the growth in perceived social influence should be greater. According to the quantity and kind of influence sources (i.e., those who are exerting influence) and targets (i.e., those who are being influenced) present, the third major concept deals with the multiplication versus division of effect. Specifically, many influence sources increase the social impact's size, but several influence targets reduce it. The strength, immediateness, and quantity of group members are projected to have a multiplicative effect on the impact of a group on a single person. On the other hand, it is anticipated that the effect of a single person trying to persuade a group would be distributed among the group members. In general, the strength, immediateness, and number of influence sources divided by the strength, immediateness, and number of influence targets determines the influence that is exercised inside a certain social force field.

Social Loafing

Social impact theory has been a driving factor behind the growth and maturing of studies on social loafing, and it may be especially pertinent to management situations. The propensity for people to work less diligently on group or collective activities than on individual chores is known as social loafing. According to social impact theory, requests for collective duties are the burden of convincing someone to work hard on the assignment should fall equally on each of the group members, which requires less labour than if these same people worked alone. Additionally, in line with the psychological principle,

this effort decrease should become more noticeable as group size grows. These theories were supported by a groundbreaking 1979 study by Latané, Kipling D. Williams, and Stephen Harkins that popularised the term "social loafing" and offered a useful illustration of how to investigate the phenomenon in a way that makes it possible to distinguish between motivation losses and merely a lack of coordination of members' efforts.

Since then, social loafing research has developed into an extensive and well-developed body of work with more than 100 studies that have looked at a diverse range of individuals and activities. Social loafing is modest in amplitude and replicates across the majority of tasks and studies, according to a 1993 meta-analysis of 78 research by Steven J. Karau and Williams, but it is also impacted by a range of moderating factors that may lessen or even erase the effect. When the group is cohesive, when the size of the group is small rather than large, when the individual identifies with the group and can make more distinctive contributions, or when they perceive the task as having a high level of significance or importance, social loafing can be reduced, for instance. Although laboratory settings have been the focus of the majority of investigations, results from field studies of social loafing perceptions inside teams in corporate organisations and educational settings have typically been quite similar with laboratory study findings.

Dynamic Social Impact Theory

The emphasis of social impact theory at its inception was on a particular influence circumstance or event, making it rather static in nature. Latané and colleagues, however, offered dynamic changes to the theory that extend its fundamental premises to its repetitive implications throughout time in a number of further assessments conducted in the 1990s and beyond. According to the dynamic social effect hypothesis, groups are intricate systems of people that interact to jointly shape their social environment. It suggests that big groups often exhibit four patterns of self-organization over time as a result of their recurring interactions within the system of social effects at the individual level: Consolidation refers to a decrease in the number and diversity of attitudes or judgements within the group; Clustering refers to the formation of cohesive subgroups within the larger group, especially as influenced by geography or communicative proximity; Correlation refers to the association of initially unrelated opinions, in part due to the influence of particularly influential members; and Continuing Diversity refers to the persistence of some minority viewpoints or judgements, primarily due to the fact that the group as a whole is still diverse. Complex computer simulations, as well as investigations of attitude creation and change inside big classrooms, online discussion boards, or community organisations, have provided early support for the dynamic social impact hypothesis. Future studies on the dynamics of social influence patterns inside groups through time may find some interesting theories and new information from this source, which has promise.

Importance

A well-known viewpoint for comprehending a variety of social influence phenomena is social impact theory. It has been effective in combining earlier studies on persuasion, minority influence, and social anxiety as well as in igniting fresh investigations into topics like group motivation and influence patterns in large social networks and communities. The notion had a significant impact on early and ongoing social loafing studies. A thorough evaluation of the theory's scientific backing is difficult and uncertain due to the variety of phenomena to which it has been applied. But the data thus far seems mostly positive. The strongest evidence has been found to support the psychosocial principle and the number of influence sources; nevertheless, evidence supporting the strength and immediacy of sources is typically supportive, but sometimes poor or mixed when comparing across different research. The theory has had a particularly substantial impact on social psychologists and has huge (mostly untapped) promise for organisational study in the future.

Any circumstance involving social influence may benefit from the use of social impact theory. In fact, the idea has been used to explain a wide range of social influence phenomena, such as aggressiveness, bystander intervention, voting behaviour, conformity, persuasion, attitude development, and social anxiety. Numerous times, the idea has been used to assist organise the body of current research material.

Latané and Sharon Wolf, for instance, offered a powerful integration of earlier studies on the dynamics of major and minor impact in groups. Additionally, social impact theory in a number of social impact areas to create testable hypotheses. Numerous empirical research have shown the theory's potential for providing original discoveries and creative methodological decisions. For instance, a fascinating field research by Jeffrey M. Jackson and Constantine Sedikides looked at social influence mechanisms in a zoo. Requests to refrain from leaning on exhibit railings were found to be more effective when made by someone donning a zookeeper's uniform (high source strength) rather than in casual clothing, immediately after the request rather than at a later exhibit, and with smaller visitor groups (number of targets) than with larger ones. As another example, Karen B. Williams and Kipling D. Williams explored the potential deterrent effect that worries about receiving unfavourable judgement from others may have on asking for assistance. Exams were administered to eight-person groups of pupils using rigged computers. The social impact theory's claims concerning strength and number were supported by the finding that people took longer to seek assistance from high-status test givers than from low-status test takers and when there were three test givers than one. The idea has several rather simple consequences for management practise.

Specifically, influence may be increased by enhancing the leader's strength and immediacy (such as by enhancing one's status, credibility, or physical proximity) or by expanding the influencing group, and may be decreased by an increase in the same factors among the targets of influence. The theory also emphasises how collective activities may lessen the effort of individual participants, particularly in bigger groups and when it is difficult or impossible to detect individual efforts. Last but not least, according to the dynamic social impact hypothesis, patterns of attitude development and change occur throughout time in vast social networks or communities in predictable ways.

III. CONCLUSION

Two key ideas that clarify the impact of social circumstances on individual behaviour within a group environment are social impact theory and social loafing. While Social Loafing emphasises people's propensity to put out less effort while working in a group than when working alone, Social Impact Theory emphasises the effect of social influence and the significance of social sources in influencing our behaviours. Both theories have applications to controlling and comprehending group dynamics. The Social Impact Theory serves as a reminder of the significance of group size, social power, and closeness in shaping individual behaviour. It implies that managers may use social influence to nudge team members in the direction of goals. On the other side, Social Loafing draws attention to the difficulties that might occur in group settings and advocates for methods to lessen the impacts of decreased responsibility and effort. Leaders and managers may conduct interventions to promote a healthy and productive group environment by understanding the underlying processes of social impact and social loafing. This entails developing a culture of cooperation and shared objectives, supporting individual responsibility, fostering a feeling of belonging, and setting clear expectations.

It's crucial to recognise that individual characteristics, cultural aspects, and environmental elements all influence group dynamics. While Social Loafing and Social Impact Theory provide insightful perspectives, they fall short of capturing the whole complexity of human behaviour. Therefore, combining these theories with other frameworks and taking into account a wider variety of circumstances are necessary for a thorough understanding of group dynamics. Social Impact Theory and Social Loafing help us understand how social circumstances affect people's behaviour inside groups. Insights into the dynamics of social influence, collective motivation, and individual contributions are provided by them. Leaders and managers may create settings that encourage participation, cooperation, and the best results for groups by putting the ideas from these theories into practise. We may better understand group dynamics and build efficient management and leadership methods by doing further study and using these ideas.

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