

INVESTIGATING SOCIAL LOAFING AMONG STUDENT-RESEARCHERS A MIXED-METHODS INQUIRY

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ABSTRACT

This mixed-methods explanatory sequential study sought to determine the level of social loafing and uncovered the lived experiences of student-researchers who encounter social loafing members in conducting an undergraduate thesis. In the first phase, a survey method was used to collect quantitative data from randomly selected 385 student-researchers. Data underscored an overall low level of social loafing among the student-researchers based on the descriptive analysis, particularly using mean as the statistical tool. In the second phase, qualitative responses using in-depth interviews and focus group discussion were gathered from 14 key participants selected through purposive sampling. The gathered data underwent a thematic analysis where essential themes emerged related to the queries on each research question. According to the participants, they experienced a sense of regret in group selection as they were caught up with various negative experiences in dealing with social loafers in the group, along with experiencing emotional distress and unfair distribution of tasks. On the other hand, participants shared that immersing in entertainment, expressing sentiments, and establishing agreements were among their coping strategies to deal with social loafing in the group. The results were discussed along with practical implications, limitations of the study, and future directions.

Keywords: *BS Psychology, social loafing; perceived social loafing, higher education, Philippines.*

INTRODUCTION

In today's pedagogical setup, a disposition for teamwork is considered one of the most desirable characters in higher education, especially in the time of pandemic where the course of learning is more on a student-directed approach. It is necessary that students should acknowledge responsibility in their learning by proactively participating in the group work process, as this facilitates critical thinking, social skills, and a sense of responsibility (Tosuntas, 2020).

Moreover, valuable practices learned through group processes (e.g., problem-solving, communication, and collaboration) are practically applicable to an actual workplace setting (Black, 2002). Therefore, it is imperative that educational institutions, particularly at the higher level, make every effort to enable students to develop such skills (Stevens & Campion, 1994, as cited in Luo, Marnburg, ØGaard, & Okumus, 2021).

However, there are prevailing concerns that emerge in group facilitation. One of the common problems encountered in a group is the issue of social loafing. According to Aggarwal and O'Brien (2008), social loafing pertains to an array of behavior in which individuals who work collectively in a group render a lesser amount of effort towards a given task than if they would perform it independently. It is a "disease" with negative implications affecting individuals, institutional structures, and society, reducing human efficiency, lowering profits, and thus, lowering the benefits for everyone (Ringelmann, 1913).

There are quite a handful of studies conducted to find out the effects of social loafing in group work (Luo et al., 2021; Rajaguru, Rajesh, & Narendran, 2020; Tosuntas, 2020; Smith, 2016). For instance, Ying, Li, Jiang, Peng, and Lin (2014) discovered that people with high social loafing tendencies perform poorly when involved in a group, unlike working

individually. In the Philippines, social loafing is also an occurring problem.

In the study of Pabico, Hemocilla, Galang, and de Sagun (2008) at the University of the Philippines Los Baños, they reported that roughly 91.80% (112 students) claimed that they perceived their workmates engaging in social loafing, and 1.30% (3 students) admitted that they engaged in individual social loafing. This affirms what some research has indicated that individuals acknowledged their social loafing tendency (Petty, Harkins, Williams, & Latané, 1977, as cited in Soni & Vijayvargy, 2021), as well as "participants seemed to be aware of the amount of effort they were exerting on the task" (Williams & Karau, 1991, as cited in Vargas, 2021). Further study argued that people are either unconscious of their social loafing behavior or reluctant to admit it otherwise (Charbonnier, Huguet, Brauer, & Monteil, 1998, as cited in Luo et al., 2021).

Meanwhile, in the local context, findings from Roferos, Taunan, and Andoyon (2013) at the University of Immaculate Conception Davao City, revealed that among all the participants in their study, 26% were identified to be 'free riders,' individuals who obtain disproportionately greater benefits than what they contribute to the group (Comer, 1995, as cited in Roose, 2020), and 74% were characterized as 'suckers,' individuals who lessen their efforts when they notice that a group member is free-riding in their efforts (Levine & Hogg, 2010).

The roots of social loafing began with the groundwork of Maximilien Ringelmann, a French agricultural engineer, who pointed out that the output was less when a group of persons pulled the rope together than when individual members pulled the rope (Ringelmann, 1913; Kravitz & Martin, 1986). Meanwhile, according to Mulvey and Klein (1998), observing loafing behavior can be difficult or even impossible, and it may also be perceived when it is not really occurring.

However, the perception of social loafing matters regardless of the actual conduct (Mulvey & Klein, 1998, as cited in Piezon & Ferree, 2008), and perception alone is enough to influence behavior in many circumstances (Ilgen, Major, & Tower, 1994, as cited in Roose, 2020). It may also result in one's own social loafing to prevent being exploited by free riders when anticipating that one's partner will engage in social loafing, thus ending up as the group's "sucker" (Orbell & Dawes, 1993, as cited in Roose, 2020).

In this study's context, the term individual's social loafing defines an individual's own social loafing tendency. Whereas the term perceived social loafing is described as the degree to which members of an organization or group 'believe' that some colleagues of their circle are exhibiting social loafing behavior (Comer, 1995, as cited in Piezon & Ferree, 2008). Mulvey and Klein (1998), as cited in Piezon and Ferree (2008), opined that group members' performance or actions are grounded on their "perception" about other members' efforts, whether these certainly take place or not.

It was further observed that the mere perception of having a group member who social loaf affects group performance because whether this idea is accurate, the perception may still negatively influence other members' motivations, leading to social loafing. While group work is a popular method used everywhere, irrespective of the task type and is applied not just by industries in contemporary businesses but also in the educational setting (Luo et al., 2021), members in some groups, however, tend to give less to the group goal in contrast to when they do the activity alone (Latané, Williams, & Harkins 1979).

In fact, in higher education, it has been noticed that as the popularity of group work increases, the rate of reports of students' social loafing also increases (Hall & Buzwell, 2012). Smith (2016)

also affirmed that when the group size is large, there is a bigger probability of having a social loafing member in a group.

In addition to that, social loafers may also produce poor quality work or display disruptive behavior (Jassawalla, H. Sashittal, & A. Sashittal, 2009), which makes social loafing regarded as one of the most typical issues of concern among students pertaining to unsatisfactory group work experiences (Brooks & Ammons, 2003).

These experiences include group satisfaction which is negatively correlated to contribution conflict (Zhu, 2013), a type of conflict that, according to Behfar et al. (2011), arises from the perceived belief of having free-riding members or from failure to execute responsibilities and expectations of their group members. The higher the contribution conflict, the lower the group satisfaction.

Furthermore, in another study by Cherry (2020), she argued that motivation could be a key factor in identifying whether or not social loafing occurs. Individuals who perceive that their contributions lack potential, lessen their motivation, and engage in social loafing. Olson (1965) posited that individuals decrease their contributions when they are in larger groups because their contributions are unnoticed by others.

Moreover, O'Leary, O'Reilly, Feller, Gleasure, and Cristoforo (2017) denoted that individual who believe that the upper management is not effectively monitoring their work are discouraged from doing their best since they presume that the rewards, they receive are non-correlated to the efforts they exert. The lesser the propensity of social loafing behavior, the greater the effort motivation (Tyagi, 2015).

On the other hand, Smith (2016) confirmed that social loafing is a common occurrence experienced by students, which

leaves a long-lasting impression on those exposed to social loafers as it elicits frustration from most members. She further noted that since social loafing is a common circumstance, students could readily provide mechanisms to deal with social loafers during group works, such as confrontation, removing perceived social loafers, evaluations, or conflict evasion by doing no action. Further studies highlighted that social loafing causes demotivation and resentment among members (Cheng & Warren, 2000) and is disadvantageous and damaging to students who actually carried out the work (Yecke, 2004).

In order to manage these unpleasant consequences, affected group members utilize coping mechanisms such as emotional support from peers and family (Apker, 2022; Labrague, McEnroe-Petitte, al Amri, Fronda, & Obeidat, 2017), establishing agreements (Linabary, 2021; Cox & Brobrowski, 2000; Harkins & Szymanski, 1989), and entertainment such as the use of smartphones (U. Lee, J. Lee, Ko, C. Lee, Kim, Yang, Yatani, Gweon, Chung, & Song, 2014), game applications (Reinecke, 2009), and music (Gallagher, Jones, Landrosh, Abraham, & Gillum, 2019; Fiore, 2018; Jennings et al., 2018; Aselton, 2012).

This study is anchored on Eccles, Wigfield, and Schiefele's (1988) Expectancy Value Theory which states that the interplay of peers' anticipation of success and personal/subjective task value in particular domains is influenced by achievement-related choices. Children, for example, are more likely to participate in an activity if they expect to succeed and give importance to it.

Another theory this study is anchored on is the Social Impact Theory by Latané et al. (1979), which postulates that social impact is diffused between members of the group when individuals collaborate. As the group size increases, each added group member would have a minimal influence on the group's overall performance.

A considerable number of studies discuss the theoretical foundation of social loafing, all of which present essential understanding relevant to the study. Nonetheless, there are no ample scholarly works, particularly in the national and local context, with respect to the depth description of the phenomenon, and only limited studies have employed the use of both quantitative and qualitative measures in intensively understanding the dynamics of social loafing behavior.

In addition, as examined through literature, several previous studies revolved around exploring social loafing in an organizational setting (Öneren, Demirel, Arar, & Kartal, 2019; Şeşen & Kahraman, 2014). While there is research on social loafing happening in workplaces, research regarding social loafing in the educational context, particularly in higher education, is relatively insufficient (Jassawalla, Malshe, & Sashittal, 2008).

Hence, it is on this premise that this study is deemed necessary in order to ensure efficiency and success in group work employed in higher education, generate an addition of knowledge towards the present body of literature, and finally may serve as a tool in fostering awareness among the intended beneficiaries of the study.

The purpose of this study was to determine the level of social loafing and uncover the lived experiences among student-researchers in conducting an undergraduate thesis at UM Tagum College. For the quantitative strand, this study sought an answer to the objective:

1. To determine the level of social loafing among student-researchers in UM Tagum College in terms of:
 - 1.1 Individual Social Loafing
 - 1.2 Group Perceived Social Loafing

2. What are the experiences of the selected key participants in encountering social loafing members in the group?

3. How did the selected key participants cope with the issue of social loafing in the group?

The findings of this study would be of great benefit to the following. Firstly, to the School Administration, this study would be a significant endeavor to apprehend the prevalence of social loafing behavior among the students and craft intervention programs to address the needing matters concerning the students' learning process. Secondly, to the Parents, the findings of this study would afford parents additional knowledge and awareness as to how they would guide their child in pursuing good conduct. Thirdly, to the students, this study would shed awareness to them in light of the potential repercussions of social loafing behavior, helping them resolve issues with group interaction and implementing ways to improve group performance. Fourthly, to the Psychosocial Practitioners and Other Related Professionals, the findings of this research would benefit these professionals to expand their knowledge of the dynamics of social loafing behavior. Lastly, to the Future Researchers, the study would serve as a ground basis for the prospective researchers soon in time as this would contribute to the existing literature anent to the scope covered by the investigation.

METHOD

This section describes in detail all the underpinnings in conducting the study. Likewise, it presents the participants, materials/instruments, design, and procedures observed in the study.

Research Participants

The participants of this study were comprised of bona fide undergraduate students of UM Tagum College who were enrolled in either Research 1 or Research 2 subjects for the academic year

2021-2022, regardless of age and sex. For the quantitative strand of the study, the selection of the respondents was carried out using simple random sampling, which is a form of probability sampling in which the researchers select a subgroup of participants from a population randomly, allowing an equal chance of selection (Thomas, 2020).

On the other hand, criterion sampling was employed in the selection of the key participants for the qualitative strand. According to Tosuntas (2020), criterion sampling is one of the purposive sampling techniques, which involves choosing participants based upon the pre-established criteria in relation to the research purpose.

In order to include the participants in the qualitative strand of this study, the inclusion criteria of “low to very low descriptive equivalent mean score in individual social loafing scale” and “high to very high descriptive equivalent mean score in group perceived social loafing scale” were established to certify that the selected participants did not engage in social loafing but only experienced having social loafing members in the group.

The researchers selected 14 individuals who met the established inclusion criteria, divided into two interview classifications: seven for the In-Depth Interview (IDI) and seven for the Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The sample size of the participants satisfies the requirement in a qualitative study because it was recommended that at least a sample of around 12 interviewees is enough in order to achieve data saturation in qualitative research (Fugard & Potts, 2014; Clarke & Braun, 2013; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

Research Instrument/Material

For the quantitative strand, the researchers used an adopted and modified survey questionnaire as a means of an

instrument for data collection. The researchers utilized the uni-dimensional Social Loafing Measurement Tool developed by Ülke (2006), composed of two parts; Individual Social Loafing and Group Perceived Social Loafing Scale.

In this study, the measurement tool was utilized to determine the level of social loafing in conducting an undergraduate thesis among student-researchers at UM Tagum College. The first part of the questionnaire deals with the Individual Social Loafing Scale, which required the respondents to evaluate their own performance in the group, whether or not they social loaf.

Furthermore, as for the qualitative strand, the researchers employed a semi-structured In-Depth Interview (IDI) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) in gathering data. The researcher-made interview guide (see Appendix G) contained two major questions with sub-questions each, organized in an open-ended structure to gain insights from the key participants.

All questions indicated in the interview guide were duly checked and cross-analyzed by a panel of experts, including the data analyst and the thesis adviser, to achieve content validity. On top of that, the researchers incorporated observations, notes (personal and analytical transcript), and audio recordings to append the data collection process.

Research Design and Procedure

This study utilized a mixed-methods sequential explanatory research design employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This design is used when data are collected throughout two consecutive phases; the researchers first collect preliminary data through a quantitative method and then use the qualitative method to explain further and support the data from the former phase (Creswell & Clarke, 2017).

For the quantitative strand of the study, the researchers used a quantitative non-experimental research design using a descriptive technique. It is employed when the study's objective is to observe and describe the behavior of a particular subject of interest without any attempt of influence (Shuttleworth, 2021).

Meanwhile, for the qualitative strand of the study, the researchers utilized phenomenology, a qualitative research design that centers on the shared lived experience among individuals by formulating narrative descriptions of the nature of the phenomena (Creswell, 2013).

The researchers employed the following procedures to conduct the study and gather pertinent data. Firstly, the researchers wrote a letter to the Dean of College to ask permission to conduct the study. Upon approval, the researchers asked for an information matrix from Record and Admission Center (RAC) to determine the whole population of undergraduate students enrolled in Research 1 and Research 2 subjects for the academic year 2021-2022 at UM Tagum College.

Once the population of the target subjects was identified, the researchers used Slovin's formula to determine the actual sample size for the quantitative part of the study. Subsequently, the researchers employed a simple random sampling technique to select the respondents and disseminated the informed consent together with the survey questionnaire via Google form. Next, the researchers retrieved the Google form survey after completing a requisite number of responses.

Finally, the researchers tabulated all the data gathered through the survey and subjected it to statistical analysis afterward.

Alternatively, for the qualitative strand, the researchers utilized criterion sampling to select the key participants for the

study. The researchers selected 14 individuals who met the inclusion criteria. Afterward, the researchers sent out a letter of invitation to the prospective key participants asking them to participate in the research study.

Upon confirmation, the researchers asked them to sign a consent form and discuss the interview schedule agreement. During the actual data gathering, the process started with an introductory or orientation phase, in which the moderator welcomed the participants to establish rapport and trust. Moreover, the researchers outlined the purpose of the discussion and set the interview parameters in terms of length and confidentiality.

Likewise, researchers also explained why there was a need to record the interview and what sort of technical issue this raised. All research participants were asked identical questions in the same sequence, but interviewers probed inductively on key responses. Follow-up questions were asked if participants' answers to the initial question did not address specific coverage of the topic, but it was emphasized that discussion is based on individual experiences and insights; thus, there are no absolute answers (Dornyei, 2007).

Lastly, a debriefing process was held to assure the participants that the researchers would treat the shared information with the utmost confidentiality and be appropriately disposed of after essential data were collected. The interview process ended when researchers extended their profound gratitude to the participants for actively participating in the study.

In analyzing and interpreting the data, the researchers used different methods for the separate phases of the study.

For the quantitative strand, the statistical tool employed was the mean, which seeks to determine the level of social loafing among student-researchers in UM Tagum College. While for the qualitative strand, the researchers utilized thematic analysis, which

involves summarizing the mass of the collected data and presenting the results to communicate the most important features (Hancock, Ockleford, & Windridge, 2001).

For an easy and manageable way of scrutinizing and probing the content, the course of all the interviews was tape-recorded, and researchers used a standardized transcription method to translate and transcribe the verbatim answers to every question (McLellan, MacQueen, & Niedig, 2003). After that, the next step was to categorize information using thematic analysis, in which the objective is to identify patterns representing concepts according to their appropriateness.

The researchers then analyzed the generated themes and made essential narrative descriptions so that the findings would emerge logically. The researchers observed the trustworthiness of this study in accordance with the criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), such as credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability. Credibility refers to the accuracy of the research findings.

The researchers established the study's credibility by ensuring that the research findings would correspond to the plausible data derived from the participants' original accounts by contacting them to validate the precision of the collected data.

Moreover, the data were accurately interpreted by employing peer debriefing and consultation from a panel of experts, such as the statistician, data analyst, and the research adviser. Transferability is the extent to which research findings can reflect another setting with a separate set of subjects (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

The researchers facilitated transferability in this study by extracting as much information as possible by asking follow-up questions in the interview if a participant's answer to the initial

question did not address specific coverage of the topic. Also, the researchers ensured to exhaust the collected data into its most essential expediency and discard the irrelevant ones.

Confirmability is the extent to which other researchers can confirm the study's findings (Kalof, Dan, & Dietz, 2008). To institute confirmability, the researchers secured the collected data to be available upon request while ensuring that participants' identities remained confidential.

Likewise, the researchers did not add their perspectives, hypotheses, or conclusions regarding the topic to avoid data misinterpretation. Dependability relates to the consistency of the research findings throughout time (Aguinis & Solarino, 2019). In addressing dependability in this study, the researchers guaranteed to maintain data monitoring by documenting the entire course of the research process.

The following are the ethical provisions that the researchers adhered to upon conducting the study. Informed consent is a crucial step in displaying respect to people involved during the conduct of research (Creswell, 2012). The researchers made sure to ask for the participants' permission beforehand by giving consent forms and guaranteeing that all participants understood the aim of the research study.

Moreover, the participants were given the prerogative of participating or withdrawing from the study. Confidentiality is another critical ethical practice in research. The researchers ensured that the participants' identities remained anonymous by using pseudonyms in the research report and treating the collected data with utmost responsibility.

Additionally, the researchers appropriately disposed of the data after collecting essential information. Beneficence necessitates a commitment to reducing risks to the participants in

research over optimizing benefits (Kinsinger, 2009). The participants' identities were kept confidential to avoid putting any participant at stake, and no information files were left unattended or disclosed (Bricki & Green, 2007). The researchers also observed positive regard by not subjecting the participants to uncomfortable situations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the study's core findings, organized logically, relating to the objective and the research questions in the introduction section. The data results are presented in tabular and textual formats, with corresponding discussion and explanation.

For the quantitative strand of the study, tables were arranged in the following subheadings: Summary Result of Individual Social Loafing Scale, Summary Result of Group Perceived Social Loafing Scale, Overall Level of Social Loafing, Level of Individual Social Loafing in Percentage, Level of Group Perceived Social Loafing in Percentage, and Descriptive Level of 14 Selected Key Participants for the

Quantitative Strand

Level of Social Loafing

Displayed in Table 1 are the mean scores for each indicator of the Social Loafing Measurement Tool, with an overall mean of 2.60, described as low with a standard deviation of .846. The low level could be attributed to the majority of low ratings given by the respondents in both parts of the questionnaire. Overall, the data indicate that social loafing among the majority groups of student-researchers conducting a thesis was less observed.

The cited overall mean score was the result gathered from the following computed mean scores from highest to lowest. 2.81 or moderate for Group Perceived Social Loafing with a standard deviation of 1.01, and 2.38 or low for Individual Social Loafing with a standard deviation of .857.

Table 1. *Level of Social Loafing (n=385)*

Indicators	Mean (\bar{x})	SD (σ)	Descriptive Level
Individual Social Loafing	2.38	.857	Low
Group Perceived Social Loafing	2.81	1.01	Moderate
Overall	2.60	.846	Low

These results support previous research findings that individuals recognize their own social loafing tendency (Petty, Harkins, Williams, et al., 1977, as cited in Soni & Vijayvargy, 2021) and are aware of the amount of effort they put into a task (Williams & Karau, 1991, as cited in Vargas, 2021). These findings further relate to other studies, which indicate that people are either unconscious of their social loafing behavior or are reluctant to admit it otherwise (Charbonnier, Huguet, Brauer, et al., 1998, as cited in Luo et al., 2021).

Qualitative Strand

This section also presents the gathered data for the qualitative strand of the study, bearing upon the interviews conducted. The participants' answers were based on the queries relevant to the study's research questions. Research Question 1: What are the experiences of the selected key participants in encountering social loafing members in the group?

Displayed in Table 2 are the themes and core ideas bearing from the responses of the participants in the first main research question, concerning their experiences of having social loafing members in conducting their thesis.

Table 2. Experiences of Student-Researchers in Encountering Social Loafing Members

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Sense of regret in group selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Realizing that choosing group members out of friendship is terrible. ● Learning that they have become a partner with irresponsible individuals. ● Hoping to transfer to another group or getting the job done single handedly. ● Imagining what might have happened if decisions had been made differently in the past.
Experiencing emotional distress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Feeling frustrated with the slow progress in the group. ● Sudden burst of tears due to stress from member's poor behavior. ● Having considered the thought of dropping out of the research subject. ● Suffering burnout as a result of picking up the slack of loafing members.

Unfair distribution of tasks

- Encountering members who participate fairly or contributing at a later time.
- Relying on a single individual to complete the task.
- Compensating the slack of social loafing members.
- Compromising own's leisure to assume another member's supposed responsibility.

Sense of Regret in Group Selection

Social loafing causes regrets in group selection as team members affected by social loafers often experience a variety of negative experiences such as picking up the slack, feeling negative emotions, and involvement in various conflicts. Since groupings were student-selected, members affected by social loafers initially felt content with their selected groupmates but eventually felt a sense of regret.

As a result, what-if thoughts of being with another group arise. Members affected by social loafers also realize that it would have been better to decide based on practicality and rationality, not friendship. This finding is supported by Zhu (2013), who concluded that group satisfaction is negatively correlated to contribution conflict, a type of conflict which, according to Behfar et al. (2011), arises from the perceived belief of having members who free-ride or fail to execute responsibilities and expectations of their group members.

This means that the higher the contribution conflict, the lesser the group satisfaction. As a result, members may feel negative emotions such as dissatisfaction among many others (e. g., animosity, tension, resentment, anger) (Zhu, 2013; Behfar et al., 2011).

One of the participants said:

“Sa first jud kay happy kaayo ko kay kaila ko sa ilaha and wala jud koy doubts sa ilahang intellectual capability. It’s just that wala silay kanang time or should I say, they don’t make time. Naay panghinayang gud na gusto ko muadto sa laing group or unsa kaya nibalhin ko. Pero gina-take na lang nako sya as positive gud sa akoang side nga, “Ay kailangan ko nila,” para matabangan sila, nga para ma-angat pud sila, para sabay-sabay gud mi tanan nga mu-graduate, ana”

(At first, I was glad that they were my groupmates because I knew them and had no doubts about their academic capability. It is just that they do not have time, or should I say, they do not make time for it. I do feel some regret and want to transfer to another group or thinking what might have happened if I were with other group. Nonetheless, I just convinced myself to take this as something good, that perhaps I could be a bridge to help them get through and earn their college degree on time) [IDI_1].

It is also affirmed that these negative emotions positively correlate with social loafing and conflict distribution (Singh, Wang, & Zhu, 2018; Zhu, 2013). According to Williams, Beard, and Rymer (1991), social loafing is the leading source of dissatisfaction among class learning groups regarding why students detest group projects.

Experiencing Emotional Distress

Due to social loafing members, other members inevitably experienced emotional distress. Members of social loafers often felt these negative emotions (e. g., frustrations, anger, irritability, stress, exhaustion) as a result of their combined experiences (e. g., delayed process, late submissions of tasks, picking up of slack, conflict, and pressure) with having social loafers.

One participant shared:

“Kuan [ang personal impact] kay annoyance ug irritability kanang mura’g ing-ana gani na after like nag-expect na ka na na-submit to 104il ana task then gamay nalang ang imong editonon. Tapos kanang ma-fall ka sa imong expectations ba kay buhaton pa diay nimo siya usab” (It causes me anger and irritability on a personal level. You expected that they had submitted their assignment and that you would only need to make minor changes, but you will be disappointed since you will have to do it all over again) [IDI_6].

The same sentiment was shared by the other participant:

“Pag-describe nako is maka-cause jud sya’g stress since nag-set mo’g deadlines tapos abi nimo’g lihokon sa katong isa ka member. Maka-cause sya’g stress kay dagdag sya ug problemahon” (It has the potential to generate anxiety. When you give someone a deadline, you expect them to do the assignment on time, but they do not. As a result, it generates stress by adding to your worries) [FGD_6].

Individuals with a negative experience with group projects frequently use the term ‘frustrating’ (Buzwell, 2012). Woolf (2022) also found that when some colleagues believe that others are not doing their part, resentment might develop between them. Burke’s (2011) findings further support this idea as he argued that group

hate occurs when other group members avoid group work. Furthermore, the perception of social loafing is linked to group conflict and emotion. Negative emotions such as anxiety, frustration, and anger indicate the effects of conflict rooted in social loafing (Zhu, 2013; Behfar et al., 2011).

These results align with Cheng and Warren's (2000) findings which state that social loafing sowed demotivation and resentments among the group members who really did the work. This relates to Yecke's (2004) findings that group tasks might be disadvantageous and damaging to the students who experience resentment and frustration from carrying the task's burden.

Unfair Distribution of Tasks

Despite assigning work to each member, tasks are often unevenly distributed because of social loafing members. Other members often picked up the slack as social loafers tend to procrastinate, submit their part late, make up excuses (e. g., work), or not be knowledgeable enough on basic research. Other group members also expressed that it is more challenging to monitor the status of tasks of social loafing members as communication can only be done virtually.

This is in line with previous studies that provide support for the notion that most typical complaints of students when it comes to group work are about unequal contributions (Hall & Buzwell, 2012; Shimazoe & Aldrich, 2010; Pauli et al., 2008; Aggarwal & O'Brien, 2008; Livingstone & Lynch, 2000).

Additionally, Tekle and Sado (2020) concluded in their study that 30.7% of students indicated that some members of their groups are contributing less than they expected; 28.2% of students indicated that some members of their groups do not work on their assigned task; 33.9% of students revealed that some members of their groups spend little time on the task if there are

other members available to do the work; 25% of students indicated that some members of their groups evade helping the group in finishing the work; and 24.6% of students agreed that some members of their groups are less likely to offer realistic contributions if there are members who are present to do the task.

In another study by Clark and Baker (2011), it was revealed that 78% of the students who responded to open questions identified unequal participation and contribution as reasons for dissatisfaction with group work. It was further found that students feel additional pressures imposed on the group when members did not contribute fully or effectively, and that the majority of students surveyed and interviewed in the study were aware of the problem of social loafing and believed that it was unfair (Clarke & Baker, 2011).

“Duha na lang man mi, so, akoang gi-expect is mas fair siya kay mura’g half-half mi sa trabahuon. Unya akong groupmate kay kana ganing mapansin nako na mas hayahay sya. Ako ginahimo man jud nako akong trabaho dayon para maabtan nako ang deadline na gi-set unya di na mi mag-cramming. Mahulog nga since gusto nako nga mahuman dayun ang work, tabangan sad nako siya sa part niya. So dili siya fair share”

(There are only two of us left in our group, and so, I was expecting our tasks to be evenly distributed. However, I noticed that things did not happen the way I expected because my group partner tends to procrastinate while I do all of my tasks on time so that we do not have to cram at the end. As a result, my workloads become double, and I would work twice as hard since I need to help her in order to beat the deadline) [ID1_2].

“Para sa akoa no kay mura’g problema jud kaayo siya and naka ingon jud ko to the point nga ni ana ko sa ilaha na may pa ug mag individual nalang ko ug ing-ani lang man diay ni. Pero dili to siya in

a term na namoyboy ko ana sa mga nabuhat or something, ana lang ko na do your part as a part of the group” (It is really a problem for me. There was even a point when I told them that since they were not helping anyway, it would have been better if this was an individual task. My intention was not to count favors, but rather to remind them of their responsibilities as a part of the group) [IDI_5].

Illustrated in Table 3 are the themes and core ideas bearing from the responses of the participants in the second main research question, concerning their coping strategies in addressing social loafing in the group.

Table 3. Coping Mechanisms of Student-Researchers in Addressing Social Loafing in the Group

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Expressing of sentiments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Venting out frustrations to friends and family members. • Confronting the social loafing members about their way of behaving. • Calling out members who do not follow the deadline of tasks.
Immersing in entertainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watching films or drama series to divert attention temporarily. • Playing games to ease the pressure for quite a while. • Reading a couple of books in order to destress.
Establishing of agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussing matters when group conflict arises. • Imposing certain disciplinary measures on groupmates who do not do their tasks.

-
- Reminding groupmates of their responsibilities and sharing updates on the study's progress.

Expressing of Sentiments

Members affected by social loafers faced various difficulties while doing their thesis. These dilemmas (e. g., conflict, picking up the slack) exposed them to negative and distressing emotions. In order to cope, one strategy they employed is the expression of their sentiments where they share their negative experiences and emotions not just with people they trust (e. g., close friends, family members) but also confronting their members who social loaf. This approach was helpful to them as this helps them to 'vent out' or feel relief.

“Mangita ko ug tao nga kanang kapahungawan nako sa kanang frustration nga kanang same pud nako ug ginabati na sentiments ana” (I seek help with a trustworthy friend with whom I can vent my frustrations and who shares the same sentiment as mine) [IDI_3].

“Ako jud silang gi-confront ug gi ingnan sad nako sila na dili ni nako kaya ako ra isa and I need help. And kato nahimo sad jud siguro tong alarm sa ilaha na kailangan na jud namo mag work as a group, na dili lang mag depend sa kung kinsa ang mas feel nila na kaya ra na niya” (I personally confronted my groupmates and informed them that I could not do it all by myself and needed their help. Perhaps that served as a wake-up call to them that it is the ultimate time for us to work as a group, rather than relying on a single individual to complete the task) [IDI_5].

“Naga call out ko basta feeling na gani nako na dugay na to akong gihatag na task, kanang ma late ang submission unya supposedly ang deadline

kay gahapon ra” (I call them out whenever I noticed that the task I gave to them long ago had passed its due date, or that they were submitting it at a later time) [IDI_6].

These results relate to Şarkaya & Tanriogen's (2019) study, where it was observed that in an organization, employees exhibit nonverbal or verbal negative behavior towards the organization outside of work. Such behaviors include insults and sarcastic language to criticize and complain. It was highlighted that workers tend to constantly display criticisms and complaints towards their workplace due to social loafing colleagues, revealing anger and distrust.

In this study's context, members affected by the social loafers express their sentiments by 'venting out' to persons outside their group. Research has also underscored that venting is one of the most commonly used coping mechanisms in response to stress (Kumar & Parashar, 2015; Fields, 2005). Also, Kassing (2011), in his study examining how coping methods correlate to dissent expression, denoted that venting coping mechanisms are linked to lateral dissent expressed with co-workers.

This coping strategy seeks emotional support from peers and family (Apker, 2022; Labrague et al., 2017). It should also be noted that even though other group members may express their frustration (concerning the social loafer member) through venting, the loafer does not necessarily hinder the overall performance of the group as other members 'pick up the slack' and exert extra effort to compensate the social loafer's shortcomings (Deleau, 2017).

Immersing in Entertainment

Having social loafing members comes with various negative experiences such as picking up the slack, feeling negative

emotions, and involvement in various conflicts. In the long run, these experiences can cause strain or stress. As a way to cope, members affected by social loafers immerse themselves in entertainment (e. g., movies, videos, mobile games, music, books). This specific strategy is somewhat beneficial as it temporarily diverts their attention away from negativity and allows them to have time to recharge and regain their strength to continue.

The participants shared:

“Naga tan-aw ko ug salida after nako mahuman sa akong task. Nakatabang sad siya para ma-relax ko pero kadali ra” (I watch movies after completing my responsibility in our research paper. It helps divert my attention away from academics for a while) [IDI_2].

“Honestly ako jud na tao kay taas ko ug pansensya. So instead na ako silang i-confront pirme no or kasab-an, I rather ano nalang watch series or read a books para ma divert akong attention sa uban” (I am the type of person who is considerate. Instead of reprimanding them, I rather watch series or read a couple of books to divert my attention) [IDI_7].

“Usahay, kanang sa mobile games, ML. Ang pinakamadalasan kay Kdrama. May na lang ang Kdrama, kiligon ka gamay. Tapos bahala na’g daghan kaayo’g problema, malimtan man na nimo pero kadali ra pud” (I occasionally play mobile games like Mobile Legends. However, I usually de-stress by watching Korean dramas. I get butterflies in my stomach, which temporarily distracts me from my stress for a limited time) [FGD_2].

These findings are parallel to Lee et al. (2014), which concluded that stress relief is one of the main motives for mobile use. This study's results also support Ho & Syu (2010), where

relaxation and stress relief are the primary motives for using game/entertainment applications. Reinecke's (2009) research also discovered that games were systematically utilized after exposure to strain and stress.

A pilot study by Prestin and Nabi (2020) showed that YouTube videos that evoke calmness, amusement, or hope reported decreased stress throughout the intervention. It was further learned that positive emotions stimulated by exposure to media could induce psychological benefits.

Furthermore, with regard to the subject of music, Fiore (2018) showed the effect of music in reducing anxiety and stress levels. Several pieces of research also identified listening to music as among the most widely applied coping mechanisms to stress (Gallagher et al., 2019; Jennings et al., 2018; Aselton, 2012).

Establishing of Agreements

Although other members frequently picked up the slack of their social loafing members, it was still crucial that every member get to contribute to the group work. In order to realize this, members affected by social loafers established agreements in their group, which include of scheduling/timelining, assigning tasks, monitoring groupmates' work status, reminding of responsibilities, and setting rules. This method helps reinforce social loafers to do their tasks, reducing social loafing behaviors.

“Um, scheduling, mao na akong gibuhat. So, mag-send ko sa ilaha sa among timeline, kung asa nami, when mi dapat mahuman, ug kung unsa ilang parts” (I ‘schedule,’ which means I send them a timeline of our study's progress, current status, deadlines, and their designation of the task) [IDI_1].

“Akong ginabuhay is pag-over na gani ang mura’g pagsalig unya makit-an nako na wala na silay pake, akong ginabuhay kay ginabalik jud nako sila sa goal or gina-chat nako ug balik ilang mga supposed buhaton then gina-remind nako sila sa mga responsibilities nila” (When I notice that they do not seem to care, I either redirect them to our objective, or I would reach them out via group chat so that they would be reminded of their responsibilities) [IDI_6].

“So ano ang among gibuhay jud katong pagka grupo namo is nag-estorya nami daan na if naay problem mahitabo unya dili mutabang sa grupo dapat kay istoryahon nalang. And then kay nag-create man jud mi ug rules nga if dili mo mutabang, nakabalo namo unsay consequence pwede ba hawaon or ilisdan nalang” (In our group, we agreed that if a conflict arose, we would talk about it. Moreover, we set rules that the moment someone does not do his/her part, they already know the consequence of their action, such as expulsion from the group) [IDI_7].

“Kanang mag-assign ug like time management. Gi-divide ang work, ang time. Usahay mu-effect sya pero usahay kay daghan man gud ug ginabuhay pud. Dili nako sila ma-control kung gusto niya mubuhay” (Assigning work and time management are two specific strategies I use to at least address social loafing in our group. We divide our tasks. However, it does not always work out because of other responsibilities. I also have no control over what she chooses to do) [FGD_2].

These pieces of evidence support previous literature, which presents that establishing agreements decreases social loafing behavior (Linabary, 2021; Cox & Brobrowski, 2000; Harkins &

Szymanski, 1989), as assigning roles and responsibilities fosters accountability (Chang & Brickman, 2018) and instills a sense of responsibility in students and makes them aware that it will be very noticeable if they do not fulfill the part allotted to them (Samarakoon, Imbulpitiya, & Manathunga, 2021). Establishing clear objectives also enables team members to work more productively, reducing social loafing (Harkins & Szymanski, 1989).

Additionally, setting ground rules can help reduce social loafing and free-riding behaviors, assuring those unlikely behaviors will be dealt with accordingly (Cox & Brobrowski, 2000). Establishing guidelines early on is beneficial as it will assist all team members in achieving the performance goals and team objectives (Cox & Brobrowski, 2000).

Concluding Remarks

This mixed-methods sequential explanatory research study sought to determine the level of social loafing and uncovered the lived experiences of student-researchers in UM Tagum College who encounter social loafing members in conducting an undergraduate thesis. Based on the study's quantitative findings, the level of Individual Social Loafing among student-researchers at UM Tagum College was generally low.

This means that the majority of student-researchers who responded to the survey were less positive to demonstrate individual social loafing tendency in group work, such as doing a thesis. On the contrary, the level of Group Perceived Social Loafing among student-researchers in UM Tagum College was moderate in general. This means that most student-researchers who responded to the survey claimed they moderately observed to have encountered social loafing members in group work, such as doing a thesis.

Meanwhile, the overall level of social loafing among student-researchers at UM Tagum College was low. This means that the occurrence of social loafing among the majority groups of student-researchers who were conducting a thesis was less observed. Lastly, the Descriptive Level of the 14 Selected Key Participants Based on Inclusion Criteria for the qualitative strand was found to be low to very low for Individual Social Loafing Scale, and high to very high for Group Perceived Social Loafing Scale. This means that although the preceding results show that the occurrence of social loafing among the majority of groups was less observed, isolated cases of groups encountering social loafing members in doing a group task such as thesis still prevail.

On the other hand, as for the qualitative strand of the study, the gathered data underwent a qualitative thematic analysis where essential themes emerged related to the queries on each research question: (1) sense of regret in group selection, experiencing emotional distress, and unfair distribution of tasks; (2) expressing of sentiments, immersing in entertainment, and establishing of agreements.

The first category of the theme was rooted in the first research question, which was about the experiences of the key participants. It depicted the personal experiences, including the participants' struggles in encountering social loafing members in doing their thesis. According to the participants, they experienced a sense of regret in group selection as they were caught up with a variety of negative experiences such as picking up the slack, feeling negative emotions, and involvement in various conflicts, which resulted in afterthoughts on what if they were with another group.

Additionally, the participants reported experiencing emotional distress (e. g., frustrations, anger, irritability, stress, pressure, and exhaustion). Meanwhile, the participants also disclosed that they experienced unfair distribution of tasks,

wherein they often found themselves picking up the slack as social loafers tend to procrastinate, submit their parts late, and make excuses. On the other hand, the second theme category focused on the coping mechanisms employed by participants to cope with the frustration of dealing with social loafing members. It elucidated here that expressing sentiments is one way they do to release unnecessary baggage, whereby they vent or share their feelings to someone they are close with and even include confronting the members who social loaf.

The participants also shared that immersing in entertainment was among their coping strategies to temporarily divert their attention away from negativity and allow them to have time to recharge and regain their strength. Lastly, the participants claimed that establishing agreements is essential to resolving group issues.

Implication for Educational Practice

In light of the foregoing findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are proposed by the researchers to address the presenting concerns on the issue of social loafing in groups:

Make a Team Contract. Confusion and miscommunication can stir up social loafing tendencies. While it may appear formal, creating a team contract is a valuable starting point in establishing group regulations and discouraging loafing behavior (Linabary, 2021). This paper contract should contain certain essential data such as objectives of the group, performance targets, methods of the communication process, and disciplinary mechanisms.

Establishing general rules and regulations in the group help mitigate social loafing and free-riding practices as this assures that unlikely behaviors will be dealt with accordingly (Cox & Brobrowski, 2000). Based on studies, group contracts have been

found to offer a great mechanism for initiating discussion of expectations and reservations, strengthening interpersonal skills, as well as developing group cohesiveness, which is all vital for efficient group performance (Shimazoe & Aldrich, 2010; Davies, 2009; Oakley et al., 2004). If this is realized early, people in a group will avoid the implications of being held liable for inadequate or poor work. Evaluate Progress Using Peer Evaluation. Individuals within a group may increase or decrease members' contributions due to friendly relations (Zhang et al., 2008). Regardless of personal relationships, members and group leaders should not tolerate others who do not contribute and actively engage in their group work by discussing the implications of not following rules and the strategy for calling out an individual's poor behavior. Whenever possible, start developing an evaluation or assessment based on a person's ability to contribute, which can be attained through members' peer evaluation of others in a group.

In the study of Tata (2002) on the effect of account assessment on perceived social loafing in group works, she discovered that when the frequency of peer assessment throughout the course of a task increases, the prevalence of perceived social loafing in work teams decreases. This is because peer evaluations serve as a warning to members of the group that there will be repercussions for underperformance, imposing a solid conviction of accountability in group work as well as providing an opportunity for members of the group to put up corrective measures in case of problems (Tata, 2002); thereby deterring the incidence of social loafing, especially if evaluations are taken early and frequently (Brooks & Ammons, 2003).

Seek Assistance from Superior. After discussing the issue with members in private and as a group, fellows of the team should consult some advice from a higher-up, whether it may be a professor or another person in authority. If possible, fellows in the group should furnish a copy of documented evidence of the

individual's loafing habit (De Vita, 2001). The authority figure can directly address the issue between team members or serve as a group mediator. For instance, once groups perform poorly, instructors can provide additional strategic support (e.g., follow-up consultation, monitoring progress, etc.). In the absence of supervision, students are unsuccessful in making full use of group role designation and contract agreement (Chang & Brickman, 2018).

Use of Appraisal System. Members of a group can foster a culture that values and recognizes "small wins" and task achievements. This, in any case, motivates colleagues to give their best and demonstrate their ability in group work. This supports Brooks and Ammon's (2003) findings that appraisal methods, including constructive feedback, reduced social loafing and improved students' perceptions of group projects.

Conducting Group Training Seminar. Institutions and organizations can provide resources on properly handling group facilitation, including conflict management, to help groups settle conflicts sooner than later before ending up in dysfunction. Evidence shows that conflict management can optimize performance even in student group formation (Tekleab et al., 2009), particularly when combined with training on becoming an effective team (Deleau, 2017).

Implications for Future Research

The study's results would help generate new insights, valuable to study further and provide more explanation and implications on the chosen topic of interest. Additionally, the study would serve as a valuable reference for prospective researchers soon, as this would contribute to the body of literature anent the scope covered by the investigation.

Since the research participants were limited to student-researchers in UM Tagum College, it is recommended to investigate other students from other institutions with gender, age, socioeconomic status, course program specification, and other demographic profiles to explicate a multifaceted perspective of the phenomenon.

Aside from that, considering that the study was based on Filipino undergraduate student-researchers, the cultural orientation of having a collectivist mindset may have brought some bias. Hence, comparative studies in other countries are needed to understand better the distinction between collectivistic and individualistic group orientation. Lastly, to effectively facilitate an open research-participant interaction, conducting research in an in-person method is suggested rather than online.

This mixed-methods study has a time frame of a ten-month-long study (or one full-length academic year) that starts from August 2021 until May 2022. However, this study was administered virtually instead of in-person conduct, wherein the loss of the internet may have occasionally hampered the comprehensive researcher-participant interaction, and the apparent gap in physical proximity could have spurred a subtle negative influence in gathering pertinent information data.

Likewise, since the study was based on Filipino undergraduate student-researchers, racial upbringing may be viewed as a limitation in this case due to cross-culturalism, which may not be generally applicable in some cultural contexts such as Western cultures, which are known for their individualistic orientation. Finally, this research study did not involve a multifaceted investigation with gender, age, socioeconomic status, course program specification, or other demographic profiles needed for this study.

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