

Examining the Impact of Social Facilitation on Performance: Insights from a Study with University Students at Karachi University

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Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the role of social facilitation on performance. This study was done on 28 university students at Psychology department Karachi University. A test was conducted through Speed and Accuracy Cancellation Sheet individually and within a group. The result for this study was a mean average of 50.036 when working alone whereas 46.714 when working in group. It was found that the effect of social facilitation on performances was false. There can be different reasons/factors that can affect social facilitation, which can be fear of audience evaluation, opposite gender audience, bad mood, an inner drive for performance or distraction/ conflict within oneself. Even when performing a seemingly simple task, fear of public shame can be a reason for harmful social facilitation of performance. A drop in performance is just one of the potential adverse outcomes of extreme fear.

Keywords: Social Facilitation; Speed and Accuracy; Performance

Introduction

It's a human psychology that they always want to be a winner, therefore if any challenge is given to them. They will try to do their best in that task. To further understand this human nature many researchers have done numerous studies on social facilitation. Some 20th-century social psychologists grew curious about the effect of being with non-competitive peers on one's performance. Researchers looked at whether or not the result was present and whether people around them were engaged in similar or dissimilar activities. According to the research of many social psychologists, people perform noticeably better when they are in the company of others. Social facilitation is the term used to describe this phenomenon. According to Gordon Allport (1985), social facilitation is distinguished by its focus on "the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others" and how it influences behavior and judgment.

According to Asch (1955), Triplett (1898) conducted one of the initial endeavors to examine the performance, namely the speed, of a cyclist when pedaling alone versus in the company of others. His research findings indicated that performance levels showed a notable improvement when individuals engaged in the task in a social setting. Zajonc (1965) conducted an additional study posing that social facilitation is likely to be more pronounced among individuals with higher levels of skill than those without proficiency. The rationale behind this phenomenon is that, following this theoretical framework, performance is heightened when the dominant responses align with correctness. When considering individuals with expertise, the prevailing answers are more accurate.

Heingartner and Herman (1980) conducted a limited number of empirical studies in social psychology to examine this theory, and their findings provided substantial support for its principles. However, a particular inquiry has piqued the interest of social psychologists: "Does facilitation arise solely from the physical presence of others, or does the apprehension of being evaluated by others also play a role?" In due course, social psychologists also recognized the significance of factors such as 'assessment apprehension' and 'self-presentation' in social facilitation.

The field of social facilitation has generated discussions and theoretical frameworks. While social psychologists acknowledge the validity of the notion that concerns about being evaluated by others and the desire to present oneself favorably may contribute to social facilitation, there have been observations of instances where the mere presence of others, without evaluation apprehension or self-presentation, can also lead to social facilitation. Zajonc, Heingartner, and Herman (1969) reported that social facilitation can be observed among various animal species, including insects. Given the potential challenges associated with attributing assessment apprehension or self-presentation to animals, it is not necessarily appropriate to consider these characteristics as the primary drivers of social facilitation.

Schmitt's (1986) work contributed more insights to the existing explanations of social facilitation. The present study aimed to examine the impact of social presence on performance in an essential typing task involving the participant's name. Three conditions were compared:

1. Alone
2. The company of individuals wearing blindfolds and earphones.
3. Performance in the fact of individuals without any blindfolds or earphones.

For the second condition, wherein the audience could not audibly perceive or attentively engage with the participants, there was an observed improvement in their performance on the task. However, it is noteworthy that in the third condition, wherein the audience had both visual and auditory access to the participants, their performances increased further. The simple existence of individuals in a social setting could result in social facilitation. However, the influence of performance assessment and self-representation may also amplify the effects of social facilitation.

An alternative explanation for social facilitation, as posited by Baron (1986) and Sanders (1975), is that it arises from the arousal resulting from a conflict between individuals' inclination to focus on the job at hand and their inclination to focus on others as co-performers or audience members. This idea has been supported by several empirical research undertaken by social psychologists, and it explains the occurrence of social facilitation in humans and animals.

Problem

To study the role of social facilitation on performance.

Hypothesis

Social Facilitation will increase the level of performance.

Research Method

Research Design: This study employed a within-subject design with two conditions.

Variables:

Independent variable: Social Facilitation.

Dependent variable: level of performance.

Control variable: Time duration, location, difficulty level.

Participants

The research participants for this study were 28 students at Karachi University studying in the department of psychology 3rd year.

Material:

Form A, Speed and Accuracy Cancellation Sheet for letter A and E.

Form B, Speed and Accuracy Cancellation Sheet for letter I and O.

Procedure:

Participants were asked to come in experiment room one by one where they were supposed to perform speed and accuracy test individually within 4 minutes. They were given a cancellation sheet in which they must cut two vowels A and E. First instructions were given to them. Then they were asked to perform the test. Once they had finished the task, they were asked to wait for more than ten minutes to take another test with all their group members.

All participants were asked to take speed and accuracy again with another cancellation sheet. Now they were asked to cut different vowels I and O within the time limits of 4 minutes. Ultimately, the participants were provided with a concise overview of the administered test and an explanation of how the collected data is utilized to ascertain the influence of social facilitation on performance.

Statistical Analysis: In order to find out the role of social facilitation on performance the sum total was calculated for each correct answer by speed and accuracy test. As well as by getting its mean and t-test.

Result

Condition 1: Individual test: N = 28.

Condition 2: Group test: N = 28.

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Individual</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Participant</i>	<i>Individual</i>	<i>Group</i>
1	52	55	16	53	20
2	43	42	17	55	64
3	59	47	18	59	47
4	55	64	19	42	43
5	51	45	20	51	45
6	47	48	21	53	48
7	53	48	22	53	54
8	48	54	23	53	42
9	53	42	24	56	49
10	56	49	25	42	45
11	42	45	26	53	48
12	53	48	27	38	48
13	34	48	28	48	42
14	48	42	Total	1401	1308
15	51	36			

Table 1: Showing total for Individual and group scores.

In the above-mentioned table 1, in individual test, 28 Participants has score total of 1401 score in total, with average mean of 50.036 which is better performance than Condition 2, where same 28 Participants of the group reported total score of 1308 and average mean of 46.714.

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>S. D</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Variance</i>	<i>t-Cal</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Individual test	50.036	52.5	6.1613	28	27	37.96	0.1143	1.314
Group test	46.714	47.5	8.0731	28	27	65.17		

Table 2: Showing mean and t test for Individual and group scores.

In the above-mentioned table 2, which is t-test for condition 1 and condition 2 shows accepting H₀ which means H₁ is rejected. Therefore, our hypothesis has not proved to be correct.

Discussion

Upon careful evaluation of the obtained results, it has been determined that the purported impact of social facilitation on performance is unfounded. Various elements can influence social facilitation. Over time, numerous ideas have been put forth, each appearing to encapsulate a significant yet partial facet of the social facilitation phenomenon. Contemporary scholars, exemplified by Eysenck (1997), propose an alternative, integrative framework that posits social presence as an ambiguous yet influential phenomenon. Multiple dimensions characterize the responses to social reality and manifest in diverse physiological and psychological systems. A notable attribute of these reactions is their tendency to manifest as positive or negative mostly. This is why individuals undergo heightened energy and enthusiasm when social facilitation is noticed or elevated degrees of unease and fear.

Neiss (1988) posits that while both reactions possess an arousal component, the valence, or the positive or negative nature, distinguishes their distinct essences. Over time, the work on social facilitation has primarily focused on promoting general encouragement and subsequent modifications in behavior, with a particular emphasis on unidimensional performance. A comprehensive study of the existing body of literature has demonstrated that in this specific framework, the influence of social presence on simple and compli-

cated performance is minimal, resulting in a significant portion of the variability remains unexplained. According to Bond and Titus (1983),

Furthermore, according to Bond (1982), a negative orientation can have a comparable detrimental impact on basic and complicated performance. This is because the job's specific characteristics become inconsequential when an individual perceives the world through a negative lens. Moreover, the apprehension of experiencing public shame might be exceptionally heightened when an individual engages in an uncomplicated undertaking. Excessive levels of fear can result in various adverse consequences, such as compromised performance.

Leary and Baumeister (2000) propose that the Sociometer hypothesis offers supplementary insight into the variation in social performance observed among persons with high and low levels of self-esteem. Based on the theoretical framework, some of the social feedback individuals receive throughout their formative years indicates genuine disparities in performance. Consequently, this negative social evaluation may contribute to poor self-esteem, partially attributable to the recurrence of unsuccessful outcomes.

Additionally, several additional aspects can influence the social facilitation theory. These factors include the dread of being evaluated by an audience, the presence of an audience of the opposite gender, experiencing a negative mood, an internal motivation for performance, and internal conflicts or distractions.

Conclusion

In summary, high social facilitation settings had a detrimental effect on performance. The participant's performance exhibited a decline in the fact of evaluators as opposed to fellow subjects. The findings resemble the outcomes observed in the context of novel tasks. The presence of evaluating individuals had a detrimental effect on performance, as opposed to enhancing it, indicating that implied evaluation did not lead to an improvement in performance. This finding suggests an interpretation related to attentional focus, specifically that individuals preoccupied with evaluating others saw a decrease in their ability to perceive task cues accurately.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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