

60-Second SoTL

Episode 29 – Team Dynamics and Challenges

(Piano Music)

0:03

Jessie L. Moore:

How does team learning affect social loafing in collaborative projects? That's the focus of this week's 60-second SoTL from Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning. This episode is the fourth in an 8-part series hosted by Elon University Masters of Higher Education students who are exploring collaborative assignments and projects as a high-impact practice. Listen for future episodes in their series wherever you subscribe to 60-Second SoTL.

0:28

(Piano Music)

0:31

Stephen Gyan:

Hi, I am Stephen Gyan

In "Taking a Free Ride: How Team Learning Affects Social Loafing" published in the Journal of Educational Psychology, SoTL scholars Gabelica Catherine, Sven De Maeyer, and Michaéla C. Schippers studied factors that contribute to social loafing in teams. Social loafing is a phenomenon seen through physical and behavioral disengagement from team tasks. Conceptualizing the contributing factors of social loafing, the study focused on the learning and performance orientations (together termed as goal orientations) of teams. This focus is less explored compared to factors such as duration of teamwork, deadlines, grades, and low expertise at the start of a collaboration which the authors considered as an outcome of the team learning orientations.

1:18

Distinctively, learning orientation relates to persistence, positive emotions, use of deep learning approaches, and, under certain conditions, to achieve the team goals; while performance orientation deals with demonstrating ability to the achievement of team task irrespective of teams' social behaviors.

1:37

Published by the Center for Engaged Learning at Elon University

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The researchers studied 675 first-year business students studying a research methods course at a university in the Netherlands. In 195 teams made up of 3 or 4-person self-selected teams, the researchers looked at the team's behavior over 9 weeks. The students were made to complete an online survey to measure their goal orientations immediately after forming the teams. The student completed another survey at the end of the team's final project to assess the goal orientations and social loafing tendencies.

2:11

After regression analysis of the comparative data from the surveys, the researchers found that the degree of social loafing is always not constant in the teams. Different team members exhibit social loafing tendencies at different times. Analyzing these changes, the researchers identified that changes in learning orientation relate to an individual's social loafing compared to performance orientation.

2:36

Team members who scored higher on team learning showed a negative change in social loafing. An increase in team learning reduces team members' tendencies to loaf. However, team learning can only explain social loafing at the initial stages of team formation but not throughout the study.

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Social loafing and its consequences have been a challenging dynamic in team-based and collaborative learning environments. Understanding the impact of team learning in reducing social loafing will help in designing and supporting collaborative projects and assignments. The study outlined the significance of developing learning-oriented teams such as building favorable team beliefs and appraisal of team tasks.

3:18

Also, the study draws educators' attention to the fluctuating nature of social loafing tendencies of team members. By building effective learning strategies to enhance shared knowledge in teams, educators will improve the commitment and engagement of team members. To learn more, see the full citation in our show notes.

3:38

(Piano Music)

Jessie L. Moore:

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Join us next week for another snapshot of recent scholarship of teaching and learning on **60-second SoTL from Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning**. Learn more about the Center at www.CenterForEngagedLearning.org.

3:54

(Piano Music)

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