

## Abstract

Contrary to our intuitive expectations about a positive group influence on human performance behaviour, there is a vast body of literature proving the opposite. All the research is based on findings of Max Ringelmann who more than 120 years ago proved in the oldest social psychological experiment ever known that people cooperating on a common task tend to exert less effort than what would be their potential. This performance decrement is caused by coordination losses which relate to the very principles of a team work as well as motivation losses. Because of the tendency of people to limit their effort in collective settings the newly discovered phenomenon has been called *social loafing*.

A group influence on individual's performance became also a main subject of this diploma thesis. Compared to a majority of research dealing with the same topic the present one employs a completely new type of interactive task which involves an intensive cooperation of all group members. We have used in our experiment an original simulation where players are in a role of top management in one movie production company and their goal is to make a strategic decision based on the information distributed among all the team members that will bring them the biggest profit. Consequently we have directly analysed behaviour of individuals shown during the game which can best describe their effort exerted in the simulations.

Groups of four people played the game under individual and group conditions differing in a potential to evaluate performance that represents the basic methodological procedure how to study social loafing. Half of the teams were also exposed to a punishment threat that was supposed to discourage people from loafing. Despite of our preliminary experimental hypotheses we were not able to prove any tendency of subjects to loaf in collective settings and even the punishment threat did not influence individuals' performances. From other factors we have tested including a gender, group cohesion and subject's self-confidence, only the latest one had a significant impact on the exerted effort. Specifically, individuals with high self-beliefs who expected they could achieve an above average outcome exerted more effort in individual conditions than those, whose expectations of future outcome were below the average. These results are discussed from the perspective of Collective Effort Model and other alternative theories at the end of this paper.