

Elucidating the Structure and Critiquing the Effects of Social Loafing in Volleyball Teams

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Abstract: This review article elucidates the structure and critiques the effects of social loafing in the team sport of volleyball. Drawing upon existing theories, opinions, and research, this review addresses the conceptual framework and factors influencing individual and group behaviors in sports environments, particularly volleyball. These factors include team cohesion, leadership styles, communication, interdependent tasks, and individual motivation. An examination of the research methodologies and article formulations, as well as meta-analyses in academic databases like PubMed, Google Scholar, and PsycINFO, indicates that the predominant approach in studies on this phenomenon is deductive, with survey strategies employed through observational studies and interviews with players and coaches using questionnaires. The findings of this review, on one hand, present and analyze theories and models explaining social loafing behaviors in sports environments and teams, including the processes and dimensions of the emergence (and growth) of social loafing and its impact on individual aspects and team performance in volleyball. On the other hand, it highlights key points and related solutions for future research directions in volleyball, including strategies and interventions (by coaches and team leadership) aimed at reducing social loafing, enhancing cohesion, and improving group dynamics in volleyball teams, ultimately leading to improved team performance.

Keywords: Social loafing; Performance; Athlete participation; Volleyball; Group dynamics

1. Introduction

From past to present, sports psychology studies have recognized social loafing as one of the most significant factors affecting the performance and efficiency of athletes, teams, and sports environments. Social loafing is essentially described as a social disease with negative consequences for individuals, groups, and communities. It is associated with the lack of participation of group members within the group. However, social loafing must be distinguished from random coordination problems that groups sometimes experience.

In volleyball, social loafing refers to the tendency of each player to exert less effort or perform less effectively in team performance during group play compared to playing individually. This phenomenon can impact the team in various ways, such as reduced effort, decreased individual responsibility, communication breakdowns, and impaired performance. Understanding this issue is crucial for coaches, players, and sports psychologists, not only to identify factors that may hinder team performance but also to develop interventions and strategies for fostering a cohesive, motivated, and high-performing team. By comprehending the impact of social loafing, teams can create conditions and environments that maximize the individual and collective capabilities of athletes, ultimately leading to improved performance and stronger team cohesion.

In this context, volleyball is a dynamic team sport that emphasizes the necessity of individual contributions within the team framework, including specialized roles, interdependence, the significance of individual efforts, and mutual support and trust. Previous research in the field of sports, including volleyball, has explored these theoretical frameworks in various contexts, providing valuable insights into the dynamics of social behaviors and their impact on team dynamics and performance. These studies have examined factors such as player motivation, peer influence, team cohesion, and individual accountability in volleyball teams to provide a comprehensive understanding of social loafing behaviors and their consequences. These findings can offer strategies for reducing social loafing and optimizing the performance of sports teams, including volleyball.

The aim of this review is to examine and analyze the content of existing studies and research that explain the structure and psychological characteristics of the

social loafing phenomenon and its impact on team dynamics in volleyball environments and teams. As mentioned, the research is based on existing theories and models, examining factors influencing individual and group behaviors in general sports environments and specifically in volleyball, including team cohesion, leadership styles, communication, interdependent tasks, and individual motivation. These reviews provide valuable insights into the current understanding of social loafing, including its determinants, mechanisms, and possible strategies to reduce its occurrence. A comprehensive analysis of these can be beneficial for researchers, coaches, and professionals in various fields.

2. Materials and Methods

The present review indicates that several methods can be relevant for studying social loafing in volleyball teams and its implications for performance and team dynamics: observational studies, surveys and questionnaires, statistical meta-analyses, experimental approaches, case studies, interviews, and focus groups. Combining multiple methodologies, such as using a mixed-methods approach, can provide a comprehensive understanding of social loafing in volleyball teams and its consequences for performance and team dynamics. This interdisciplinary approach can offer valuable insights for coaches, players, and sports psychologists aiming to address social loafing and optimize team performance.

An analysis and meta-analysis of the databases used, such as PubMed, Google Scholar, and PsycINFO, show that the predominant approaches and methods in studies of this phenomenon include an adaptive strategy, with their methodology comprising observational studies and interviews with players and coaches, particularly the use of questionnaires. In general, the face and content validity of the questionnaires are confirmed based on expert opinions and the use of standard questionnaires, while structural validity is verified through factor analysis, and reliability is confirmed through Cronbach's alpha tests and average variance extracted. Additionally, the collected data is analyzed using various software programs, including SPSS and Smart PLS, employing correlation matrices, structural equation modeling, and model fit tests.

3. Results



In this review, considering the psychological analysis of sports activity, it is necessary to first explain the structure and psychological characteristics of the phenomenon of social loafing as a general aspect of sports activities. Secondly, based on conducted research, the most significant dimensions of impact and related solutions concerning the role of this phenomenon in volleyball are presented. It should be noted that in team sports, in addition to specific physical and technical-tactical characteristics, mastery, control, and awareness of the activation level of each team member and the volleyball team as a whole are methodologically included in ball sports. This is determined by performing actions under conditions of mutual communication and interdependence. Technical-tactical problems are complex due to the different performances of players and the infinite actions that can occur in the development of the game. Group dynamics, both functional and emotional, are of great importance in the course of actions. Due to the unpredictability of actions, the influence of people, and other factors, players are under a lot of mental pressure (Carron & Eys, 2011).

3.1. Content Structure of the Review on "Social Loafing in Sports and Volleyball"

As mentioned, in the first part of this review, the content structure of the psychological characteristics of the phenomenon of social loafing is explored and extracted both generally as an aspect of sports activities (Table 1 and Figure 1) and specifically in volleyball (Table 2 and Figure 2). Understanding the content of these sources can provide valuable insights into the dynamics of social and group games like volleyball. Given the need for knowledge production in this area and the lack of information on this subject in the country, it serves as a good starting point for further research. Several review articles and literature reviews cover the concept of social loafing. Some of these reviews focus generally, while others specifically focus on social loafing in sports and team settings, such as:

- Zhou and Wang (2018), Sims and Nichols (2014) and Pandeyrot and Assing (2017). These reviews provide an in-depth look at the concept of social loafing, its theoretical underpinnings, empirical research, and implications in various contexts. Additionally, Jowett and Lavallee (2011) specifically examine social loafing in team environments, considering factors such as task interdependence, group cohesion, and individual

motivation. Min and Haging (2018) review the antecedents, processes, and outcomes of social loafing, providing an overview of this phenomenon. Carron et al. (1998) argue that when individuals contribute to group activities and work, they often achieve less than expected based on their combined abilities. This lack of motivation and reduction in effort is termed social loafing, which occurs more when individuals work in groups than when they work alone (Williams et al., 1986). Understanding social loafing involves perceiving it through the lens of other group members (Mowaly & Colin, 1998). If social loafing is perceived, athletes might reduce their individual effort to avoid being seen as free riders in the team. Team members might adjust their effort to a level they believe others are putting in, reducing their effort to avoid outworking others and being seen as trying too hard (Hoigaard et al., 2006). This reduction in effort in group settings can weaken group performance.

In team sports, where members rely on each other to put in maximum effort to achieve team goals, social loafing can be problematic and diminish competitive opportunities (Hardy, 1990). Studies on group dynamics and cohesion, identified as key factors, show significant effects on team performance (Carron et al., 2002). Coaches believe that team members need a sense of group unity and cohesion for success. When players share experiences and communicate, they develop closer interpersonal relationships, fostering mutual trust and support, which enhances their collective effort towards group goals. Cohesion is critical in sports, particularly in team sports like volleyball, where achieving common goals requires unity and team cohesion (Kozehchian, 2001).

Group cohesion is defined as a dynamic process reflecting a group's tendency to stick together and remain united in pursuing their functional goals or for member satisfaction (Carron et al., 1998). Cohesion is multidimensional, involving social and task-related components. Social cohesion refers to the degree of interaction among team members, while task cohesion refers to the level of unity in achieving performance-related goals (Carron et al., 2007). Thus, group cohesion might play a crucial role in shaping and reducing perceptions of social loafing in sports teams.

A study by Moradi Aghbelagh et al. (2014) examined whether there is a relationship between group cohesion and its components in the perception



of social loafing among premier league volleyball players. Some research directly or indirectly discusses the relationship between group dynamics and social loafing in sports, particularly volleyball (Friesen, 2012). The key question in most research on group dynamics and social loafing is whether a better understanding of group dynamics can enhance individual and team performance by reducing social loafing or improving the outcomes of sports interventions.

Human behaviors in sports environments and group practices manifest where individuals' cognitions, emotions, and behaviors are influenced by other group members. Group dynamics in sports and sports psychology examine the unique psychological dynamics that emerge in sports groups and practices.

The reviewed sources provide a clear and comprehensive guide to contemporary theory, research, and practical applications, covering key topics and advanced subjects while highlighting directions for future research. For example, various aspects of social and group dynamics in sports are addressed by Albert V. Carron et al., and also by Sophia Jowett and David Lavallee.

A collection of articles by Singh et al. explains the understanding of group behavior in volleyball from the perspective of social loafing. Garcia-Gonzalez et al. provide valuable insights into how team cohesion impacts social loafing in volleyball (Singh et al., 2018).



Figure 1. Conceptual Map of the Content Structure of Psychological Characteristics of the Phenomenon of Social Loafing in Sports

Table 1. Content Structure of Psychological Characteristics of the Phenomenon of Social Loafing in Sports

Conceptual Structure of Social Loafing	Related Sources
Definition of social loafing and its importance in sports settings	Karau & Williams (1993)
Processes of conceptual development of social loafing in sports	Hardy & Latané (1988)
Factors influencing social loafing in sports	Karau & Williams (2001)
Team size and its effects on social loafing	Ingham et al. (1974)
Group cohesion and passive behaviors of players	Hardy & Crace (1997)
Leadership structure and its effects on sports social loafing	Høigaard et al. (2006)
Individual responsibility and its relation to social loafing in sports	Forsyth & Kelley (1994)
Effects of social loafing on team performance and group cohesion in sports settings	Karau & Williams (1995)
Strategies and tactics for managing social loafing in sports	Liden et al. (2004)
Enhancing group cohesion and internal communications in sports teams	Beal et al. (2003)
Strengthening individual responsibility and maintaining player motivation	Forsyth & Kelley (1994)
Effective leadership and providing constructive feedback on team performance	Høigaard et al. (2006)
Final remarks and suggestions for future research and practical applications	Sims & Nichols (2008)



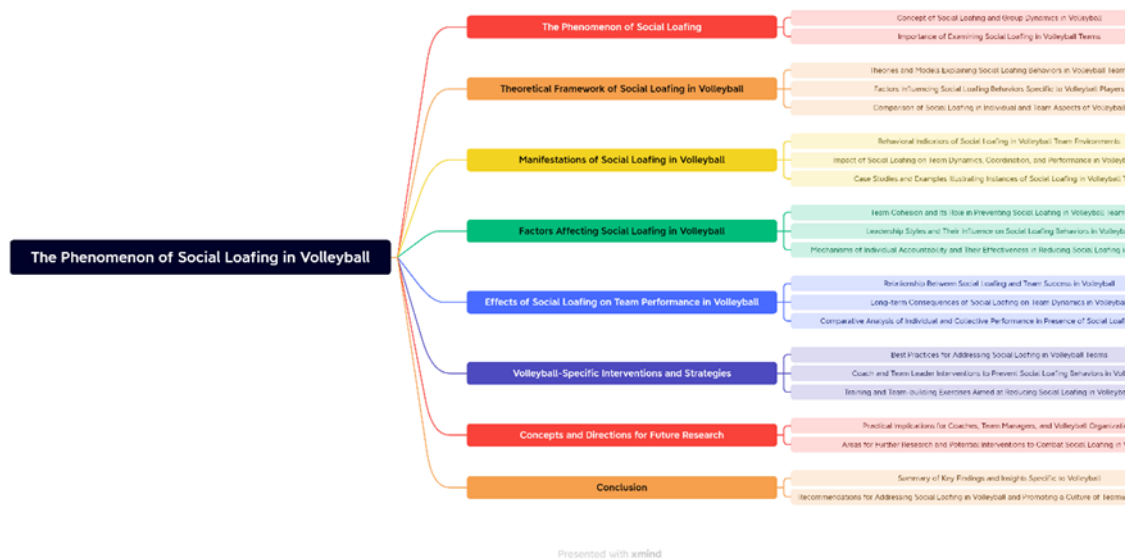


Figure 2. Conceptual Map of the Content Structure of Psychological Characteristics of the Phenomenon of Social Loafing Specifically in Volleyball

Table 2. Content Structure of Psychological Characteristics of the Phenomenon of Social Loafing, Specifically in Volleyball

Conceptual Structure of Social Loafing	Related Sources
Phenomenon of Social Loafing in Volleyball	Lee & Harmer (1996)
Concept of Social Loafing and Group Dynamics in Volleyball	Hardy et al. (2005)
Importance of Investigating Social Loafing in Volleyball	Teams Latané et al. (1979)
Theoretical Framework of Social Loafing in Volleyball	Karau & Williams (2001)
Theories and Models Explaining Social Loafing Behaviors in Volleyball	Teams Forsyth (2000)
Factors Influencing Social Loafing Behaviors of Volleyball Players	Høigaard & Peters (2009)
Comparison of Social Loafing in Individual and Team Aspects of Volleyball	Kim & Gill (1997)
Manifestations of Social Loafing in Volleyball	Wu & Chen (2005)
Behavioral Indicators of Social Loafing in Volleyball Team Environments	Smith & Williams (1993)
Impact of Social Loafing on Team Dynamics, Coordination, and Performance in Volleyball Matches	Feltz & Lirgg (1998)
Case Studies and Examples Demonstrating Social Loafing in Volleyball Teams	Eys et al. (2009)
Factors Affecting Social Loafing in Volleyball	Prappavessis & Carron (1997)
Team Cohesion and Its Role in Preventing Social Loafing in Volleyball Teams	Carron & Brawley (2000)
Leadership Styles and Their Impact on Social Loafing Behaviors in Volleyball	Høigaard et al. (2008)
Mechanisms of Individual Accountability and Their Effectiveness in Reducing Social Loafing in Volleyball Teams	Lee & Eys (2006)
Effects of Social Loafing on Team Performance in Volleyball	Zaccaro (1984)
Relationship Between Social Loafing and Team Success in Volleyball	Kozlowski & Ilgen (2006)
Long-term Consequences of Social Loafing on Volleyball Team Dynamics	Williams & Karau (1991)
Comparative Analysis of Individual and Collective Performance in the Presence of Social Loafing in Volleyball	Johnson & Johnson (1989)
Specific Interventions and Strategies for Volleyball	Sullivan & Feltz (2003)



Best Practices for Addressing Social Loafing in Volleyball Teams	Weinberg & Gould (2011)
Coach and Team Leader Interventions to Prevent Social Loafing Behaviors in Volleyball	Fletcher & Roberts (2013)
Training and Team-building Exercises Aimed at Reducing Social Loafing in Volleyball Teams	Fletcher & Roberts (2013)
Concepts and Directions for Future Research	Shepperd & Taylor (1999)
Practical Implications for Coaches, Team Managers, and Volleyball Organizations	Beersma et al. (2003)
Areas for Further Research and Potential Interventions to Combat Social Loafing in Volleyball	Williams et al. (1981)
Summary of Findings and Key Insights Specific to Volleyball	Eys et al. (2009)
Recommendations for Addressing Social Loafing in Volleyball and Promoting Teamwork and Accountability	Karau & Williams (1993)

3.2. Key Findings

Below are some examples of key findings, implications, and potential solutions based on research:

- Studies show that social loafing behaviors, such as reduced effort and motivation, can be common in volleyball teams, especially during practice sessions where individual contributions are made.
- Surveys highlight a relationship between social loafing and reduced team cohesion, with players feeling less responsible and motivated when their efforts are critical to the team's overall success.
- Research identifies specific situational factors, such as group size and task visibility, that can influence the likelihood of social loafing behaviors in volleyball teams.
- Social loafing in volleyball teams can lead to decreased performance in terms of coordination, communication, and overall team success during games and competitions.
- The presence of social loafing behaviors can reduce player engagement and motivation, ultimately impacting team morale and overall cohesion.
- Breakdown in communication and lack of synergy on the court can result from social loafing behaviors, leading to poor team performance and potential internal conflicts.

3.3. Potential Solutions

- Studies indicate that promoting a culture of individual accountability and emphasizing the importance of each player's contributions can reduce social loafing and group resentment in volleyball teams.
- Setting clear team goals and creating a supportive team environment that values and recognizes

individual efforts are suggested as effective strategies to address social loafing.

- Interventions focused on enhancing communication, teamwork, and shared responsibility within the team have been shown to reduce instances of social loafing and improve overall team performance.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

Volleyball requires a high level of precision and coordination in both individual and group techniques, necessitating sensory and psychological physiological mechanisms (Kleschev, 1998). Understanding social (group) movements and the ability to quickly orient in new situations are important characteristics of volleyball players. Almost all actions of volleyball players are based on visual perceptions and team convergence. Understanding social (group) movements in volleyball is crucial for several reasons (Fiedler, 2018):

- Impact on Team Dynamics: Social loafing can disrupt team cohesion and individual motivation, leading to decreased performance and communication breakdowns within the team (Spink, 1990).
- Importance of Individual Contributions: In volleyball, each player's contribution is vital to the team's success. Social loafing can undermine the importance of individual efforts, affecting the team's overall performance (Dezhagrov & Puni, 1990).
- Addressing Team Success: By recognizing and addressing social loafing, teams can foster a culture of responsibility, motivation, and teamwork, ultimately enhancing their chances of success on the court (Ricop et al., 2019).



• **Maximizing Team Performance:** Combating social loafing can lead to stronger team dynamics, improved communication, and increased motivation, all of which help maximize the team's performance and potential (Fertuzza de la Rosa, 2020).

Therefore, understanding and addressing social loafing in volleyball is essential for maintaining a cohesive and high-performing team. Volleyball teams can reduce the negative impact of social loafing by emphasizing the importance of individual contributions and promoting a supportive team environment, striving to achieve their full potential on the court (Sabine & Alexandro, 2015).

Coaches are responsible for guiding the training process of volleyball athletes and should consider the athletes' personalities, their psychological orientation, and their motivation for participating in competitions. Coaches must ensure the mental health of players, coordinate them with various psychological and physical conditions, and prepare them for competitions (Moradi, 2004). Coaches are a key factor in social loafing among athletes: a coach should not discriminate between players, must know all players and be familiar with their abilities and performances, and should not place all responsibilities on one player or suppress others to increase performance through jealousy (Andoux et al., 2013). A competent coach can distribute tasks and roles among players, motivate them, prevent division within the team, and establish mutual trust and confidence. A coach must consider group factors in relation to sports goals, record motivational aspects, emphasize the importance of each individual in the team, and stress each member's responsibility. Cohesion, satisfaction, and willingness to perform depend on these factors.

Teams often fail to reach their full potential due to various interpersonal processes that diminish overall efficiency. A winning team is one that can prevent social loafing, coordinate interpersonal processes, maintain team cohesion and responsibility among all players, and ensure that all duties are predetermined. Sacrifice is a priority for the team; if a player cannot perform a task, they should not take it on to avoid losing points and should instead pass the opportunity to others. Knowing the characteristics and abilities of all players can lead to team success.

An athlete familiar with the personality, individual characteristics, ethics, and performance of other players and who starts training with the team is less likely to engage in social loafing. Such an athlete

uses all their capacities to achieve the team's shared goals and spares no effort. Reducing social loafing is mainly about increasing group members' participation in the desired work or goal. This can be achieved by turning work into friendly competition among group members or attaching rewards or punishments to the work, provided that the group exerts equal effort.

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تبیین ساختار و نقد آثار پدیده تنبلی اجتماعی در تیم های والیبال

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چکیده: مقاله مروری حاضر به تبیین ساختار و نقد آثار پدیده تنبلی اجتماعی در رشته تیمی والیبال می‌پردازد. این مطالعه مروری با استناد به آراء و نظریه‌ها و پژوهش‌های موجود، به ساختار مفهومی و عوامل تأثیر گذار بر رفتارهای فردی و گروهی در محیط‌های ورزشی و بطور خاص والیبال؛ از جمله انسجام و همبستگی تیمی، سبک‌های رهبری، ارتباطات و وظایف متقابل و همچنین انگیزه هر فرد می‌پردازد. بررسی چگونگی روش‌شناسی تحقیق و تدوین مقالات و متآنالیزها در پایگاه‌های اطلاعاتی دانشگاهی مانند PubMed، Google Scholar و PsycINFO نشان می‌دهد بطور عمده رویکرد پژوهش‌های با موضوع پدیده مورد نظر، قیاسی و راهبرد آنان پیمایشی از طریق مطالعات مشاهده‌ای و مصاحبه‌ها با بازیکنان و مربیان و با استفاده از پرسشنامه است. یافته‌های این بررسی مروری ازسویی به ارائه ساختار تبیین رفتارهای تنبلی اجتماعی در محیط‌ها و تیم‌های ورزشی، و از سوی دیگر نکات کلیدی و راه حل‌های مرتبط با جهت‌گیری‌های تحقیقاتی آینده ورزش والیبال، راهبردها راهکارها و مداخلات (مربیان و رهبری تیم) که برای کاهش تنبلی اجتماعی و انسجام و بهبود پویایی گروهی در تیم‌های والیبال، و در نتیجه بهبود عملکرد تیم در نظر گرفته شده است، می‌پردازد.

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این نماد به معنای مجوز استفاده از اثر با دو شرط است یکی استناد به نویسنده و دیگری استفاده برای مقاصد غیرتجاری.

واژه‌های کلیدی: تنبلی اجتماعی، عملکرد، مشارکت ورزشکار، والیبال، پویایی گروهی