

Understanding Social Loafing Among Senior High School Learners: Proposed Evidence-Based Teaching-Learning Intervention Strategies

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ABSTRACT

This mixed-methods explanatory sequential study investigated the phenomenon of social loafing among Grade 12 learners at Leyte National High School in the Philippines. Recognizing that collaborative learning is a cornerstone of the Philippine Department of Education curriculum, this study addressed a critical gap in local literature by exploring the extent, causes, consequences, and solutions to social loafing within this specific institutional context. Quantitative data were collected through surveys, followed by qualitative data gathered via in depth interviews to provide deeper explanation of the initial findings.

The findings reveal a notable self-other discrepancy, where learners rarely identify themselves as loafers but readily recognize loafing behavior in their peers. Key causes of social loafing include the absence of individual grading, the perception that personal input is unnecessary for group success, large group sizes, and unclear individual accountability. Qualitative analysis uncovered additional personal factors such as laziness, lack of interest, lack of competence, fear of judgment, and low academic ambition. Group dynamic factors include poor communication and permissive leadership, while external factors encompass home responsibilities and technological constraints.

Consequences of social loafing extend beyond poor academic performance to include delayed submissions, overburdened active members experiencing stress and burnout, resentment and conflict among team members, decreased motivation, and damaged group cohesion. Proposed solutions include establishing clear and equal roles, implementing individual grading and peer evaluations, applying meaningful consequences for non-contribution, fostering open communication, setting strict deadlines with monitoring, and reducing group size. The study concludes that addressing social loafing requires structural, and relational interventions to create equitable and productive collaborative learning environments.

INTRODUCTION

Background and Rationale

Collaborative learning is a fundamental component of the Philippine Department of Education (DepEd) curriculum. The Policy Guidelines on the K to 12 Basic Education Program explicitly state that the curriculum should employ pedagogical approaches that are not only constructivist, inquiry-based, reflective, differentiated, and integrative but also collaborative in nature (DepEd Order No. 021, s. 2019). This mandate is grounded in the belief that collaborative approaches allow learners to share ideas, thereby developing the values of cooperation, respect, camaraderie, and tolerance. Furthermore, the MATATAG Curriculum reinforces the alignment of basic education with global standards and competencies, including critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration (DepEd Order No. 010, s. 2024).

Building on these premises, collaborative learning holds significant educational value. Not only it cultivates creativity, communication, and social skills through shared tasks and discussion but also promotes higher-order thinking as learners explain, argue, and defend their ideas. Effective teamwork is indeed essential to the learning process. Working in groups helps learners develop problem-solving, communication, and critical thinking skills

while providing opportunities to learn from peers. Exposure to diverse ideas within a team enriches individual perspectives and leads to better decisions and outcomes.

The importance of teamwork within the education system is further highlighted in DepEd Order No. 035, s. 2016. Collaborative learning activities, such as group projects, peer discussions, and cooperative learning exercises, are encouraged not only among learners but also among teachers. Educators are mandated to engage in collaborative learning sessions with colleagues to address shared challenges through Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions. This mandate is reinforced by the organization of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), which aim to encourage teacher collaboration through mentoring programs and team teaching to improve instructional practice.

Despite the numerous benefits of collaborative or cooperative learning, widely regarded as one of the most effective educational approaches, its implementation requires thoughtful and intentional design to ensure that all group members actively participate and that learning objectives are met. A persistent challenge in group work is the tendency for individuals to reduce their effort when performing collectively, a phenomenon known as social loafing.

In a study by Riwoe (2022) titled "*Social Loafing Behavior in Group Task Completion of University Students*," findings revealed that students experienced social loafing when working on group tasks. The study also indicated that this behavior threatens both productivity and the quality of learning outcomes. Given these negative effects, research on social loafing continues to stimulate further investigation and re-examination to achieve a holistic understanding and develop effective strategic responses. Nevertheless, empirical literature remains varied and diverse regarding the factors associated with social loafing and its impacts. Riwoe (2022) further revealed that social loafing is often poorly addressed and remains widespread, underscoring the need for more research in this area.

Despite the growing body of international and national research on social loafing, no study to date has specifically investigated this phenomenon among senior high school learners at Leyte National High School (LNHS). This gap in the local literature further justifies the present inquiry, as contextual factors, such as school culture, class size, grading practices, and teacher facilitation styles, may uniquely shape how social loafing manifests and how it can best be addressed within this specific institutional setting. In addition, LNHS has more than 3,000 senior high school learners and sufficient to provide the needed information is another reason why it was chosen as the study site.

The DepEd is mandated to provide quality basic education for all Filipino learners and must ensure that learning outcomes are achieved while addressing all hindering factors. As stipulated in DepEd Order No. 39, s. 2016, *Teaching and Learning* is identified as the first theme in the DepEd Research Agenda. This order highlights the importance of an effective teaching-learning process and implies that any aspect, component, or factor that could adversely affect teaching and learning outcomes is a matter of grave concern that must be examined and explored. This policy directive provides a compelling rationale for the present study, which seeks not only to explore the factors and impacts associated with social loafing but also to investigate how these driving factors may be mitigated or prevented. The goal is to ensure that the quality education envisioned by DepEd is not compromised.

To achieve a comprehensive and holistic understanding of this phenomenon, a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies, was deemed most appropriate. This design allows the researchers to capture both the breadth and depth of social loafing as it manifests among senior high school learners. By exploring all possible factors associated with social loafing, the results of this study will provide valuable support to teachers who utilize group activities in lesson delivery. Educators may adopt evidence-based strategies to mitigate social loafing and preserve the effectiveness of teamwork and collaboration in their classrooms. Furthermore, this study may generate suggestions and recommendations for preventing social loafing, grounded in the perspectives of the learners themselves.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to explore the factors and impacts associated with social loafing among senior high school learners of Leyte National High School (LNHS) during School Year 2025–2026. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the perceived extent or prevalence of social loafing among senior high school learners at LNHS, as reported by the learners themselves?
2. What are the perceived causes and consequences of social loafing among senior high school learners at LNHS?
3. Why does social loafing occur among learners during collaborative or group work, from the perspective of senior high school learners at LNHS?
4. How does social loafing affect group performance in terms of productivity, output quality, and group dynamics?
5. What intervention strategies may be developed and proposed based on the findings to mitigate or prevent social loafing among senior high school learners at LNHS?

Scope and Delimitations

The present study focused on exploring the factors and impacts associated with social loafing among senior high school learners of LNHS during School Year 2025–2026. To develop a deeper understanding of this phenomenon, a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches (explanatory mixed-methods design) was utilized. The investigation specifically targeted the following: learners enrolled in Grade 12 as respondents and participants of the study from the Academic and Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) tracks. The quantitative data were gathered through surveys, followed by qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

The present study was deliberately limited to Grade 12 learners. It did not include Grades 7–11, as social loafing behaviors may manifest differently across developmental stages and the researcher prioritized senior high school learners, particularly Grade 12 due to their more frequent engagement in collaborative tasks and group projects. The study was confined exclusively to LNHS for a context-specific understanding of social loafing within a single institutional setting before any potential replication. Thus, findings were specific to the LNHS context and were not intended for generalization to other schools, divisions, or regions without further validation. This delimitation was set to ensure depth over breadth, given the available time and resources.

The present study acknowledged the following limitations: The primary data collection method relied on self-reported surveys and interviews. Learners may have underreported or overreported their social loafing behaviors due to social desirability bias, lack of self-awareness, or fear of consequences. The unique culture, student demographics, and institutional practices of LNHS may limit the applicability of results elsewhere. The study was conducted within a limited time frame (school year 2025-2026). A longer study period might have revealed different patterns.

In the qualitative phase, the researcher's interpretations of data transcripts may have been subject to personal bias. Although strategies such as member checking and peer debriefing were employed, complete objectivity could not be guaranteed.

Significance of Study

To date, no investigation on social loafing has been conducted at Leyte National High School (LNHS). This gap in local research necessitates the present study, which aims to address the phenomenon of social loafing among senior high school learners within this specific institutional context. Accordingly, the results of this study will contribute to the broader body of knowledge on social loafing in educational settings. More importantly, they will provide critical, context-specific information necessary for the development of intervention strategies designed to reduce the risks of or eliminate social loafing at LNHS.

The anticipated findings are expected to hold significant value for teachers. Educators will receive evidence-based inputs that they can directly utilize to mitigate social loafing, thereby preserving the effectiveness of teamwork and collaborative learning in their classrooms. Furthermore, the results will also be beneficial to school administrators. School leaders will be equipped with essential data needed to formulate and implement institutional strategies that improve overall teaching–learning practices across the school. Ultimately, this study supports the Department of Education's mission to promote quality basic education by fostering accountable, productive, and equitable collaborative learning environments for all learners at LNHS.

Definition of Key Terms

Causes of social loafing. This term refers to the factors or conditions that trigger or increase the likelihood of social loafing behavior (Oxford Reference, n.d.).

Effects of social loafing. This term refers to the consequences or outcomes resulting from social loafing behavior, both at the individual and group levels (Oxford Reference, n.d.).

Group dynamics. This term is defined as the observable interactions, relationships, and behavioral patterns among group members, including communication, cooperation, role distribution, conflict resolution, and mutual accountability during collaborative tasks.

Productivity. This term refers to the efficiency with which individuals or groups convert inputs, such as time and labor, into valuable outputs. In practice, it measures how effectively tasks are completed within a reasonable use of time and resources. High productivity thus signifies not only completing tasks, but doing so optimally, avoiding unnecessary waste.

Quality of Output. This term refers to the standard of the final product or service. It reflects how well the output fulfills its intended purpose, meeting the necessary requirements and expectations set by the teachers or the class.

Senior High School Learners. This term refers to learners in Grades 11 and 12 under the Philippine K to 12 Program (DepEd, 2013), typically preparing for higher education, entrepreneurship, or skills development. The K to 12 Program includes six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School (Official Gazette, 2012).

Teaching-Learning Intervention Strategies. These terms refer to evidence-based, planned approaches derived from participant perspectives, designed to address, reduce, or prevent social loafing in educational settings and enhance teaching–learning experiences.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter presents a review of relevant concepts, ideas, and findings from various literatures that have provided necessary information and valuable insights into the topic under investigation. The chapter is organized into three main sections: Conceptual Literature, Conceptual Framework, and Related Studies.

Conceptual Literature

The Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines actively promotes collaboration in the classroom as a key pedagogical approach. However, collaboration is not limited to learners; DepEd also emphasizes professional collaboration among teachers to improve instruction and student outcomes. This emphasis is aligned with the K to 12 Basic Education Program, which highlights 21st-century skills such as communication, creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration (DepEd Order No. 021, s. 2019; DepEd Order No. 010, s. 2024). Despite the recognized benefits of collaborative learning, group activities, if not managed effectively, can unfortunately lead to a phenomenon where some individuals contribute less effort than they would when working alone. This behavior is known as social loafing.

Social loafing is a term used in social psychology to describe what happens when an individual puts in less effort when their performance is judged as part of a group (Wooll, 2025). She further described it as a decrease in effort and motivation by individuals, leading to reduced work output. The phenomenon was first identified by Max Ringelmann, a French agricultural engineer, who studied group performance and found that groups of people did not meet their potential, defined as the sum of the maximum output of each individual acting alone. This finding is known as the Ringelmann Effect, which describes the inverse relationship between team size and effort expended. Ringelmann noted that as the number of group members increased, there was a decrease in overall performance. He attributed this decline to motivational loss, interpreting that the reduction of effort occurs in collective tasks because group members cannot be evaluated individually (Hoffman, 2023).

Social loafing can occur not only in educational institutions but also in various settings, like business environments, volunteer organizations, sports teams and even within virtual teams. In business, for example, Kundu et al., (2020) conducted a study that highlights the importance of the perceived role clarity in developing positive work attitudes and innovative behavior among employees. They found that perceived role clarity has positive relation with intrinsic motivation, and job involvement. The results of the study suggested that organizations should strive constantly to enhance perceptions of role clarity among employees so that they remain motivated and involved in their jobs and exhibit innovative behavior at work. Similarly, Flournoy (2023) states that "clearly defined roles enable individuals to understand their responsibilities and contribute effectively to the organization's objectives," which in turn "leads to improved productivity and collaboration." He further notes that accountability ensures individuals make informed choices and take ownership of their work. These principles apply directly to educational settings. When learners are assigned specific, visible roles within a group, they are more likely to feel accountable for their contributions, thereby reducing the likelihood of social loafing. Conversely, when role clarity is absent, students may feel their efforts are unnecessary or will go unnoticed, encouraging the very behavior this study seeks to address.

Furthermore, literature also shows that several factors are associated with social loafing. For instance, Jassawalla et al. (2009) investigated students' perceptions of social loafing, focusing on its antecedents and consequences in undergraduate business classroom teams. They found that student apathy and social disconnectedness were identified as antecedents of social loafing, while taking compensatory action when team members social loafed was identified as a consequence. The study found that when students feel indifferent about the work or detached from their teammates, they are more likely to withdraw effort.

In a separate study, Afif et al. (2024) conducted an exploratory study on social loafing among high school students and found that lack of contribution, excessive expectations, lack of self-awareness, and lack of self-confidence served as backgrounds or causes of social loafing in high school students working on group assignments.

While there are identified factors that influence social loafing behavior, there are also ways to minimize or prevent it from occurring. According to Williams et al (1981), one factor that increases group productivity is when group members feel that they are being evaluated individually. Increasing identifiability tends to decrease social loafing. Furthermore, minimizing or avoiding situations in which group members exert less effort because others will compensate for them, that is, preventing group members from free riding, reduces social loafing because group members feel a greater sense of responsibility.

Hoffman (2023) also added that assigning separate and distinct contributions to every team member may also be an effective strategy to avoid social loafing. Without distinct goals, groups and group members drift into social loafing with much greater ease. Setting clear goals helps group members become more productive and decreases social loafing. Another factor that can greatly affect the presence of social loafing is involvement in the group. Members who feel involved and invested in the group tend to be more productive. Thus, increasing involvement in the group can encourage team loyalty and decrease social loafing. In summary, by establishing individual accountability, minimizing free riding, encouraging team loyalty, and assigning distinct responsibilities for each team member, social loafing can be effectively avoided.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1. Understanding Social Loafing Leading to Evidence-based Intervention Strategies Formulation

The conceptual framework of this study, as illustrated in Figure 1, follows the Input–Process–Output (IPO) model to systematically organize the concepts under investigation. As shown in the figure, the input stage focuses on the issue of social loafing among senior high school learners, which serves as the central problem and primary data source for this inquiry. These inputs include the causes and consequences of social loafing. While in the process stage, both quantitative and qualitative data are collected and subjected to rigorous analyses using numerical (statistical) and textual (thematic) approaches, following an explanatory mixed-methods design where quantitative data are analyzed first, followed by qualitative data to explain and enrich the initial findings. Based on these careful analyses, the output stage produces proposed intervention strategies designed to eliminate or prevent social loafing behavior in collaborative learning settings. Ultimately, this investigation is conceptually aligned with the DepEd’s mission to “promote the right of every Filipino to quality basic education” by fostering more equitable, accountable, and effective group learning environments for senior high school students.

This study is anchored on several theories on social loafing, primarily the Collective Effort Model (CEM) and Social Identity Theory (SIT). The CEM, proposed by Karau and Williams (2001), posits that an individual's motivation to contribute to a group task is influenced by expectancy (belief that individual effort leads to a desired outcome, also known as identifiability) and valence (value placed on that outcome, also known as perceived contribution). Increasing these factors reduces social loafing and enhances productivity. Social loafing thrives on a lack of individual accountability; when tasks are unclear, members can "hide in the crowd." High identifiability makes contributions transparent and measurable, while high valence makes members see their role as meaningful and essential, thereby reducing free riding. On the other hand, SIT, proposed by Tajfel and Turner (1986), suggests that motivation is tied to group identification. When individuals experience belongingness, purpose, self-worth, and identity within a group, they become more committed to its success and are less likely to engage in social loafing.

Building on this work, the present study investigates social loafing among senior high school learners at Leyte National High School to propose intervention strategies that reduce social loafing and improve collaborative learning outcomes as envisioned by the Department of Education.

Related Studies

Results of empirical investigations on the issue of social loafing behavior remain varied and diverse, reflecting the complexity of the phenomenon and the influence of multiple contextual, cultural, and individual factors. This complexity explains why the results of different investigations can appear varied and even contradictory.

In a study entitled "*Exploring Antecedents of Social Loafing in Students' Group Work: A Mixed-Methods Approach*," the results revealed that students' competencies, emotional relationships, and collective identities are key determinants of social loafing behavior (Luo et al., 2021). The study concluded that three factors emerged as the key determinants of social loafing behavior: individual factors (competencies and emotional relationships) and cultural factors (collective identities). The students' competencies are the student's perceived lack of skills or ability to complete the task that can lead them to withdraw effort, while the emotional relationships to the quality of the interpersonal connections and feelings among group members that significantly impact individual contribution levels. On the other hand, collective identities refer to the extent to which students identify with and feel a sense of belonging to the group is a critical predictor of whether they will engage in or avoid social loafing. It is also worth noting that the above study employed a mixed-methods approach to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, combining quantitative and qualitative analyses.

The same methodological approach was used by Tapiz et al. (2023), who employed a mixed-methods explanatory sequential design to investigate social loafing among student-researchers. The study aimed to determine the level of social loafing and to uncover the lived experiences of student-researchers who encountered social loafing members while conducting an undergraduate thesis. Data collection was carried out in two phases. Phase 1 involved quantitative data gathered via a survey of 385 randomly selected student-researchers.

Descriptive analysis, using the mean as a statistical tool, indicated an overall low level of social loafing among the participants. Phase 2 focused on qualitative data, collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with 14 key participants who were selected through purposive sampling. The findings revealed the overall low level of social loafing among the student-researchers based on the quantitative data, which suggests that in the specific context of thesis work, most students generally maintain their effort rather than reducing it. However, the qualitative interviews uncovered important negative experiences among students who did encounter social loafers. Three key themes emerged: (1) *sense of regret in group selection* where students regretted choosing certain group members after experiencing their lack of contribution; (2) *emotional distress*, which means that dealing with social loafers caused significant emotional strain on contributing members; and (3) *unfair distribution of tasks*, which means that loafing behavior resulted in an imbalanced workload falling on fewer group members.

Another study was conducted by Aggarwal and O'Brien (2008) on social loafing in group projects, specifically examining structural antecedents and the effect on student satisfaction. Results revealed that a common problem with the use of student groups is social loafing. The study also found that the incidence of social loafing increases with the scope of the project and the size of the student group assigned to the project. Importantly, having multiple peer evaluations during the project was found to reduce social loafing. In short, the results revealed that group size and project scope as key predictors while peer evaluation as solution.

Liden et al. (2004) conducted a field investigation on social loafing. The study revealed that, at the individual level, increases in task interdependence and decreases in task visibility and distributive justice were associated with a greater occurrence of social loafing. At the group level, increased group size and decreased cohesiveness were also related to increased levels of social loafing. The study results further indicated that students' competencies, emotional relationships, and collective identities are key determinants of social loafing behavior, consistent with the findings of Luo et al. (2021).

Furthermore, North et al. (2000) conducted a study on social loafing in a cooperative classroom task and found that individuals working within smaller groups were more productive than those working in larger groups. This finding indicates that group size is a predictor of social loafing.

From the reviewed related studies, it appears that the most appropriate method for investigating social loafing, particularly when the aim is to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, is a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. It is on this basis that the present study utilize an explanatory mixed-methods sequential design, as this approach allows researchers to gain a broader and more holistic understanding of social loafing, something that neither a purely quantitative nor a purely qualitative study could provide on its own.

Furthermore, because the present study considers the possibility that social loafing is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., contextual, relational, and individual, as presented in the reviewed literature), a mixed-methods approach is believed to be perfectly suited to addressing this complexity. This present study utilizes quantitative analysis to identify the factors and impacts of social loafing and then employs qualitative inquiry to explore the how and why through the individual experiences of participants that influence their behavior in a particular setting. Moreover, the qualitative data collected from in-depth interview strengthen the quantitative findings by offering richer interpretation and validation.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents a detailed discussion of the methods employed to answer the research questions of this study. The chapter includes the following sections: research design, research environment, respondents and participants of the study, data collection procedures, research instruments, validation of instruments, ethical considerations, and plan for data analysis. The collected data were subjected to statistical analysis for quantitative data and thematic analysis with in vivo coding for qualitative data.

Research Design

This study utilized an explanatory sequential mixed methods design. In this approach, quantitative data were gathered and analyzed in the initial phase, followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data in the subsequent phase. The results from both phases were then integrated to produce a fuller interpretation.

Accordingly, the data collection and analysis procedures were divided into two phases. In Phase 1, quantitative data were collected using a survey questionnaire that measured the prevalence of social loafing, its associated factors, and its impacts. The collected data were then subjected to statistical analysis. In Phase 2, the results of the statistical analysis from Phase 1 served as the basis for in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with selected participants. The qualitative data gathered were analyzed using thematic analysis employing in vivo coding. Finally, the findings from both phases were synthesized to yield integrated interpretations.

This design was chosen because it allowed the researchers to first identify broad trends and patterns quantitatively and then explore the deeper reasons and contextual explanations qualitatively (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Research Environment

This study was conducted at Leyte National High School (LNHS), formerly a provincial high school of Leyte established in 1905, located at Gonzaga Avenue, Tacloban City, Leyte, Philippines. The researchers are senior high school teachers at the said school, which provided accessibility and contextual familiarity.

Since 2016, LNHS has been classified as an Integrated Senior High School. For School Year 2024–2025, LNHS had an estimated enrollment of 10,000 learners across both junior and senior high school levels. Under the senior high school program, LNHS offers two main tracks: (1) Academic Track with the following strands, Accountancy, Business and Management (ABM), General Academic (GA), Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS), and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM); Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) Track with Information and Communications Technology (ICT); Home Economics (HE) strands. As of the second semester of School Year 2024–2025, based on the Learners' Information System (LIS), LNHS had a total of 3,637 senior high school learners (Department of Education, 2025). The data was accessed thru <https://lis.deped.gov.ph>.

Respondents and Participants of the Study

The respondents and participants of this study were selected in two phases, consistent with the explanatory sequential mixed methods design. In Phase 1, the respondents were randomly selected from the population of senior high school learners enrolled during the second semester of School Year 2025–2026. The sample size was determined using appropriate sampling formulas to ensure representativeness. While, in Phase 2, the participants were Grade 12 senior high school learners who were identified and selected based on predetermined criteria, including: (a) self-reported experience or observation of social loafing in group work, (b) willingness to participate in in-depth interview/focus group discussions, and (c) availability during the data collection period. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants who could provide rich, relevant, and detailed information about the phenomenon under investigation.

Data Collection

To gain an in-depth understanding of the issue under investigation, a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, known as the mixed-methods explanatory sequential design, was employed. This method was also used by Tapiz et al. (2022) in their investigation of social loafing among student-researchers.

The data collection procedures were carried out as follows: Phase 1, a quantitative data collection was administered using a survey questionnaire to the randomly selected respondents. The questionnaire gathered data on the perceived prevalence or extent of social loafing, the factors associated with social loafing, and the impacts of social loafing. The quantitative data collected were then subjected to statistical analysis. The results of this

analysis provided input for the second phase of data collection. Phase 2, a qualitative data collection was conducted with selected participants through in-depth interview and focus group discussions based on the results of Phase 1. These qualitative methods allowed the researchers to explore the deeper, contextual, and experiential dimensions of social loafing. The interview questions focused on the why and how of social loafing, including: Why does social loafing occur when learners work together? How does social loafing affect group performance? How can social loafing be prevented from occurring?

With this sequential approach, the study achieved more robust, comprehensive, and reliable results than either a purely quantitative or purely qualitative design could have provided on its own.

Survey Questionnaire (Phase 1). A structured survey questionnaire was developed to collect quantitative data on the following: the extent or prevalence of social loafing; the factors associated with social loafing; and the consequences of social loafing. The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale for responses. The scale and its corresponding interpretation are presented in the Plan for Data Analysis section.

Interview Guide (Phase 2). A semi-structured interview guide was developed to facilitate in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The guide was formed through the results of the Phase 1 quantitative analysis and by relevant literature. Questions were designed to elicit detailed narratives and explanations regarding the participants' experiences with social loafing.

Validation of Research Instruments

To ensure content validity and reliability, the instruments (survey questionnaire and interview guide) were presented to and reviewed by a panel of experts. The panel consisted of experienced researchers, methodologists, and educators familiar with mixed-methods research and social loafing as a construct.

The suggestions and recommendations provided by the panel were carefully considered and incorporated into the final versions of the instruments prior to data collection. Additionally, a pilot test was conducted with a small group of senior high school learners (not included in the actual sample) to check for clarity, readability, and internal consistency.

Ethical Considerations

Understanding and adhering to ethical standards in research was a vital consideration throughout this study. The following ethical protocols were observed: All information obtained from related materials, studies, and sources were properly cited and recognized; Collected data were properly treated and organized to avoid misinterpretation and personal bias; The names of participants were not revealed. Pseudonyms and codes were used to remove personal identifiers. All data shared by participants were treated with the strictest confidentiality; Prior to participation, all respondents and participants were informed of the purpose of the study, their voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Written informed consent was obtained; All individuals involved in this study were treated with utmost respect. Their time, perspectives, and experiences were valued and acknowledged; All data (hard copies and digital files) were stored securely and will be destroyed after a specified retention period as per institutional guidelines.

Plan for Data Analysis

The data analysis plan was structured to address each specific research question using appropriate quantitative or qualitative techniques.

To answer the first research question on the perceived extent or prevalence of social loafing among senior high school learners, descriptive statistics (mean scores) were computed. The following interpretation scheme was utilized:

Mean Ranges	Qualitative Interpretation	Meaning
4.20 – 5.00	Always happening	Very serious problem

3.40 – 4.19	Often happening	Serious problem
2.60 – 3.39	Sometimes happening	Moderate problem
1.80 – 2.59	Rarely happening	Minor problem
1.00 – 1.79	Never happening	Not at all a problem

To answer the second research question on the perceived causes (factors) and consequences of social loafing, descriptive statistics (mean scores) were also computed. The following interpretation scheme was utilized:

Mean Ranges	Qualitative Interpretation	Meaning
4.20 – 5.00	Strongly agree	Overwhelming consensus
3.40 – 4.19	Agree	General consensus
2.60 – 3.39	Neutral	Mixed opinions
1.80 – 2.59	Disagree	Not relevant by the majority
1.00 – 1.79	Strongly disagree	Strong rejection

To address the third and fourth research questions which explore the reasons why social loafing occurs and how it affects group performance, qualitative data were collected. Specifically, Phase 2 employed in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with 20 key participants selected through purposive sampling from the larger sample of 315 learners. The following analytical steps were adapted from Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenological method (Morrow et al., 2015):

- Familiarization of the collected by reading through all the participants accounts
- Identifying significant responses
- Giving or formulate meaning that relevant to the studied phenomenon
- Clustering themes that are common across all accounts
- Developing an exhaustive description
- Producing the fundamental structure that captures the phenomenon investigated
- Seeking verification of the fundamental structure

To answer the fifth research question on the intervention strategies that may be developed and proposed, the inputs and results from both the quantitative and qualitative phases served as the primary basis. Specifically: the quantitative findings identified the most prevalent factors and impacts; and the qualitative findings provided contextual understanding and participant-suggested solutions. These integrated results informed the formulation of evidence-based intervention strategies designed to mitigate or prevent social loafing at Leyte National High School.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results and discussion of the study, organized according to the five research questions. Quantitative findings from the survey of 315 Grade 12 learners of LNHS are reported first, followed by qualitative themes drawn from interviews and focus group discussions with 20 participants. The chapter concludes with an integration of findings, highlighting key insights on the extent, causes, and effects of social loafing on group performance while verbatim quotations with researchers' interpretations derived from pattern analysis for qualitative data.

Research Question 1. What is the perceived extent or prevalence of social loafing among senior high school learners at LNHS, as reported by the learners themselves?

The initial phase of the investigation focused on quantifying the occurrence of social loafing among Grade 12 learners at LNHS. Addressing this question first is critical before attempting to identify causes, consequences, or solutions, school administrators and teachers must understand whether social loafing is a minor, isolated behavior or a widespread systemic issue that demands immediate attention. The perceived extent of social loafing was measured using ten behavioral indicators, grouped into two categories: learners' self-perceptions (items 1–5) and their perceptions of loafing in others (items 6–10) as shown in the table.

Table 1 presents the mean scores and corresponding interpretations for ten behavioral statements measuring the extent of social loafing among Grade 12 learners of LNHS. The interpretation scale used is a Likert scale ranges: 1.00-1.80 (never happening); 1.81-2.60 (rarely happening); 2.61-3.40 (sometimes happening); 3.41-4.20 (often happening); and 4.21-5.00 (always happening).

As may be seen in Table 1, learners rated themselves low across all five self-perception loafing items, with mean scores $\bar{x}=1.69$ - $\bar{x}=2.54$, suggesting that behaviors such as failing to contribute equally, relying on others, exerting minimal effort, participating passively, and neglecting their share of work were rarely happening according to their own accounts. On the other hand, when learners rated the behavior of others (behavioral statements 6-10), the scores shifted dramatically toward frequent loafing. These are all in the “*Often happening*” range, except item 9 (“Workload not distributed equally” – $\bar{x}=2.80$, *Sometimes happening*). The high mean scores ($\bar{x}=3.49$ – $\bar{x}=3.87$) indicate that social loafing is perceived as a common and recurring problem. Results show that learners consistently reported that they have witnessed non-contributing members in their groups, at least one person did little to no work, some members consistently avoid tasks, and/or only a few people ended up doing most of the work.

Table 1

The perceived prevalence of social loafing as reported by G12 learners

Num	Behavioral statements	Mean score	Interpretation
1	In group projects, I did not contribute equally to group tasks.	1.91	Rarely happening
2	I relied on others to do more of the tasks in a group project.	2.54	Rarely happening
3	I did not try as hard as I could in my group.	1.87	Rarely happening
4	I did not actively participate in the group discussion and shared my ideas.	2.10	Rarely happening
5	I did not do my share in my group.	1.85	Rarely happening
	<i>Average</i>	2.05	Rarely happening
6	In group tasks, I notice some members contribute significantly less than they would if working individually.	3.49	Often happening
7	I have frequently worked in groups where at least one person did little to no work.	3.51	Often happening
8	I have noticed specific team members consistently avoiding tasks or responsibilities.	3.49	Often happening
9	It feels like the workload is not distributed equally among all team members.	2.80	Sometimes happening
10	A few people in the team end up doing most of the work to meet the deadline.	3.87	Often happening
	<i>Average</i>	3.43	Often happening

Though the data reveals strong evidence of widespread social loafing, there is seemingly a disconnect between self-perception and observed reality. When respondents rated about their own behavior, they overwhelmingly portrayed themselves as hardworking contributors, but when they rated the behavior of others, the scores shifted toward frequent loafing, which could mean that social loafing occurs to a pervasive and systemic extent in this educational context. While individual students rarely identify themselves as loafers, the overwhelming majority report regularly experiencing social loafing in their groups, with significant negative consequences on output quality, timeliness, and group dynamics.

Frequency of occurrence, as may be seen in Table 1, indicates the quantitative evidence that social loafing is not an occasional or isolated issue. In fact, the observed loafing in others is high. The consistently high mean scores ($\bar{x}=3.49$ – $\bar{x}=3.87$) indicate that it is perceived as a common and recurring problem, and therefore it would mean a serious problem. Though the workload distribution is inequitable only “*sometimes*” ($\bar{x}=2.80$). Learners consistently report that they have witnessed non-contributing members in their groups.

Clearly, learners recognize social loafing happening in their groups, but they attribute it to others, not themselves. In short, learners reported that they “rarely” loaf, but others “often” loaf, which is a classic self-serving bias where learners excuse their own minimal contributions by genuinely believing that they contribute fully while readily identifying loafing in peers. These findings suggest that there is either a genuine lack of self-awareness or a reluctance to self-report negatively, but the learners recognized that social loafing is a common problem in group projects from their point of view. However, there is a possible self-perception bias where learners attribute loafing to others but not to themselves, which may hinder personal responsibility. Moreover, the highest mean score ($\bar{x}=3.87$) – “*A few people do most of the work*” – suggests uneven participation is the most observable and frustrating aspect of group work for these learners. This finding suggests that that educators should explicitly reinforce collaboration, individual accountability, and peer evaluation to reduce loafing. Lastly, Consistent with the explanatory sequential design, the self-other discrepancy identified in the quantitative phase became a key input for the qualitative investigation, which sought to further explain the phenomenon.

The Self-Other discrepancy on the prevalence of social loafing: Understanding the gap through Participants’ shared insights.

Beyond numerical ratings, the prevalence of social loafing among Grade 12 learners is best understood through their own words. Analysis of open-ended responses revealed that learners not only acknowledge social loafing as a common occurrence but also offer rich, contextual explanations for why it happens although they often attribute it more readily to their peers than to themselves.

The quantitative survey of G12 learners revealed the following mean scores related to the prevalence of social loafing: the average self-reported loafing (from items 1–5) is $\bar{x}=2.05$, which interpreted as *rarely happening* and is considered as a minor problem. However, for *other-reported loafing*, an average from items 6–10 is $\bar{x}=3.43$ with *often happening* interpretation, which is considered as a serious problem. With a wide gap of 1.37, these results indicate that the prevalence of self-reported loafing appears a minor problem, while perceived prevalence of *others’* loafing appears a serious problem.

To explain the quantitative findings, qualitative data from the verbatim responses of 20 participants were analyzed. The qualitative data served to clarify the discrepancy between self and other reports. The explanations from participants helped clarify the self-other discrepancy. When asked about social loafing, most participants reported from their perspective that they loaf yet only sometimes. For instance, Participant 1 (P1) answered, “*sometimes I loaf*” but “*I often experience that others are lazy and do not participate*”. While P10 said, “*when I am not interested in the group activity, I rely on others to do the work*”. P16 added that “*in groups with high numbers, I tend to be complacent*”. P2 also reported that “*when I don’t know how to do the assigned task, I expect the leader to do the work*”. Furthermore, Participants 5, 7 and 11 agreed that “*sometimes they feel lazy*” and that “*they hope they get carried by the smartest people in the group*”, while others admit that they rarely loaf, and it happened when *they are not interested in the topic, they are afraid of being judged or criticized, and when they expect the leader to do all the work*.

The responses indicate that learners are reluctant to self-identify as loafers. Rather than labeling themselves as such, they attribute their own occasional non-contribution to specific situational circumstances. Although most participants did not explicitly admit to being loafers or to reducing their effort in group projects, they conceded that they sometimes reduce their efforts. Thus, they implicitly maintained a self-image as responsible learners who compensate for the failures of others.

The discrepancy between self-report and peer-report suggests a self-serving bias: learners attribute their own low effort to external circumstances while attributing similar behavior in teammates to internal traits such as laziness or lack of knowledge. Participants view their own loafing as temporary and excusable but see others' loafing as blameworthy, applying a lenient standard to themselves and a critical standard to teammates.

This pattern aligns with attribution theory, which holds that people attribute others' negative behaviors to internal causes and their own to external causes. Most participants reported that social loafing resulted from external factors: P1 relied on the leader because he did not understand the task; P10 lacked interest and relied on others; P16 became complacent due to large group size. Conversely, Participants 1, 5, 7, and 11 attributed others' loafing to laziness which is an internal factor.

Thus, most participants perceive their own loafing as external, temporary, and uncontrollable, feeling justified in excusing themselves. This suggests that low self-report scores reflect not low actual prevalence but rather low self-awareness or reluctance to self-identify as a loafer.

Research Question 2. What are the perceived causes and consequences of social loafing among senior high school learners at LNHS?

The second research question investigates the factors and consequences related to social loafing. As shown in Table 2A, ten indicators were rated by learners using a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). These items are grouped into two distinct categories: the first five items (1–5) represent self-reported personal factors explaining why the respondent might engage in social loafing, whereas the remaining five items (6–10) capture observational factors regarding why other team members do loaf.

Table 2A

Perceived causes of social loafing among senior high school learners

Num	Indicators	Mean Score	Interpretation
1	I feel less motivated to contribute when the group task feels boring or unimportant.	2.80	neutral
2	I reduce my effort because I do not want to be the person doing all the work while others do nothing.	2.84	neutral
3	I feel that if the group fails, the blame is shared, so my personal accountability feels lower.	3.06	neutral
4	I feel like my specific input is not necessary for success when working in a large group.	2.69	neutral
5	When the group project is not graded individually, I tend to work less on it.	2.70	neutral
	average	2.81	neutral
6	Team members tend to reduce effort when the task is less engaging.	3.28	neutral

7	Team members tend to exert less effort when working in large groups compared to smaller groups.	3.42	agree
8	Team members tend to contribute less when individual performance is not graded individually or evaluated by co-members.	3.53	agree
9	Team members tend to reduce effort when they feel like their specific input is not necessary for success.	3.50	agree
10	Team members tend to reduce effort when the task has less clear individual accountability.	3.42	agree
	average	3.43	agree

Notably, all self-focused items (1–5) fall under *neutral* interpretation, while four out of five team-focused items (7–10) fall under *agree*. For items 1–5, learners were asked to reflect on their own behavior. The mean scores are neutral ($\bar{x}$ =2.69– $\bar{x}$ =3.06), indicating that there are mixed opinions among learners regarding self-reported personal factors explaining why the respondents might engage in social loafing. This could be due to several factors such as being reluctant to admit their reduced efforts as deduced in the previous section; or they may not recognize their own reduced effort; or they may feel they contributed fairly, though not optimally. This result is consistent with Table 1 where learners reported that they rarely loaf with the average mean score of 2.05 but others often do ($\bar{x}$ =3.43).

On the other hand, as may be seen in Table 2A, there is a high recognition of social loafing in others (items 6–10). Most means are above $\bar{x}$ =3.30 (agree), especially item 8 ($\bar{x}$ =3.53 – individual performance not evaluated) and item 9 ($\bar{x}$ =3.50 – input unnecessary). These results suggest that learners see loafing more clearly in peers than in themselves; large group size, lack of individual grading, and unclear accountability genuinely promote loafing; item 6 (less engaging task) is neutral though ($\bar{x}$ =3.28), still close to agree, showing some effect.

The data revealed that the key drivers of social loafing (with the highest means) were items 8, no individual evaluation ($\bar{x}$ =3.53) and 9, perceived unnecessary input ($\bar{x}$ =3.50) where these factors indicate strong loafing. While items 7 and 10, large group size ($\bar{x}$ =3.42) and unclear accountability ($\bar{x}$ =3.42) respectively indicate moderate agreement. These results align with classic social loafing theory (Karau & Williams, 1993): Loafing increases when evaluation and task meaningfulness are low, and also when individuals feel invisible or unaccountable, effort drops. While items 7 and 9 show that learners perceive large groups and feeling unnecessary as loafing triggers. This is consistent with Ringelmann’s (1913) rope-pulling experiments that as group size increases, individual effort decreases.

The pattern reveals that G12 learners do not social loaf primarily due to internal motivational issues, but rather due to perceived structural and evaluative gaps in group work design, in which they believed that social loafing is driven not by task boredom, but by lack of individual grading, absence of performance evaluation, large group size, and unclear personal accountability. Thus, to reduce social loafing, educators should grade individual contributions within group tasks (e.g., peer assessment, individual write-ups), keep groups small (3–4 members) to increase visibility, clarify individual roles and accountability before group work begins and avoid over-reliance on ungraded or purely collective tasks, as learners openly admit to reducing effort under those conditions.

Tables 1 and 2A are complementary. Table 1 establishes that social loafing is a real and frequent problem, especially as perceived in others while Table 2A provides the causal mechanisms. The self-other discrepancy appears consistently in both tables, reinforcing that learners are willing to report loafing in peers but not in themselves. For example, in Table 1, learners say they rarely loaf ($\bar{x}$ =2.05) but others often do ($\bar{x}$ =3.43) while in Table 2A, learners are *neutral* about loafing themselves ($\bar{x}$ =2.81) but *agree* others loaf due to several factors ($\bar{x}$ =3.43). Both tables show highest agreement/occurrence for items related to accountability and workload distribution and lowest scores for items involving personal admission of reduced effort.

To gain an in-depth explanation of the quantitative results, the findings in Table 2A were further explored through interviews with selected participants. The following statements, which received general consensus from respondents emerged: Individual performance is neither graded individually nor evaluated by co-members ($\bar{x} = 3.53$); Learners feel that their specific input is not necessary for group success ($\bar{x} = 3.50$); The task lacks clear individual accountability ($\bar{x} = 3.42$); and Learners exert less effort when working in large groups compared to smaller groups ($\bar{x} = 3.42$).

Four Key Drivers of Social Loafing with General Consensus: Deepening Understanding through Participants' Lived experiences.

From the data transcripts, Participant 7 (P07) confirmed that the lack of individual grading is a significant factor contributing to social loafing. As P07 explained, *"in my experience, one of the reasons that a member has less contribution is that sometimes it is not graded individually."* Similarly, P18 reported that *"if graded by group, some members rely on others, especially when they see that a specific person has the potential to finish the task independently."* These statements illustrate that when group projects are assessed collectively rather than individually, some members may take the opportunity to hide within the group and contribute less. This finding aligns with Hoffman's (2023) observation that reduced effort occurs in collective tasks because individual contributions cannot be evaluated. To counteract this, Hoffman suggested that establishing individual accountability can effectively prevent social loafing.

Participants consistently reported that social loafing arises when individuals feel their specific input is unnecessary for the group's success. P09 revealed, *"Some members don't care because they know that someone will 'act' sooner or later and do all the job."* Similarly, P15 added, *"Some members feel participation is not necessary since other members tend to do all the work."* Supporting this, P08 explained, *"It is because they think that their opinions are not needed."* P10 expressed a comparable experience: *"Maybe because they feel like they don't really need to exert effort and just rely on their leaders."* P18 also shared that members *"hope they get carried by the smartest people in the group."* These findings are consistent with Hoffman's concept of free riding, which posits that social loafing occurs when individuals believe their contribution is not critical or that they can benefit regardless of their effort, expecting others to compensate for them. This finding also echoes the study conducted by Jassawalla et al. (2009) that one of the factors causing social loafing was identified as social disconnectedness (feeling unnecessary), that is when one detached from their teammates, one is more likely to withdraw effort.

When individual accountability within a task is less clear, members tend to contribute less. As P16 explained, *"they are not fully aware of what they are going to do even though they are already assigned or given tasks for them."* Similarly, P03 reported that due to a *"lack of responsibility and motivation, some members rely on others to finish the task."* P09 added, *"I feel like when members aren't sure what's expected of them, they might not contribute as much."* These findings indicate that unclear roles are a significant contributor to social loafing. This aligns with Flournoy (2023) who emphasized that clearly defined roles enable individuals to understand their responsibilities and contribute effectively to the organization's objectives. This leads to improved productivity and collaboration within teams and departments.

Participants consistently identified group size as a significant factor influencing social loafing. P16 reported that *"most of the group members do not contribute when they are many in their group."* Similarly, P03 stated that *"in groups with high numbers, members tend to be complacent."* P05 echoed this, noting that *"most of the group members do not contribute when they are many in their group."* These responses suggest that larger groups diminish individual accountability, making it easier for members to disengage or free-ride. This finding aligns with Liden et al. (2004), who found that at the group level, increased group size is associated with higher levels of social loafing.

Based on the quantitative and qualitative findings, it can be concluded that social loafing is driven by four key factors: the absence of individual grading, the perception that one's input is unnecessary, unclear role accountability, and large group size. Participants consistently reported that when contributions are not personally evaluated or seen as critical, members are more likely to disengage and rely on others. Unclear roles further enable loafing by allowing members to claim ignorance of their responsibilities, while larger groups dilute

individual accountability and make it easier to hide. These qualitative insights align with existing literature, highlighting the need for structured role clarity, equitable task distribution, and mechanisms for individual evaluation to reduce social loafing in group work.

The data presented in Table 2B summarize the perceptions of G12 learners regarding the impacts of social loafing on group work. It includes five indicators, each rated by learners on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree).

Table 2B

Perceived consequences of social loafing as reported by G12 learners

Num	Indicators	Mean Score	Interpretation
1	The final output of our group is often lower in quality due to lack of full participation.	3.48	agree
2	Social loafing leads to resentment and arguments among team members.	3.50	agree
3	High-performing members feel overwhelmed or stressed because they must compensate for "loafers."	3.69	agree
4	Seeing others slack off decreases my own enthusiasm and motivation for the project.	3.38	neutral
5	Projects take longer to complete because of members who fail to meet their individual deadlines.	3.92	agree
	average	3.59	agree

The results consistently show that social loafing negatively affects group outcomes in terms of both product quality ($\bar{x} = 3.48$) and process efficiency, particularly with respect to time ($\bar{x} = 3.92$). Beyond task performance, it also harms group dynamics, as evidenced by increased resentment and arguments among members ($\bar{x} = 3.50$), as well as a greater burden on diligent members ($\bar{x} = 3.69$).

Interestingly, while social loafing clearly leads to negative emotional and relational consequences (items 2 and 3), its effect on personal motivation is less uniform (item 4). This suggests that some learners are more resilient or intrinsically motivated, continuing to engage regardless of their peers' behavior. The strongest finding ($\bar{x} = 3.92$) relates to deadlines and project duration, implying that the most tangible and widely experienced consequence of social loafing is delay, not merely reduced quality.

The quantitative findings presented in Table 2B further demonstrate that social loafing extends beyond individual failings, negatively impacting both academic outcomes and the well-being of learners who actively contribute. Low-quality outputs and missed deadlines, for instance, often lead to poor grades and increased frustration. To gain a richer understanding of these consequences, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with selected participants.

Understanding the consequences of social loafing through the lived experiences of Grade 12 learners.

Time delays emerged as both the highest-ranked consequence in the quantitative findings ($\bar{x} = 3.92$) and a frequently cited theme in the qualitative interviews. Participants consistently described how social loafing prolongs task completion. P14 explained, *"It takes longer to finish the task because of members who fail to contribute,"* while P05 similarly observed, *"The task takes longer to complete."* Beyond simple delays, participants reported cascading negative effects. P07 noted the chain reaction of *"late submissions, other members overworking,"* and P08 added that *"because of lack of contribution, submissions might be delayed."*

Collectively, these accounts suggest that individual missed deadlines accumulate into group-level delays, which in turn produce rushed work, last-minute cramming, and heightened stress, further eroding output quality.

Emotional and physical exhaustion of high-performing members is ranked second among consequences ($\bar{x} = 3.69$). The stress and overwhelm experienced by high-contributing members were a dominant theme in the qualitative data. Participants consistently reported that compensating for loafers exacted a significant toll. P03 described the experience as *"very exhausting,"* while P14 distinguished between workload and social stressors: *"I feel tired not because of the workload but because of the members making it more stressful."* P07 noted that active members *"end up doing all the work, leading to stress,"* and P19 highlighted the disproportionate burden on leaders, stating, *"All the works that this member did not do go to the leaders, making the leaders feel pressured and burned out."* Beyond exhaustion, participants also voiced a sense of unfairness, with P04 observing, *"Some people end up picking up the slack, which isn't fair."* Taken together, high-performing learners experience not only increased workload but also emotional and physical exhaustion, perceived inequity, and burnout, all directly attributable to compensating for loafers.

Social loafing leading to resentment and arguments among team members ranked third among the identified consequences. Multiple participants explicitly confirmed conflict and resentment as direct outcomes of social loafing. P16 stated, *"It leads to resentments and arguments among the group."* P06 noted, *"It created conflict between members."* P08 explained, *"Arguments and small fights tend to become a big deal."* P19 reported, *"It caused unfair workload, stress, and conflict."* P13 added, *"Resentment, blaming, shifting priorities."* Thus, emotional and relational consequences are common. Learners report that unequal contribution not only affects grades but also damages group cohesion and generates lasting interpersonal conflict.

Lower quality of final output is ranked fourth among consequences. Reduced output quality due to incomplete participation was also consistently reported by participants. P09 explained the causal link directly: *"When some members don't put their weight, the overall output and quality of work suffer."* Similarly, P03 attributed low quality to *"lack of teamwork,"* while P07 simply stated that social loafing *"reduces the quality of the performance."* P05 reported *"low quality work / performance,"* and P17 described the outcome of minimal participation: *"Our project is not good since only few people are participating."* Across these accounts, learners consistently perceive incomplete participation as a direct cause of poor-quality outputs, which they characterize using terms such as "low quality," "not good," or "less effective."

In conclusion, the integration of quantitative and qualitative findings confirms that social loafing produces both tangible and relational consequences that extend well beyond individual performance. The most frequently reported consequence is time delay, which precipitates rushed work and elevated stress. Closely following is the unfair burden shouldered by high-performing members, resulting in emotional and physical exhaustion. Social loafing further erodes group cohesion, generating resentment, arguments, and enduring interpersonal conflict. Finally, incomplete participation directly compromises the quality of group outputs, which learners consistently characterize as "low quality" or "not good." Collectively, these findings demonstrate that social loafing undermines not only academic outcomes but also the well-being and interpersonal dynamics of learner teams.

Research Question 3. Why does social loafing occur among learners during collaborative or group work from the perspective of senior high school learners at LNHS?

The third research question sought to explore the reasons for social loafing among Grade 12 learners through in-depth interviews, aiming to uncover additional factors not captured in Table 2A. While the survey identified several key reasons, the interviews allowed participants to elaborate on experiences and perspectives that may not have been reflected in the quantitative data. Table 3 revealed the results of analyses from the interview transcripts.

Table 3

Qualitative Findings: Perceived Reasons for Social Loafing as Reported by Grade 12 Learners

Global Theme	Theme	Verbatim Responses
Internal factors	Laziness	Most participants mentioned <i>"because they are lazy"</i> as a factor associated with social loafing (1,3,7,11,12,13). While some participants noted that others were <i>"lazy because don't know what to do"</i> (P02). Others said, <i>"they are lazy and doesn't care about their grades"</i> (P05) <i>"they're lazy and always making up excuses"</i> (P20).
	Lack of interest in the topic or task, Lack of knowledge/ skill	Several participants mentioned that others are <i>"not interested in the group activity"</i> (P02, P08, P09,). Others added that <i>"they are bored and didn't know what to do"</i> (P20). They also mentioned that they are <i>"uninterested with the topic and lack of enthusiasm"</i> (P04, P05) <i>"because it isn't exciting"</i> (P14). They admitted that they are <i>"less motivated when the topic is boring"</i> (P17) and <i>"not inspired to work"</i> (P18)
	low academic ambition	Participants mentioned that <i>"don't care about their grades"</i> (P05, P08); <i>"already satisfied with getting a low grade like 75"</i> (P03); <i>"low accountability"</i> (P04); <i>"lack of responsibility"</i> (P13, P14); <i>"they avoid responsibilities"</i> (P19); <i>"they are not responsible for the task assigned"</i> (P16)
	Fear of judgment, shyness, or low confidence	Participants mentioned <i>"feeling a bit shy or unsure about sharing their thoughts"</i> (P04); <i>"fear of being judged or criticized by others"</i> (P09); <i>"shyness"</i> (P12, P16, P18); <i>"insecurity on how they will contribute"</i> (P08); <i>"they doubt themselves that can't do their part"</i> (P17); <i>"lack of confidence"</i> (P14); <i>"they think that their opinions are not needed"</i> (P11)
	Feeling not part of the group	Participants mentioned that <i>"because they feel not belong to the group or lack of motivation"</i> (P06); <i>"because they're not considered in the group that is why they feel they don't belong to the group, and others see them as naïve"</i> (P11); <i>"maybe because they don't feel included in the group"</i> (P02).
Group Dynamic Factors	Poor group communication	Several participants mentioned that <i>"not seeing GC"</i> (P10); <i>"by not seeing the chats or messages"</i> (P12); <i>"other not reaching out to the group"</i> (P18); <i>"busy doing cellphone and not using the GCs"</i> (P16); <i>"some of them do not read or seen on the GC"</i> (P11); <i>"distractions from other things or not paying or reading group GCs"</i> (P08)
	Leader behavior that tolerates non-participation	Some participants mentioned that <i>"friends with leader"</i> (P07); <i>"they can do less work because they are friends with the assigned leaders"</i> (P03); <i>"leaders sometimes tolerate their dependent behavior"</i> (P05); <i>"group leader is not strict"</i> (P15); <i>"some leaders didn't ask for their opinion"</i> (P19)
External factors	Home responsibilities/chores	Participants mentioned that <i>"busy doing chores or emergencies"</i> (P14); <i>"get sick or family problem"</i> (P13); <i>"cannot access the internet"</i> (P09); <i>"no load, wifi, phone"</i> (P10);

The in-depth interviews revealed that social loafing among Grade 12 learners is driven by a complex mix of internal, relational, and external factors. These qualitative findings extend beyond the survey results in Table 2A, which focused on role clarity, group size, individual grading and individual accountability. The interviews uncovered new reasons such as laziness, lack of interest, fear of judgment, poor communication, permissive

leadership, and external home responsibilities. These reasons are categorized into internal factors, relational factors and external factors.

The findings indicate that social loafing among Grade 12 learners is multidimensional, arising from an interplay of individual dispositions, relational dynamics, and external constraints.

Participants consistently attribute social loafing to five internal factors. Laziness is the most frequently cited reason, often linked to indifference about grades or task clarity. Participants noted that some group members are *"lazy because don't know what to do"* (P02), while others stated, *"they're lazy and always making up excuses"* (P20). Lack of interest in the topic leads to boredom, low motivation, and disengagement. One participant explained, *"they are bored and didn't know what to do"* (P20), and another admitted, *"less motivated when the topic is boring"* (P17). Low academic ambition manifests as minimal responsibility, satisfaction with low grades, and avoidance of accountability. For example, a participant shared being *"already satisfied with getting a low grade like 75"* (P03), while others mentioned *"low accountability"* (P04) and *"they avoid responsibilities"* (P19). Fear of judgment, shyness, or low confidence inhibits participation due to self-doubt, insecurity, or fear of criticism. Participants described *"fear of being judged or criticized by others"* (P09), *"shyness"* (P12), and *"they doubt themselves that can't do their part"* (P17). Finally, feeling not part of the group reduces belongingness and motivation, leading to withdrawal from collaborative efforts. As one participant stated, *"they don't feel included in the group"* (P02), and another explained, *"because they feel not belong to the group or lack of motivation"* (P06). These findings suggest that addressing social loafing requires not only task restructuring but also interventions targeting individual motivation, confidence-building, inclusive group dynamics, and clarity of roles to enhance personal accountability and engagement. The low or lack of self-confidence is consistent with previous research by Afif et al. (2024) which concluded that students who doubt their own abilities may withdraw effort, assuming others are better equipped to complete the work. Furthermore, the finding on "not feeling part of the group" is aligned with the work of Tajfel and Turner (1986) which states that loafing occurs when group membership is psychologically irrelevant or unvalued. On the other hand, when one of the participants mentioned that *"they didn't know what to do"* (P20), this suggests that lack of knowledge/skill can lead to social loafing. This finding aligns with the work of Luo et al., 2021 which found that individual factors like competencies (perceived lack of skills and abilities) can lead the members to withdraw effort.

Poor communication and lenient leadership emerged as critical group-level drivers of social loafing. Regarding communication, participants described breakdowns in information sharing: *not seeing group chats* (P10), *failing to read or respond to messages* (P12), *cellphone distractions* (P16), and a *general lack of reaching out* (8, 11). These gaps create task and deadline ambiguity, making disengagement easier and less detectable. Regarding leadership, participants noted that leaders who tolerate non-participation whether by *favoring friends* (3, 7), *failing to solicit opinions* (P19), or *accepting dependent behavior* (P5), inadvertently signal that low effort is acceptable. Together, these dynamics indicate that social loafing is not solely an individual failing but is often enabled or even encouraged by weak communication structures and permissive leadership styles that fail to hold all members accountable.

External factors, particularly those rooted in students' home environments and resource limitations, represent another significant driver of social loafing. Participants frequently cited home responsibilities and chores (*household duties, emergencies, illness, family problems*) as direct barriers to meaningful contribution. Beyond domestic obligations, technological and economic constraints emerged as critical impediments, including lack of internet access, insufficient mobile data, unreliable Wi-Fi, or absence of a functioning phone.

Table 3 further reveals that not all social loafing is voluntary. There are instances that some learners want to contribute but cannot be due to psychological barriers (shyness, fear of judgment, feeling of being not part of the group) or structural barriers (no internet, family emergencies). These findings are completely absent from Table 2A. These external circumstances often operate beyond the individual's control, suggesting that apparent non-participation may reflect genuine structural barriers rather than voluntary disengagement. Thus, addressing social loafing requires not only individual or group-level interventions but also institutional awareness of, and accommodation for, the unequal external realities that shape learners' capacity to participate equally in collaborative tasks.

These findings suggest that addressing social loafing requires more than simply holding learners accountable. Educators and group leaders should (1) build psychological safety to reduce fear of judgment, (2) design engaging and relevant tasks to spark interest, (3) establish clear communication protocols and monitor group chats, (4) train leaders to actively invite input and address non-participation, and (5) accommodate external constraints by offering flexible deadlines, offline alternatives, and equitable task distribution. Without recognizing the structural and psychological dimensions of social loafing, interventions that focus solely on individual responsibility may unfairly penalize students facing legitimate barriers.

The qualitative findings are consistent with the quantitative results, that is learners do not see themselves as loafing due to internal factors, but they readily attribute others' loafing to internal factors such as laziness, lack of interest in the subject/topic, low ambition, et cetera. This implies a classic attribution bias wherein individuals tend to attribute their own behaviors to external, situational factors while attributing the same behaviors in others to internal, dispositional factors.

While Table 2A, on the quantitative data, highlights task design, accountability, individual grading, unnecessary input for group success, and group size as key causes of loafing among peers, qualitative data, however, emphasize group processes laziness, lack of interest, low academic ambition, fear of judgement, social anxiety, motivation loss, communication breakdowns, leader tolerance and home responsibilities as significant factors for social loafing. This suggests that the quantitative survey was limited by its pre-determined items. The qualitative phase (Table 3) was essential for discovering unanticipated causes that were not included in the original survey. This confirms the value of the explanatory sequential mixed methods design: qualitative data explained and expanded upon quantitative findings. In Table 3, learners acknowledge that others loaf due to boredom or lack of interest, but they do not strongly endorse this for themselves. This again reflects self-serving attribution, externalizing the cause of loafing to others' dispositions while remaining neutral about one's own. The most striking finding from comparing the two tables is the consistent discrepancy between how learners explain their own behavior versus others' behavior.

Taken together, Tables 2A and 3 reveal that social loafing is fundamentally multi-causal. Effective interventions, therefore, must be holistic, addressing the interplay of internal, group dynamic, and external factors rather than any single cause in isolation.

Research Question 4: How does social loafing affect group performance in terms of productivity, output quality, and group dynamics?

The quantitative findings (presented in Table 2B) provided a ranked order of consequences, while qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions (summarized in Table 4) offered deeper explanatory context. Together, these findings illuminate the multidimensional impact of social loafing on group performance.

Table 4

The manner in which social loafing affects productivity, outputs quality, and group dynamics

Global theme	Theme	Verbatim responses
Productivity (Tasks)	Delayed Submissions / Time Inefficiency	Most participants consistently mentioned that social loafing “causes delay and affects the work” (P20); “delays the time to submit the task” (P15); “takes a long time to finish the activities” (P04); “slows the process of making the project” (P08); “made our group slower and less productive” (P10); “sometimes we failed to meet the deadline” (P16); “sometimes leading to late submission” (P11); “we cannot pass our activity on time” (P01); “rush for the deadline” (P02)
Quality of Outputs	Lower Quality of Output	Participants mentioned that social loafing results to “low quality of work and did reach the expectation” (P15); “the project is not that quality” (P14); “ugly output” (P20); “bad quality of

		<i>the output” (P09); “bad output, slow work, and uncoordinated” (P06); “less result regarding with the quality of our work” (P01)</i>
	Lower Grades / Poor Academic Performance	Participants mentioned that social loafing results to <i>“failing grade or score” (P10); “low performance grade from teachers” (P06). Suffice it to say that loafing “will decrease your grade” (P02); “affects our score on activity” (P03); “can affect our grades” (P12); “will downgrade us because of the one member” (P11); “made our score low” (P14); “can make our grades low” (P08)</i>
Relational/ Group Dynamics	Conflict, Resentment, and Arguments	Participants mentioned that social loafing does not only <i>“lower performance but also creates conflict” (P20)</i> ; and it also results to <i>“arguments” (P12); “chaos” (P06); “hardships, specifically misunderstanding and inequality of task” (P07); “failing grades that lead group to chaos” (P10); “having conflict and misunderstanding” (P05); “misunderstanding in our group performance” (P11)</i> ;
	Negative Emotional Impact (Stress, Burnout, Pressure)	Participants mentioned that <i>“the person who exerts so much effort getting sick because of it” (P05); “burnout or delays” (P17); “stress, cramming... can cause conflict” (P13); “burnout, stress and probability of feeling like a ‘failure’” (P19); “maybe they feel pressure or overwhelmed” (P18); “Some people end up picking up the slack, which isn't fair.” (P04)</i>
	Unfair Workload / Overburdening Active Members	Participants mentioned that <i>“some members might feel overburdened” (P11); “people end up picking up the slack which isn't fair” (P04); “members actually try end up doing all the work leading to stress” (P07); “all the works that this member did not do goes all to the leaders, making the leaders feel pressured and burned out” (P19); “caused unfair workload, stress, and conflict” (P04); “creates unfair workload distribution” (P09); “other members will have to do extra work” (P15)</i>
	Decreased Motivation and Enthusiasm	Participants mentioned that <i>“seeing others slack off decreases own enthusiasm and motivation” (P01); “demotivation, lack of enthusiasm” (P08); “discouragement” (P03); “the whole group will be less motivated” (P07); “decrease of motivation for doing the performance” (P13); “it decreases the participation of other members” (P10)</i>
	Negative Effects on Collaboration / Team Dynamics	Participants mentioned that <i>“lack of cooperation” (P02); “it affects the groups output and team dynamics” (P04); “dynamic destroyed” (P08); “lack of participation, assign task, and members not always active” (P06); “not participation, cooperation, and access” (P16); “it don't have cooperation” (P07); “less hands to assist and less cooperation” (P05); “lack of communication, unclear goal, messy task” (P12); “not unified ideas” (P15); “split the group and foster a lack of cohesion” (P17)</i>

While the previous sections (Table 2B) have identified the effects of social loafing including time delays, emotional and physical exhaustion, resentment and arguments among team members and lower quality of final

output, this section focuses specifically on the three interrelated domains: productivity (time delays), quality (final output), group dynamic (exhaustion and conflicts) and other effects drawn directly from the verbatim accounts of Grade 12 learners at Leyte National High School.

Productivity, the first domain, refers to the efficiency with which groups complete their tasks. Participants consistently reported that social loafing undermined productivity by causing delays and slowing down group work. For instance, several participants noted that loafing *“causes delay and affects the work”* (P20), *“delays the time to submit the task”* (P15), *“takes a long time to finish the activities”* (P04), and *“slows the process of making the project”* (P08). These statements suggest that loafing does not merely reduce individual effort but actively disrupts workflow continuity, leading to a cascading effect on group timelines. Furthermore, the impact of loafing extended beyond simple slowdowns to jeopardize timely task completion. One participant explicitly stated that loafing *“made our group slower and less productive”* and forced the team to *“rush for the deadline”* (P02, supported by P10). Another recalled that *“sometimes we failed to meet the deadline”* (P16), while others mentioned *“sometimes leading to late submission”* (P11) and that *“we cannot pass our activity on time”* (P01). These accounts do not only confirm the findings in Table 2B but also indicate that social loafing transforms the group’s experience from one of planned, steady progress to one of reactive, last-minute scrambling. The repeated mentioned of deadline failures and rushed work suggest that productivity loss is not just quantitative but qualitative, compromising the group’s ability to plan, coordinate, and deliver reliably. In conclusion, within the domain of productivity, social loafing consistently and negatively affects group efficiency by introducing delays, prolonging task duration, and increasing the risk of missed deadlines. These findings highlight that productivity is not solely a matter of individual output but is highly sensitive to the equitable distribution of effort among members. When loafing occurs, the remaining members must compensate, often under time pressure, which erodes both the pace and the predictability of group outcomes.

The second domain, quality of outputs, captures the standard of the final product. Learners overwhelmingly cited lower quality, missing contributions, and unmet expectations as direct consequences of social loafing, a finding consistently supported by respondents, as shown in Table 2B. Participants described the effects in varied but converging terms: *“low quality of work and did not reach the expectation”* (P15), *“the project is not that quality”* (P14), *“ugly output”* (P20), *“bad quality of the output”* (P09), and *“less result regarding the quality of our work”* (P01). One participant further linked quality deficits to process breakdowns, mentioning *“bad output, slow work, and uncoordinated”* (P06). Participants’ use of strongly negative descriptors like “low,” “ugly,” “bad” indicate that social loafing produces outputs far below group standards, not merely mediocre ones. Quality loss stems from fragmented workflows and uneven participation (P06), which eliminate opportunities for peer review and collective refinement. Even if remaining members work harder, the absence of full engagement results in deficits in completeness and coherence.

Beyond the effects listed in Table 2B, social loafing leads to lower grades or poor academic performance. Participants’ accounts reveal a clear causal chain: loafing first reduces productivity (delays, inefficiency), which then degrades output quality (poor, incomplete, or substandard work). Since grades reflect both timeliness and excellence, groups suffering from both deficits are predictably penalized, late submissions incur deductions, and low-quality work fails rubric criteria. Together, these failures compound, leaving groups submitting work that is both late and academically weak. Social loafing directly predicts poor academic performance because it undermines the two pillars of grading, that is timeliness and excellence. Consequently, low grades reflect not just individual ability but the breakdown of collective responsibility. Addressing loafing is therefore essential not only for fair collaboration but also for protecting measurable learning outcomes.

The third domain, relational and group dynamics, captures interpersonal functioning within the group. Participants reported conflict, resentment, unfair workload distribution, overburdened active members, stress, burnout, decreased motivation, and erosion of team cohesion. Their own words, organized thematically, offer an unfiltered view of how social loafing harms both learning experiences and personal well-being. Participants consistently reported that social loafing triggers interpersonal turmoil, including *“conflict”* (P15), *“arguments”* (P12), *“chaos”* (P06), and *“misunderstanding and inequality of task”* (P07). P10 noted that *“failing grades lead the group to chaos.”* These repeated references to misunderstandings suggest that unequal participation erodes trust and fuels blame cycles. Additionally, active members suffer tangible harm: one participant reported getting *“sick because of it”* (P05), while others cited *“burnout”* (P15, P17), *“stress”* (P13, P15), and *“pressured or*

overwhelmed" (P18). P15 described *"burnout, stress and probability of feeling like a failure"*, revealing that loafing causes conscientious members to internalize group failure as personal inadequacy. P04 captured the core injustice: *"Some people end up picking up the slack, which isn't fair."* The findings on unfair workload distribution and overburdened active members are in line with the finding of Tapiz et al. (2023) which states that students, who did encounter social loafers, have negative experiences that include emotional distress and unfair distribution of tasks.

Thus, social loafing is not merely an academic problem, it is also a relational and emotional hazard. Conflict replaces collaboration, while active members suffer stress, burnout, illness, and feelings of failure. Even if the group produces acceptable work, hidden costs like broken trust, unequal burden, and psychological distress persist. Addressing loafing is therefore essential not only for fairness and grades but for preserving mental health and collaborative integrity.

In summary, productivity suffers through delayed submissions, missed deadlines, and rushed work. Output quality declines not only in tangible "ugly output" but also failure to meet expectations. Both (productivity and output quality) result to lower grades. Most damagingly, group dynamics unravel: active members experience unfair workload, emotional exhaustion, burnout, and even physical illness; teams fracture into resentment, arguments, and chaos; collaboration erodes as motivation spreads downward and group cohesion is "destroyed." Together, the Tables 2B and 4 demonstrate that social loafing is not merely a productivity problem but a relational and emotional one. Thus, effective interventions must address not only task design and accountability (to reduce delays and improve quality) but also group dynamics (to protect high-performing members, prevent conflict, and rebuild damaged team cohesion). The qualitative discovery of physical health consequences and cascading relational damage suggests that the true cost of social loafing may be higher than quantitative rankings alone reveal.

Social loafing produces a multifaceted harm that extends beyond productivity and quality to include unfair workload distribution, emotional distress, interpersonal conflict, decreased motivation, and systemic collaboration breakdown. While quantitative findings (Table 2B) reliably confirm some effects such as delays, lower quality, overburdening, and conflict, they underestimate motivational loss and miss entirely the domains of grade penalties and collaboration erosion. The qualitative data (Table 4) therefore serves not merely as illustrative support but as a critical corrective, revealing the full human and academic cost of social loafing. Addressing social loafing requires interventions that target not only task efficiency but also team cohesion, psychological safety, and equitable workload distribution, areas that quantitative surveys alone may overlook.

Research Question 5: What intervention strategies may be developed and proposed based on the findings to mitigate or prevent social loafing among senior high school learners at LNHS?

The findings of this study have clearly established that social loafing is a pervasive and multidimensional problem affecting Grade 12 learners at Leyte National High School. It arises from a complex interplay of personal factors (laziness, lack of interest, fear of judgment, low academic ambition), group dynamic factors (poor communication, permissive leadership), and external factors (home responsibilities, technological constraints). The consequences extend beyond lower grades to include time inefficiency, unfair workload burdens, emotional distress, interpersonal conflict, and damaged team cohesion.

Table 5

Proposed intervention strategies to mitigate or prevent social loafing: participants' voices

Theme	Verbatim responses
Assign Clear, Equal, and Specific Tasks (Role Clarity)	Participants mentioned that <i>"divide the task equally so that each one of us contribute"</i> (P04); <i>"assigning clear roles, setting deadlines and monitoring individual contributions"</i> (P07); <i>"assign clear roles and responsibilities to each member so everyone is accountable"</i> (P08); <i>"give each member a task"</i> (P18); <i>"proper distribution of tasks and allowing each member to share their ideas"</i> (P10); <i>"distribute tasks equally"</i> (P11); <i>"define clear, specific role: assign specific tasks to"</i>

	<i>each team member</i> ” (P15); <i>“equal division of the task</i> ” (P16); <i>“assign a leader to lead the group and contribute tasks fairly</i> ” (P12)
Individual Grading / Evaluating Contributions Separately	Participants mentioned that <i>“individual grading even if in a group</i> ” (P02); <i>“less members, and individual grading</i> ” (P03); <i>“grade individually and as a group for 50% only</i> ” (P07); <i>“grade both by group or individual</i> ” (P09); <i>“graded individually even in groupworks</i> ” (P10); <i>“grade each member individually based on their contribution</i> ” (P14); <i>“individual grading</i> ” (P15); <i>“the activity where members of the group will rate the performance of its members</i> ” (P05); <i>“confidential evaluation</i> ” (P11)
Removal / Exclusion from the Group	Participants mentioned that <i>“tell them that they will be removed from the group</i> ” (P19); <i>“removal from the group</i> ” (P02); <i>“elimination to those who will not contribute</i> ” (P20); <i>“eliminate the member with little to no contribute</i> ” (P05); <i>“remove them from the group so they’ll learn from the consequences</i> ” (P16); <i>“not listing their names</i> ” (P10); <i>“removed that member</i> ” (P08); <i>“remove then if they don’t participate</i> ” (P12); <i>“if the person did not contribute they can be removed in the group</i> ” (P13); <i>“remove members who lacks accountability</i> ” (P18); <i>“remove loafers in the group</i> ” (P17)
Motivation, Encouragement, and Positive Reinforcement	Participants mentioned that <i>“do my best to motivate them to do their best</i> ” (P01); <i>“giving them motivation or guiding them on what to do</i> ” (P17); <i>“encourage them to participate in the group</i> ” (P05); <i>“give them motivation or talk to them that they need to cooperate</i> ” (P09); <i>“encouraging everyone to participate and communicate effectively</i> ” (P04); <i>“make them feel they are part of the group</i> ” (P20); <i>“encourage those type of person</i> ” (P10); <i>“encouraging the members to participate well</i> ” (P07); <i>“by motivating them</i> ” (P12); <i>“encouraging team members</i> ” (P13); <i>“make them comfortable to open up with their ideas/opinions</i> ” (P15); <i>“making it more engaging, letting them feel part of the group</i> ” (P03)
Improved Communication and Open Dialogue	Participants mentioned that <i>“communicate to everyone especially with co-members because if conflict or misunderstanding is present, less work will be done</i> ” (P02); <i>“improving communication among the group to help prevent arguments</i> ” (P03); <i>“talk to the group members honestly</i> ” (P04); <i>“talking to them personally</i> ” (P05); <i>“socialize properly</i> ” (P06); <i>“communication</i> ” (P07); <i>“by engaging with each other and share ideas</i> ” (P14); <i>“talk to the member who doesn’t contribute and ask why they don’t want to participate</i> ” (P12)
Setting Deadlines, Monitoring, and Strict Follow-Up	Participants mentioned that <i>“set strict deadlines of submission and if they fail, report immediately to the advisors</i> ” (P06); <i>“consistently monitoring each member’s task and evaluating its quality</i> ” (P02); <i>“set clear boundaries and constantly remind everyone their roles</i> ” (P20); <i>“set individual deadlines and monitor each member’s contribution regularly</i> ” (P17); <i>“properly assessing the task and monitoring each member’s participation</i> ” (P08); <i>“assign task and set deadline with punishment when not met punctually</i> ” (P14); <i>“each member will be given time only to do their task so they can pass on time; if not, consequences</i> ” (P16)
Reducing Group Size	Participants mentioned that <i>“less members</i> ” (P03); <i>“less member and individual grading</i> ” (P14); <i>“with large groups like more than 8, some members become dependent</i> ” (P19);

Given these realities, effective intervention requires a multi-pronged approach. No single strategy, whether punitive or supportive, can fully address the problem on its own. Fortunately, the participants themselves offered a rich array of practical, learner-generated solutions grounded in their direct experiences with social loafing. These proposed strategies range from structural reforms such as role clarity and individual grading to relational approaches including positive reinforcement and open dialogue, as well as task design improvements that make group work more engaging and meaningful. The following intervention strategies are organized thematically

based on the verbatim responses of the participants. These evidence-based recommendations are intended to guide educators, group leaders, and school administrators in creating more equitable, accountable, and productive collaborative learning environments at LNHS and beyond.

The most frequently suggested strategy is to **assign clear, equal, and specific tasks (role clarity)**. Participants believe that when every person has a clearly defined, equally weighted task, loafing decreases because accountability becomes visible. Role clarity removes the ambiguity that allows loafers to hide. When tasks are specific and evenly distributed, members cannot claim they “didn’t know what to do.” This also addresses the unfair workload problem by ensuring no single person carries the group. Participants consistently emphasized that role clarity is a primary solution to social loafing. Suggestions such as *“divide the task equally so that each one of us contribute”* (P04) and *“assign clear roles and responsibilities to each member so everyone is accountable”* (P08) reflect a shared understanding that ambiguity enables withdrawal. The recurrence of terms like *“equal,” “clear,” “specific,”* and *“accountable”* across multiple participants (7, 10, 11, 15, 16) indicates strong consensus on the importance of structured task allocation. These findings suggest that social loafing is not merely a product of lazy individuals but also a structural failure of group organization. When tasks are vague or unevenly distributed, non-contribution becomes both permissible and invisible. Conversely, clear, equal, and specific roles transform group work from a collective blur into a set of individual responsibilities, making withdrawal noticeable. Therefore, without such structural clarity, groups remain vulnerable to the very ambiguity that enables social loafing to thrive. This result corroborates the conclusions of Kundu et al., (2020) that perceived role clarity has positive relation with intrinsic motivation, job involvement, and innovative behavior at work. A similar pattern was reported by Flournoy (2023) in his study, which he found that role clarity leads to improved productivity and collaboration.

Participants frequently proposed **individual grading** or **evaluating individual contributions separately** as a solution to social loafing, with multiple members explicitly stating preferences for being *“graded individually even if in a group”* (P02, P10) and simply *“individual grading”* (P15). One participant suggested a hybrid model: *“grade individually and as a group for 50% only”* (P07), while another echoed *“grade both by group or individual”* (P09). Beyond instructor-assigned grades, participants also recommended peer-driven accountability through *“the activity where members of the group will rate the performance of its members”* (P05) and *“confidential evaluation”* (P11), suggesting that anonymous peer assessment could surface honest feedback about individual contributions. Participants overwhelmingly view individual grading and separate contribution evaluation as essential mechanisms for reducing social loafing. Whether through teacher-assigned individual grades, confidential peer ratings, or a hybrid group-individual model, the core principle remains consistent: each member's effort must be recognized and rewarded independently. Without such individual accountability, groups risk perpetuating the very unfairness that fuels resentment, burnout, and declining motivation. Implementing individual grading, particularly combined with peer evaluation, appears to be one of the most directly actionable solutions from the participants' perspective. This finding aligns with the work of Williams et al (1981) which demonstrated that when individuals believe their individual output can be identified, they are less likely to reduce their effort when working in a group, effectively deterring the social loafing effect. Thus, identifiability through individual grading is a key factor that can moderate social loafing in teams. Similarly, Aggarwal and O'Brien (2008) corroborate the findings that peer evaluation is a perceived solution to social loafing.

Participants frequently endorsed **removal or exclusion from the group** as a legitimate consequence for non-contributing members. This reflects frustration and a desire for clear consequences. Removal is a last-resort strategy. Multiple participants stated simply *“removal from the group”* (P02) or *“elimination to those who will not contribute”* (P20), while others specified *“eliminate the member with little to no contribute”* (P05) and *“remove loafers in the group”* (P17). Beyond mere removal, some participants framed the consequence as a corrective measure, noting *“remove them from the group so they'll learn from the consequences”* (P16) and *“I will remove members who lacks accountability”* (P18). A practical variation included *“not listing their names”* (P10), effectively excluding the non-contributor from credit without formal removal. Others emphasized conditional removal, stating *“remove them if they don't participate”* (P12) and *“if the person did not contribute, they can be removed in the group”* (P13), suggesting that prior warning or failed participation triggers the consequence. The data reveals that participants view removal not merely as punishment but as both a protective mechanism for active members and a learning opportunity for loafers. The statement *“so they'll learn from the*

consequences" (16) indicates an educational intent, implying that experiencing natural consequences may reshape future behavior. The conditional phrasing across multiple responses from participants (12, 13, 18) suggests that participants envision a fair process, removal follows non-contribution rather than being arbitrary. Interestingly, *"not listing their names"* (P10) offers a less confrontational alternative to outright expulsion, allowing groups to withhold credit while avoiding direct removal. These findings suggest that participants see removal as a last-resort consequence that restores fairness to the group. When social loafing persists despite other interventions, exclusion rebalances the workload by reducing the group size to only contributing members. The threat of removal may also function as a deterrent, motivating marginal members to engage. Participants who advocate removal likely assume instructor support for such actions, which may not always exist. The educational framing, *"learn from the consequences"*, implies that participants are hoping loafers develop accountability through direct experience.

Many participants prefer positive approaches such as **motivation, inclusion, and emotional support**, over punishment. This strategy addresses the root causes of loafing: lack of confidence, shyness, or feeling disconnected. When members feel valued and understood, they are more likely to contribute. However, this requires emotional labor from leaders and may not work for chronic loafers. From the data transcripts, one participant expressed a personal commitment, stating *"I will do my best to motivate them to do their best"* (P01), while others suggested *"giving them motivation or guiding them on what to do"* (P17) and *"encourage them to participate in the group"* (P05). Several participants emphasized the relational aspect of encouragement, noting the importance of *"making it more engaging, letting them feel part of the group"* (P03) and *"make them feel they are part of the group"* (P20). Beyond mere motivation, participants also recognized the need for psychological safety, suggesting *"make them comfortable to open up with their ideas/opinions"* (P15) and *"encouraging everyone to participate and communicate effectively"* (4). The recurring phrase *"encourage them"* across multiple responses of participants (5, 9, 10, 13, 17) reflects a shared belief that positive reinforcement can transform reluctant members into active contributors.

The phrase *"let them feel they are part of the group"* (P05, P09) appears twice, indicating that social belonging is perceived as a prerequisite for voluntary contribution when members feel excluded, they are more likely to withdraw. The above findings suggest that participants view social loafing not solely as a character flaw but sometimes as a response to feeling disconnected, unsupported, or unsure of expectations. Motivation and positive reinforcement address the underlying emotional and social barriers to participation. Encouragement reduces fear of judgment (identified earlier as a personal factor) by creating a safe environment where members feel comfortable sharing ideas. Making members feel included directly counters the *"lack of personal connection"* and *"low task engagement"* previously cited as reasons for withdrawal. Importantly, participants advocating encouragement are not excusing loafing; rather, they recognize that punitive measures alone may fail with members who are disengaged due to low confidence, confusion, or perceived exclusion.

Improved communication and open dialogue are seen as preventive measures. It resolves misunderstandings, builds trust, and allows early intervention. Many loafing behaviors stem from unclear expectations, social anxiety, or unspoken resentment. Regular, honest communication can surface these issues before they become problems. This strategy is low-cost but requires psychological safety within the group. Participants consistently identified improved communication and open dialogue as essential strategies for addressing social loafing. One participant articulated a clear causal link, stating *"communicate to everyone especially with co-members because if conflict or misunderstanding is present, less work will be done"* (P02). Others emphasized preventive communication, suggesting *"improving communication among the group to help prevent arguments"* (P03) and *"talk to the group members honestly"* (P04). Multiple participants advocated for direct, interpersonal approaches, including *"talking to them personally"* (P05), *"socialize properly"* (P06), and simply *"communication"* (P07). Notably, one participant proposed a non-confrontational inquiry: *"talk to the member who doesn't contribute and ask why they don't want to participate"* (12), suggesting curiosity rather than accusation. Another highlighted the generative function of communication, stating *"by engaging with each other and share ideas"* (14). These findings suggest that poor communication is not merely a symptom of social loafing but a root cause. When groups fail to establish open dialogue, misunderstandings multiply, conflicts remain unresolved, and non-contributing members face no social pressure to change. Conversely, honest, personal communication creates pathways for addressing loafing early and constructively. Furthermore, Participants view improved

communication and open dialogue as foundational solutions to social loafing. Effective communication prevents conflict before it starts, enables honest problem-solving when issues arise, and builds the relational cohesion that motivates voluntary participation. The most productive approach appears to be non-accusatory inquiry, asking why a member is not contributing, rather than immediate punishment. Without open dialogue, groups remain trapped in cycles of misunderstanding, resentment, and withdrawal.

Setting deadlines, monitoring, and strict follow-up create structure and urgency. Loafers often exploit the absence of visible progress tracking and firm deadlines. This shifts group work from trust-based to accountability-based. Participants strongly endorsed the use of deadlines, monitoring, and structured follow-up as practical mechanisms for reducing social loafing. One participant proposed a formal escalation process, suggesting *"set strict deadlines of submission and if they fail, report immediately to the advisors"* (P06). Others emphasized ongoing oversight, including *"consistently monitoring each member's task and evaluating its quality"* (P02) and *"properly assessing the task and monitoring each member's participation"* (P08). The combination of deadlines with accountability appeared frequently, such as *"set individual deadlines and monitor each member's contribution regularly"* (P17) and *"set clear boundaries and constantly remind everyone their roles"* (P20). Several participants linked deadlines to punitive consequences, stating *"assign task and set deadline with punishment when not met punctually"* (P14) and *"each member will be given time only to do their task so they can pass on time; if not, consequences"* (P16). These findings suggest that participants view lax deadlines and absent monitoring as enabling conditions for social loafing. When groups set vague timelines or fail to check in, non-contributors can hide indefinitely. Conversely, strict deadlines and regular monitoring remove the ambiguity that allows loafing to thrive. The emphasis on *"individual deadlines"* (P17) is particularly significant. Participants view setting strict deadlines, consistent monitoring, and firm follow-up as essential structural solutions to social loafing. Deadlines create visibility, monitoring ensures ongoing accountability, and consequences provide meaningful deterrents.

A smaller but significant set of responses suggests avoiding the problem by reducing the size of collaborative work groups. One participant simply stated, *"less members"* (P03), implying that smaller groups may naturally reduce opportunities for social loafing. Participant P14 emphasized *"less member and individual grading,"* suggesting that reducing group size alone is insufficient and that individual grading is a necessary accompanying measure. This implies that shared grading in larger groups is perceived as fundamentally unfair. P19 further reported that larger groups, specifically those with more than eight members, can lead to dependency, wherein some members exert minimal effort while receiving the same grade as active contributors. This suggests that when groups are large, members feel they can hide, rely on others, or become complacent because individual contributions are less visible. These perceptions align with social psychology research (Ringelmann, 1913), which consistently demonstrates that as the number of group members increases, the overall performance decreases. In addition, Aggarwal and O'Brien (2008) also support that findings that the size of the student group assigned to the project and its scope are key predictors to social loafing. North et al. (2000) also confirmed that individuals working within smaller groups were more productive than those working in larger groups.

Participants' proposed solutions suggest that effective intervention must be multifaceted, which means that no single strategy, whether positive reinforcement alone or strict monitoring alone, fully addresses the problem. Instead, the most effective strategy is likely to combine structural solutions (clear roles, individual deadlines, monitoring, individual grading) with relational solutions (open dialogue, encouragement, psychological safety, inclusion). For persistent cases, consequential solutions (removal, reporting to advisors, punishment for missed deadlines) provide necessary accountability.

Ultimately, participants' voices reveal a consistent truth: social loafing thrives in ambiguity, tolerates in silence, and worsens under unfair grading. It diminishes when roles are clear, contributions are visible, communication is open, and all members feel both accountable and valued. Educators and group leaders who address social loafing must therefore attend not only to "lazy" individuals but also to the structural, relational, and other tasks and group dynamics-related problems.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a synthesis of the key findings derived from the quantitative and qualitative responses regarding the causes, consequences, and solutions to social loafing in group work.

Recognizing that collaborative learning is a cornerstone of the Philippine Department of Education curriculum, this study addressed a critical gap in local literature by exploring the extent, causes, consequences, and solutions to social loafing within this specific institutional context.

This present study is sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the perceived extent or prevalence of social loafing among senior high school learners at LNHS, as reported by the learners themselves?
2. What are the perceived causes and consequences of social loafing among senior high school learners at LNHS?
3. Why does social loafing occur among learners during collaborative or group work, from the perspective of senior high school learners at LNHS?
4. How does social loafing affect group performance in terms of productivity, output quality, and group dynamics?
5. What intervention strategies may be developed and proposed based on the findings to mitigate or prevent social loafing among senior high school learners at LNHS?

This study employed a mixed-methods explanatory sequential design to investigate social loafing among Grade 12 learners at Leyte National High School. Quantitative data were first collected through surveys from randomly selected respondents. Subsequently, qualitative data were gathered through in-depth interviews with participants purposely selected based on predetermined criteria, allowing for a deeper explanation of the initial quantitative findings. Descriptive statistics were employed to analyze the quantitative data, while thematic analysis with in vivo coding was applied to the qualitative data.

Summary of Major Findings

Following the analyses, the following major findings emerged from the quantitative and qualitative data:

1. Prevalence and Self-Other Discrepancy. Both quantitative and qualitative data recognized that social loafing is a serious problem among senior high school learners. Additionally, both data sources confirmed the presence of a self-other discrepancy in how learners perceive the prevalence and causes of social loafing. Specifically, learners tend to attribute loafing to others while portraying themselves as actively contributing. In other words, learners believe that *others* loaf while *they themselves* are doing their best.

2. Causes and Consequences. Both quantitative and qualitative data agreed on several structural factors contributing to social loafing: when individual performance is not graded individually or evaluated by co-members; when members feel that their specific input is not necessary for success; when working in large groups compared to smaller groups; and when the task has less clear individual accountability. However, the qualitative data expanded upon these findings by discovering additional factors not captured in the quantitative survey, including laziness, lack of interest in the topic or task, fear of judgment, shyness, or low confidence, poor group communication, permissive or lenient leadership, and external home responsibilities and technological constraints. Both quantitative and qualitative data agreed on the major consequences associated with social loafing, which fall into three categories: productivity-related, output quality-related, and group dynamics-related effects.

3. Categorization of Causal Factors. Participants reported that social loafing is driven by three broad categories of factors: Personal/Internal Factors which include laziness, lack of interest, fear of judgment, lack of knowledge or understanding, low academic ambition; Relational/Group Dynamic Factors include poor group communication, leader tolerance of non-participation, favoritism; External Factors include home

responsibilities (chores, emergencies, illness), technological constraints (lack of internet, no mobile data, no functioning phone).

4. Consequences of Social Loafing. The consequences of social loafing are organized into three thematic areas: Low Productivity such as delayed submissions, time inefficiency, cascading delays, rushed work, constant time pressure, missed deadlines; Poor Output Quality includes lower quality and coherence, incomplete integration, missing contributions, unmet expectations, lower grades; Poor Relations and Group Dynamics include unfair workload and overburdening of active members, stress, burnout, pressure, conflict, resentment and arguments, decreased motivation and enthusiasm, negative effects on collaboration and team cohesion.

5. Proposed Intervention Strategies. From the voices of the participants,, the following intervention strategies are proposed to mitigate or prevent social loafing: stablish role clarity, implement individual grading, clarify individual accountability, reduce group size where possible, apply appropriate consequences for non-participation, use positive reinforcement for active contribution, improve group communication channels, conduct regular monitoring and follow-up on individual contributions, and provide clear expectations and deadlines.

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions are drawn from the findings of the study:

1. Social loafing is not only a prevalent issue among senior high school learners but is also perceived through a biased lens: learners consistently recognize loafing in others while denying it in themselves. This self-other discrepancy suggests that interventions must first address learners' lack of self-awareness regarding their own loafing behaviors before meaningful behavioral change can occur.
2. While structural factors such as ungraded individual performance and large group sizes are widely recognized causes of social loafing, the qualitative findings reveal a more complex picture. Additional personal, relational, and external factors, including laziness, fear of judgment, poor communication, and home responsibilities, play an equally critical role. Therefore, effective interventions must go beyond altering group structures and address the individual and environmental contexts in which learners operate.
3. Social loafing is driven by three distinct yet interconnected categories of factors: personal/internal, relational/group dynamic, and external. This tripartite framework indicates that no single cause dominates; rather, loafing emerges from an interaction between a learner's disposition, the quality of group interactions, and external life circumstances. Prevention strategies must therefore be multidimensional and tailored to each category.
4. The consequences of social loafing extend far beyond reduced productivity to include tangible declines in output quality and significant damage to group relationships. Notably, the overburdening of active members leads to stress, resentment, and decreased team cohesion, suggesting that social loafing not only harms academic outcomes but also undermines the collaborative learning environment essential for learners' development.
5. Participants themselves advocate for a structured, accountability-driven approach to mitigating social loafing, emphasizing role clarity, individual grading, reduced group sizes, and consistent monitoring. The absence of punitive-only measures and the inclusion of positive reinforcement and improved communication channels suggest that learners prefer fair, transparent, and supportive systems over purely disciplinary actions. Implementing these participant-derived strategies may yield higher acceptance and effectiveness than externally imposed solutions.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following are recommended:

1. Given that learners attribute loafing to others but not to themselves, it is recommended that teachers implement structured self-reflection where learners rate their own contributions alongside peer assessments. Interventions focused solely on monitoring peers will be ineffective without first correcting this perceptual bias.

2. While it is recommended that teachers continue to use individual grading, smaller groups, and clear accountability measures, these structural interventions alone are insufficient. The school should also establish support systems addressing personal factors and external factors.
3. It is recommended to adopt a three-directional intervention strategy targeting each category of causal factors simultaneously: personal/internal factors, relational/group dynamic factors, and external factors.
4. It is also recommended that teachers implement regular individual check-ins and peer evaluations at the midpoint of group projects. When inequities are detected, teachers should intervene by reallocating tasks or providing targeted support to underperforming members.
5. It is therefore recommended that the school/teachers adopt the strategies proposed by the participants (Table 5) as a formal social loafing prevention policy.

Additionally, it is recommended to pilot the above strategies in one grade level or subject area over one academic term, with pre- and post-intervention measurements of social loafing prevalence, self-other discrepancy scores, and group project outcomes. The results of this pilot should inform school-wide policy on group work design and accountability structures. Finally, future researchers may further investigate the effectiveness of combined interventions and explore the loafing experience from various perspectives for more in-depth results.

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