

Social facilitation theory analysis



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During my school days, when I used to practice solving mathematical equations at home I do fine and if professor asked to solve the same equation in front of class on white board, I always solve it accurately and fastly. But if the equation given is different or little tough, many times my performance degrades even if I know well how to solve it. Now when I thought about this situation, I understand that this is happening due to presence of audience (other students in class) and in result, facilitating or inhabitating my performance. And this very concept is known as Social Facilitation.

The Social Facilitation is simply ‘ the effect that the mere presence of other people has on performer’. It can be either ‘ positive’ or ‘ negative’ i. e. either performance is getting ‘ facilitated’ or ‘ inhibited’. It seems like the performance gets facilitated during easy or known tasks when performer accompanied by an audience but it gets inhibited during tough or unknown tasks. (Zajonc B. 1965)

The research in this area is based on two effects- audience (performer performing in presence of spectators) and co-action (performers perform individually the same tasks alongside).

EXPERIMENTS EXPLAINING THE CONCEPT

One of the oldest experiments performed in relation with Social Facilitation is on ‘ cyclist in cycling trails in three conditions’ by Triplett (1897) to show inter-individual influences. In first condition, cyclists raced individually against clock. In second condition, cyclists raced together without completion. In third condition, cyclists raced together with competition. In

results, third condition appears to have winner with fastest time. But winner from second condition have better time than winner from first condition. So the results states that the presence of others leads to social facilitation effects. The study by Triplett (1897) was conducted in competitive environment and later researchers' works to separate them. (sportspsych 2011) (Aiello R. & Douthitt A. 2001)

The study by Allport (1920) separates the word ' competition' from the concept of social facilitation. In his experiment, candidates perform the same task alongside but without the sense of competition and then individually. In results, candidates perform easy task better when do it alongside but perform tough task better individually.

Allport gives explanation for social facilitation effects and says presence of others accelerates ' the idea of movement' and facilitates the performance and ' over-rivalry, distraction and emotions' leads to inhabiting the performance. (Aiello R. & Douthitt A. 2001)

The study by Allport (1920) did not include the word ' audience' and Zajonc in later years gives theory explaining social facilitation effect in presence of ' audience'.

THE DRIVE THEORY OF SOCIAL FACILITATION

The drive theory of Social Facilitation is given by Robert B. Zajonc in 1965. The theory says that the physical presence or ' mere presence' of spectators result in increasing the level of arousal. Arousal thus accelerates the performance of dominant responses (i. e. the responses which are most learnt and habitual). (Platania & Moran 2001)

Zajonc says in easy or known tasks, the dominant responses of an individual are right, so the performance gets facilitated. And in tough or unknown tasks, the dominant responses are usually wrong thus inhibits the performance. He proposed this theory on bases of Hull-Spence Drive Theory (1956). The theory was criticized as Zajonc used the term ‘mere presence’ and critics say presence of others is more significant. So, in 1980 Zajonc gave the clarification for the criticism.

Zajonc (1980) says that the presence of an audience is unavoidably noteworthy but it is variable, changes from situation to situation and depending upon behavior. The presence may result in sense of competition or feeling of reward or punishment or encouragement as an example. But if omitting all these probabilities, ‘mere presence’ of spectators still shows the effect of social facilitation.

EXPERIMENTAL EXAMPLE IN SUPPORT WITH THE THEORY

Zajonc et al (1969) perform experiment on cockroaches. According to their findings, when two cockroaches ran together to escape an easy maze being watched by audience (i. e. other cockroaches), took less time in comparison when they have same situation but difficult maze. So, it supports the theory as dominant responses get facilitated in easy maze and gets inhibited in tough maze. (Kevin Brewer 2009)Social-Facilitation-300x200. jpg

Michael et al (1982) perform another experiment on human being and the results confirm the findings of drive theory by Zajonc (1965). (FolorunshoEm 2010)

In this experiment by Michael, students were observed while playing from a distance and then 12 were selected; 6 above and 6 below average. Now they were observed again while playing but in presence of spectators. In conclusion, it appears that the dominant responses were facilitated for above average players and inhibited for below average in presence of spectators.

Bell and Yee (1989) also perform experiment and findings again support the theory. They observed skilled and unskilled karate candidates with and without audience and observed social facilitation effects. (Blumberg & Hare 2008)

CLAIMS AND COMMENTS ON THEORY

Social facilitation is still a burning topic for researchers for future research. Many researchers supported the drive theory by Zajonc (1965), as their study shows the same results. But some researchers argued and criticized the drive theory.

The study conducted by Markus (1978) to test whether 'the mere presence of others can influence an individual's performance'. And the result was satisfactory and Markus says, 'the drive theory of social facilitation stands in sharp contrast to many other current explanation of social behavior...'

Another study was conducted by Schmitt et al. (1986) and they use the almost same conditions in the experiment as Markus (1978) and but in bit simpler form and finds same results supporting the drive theory of social facilitation.

Few researchers agree with the Zajonc's drive theory but they do not agree with the explanation for the arousal that accelerates the performance of dominant responses. The study conducted by them show different reasons for the arousal and thus they provide separate theories for their explanation.

Contrell et al (1968) conducted an experiment to see social facilitation effect. The results were similar to the Zajonc's theory but Contrell explain other reasons for the arousal. He gave theory in 1972 known as Evaluation apprehension Theory.

The Evaluation Apprehension Theory says the social facilitation effects can be observed when the candidate knows he is under evaluation. The feeling of being evaluated lead to arousal. And thus, facilitate the dominant responses and inhibits the weaker responses. Contrell (1972) says, the evaluation apprehension caused the 'drive' and the previous experiences of evaluation apprehension results in 'learned drive' (that is habitual to the reaction towards drive). Dashell (1930, 35) and Paulus and Murdock (1971) also study the social facilitation effects and their findings support Contrell's (1972) theory.

Another theory was given by Baron (1986). The experiment was performed by Sanders, Baron and Moore (1978) and results shows clearly that non-living things like noise and light can also cause social facilitation effects.

Baron (1986) gave Distraction Conflict Theory. The theory says that the 'drive' is caused by the distraction. In explanation with previous two theories, he says that the presences of others put candidate in 'attentional conflict'

and thus result in arousal and cause drive. And 'distraction' causes the drive, instead of feeling of being evaluated.

The drive theory of social facilitation by Zajonc (1965) is widely accepted, but many researchers currently stand along with Baron's (1986) distraction conflict theory. Either way, all three theories provide good knowledge and different perspective towards social facilitation.

EXAMPLE FOR DRIVE THEORY APPLICATION IN PRACTICE

The Drive Theory of Social Facilitation is applicable in practice where one wants to influence the learning effects. Schools and universities are teaching centers. Their main aim is to provide effective learning environment for students. To accelerate the learning level or to provide better environment for average or below average students, they can pay attention to social facilitation effects. As it says presence of others has influence on the candidate, so the 'classroom size', 'number of teachers observing students', what kind of activities being performed individually or in group and in what type of situation will have direct affect on learning level. The same in case of Organization's training unit, 'working in team' and 'level of monitoring' will affect learning levels. (Aiello R. & Douthitt A. 2001)

To maximize the learning effects or performance, the schools, universities and organization should work on their monitoring levels and group tasks in order to have facilitating effects. During tough tasks, one should practice more individually to get habitual. Again, working in team with sense of competition and without competition will have different effects. So,

reconsidering the working condition for workers and studying environment for students in accordance with social facilitation effects, one can enhance their performance. Social-Facilitation-300×200. jpg

The common example of using social facilitation is through the use of electronics (i. e. computers) to measure or monitor the performance of individuals or candidates. This concept is known as Computerized Performance Monitoring where the audience is not present physically but electronically. Organizations are using this technique widely to monitor their employees.

The study by Aiello and Svec (1993) shows, when candidates perform tough tasks individually without monitoring perform better in comparison when being monitored. Also, when monitor by a person, the performance is inhibited less and when monitored by computer, the performance is inhibited more. The results support the Baron's (1986) theory i. e. Evaluation Apprehension as candidates consider that they are being evaluated and thus their performance gets inhibited. Many organizations use the computerized performance monitoring to monitor job performance. But the study shows that actually this concept can degrade the individual's performance instead of improving it. (Greenberg & Baron 1997)

APPENDIX

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Aiello R., J. & Douthitt A., E., 2001. Social Facilitation From Triplett to Electronic Performance Monitoring. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research and Practice*, 5(3), pp. 163-180.

<https://assignbuster.com/social-facilitation-theory-analysis/>

This article reviews birth of Social Facilitation Theory and its development over time. Starting from Triplett (1898) who conducted first experiment in this field and shows social facilitation effect on individuals in presence of others. And in 1965, Robert B. Zajonc gives social facilitation theory and explains why performance impairments occur. The author describes the chain of experiments performed in this study area from 1898 till end of 19th century. Considering Zajonc's (1965) drive theory as main idea of this article, he describe social, physiological, behavioral and cognitive theories related to social facilitation and their advancement over time.

Despite of the fact that many researchers criticize the Zajonc's drive theory and support Evaluation Apprehension Theory or Distraction Conflict Theory, the authors consider Zajonc's work one of most important work in development of Social Facilitation theory.

The authors concludes that Zajonc provide a strong base for social facilitation theory. The rest researches are variations, refinements and amplifications in his drive theory. The Evaluation Apprehension Theory and Distraction Conflict Theory have common base as of drive theory- that social facilitation effect is produced by the increased drive. But these theories provide different reason for what causes drive. So these theories are variations or refinements of Zajonc's drive theory.

The authors describe the issues and problems relating to social facilitation theories and also present their own framework for social facilitation evaluation. They also describe the applicability of social facilitation theory.