# Reference Group and Workers' Job Satisfaction in Selected Factories in Lagos Metropolis, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** This study arose to identify how and where factory workers select their reference groups; ascertain if the reference members of the factory workers induce evaluation responses that probably lead to attitude of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Through a multistage sampling technique, two hundred and five (205) factory workers were sampled from selected Glaxosmithkline and Tower Aluminium factories in Lagos/Ogun state, Nigeria. Questionnaire and in-depth interviews were utilized to generate quantitative and qualitative data respectively. Consequently the analysis of data was based on quantitative and qualitative analysis. The finding revealed among other things that the respondents varied in their socio-economic and demographic characteristics such as sex, age, educational attainment, years of working experience, marital status, job position religious background and income. The study showed that respondents chose their reference members from their relatives, friends, colleagues and boss. Also most respondents' agreed that referents members had commented about their place of work. On job satisfaction, the study showed that most respondents were satisfied with achievement and recognition but dissatisfied with supervision, company policies and salaries. Hypotheses tested showed that most respondents selected reference group members from non-factory; that the feeling of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction among factory workers was a function of level of comparison with referent members; that most factory workers do not change members of reference group as they progressed in the factory. Anchoring the explanation of the research findings on equity and social action perspectives, the study recommended that that there is need to review human resources policy of the organizations and, in formulating policies towards job satisfaction, the management should always consider the different needs and aspirations of categories of employees. Most importantly, there is an urgent need for management to encourage social researches on the socio-psychological aspects of the factory workers in order to change their attitudes to work and to social pressures.

**Key words:** Dissatisfaction, equity, factory system, job satisfaction, reference group, social action, workers, working environment

## INTRODUCTION

During the traditional period, individuals seemed to derive relative satisfaction from their jobs[1-3]. This is evident in the identity of membership. For instance, among the Yoruba of south west Nigeria, offspring were named along the occupation of the family. For those whose major occupation is drumming, members bear such names as "Ayanbadejo" meaning the drummer matches well with royalty; "Ayanloba" meaning the drummer is the king[4]. These and many more show the level of humanism and satisfaction or dignity individuals derived from their job task.

In the modern society several factors have been established that could influence workers willingness and preparedness to utilize his abilities. These could be extrinsic or intrinsic in nature. Variables such as promotional opportunities, salary/wages, status of the job, fringe benefit those extrinsic factors that may influence their job satisfaction. On the other hand Intrinsic factors are those satisfactions that emerge within the person, for instance, feeling of accomplishment, enjoyment at work and self esteem.

The worker as a self, functions and sustains through the continuous interaction with significant others in a symbolic social situation. The symbolic interactive situation with these significant others allow individual to make certain comparisons with significant others or reference group members, the outcome of that comparisons is likely to predispose the worker to certain patterns of job satisfactory or dissatisfactory behaviour[5-7].

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**The problem:** In the world of work, both the extrinsic and intrinsic factors that serve as motivator or satisfier have been so much stressed by intellectuals. Most scholars like Clark[6], Locke[8], Idson[9], Abraham[10], Onyeonoru[11] have concerned themselves with issues of salaries more than others. However, the social situations in which the workers live have not received vigorous attention. The fact that a worker is a member of social groups, family, religious, educational, up to the work group, implies that the worker attempts to evaluate his performance along the group he belongs to. To certain extent, the accomplishment of his goal can be valued through this evaluation[12].

Workers' motivation tended to be confused for workers' job satisfaction. The management can provide such incentives as monetary to motivate the workers to efficiently perform their job task but this in itself does not linearistically end in job satisfaction. The little understanding of the management to concentrate intangible energies and foci on the social reference basis on what could lead to job satisfaction of workers seems to make impotent several policies and programmes directed at getting the workers motivated towards efficiency.

The situation becomes worrisome to the category of factory workers. The gross folding-up of several factories, under-utilization of capacity, consistent failure to meet target production, absenteeism or characteristic lateness to working place, among others seem to characterize the industrial factory sector[3,13-15]. Therefore a keen empirical consideration of the workers' job satisfaction or dissatisfaction from the angle of his reference group could be useful in understanding his behavoiur in workplace. Therefore the main research questions that guided this study are:

- Do factory workers select their reference group randomly?
- Does reference group membership of factory workers induce an evaluative response, thereby leading to attitudinal feeling of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction?
- What are the patterns of dynamism of workers' reference group in relation to industrial socialization?; and
- What are the corresponding effects of job satisfaction arising from evaluation of reference group on the work task?

**Objectives:** The general objective of this study is to determine the relationship between reference group and workers' job satisfaction in selected factories in Lagos. The specific objectives of This study are:

- To examine how factory workers select their reference group;
- To ascertain if the reference group membership of the factory workers induces an evaluative response thereby leading to attitude of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction;
- To examine the dynamism of factory workers' reference group in relation to industrial socialization; and
- To determine if referent evaluation on workers' job satisfaction or dissatisfaction has any impact on effective job performance.

**Brief review of literature:** Sociologists, social psychologists and cultural anthropologists have always operated on the fundamental principles that an individual's attitudes and conduct are shaped by the group in which he has membership and that self-appraisal and the correlative feelings and behaviour flow from the individual's location in a particular group within a social hierarchy[16]. In coining the term reference group, Hyman considered it as an anchoring point for the individual, having various weights or influences depending on a variety of factors such as distance from the reference group, mobility of alternative anchorage points and so on. In general however, Nevandomisky[17] found that status evaluation and status aspirations is influenced by reference groups and that changes in reference groups produced changes in values and judgments.

W.G. Sumner's[18] idea of in-groups and out-groups is a distant relation to the term reference group, but Cooley's discussion of selective affinity to groups outside of ones' immediate environment is an even earlier and closer relative. Cooley's remark that "people differ much in the vividness of their imaginative sociability" is suggestive of later findings on individual differences in the use of multiple reference groups (1964:96).

For individuals, reference groups are paramount or central focusing groups used as a standard for measuring the relevance of other groups. Individuals seek membership into certain groups because of the groups' perceived status and the benefits gained from belonging to such groups. Groups possess power through their ability to influence individuals who desire to become members. Dawson and Chatman[19] referred to such power as referent power.

Hurado[20] conducted a study that explored how history and macro-social structures impact individuals' types of behaviour in Mexican and Chicago immigrants. It was reported that differences between immigrants and ethnic groups are due largely to changes in the immigrants' reference groups as they compare themselves

to a wider population of people who either do or do not promote acceptance of traditional American culture.

It may be true that individuals usually compare themselves with and this compete with, only similar others. Occasionally, these bounds are broken, however and individuals compare themselves with persons whose status is either far above or below theirs. Kidder and Stewart[21] noted that when such happens, the gross discrepancies revealed are no longer tolerable and riots or revolutions may result. Thus, some of the apparent effect of reference groups on the values of individuals may be spurious, since their values were prior in time and determined the choice of reference group.

Intergroup comparison processes tend to form the main thrust of current study and raise issues of motivations, satisfaction, identity and choice of comparison. For instance Rolthgerber and Worchel[22] findings corroborated Tajfel and Turner's[23] expectations about perceptions of groups resulting from inter-group comparisons. Whelen and Glaser[24] concluded that it appears that social comparisons remain a major source of self-evaluation throughout a person's life.

As regards job satisfaction, Yomere[25] asserted that the concept refers to a level of contentment attained by the individual workers in the performance of his task. This presupposes that the individual experiences a desirable measure of fulfillment in his job. Job dissatisfaction on the other hand, is an aversion toward the task of the individual. It is a negative attitude to the work situation. Locke[8] opined that determining job satisfaction is an appraisal that must have taken into consideration the work content and a combination of psychological and environmental circumstances. This definition embraces all factors that will make a job satisfactory or dissatisfactory. Afonja[26] noted that job satisfaction is a multi-dimensional variable that conveys how the worker assesses expectation against reward and disreward, taking into account other alternatives available in the labour market. He proposed that satisfied workers were expected to evaluate their present job positively, to be very satisfied and without the desire for a change of the job in the workplace.

It was strongly suggested by Watson and Clark[27] that workers with positive dispositions usually are more satisfied with their jobs regardless of the work conditions, while those with negative dispositions seem not to be satisfied with anything.

## MATREIALS AND METHODS

**The location, organization and population of study:** This study was conducted in Lagos metropolis, using two industrial establishments namely Glaxosmithkline

Consumer Nigeria Plc. (GSK) and Tower Aluminium Nigeria Plc. The choice of Lagos as the location of study is informed by the fact that is cosmopolitan city with large concentration of industries and heterogeneous population. Hence, the study universe is all the factory workers in Lagos but the study population is the Glaxosmithkline and Tower Aluminium workers. At the time of this study the population of study was eight hundred and fifteen workers, drawn from two factories and head office of GSK and one factory and Head Office of Tower Aluminium.

**Sampling size and selection techniques:** Three factory sites (Ilupeju, Sango-Ota and Agbara) and two head offices (Ojota and Ikeja) in Lagos adjoining to Ogun State are selected for this study. GSK is in Healthcare sector[28] while Tower Aluminum is in the Industrial Domestic product sector. The selection of these establishments was purposeful essentially to gain legitimate entry into the factories and to have access to vital information that aid the study.

Multi-stage sampling was adopted in the selection of sample size. Multi-stage sampling according to Sarantakos[29] is the method by which a sequence of samples is drawn from samples already selected but only the last sample of subjects is studied. The main advantage of this sampling procedure is that it allows the establishment of a sample that is directly related to the research object. With every additional drawing, the sample becomes more specific and more relevant to the research questions and the results are expected to become equally relevant and more representative.

The total workforce in the selected factories was eight hundred and fifteen. The Glaxosmithkline consumer Nigeria Plc a total of 504 workers distributed as follows 121 workers-Head office at Ojota ; 162 workers-factory site at Ilupeju; 221 workers-factory site at Agbara[30] On the other hand, Tower Aluminimum Nigeria Plc has a total of 322 workers distributed as follows: 102 workers-Head office at Ikeja; 220 workers-factory site at Sango Ota.

The researcher employed cluster sampling to select a large probability sample of two hundred and five workers (205). Twenty-five percent 25% of the estimated population figure was decided as a representative standard of the sample. Hence the researcher in this primary selection unit arrived at the following: Glaxosmithkline Consumer Nigeria plc, 30 samples-Head Office at Ojota; 40 Samples-Factory site at Ilupeju 55 Samples-Factory site at Agbara. On the other hand, the following were selected from Tower Aluminum Nigeria plc: 25 samples-Head office at Ikeja and 55 samples-Factory site at Sango-Ota.

Next was the stratification of each of the selected sample into two categories namely: The junior staff and the senior staff/Management staff. The junior staff was later classified into three Subdivisions namely: Casual/trainee staff; blue collar workers i.e. technician and factory workers; and white collar workers i.e. administrative staff.

The use of stratified random sampling for this categorization of staff was disproportionate to the units of target sample that is, not sensitive to gender or age. However, the staff was stratified due to the researchers' special interest in the junior staff category. It therefore offers a high degree of representativeness.

In the selection of unit of response (respondent) at the Senior/Management staff category, non-probability sampling technique was adopted. This was due to the inability to find or have access to a list from which select the element for study. Hence, the instrument of data collection (questionnaire) was given to any willing and available staff.

Simple random technique was however utilized in selecting respondent in the junior staff (blue collar) category. This was enhanced by the staff clocking card system. Each card was assigned a number accordingly. An urn with as many as the number of the workers in the card was obtained, the numbers were put in a container and after been shaken rigorously each number was drawn from the container until the desired size was realized.

**Methods and instruments of data collection:** Quantitative and Qualitative methods of data collection were adopted in this study. Quantitatively, structured questionnaire was used to collect relevant information from all categories of workers in the study organizations. The questionnaire which contained both open-ended and closed-ended questions was pre-tested through pilot study to ascertain its validity and reliability. A total of two hundred and five copies of questionnaire were prepared and distributed to the workers from the study organizations.

To complement the above instrument the qualitatively, in-depth interviews were employed to probe into matters or ideas, which the open- ended and closed ended potency of the questionnaire might not have afforded clarification. Hence, three sections of oral interview were conducted with a manager, a supervisor and a plant floor worker in each of the selected factories. These interviews were both formal and informal.

**Method of data analysis:** The combination of univariate and bivariate analyses were employed in the analysis. Specifically, for the quantitative data, the researchers adopted frequency distribution tables, percentages and chi-square statistical techniques for data presentation, analysis and testing of hypotheses. For qualitative data, content analysis was used. In order to ensure suitability for data presentation and analysis, the researchers inspected and edited the returned questionnaires.

## DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

**Selected respondents personal characteristics:** On the respondents personal characteristics, the data for this study showed that 62.4% of the respondents were male while 37.6% of the respondents were female. As regards age, 42.4% of the respondents were between 18 years and 30 years, while 34.2% were under the age bracket of 31 years to 45 years. Furthermore, it was observed that 23.4% of the respondents were between 46 and 60 years. Form the data, it is implied that all age groups that fall under the workforce are represented in the factories under study. Also, the large percent of workers whose age group is 18 to 30 years are likely to evolve in the factories as most of them are either young school leavers with fresh ideas. It also shows that vigour and vitality are needed to work in these organizations.

On marital status, it was observed from the data that 38.1% of the total respondents were single while 50.25 of them were married-showing quite a number of the respondents have family responsibilities. Also, 11.7% were divorced, separated or widowed. The ethnic group of the respondents showed that 55.0% were Yoruba; 21.3% were Igbo while 4.5% were from other ethnic groups such as Benin, Idoma, Igala and Urhobo. This could be deduced that majority of workers in the factories were located in Yoruba speaking area despite the cosmopolitan nature of the city.

Data for this study also showed that 67.3% of the total respondents were Christians while 32.2% were Muslims and only 0.5% of the respondents practiced traditional religion. By implication there are more Christians than Muslims in the organizations studied. Religion helps in shaping the world view of individuals. As regards educational attainment, the data showed that 20.3% of the respondents were HND/Bachelor degree holders, 44.1% of the respondents were holders of secondary/technical school certificate. Also 14.9% had primary school certificate and another 14.9% had ordinary national diploma while 3.0% had no formal education. Higher degree holders of the total respondents were 3.0%. This shows that almost all the workers in the factory were educated, though, with some variations.

The data further revealed the respondents' years of service. The percentage distribution, showed that respondents who were still below a year in the factory

were 9.3%, respondents who have worked between 1 and 4 years were 33.2%, respondents with 5-9 years of service were 27.8%; 10-14 years service respondents were 18.0%, 15-19 years service respondents were 6.8% while respondents who have contributed 20 years and above were 4.4%. This finding showed that recruitment into the workforce of study organization was dynamic as new entrants outnumbered old staff. It can be inferred here that the organizations have a high labour turn over.

The position occupied by the respondents revealed that 13.7% were either casual or trainee staff. Also 45.9% were blue collar staff working in the plant floor. Further, 18.5% of the total respondents were white collar staff working in the administrative section, 9.8% were in the category of supervisor of blue collar workers while 7.3% were white collar supervisor. The senior/management staff among the total respondents was 4.9%. This finding is not surprising since blue collar worker either unskilled or semi-skilled are mostly needed for production in the factory.

The monthly salary of the respondents showed that 16.3% earned the minimum wage of N7500. Respondents who earned between N7500-N12500 were 34.7% while 27.7% earned between N12500-N17500. Respondents who earned between N17500-N22500 were 12.4 and 3.0% earned between N22500-N27500. Also 5.9% of the respondents earned above N27, 500.

**Respondents association with reference group members:** Data for this study showed that 28.8% of the respondents said the had never visited their mates in their working places. Also, 8.3% always visited their mates in the office while 60.0% of the respondents rarely visited their mates in working places. However, only 2.9% of respondents did not respond.

Related to the above one respondent said:

- In a place like Lagos it is very to visit any worker during the working h. The hectic nature of Lagos makes it impossible for such visits to take place. As a matter of fact people are so busy seeking to survive...

The sociological implication of *never* or *rarely* visits to mates' working place may affect the factory workers' personal understanding of the realities in other working environment than what they were told by their mates. On how often do workers receive visit from friends during working hours, the data showed that 77.1% rarely received visitors, 13.7% had never received visits from friends and 5.9% always received visits from friends. This finding buttresses the earlier conception that workers are likely to be misinformed about the realities in other working places especially of their friends.

Further the data showed the respondents' mates during non-working hours. It was observed that over 40.5% spent most of their non-working hours with their families, 24.9% of the respondents spent theirs with friends, 20.5% spent theirs mostly with colleagues and 4.9% mostly with neighbours and 2.0% spent their non-working hours alone. It is therefore sociological to assert that most of the workers interviewed valued family life and relate more with their family members during their non-working hours.

It was further observed from the data that 67.3% of the total respondents often discussed about their place of work with friends, 12.2% of the respondents had never discussed anything about place of work with friends while 18.5% rarely discussed with friends about place of work and 1.0% did not respond to that question. The greater percentage of respondents who often discussed about their places of work with friends makes one to imply that the extent of discussion and the contents may likely affect the attitude of factory workers in demanding higher conditions of service from their management.

Moreover, the data showed that 38.5% noted that relatives influenced them more on the issue of job situation. Respondents who were more influenced by friends were 22.4, 21.0 and 12.2% by colleagues and boss, respectively. This finding is indicative of the fact that relatives remain the major influence on individuals' life. In such case, there is bound to be strong expectations from individual workers.

Taken this further it was shown 59.5% found influence from their friends/relatives difficult to resist. Also 33.7% of the respondents found such influence easy to resist and 3.4% of them did not respond. This finding further implies that since influence on job situation could sometimes be difficult to resist, workers may experience internal and societal discord and also engage from time to time on self-career evaluation. One respondent remarked:

- ...no body is an island, if a person or people had contributed to send a person to school it is expected that when you starting working, from time to time they should enquire to know how you doing in your career. It is normal. It is African to do such.

It is not surprising therefore to observe that respondents who found influence on job situation either from relatives, friends, boss or colleagues difficult to resist mentioned reasons such as parental care, financial support, emotional attachment, role model and team spirits underlying their non-resistance of such influence.

**Reference group comparison and factory workers' job satisfaction:** The data from the study showed that 64.9%

of the respondents admitted that reference group members ever commented about their workplace. Out of this, 64.7% acknowledged such comments as *negative* while 35.3% considered such comment as *positive.* On the other hand 31.7% claimed that members of reference group have never commented about their place of work and 2.4% declined to respond to the question. In relation to this a respondent from Tower Aluminium, Sango Ota commented:

- Our family members and friends expect much from us, they believe that since we are working with such a big company we should be able to live a luxurious life. Initially there were the people that encouraged me working here so they believed that their dreams had come true"

For the respondents who had received comments from members of reference group on their job or place of work, 6.8% of the respondents asserted that the comment was on *neat working environment,* 18.8% indicated *quality of product and technology* in their working place, 13.5% said *cooperation among staff,* 10.5% said *television sponsored programmes* of the place of work , 20.3% put such comments on *salary and welfare package,* 5.3% said *every aspect* and 7.5% said the comments were based on the *company policies* and *professionalism.*

It was further observed from the Table 1 that 75.1% of respondents who compared themselves with members of reference group working in other companies on the whole felt better off, while only 20.5% felt worse off. In Agbara, one of the respondents said that:

- You see, the job is as bad ... but where we get frustrated is a situation where our friends who are working in a less productive sectors receive higher pay and better conditions of service than those of us who spend our energies working here. It is really frustrating that at times you feel you are a fool.

When the respondents where asked reasons to support their feelings (ie. better off or worse off) 20.5, 34.1 and 20.5% cited *salary, material achievement* and *professionalism/ career building* respectively to support their feelings. On the other hand 12 and 9.3% cited *just trying to survive* and *no achievement/recognition,* respectively as reasons to support their feelings of being worse off. The implication here is that on the whole, factory workers felt better off than referents in other companies.

Concerning their level of *satisfaction* or *dissatisfaction* with their jobs when compared with members of reference group working in the public sector, 48.8% felt *more satisfied* working in a factory than mates in the public sector while 45.4% felt *more dissatisfied* working in the factory than members of reference group in the public sector. The little difference in the percentages of satisfied and dissatisfied workers may be attributed to reflection of several categories of factory workers with differential background and aspirations. In relation to this, a respondent from Sango Ota said:

- You could see for yourself that just like my colleagues here, I have reasons to be frustrated and just go out of this company unceremoniously but where else should I go? My family is expecting me to meet their needs and failure to do that is a jeopardy. For me, each time I look at the numbers of unemployed or laid-off I have reason to thank my star. After all, half loaf they say is better than none.

On other hand when compared with their school mates, 35.6% felt more satisfied and 54.6% felt more dissatisfied while 6.8% did not respond to the question.

**Aspects of respondents job satisfaction and dissatisfaction level despite referents attitude towards job Table 2:** As regards level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with different aspects jobs such job variables as *achievement, recognition, supervision, company policies* and *salary* were considered. The data showed that most respondents were satisfied with only *achievement* 52.7% and *recognition* 51.2% irrespective of positive or negative attitudes of referents towards their job. On the other hand most of the respondents were dissatisfied with *supervision* (55.1.1%); *company policies* 53.7% and *salary* 64.0% irrespective of positive or negative attitudes of referents towards their job. The variations in the responses of the respondents could be attributed various experiences and expectation from the job as well as comments and remarks from the reference group. For example the finding shows that factory workers were mostly dissatisfied with supervision, salary, working condition and company policies. It is likely that the feeling of dissatisfaction among the factory workers was as a result of workers non-involvement in policy formulation and stringent conditions attached to supervision. It is instructive that factory workers ranked a non-economic aspect of job (i.e., recognition) satisfactory.

On the respondents feelings towards effective performance of job task due to the attitude of referents, 32.2% of respondents felt that the attitudes of mates

Table 1: Respondents' job satisfaction and attitudes of reference groups

| Responses | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Referent members ever commented about workplace | | |
| Yes | 133 | 64.9 |
| No | 65 | 31.7 |
| No response | 5 | 2.4 |
| Can't say | 2 | 1.0 |
| Total | 205 | 100.0 |
| Direction of mates' comments | | |
| Negative | 86 | 64.7 |
| Positive | 47 | 35.3 |
| Total | 133 | 100.0 |
| Aspects of work commented on | | |
| Neat working environment | 9 | 6.8 |
| Quality product & technology | 25 | 18.8 |
| Cooperation among staff | 18 | 13.5 |
| Television sponsored programme | 14 | 10.5 |
| Salary & welfare package | 27 | 20.3 |
| No response | 23 | 17.3 |
| Every aspect | 7 | 5.3 |
| Company policies and professionalism | 11 | 7.5 |
| Total | 133 | 100.0 |
| Workers' feeling when compared with peers in other companies | | |
| Better off | 154 | 75.1 |
| Worse off | 42 | 20.5 |
| Don't really know | 4 | 2.0 |
| No response | 5 | 2.4 |
| Total | 205 | 100.0 |
| Reasons to support the feelings | | |
| Work not commensurate with salary | 42 | 20.5 |
| Material achievement | 70 | 34.1 |
| Professionalism /Career building | 42 | 20.5 |
| Just trying to survive | 26 | 12.7 |
| No achievement/recognition | 19 | 9.3 |
| Others | 6 | 2.9 |
| Total | 205 | 100.0 |
| Level of satisfaction compared to mates in public sector | | |
| More satisfied | 100 | 48.8 |
| More dissatisfied | 93 | 45.4 |
| No response | 12 | 5.9 |
| Total | 205 | 100.0 |
| Level of satisfaction viz a viz school mates | | |
| More satisfied | 73 | 35.6 |
| Dissatisfied | 113 | 54.6 |
| Can't say | 6 | 2.9 |
| No response | 14 | 6.8 |
| Total | 205 | 100.0 |

towards their job has affected them *positively* in job performances whereas 60.0% claimed that the attitude of referents have *negative* implication on effective performance of their job task. This finding corroborates the idea of referent power as conceptualized by French and Raven (1959:78). According to these authors:

- reference group has the ability to influence individuals, even when individuals may not be aware of it. Certain groups that individuals use as a point of reference posses the power to influence the attitudes and behaviour of individuals who may or may not be members of the group.

To further buttress their level of dissatisfaction with some aspects job conditions such as salary, supervision and company policies, as a result of attitudes from reference group, 53.7% of the respondents indicated that they would opt for a *different* kind of job if they quit their present job. Although, 31.2% respondents said they would prefer the *same* job if quit job provided they would get the same pay and promotion chances as they have now. Also 9.3% of respondents preferred *going back to school* while 2.0% maintained that they would *quit paid employment* totally.

On who among their friend would they most like to work where he or she was working, 29.3% said *telecommunication outfit*, 17.6% indicated referent in the *bank*, 14.6% said *private business*, 15.1% said *politics* and 8.3% said *referent* in the factory, etc. The inference that be drawn here is that most of the respondents use their referents' working in other organizations to evaluate

Table 2: Aspects of Respondents Job Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction Level despite Mates Attitude towards Job

| Responses | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Achievement on job | | |
| Satisfied | 108 | 52.7 |
| Dissatisfied | 67 | 32.7 |
| Can' t say | 21 | 10.2 |
| No response | 9 | 4.4 |
| Total | 205 | 100.0 |
| Recognition on job | | |
| Satisfied | 105 | 51.2 |
| Dissatisfied | 74 | 36.1 |
| Can' t say | 15 | 7.3 |
| No response | 11 | 5.4 |
| Total | 205 | 100.0 |
| Supervision | | |
| Satisfied | 75 | 36.6 |
| Dissatisfied | 113 | 55.1 |
| Can' t say | 17 | 8.3 |
| Total | 205 | 100.0 |
| Company policies | | |
| Satisfied | 95 | 46.3 |
| Dissatisfied | 110 | 53.7 |
| Total | 205 | 100.0 |
| Salary | | |
| Satisfied | 74 | 36.0 |
| Dissatisfied | 131 | 64.0 |
| Total | 205 | 100.0 |
| How performance affected by mate attitude? | | |
| Positive | 66 | 32.2 |
| Negative | 123 | 60.0 |
| Don't really know | 16 | 7.8 |
| Total | 205 | 100.0 |
| If you quit job now, which job will you pick up assuming the same pay and positon? | | |
| Same | 64 | 31.2 |
| Different | 110 | 53.7 |
| Back to school | 19 | 9.3 |
| Others | 6 | 3.0 |
| No response | 6 | 2.9 |
| Total | 205 | 100.0 |
| Who among mates would you most like to work where she/he works? | | |
| Mate in bank | 36 | 17.6 |
| Mate in oil company | 11 | 5.4 |
| In private business | 30 | 14.6 |
| Mate schooling | 6 | 2.9 |
| Mate in factory | 17 | 8.3 |
| Politics | 31 | 15.1 |
| Telecommunication Outfit | 60 | 29.3 |
| None | 13 | 6.3 |
| No response | 1 | 5.0 |
| Total | 205 | 100.0 |
| Why would you like to work there? | | |
| Good pay | 88 | 42.9 |
| Personal freedom | 23 | 11.2 |
| Power/popularity | 19 | 9.3 |
| Career formation | 66 | 32.2 |
| Exposure | 5 | 2.4 |
| No response | 4 | 2.0 |
| Total | 205 | 100.0 |
| Workers' expectation from the management | | |
| Increased salary | 167 | 81.5 |
| Pension review | 14 | 6.8 |
| All of them | 20 | 9.8 |
| No response | 2 | 1.0 |
| Total | 205 | 100.0 |

Table 3: Cross tabulation of the respondents' position and reference members place of work

| Position | Reference Members' Place of Worktotal | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Factory | Non-factory | Total |
| Casual/trainee staff | 6(22.2%) | 21 (77.8%) | 27 (100%) |
| Blue collar (factory) | 56 (60.2%) | 37 (39.8%) | 93 (100%) |
| White collar (admin) | 13 (34.2%) | 25 965.8%) | 38 (100%) |
| Blue collar (supervisor) | 7 (35.0%) | 13 (65.0%) | 20 (100%) |
| White collar (supervisor) | 4 (26.7%) | 11 (73.350 | 15 (100%) |
| Senior management | 0 (0%) | 10 (100%0 | 10 (100%) |
| Total | 86 (46.4%) | 117 (57.6%) | 203 (100%) |

Pearson chi-square = 26.966; df = 5; asymp. Sig. = .000; phi = 0.30; v = 0.30

their own jobs and aspirations in life. With most respondents wishing to work in the telecommunication it appears that the sector is the toast and delight of most people seeking employment. Against this backdrop, a respondent from the Tower Aluminium commented that:

- ... The parents did not actually have anything against me working here but the problem is from my friend and old school mates, they wonder why I could not work with banks or oil sector where I can really receive fair pay

On why would they want to work their referents organization 42.9% cited *good pay*; 11.2% indicated *personal freedom*; 32.2% said *career formation* while 9.3 and 2.4% indicated *power/ popularity* and *exposure*, respectively.

Against this background it is therefore not surprising that 81.5% of the respondents expected management to review and increase the salary structure more than any other issue while 6.8% indicated pension review.

**Test of hypotheses**
**Hypothesis 1**
**Ho:** Most factory workers are likely to select members of reference group more in the factory system than non-factory.

**H1:** Most factory workers are likely to select members of reference group more in the non-factory than factory system.

Table 3 above shows the relationship between respondents' position and selection of reference group from factory or non-factory. It could be observed that most respondents selected their reference group members from non-factory.

The results of Pearson's chi-square showed that the relationship was significant at two-tailed test and 95% confidence level. Thus, null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis accepted. It is therefore statistically significant to conclude that factory workers

select reference group members more in non-factory than in the factory system. The phi value and the Crammer's V of 0.30 also indicated a moderate positive relationship between factory workers and selection of members in non-factory system. The relationship is statistically significant but not particularly strong. As for the pattern of association, it can be seen that there is a tendency for all categories of factory workers, except blue collar workers, to select their reference members outside the factory system.

This finding coincided with popular opinions among scholars in literature reviewed. For instance, Major *et al.*,[32] showed the significant level at which people compared themselves with out-group members than in-group members.

**Hypothesis 2**

**Ho:** The feeling of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction among factory workers is not a function of the level of comparison with referent members.

**H1:** The feeling of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction among factory workers is a function of the level of comparison with referent members.

Table 4 above depicts results of cross tabulation of dependent and independent variables which was used to test the second hypothesis stated above. It was discovered from the table that 73.9% of respondents who always compared themselves with reference members had feeling of job dissatisfaction while 26.1% had feelings of job satisfaction. Furthermore, 57.9% of respondents who rarely made comparison with reference members had feeling of job satisfaction while 42.1% had job dissatisfaction feelings. Moreover, 80.0% of respondents who had never made comparison with reference members had job satisfaction feelings than 20.0% of respondents who had never compared themselves with reference group.

Given the Pearson chi-square result as shown above the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is accepted. That is, the feeling of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction among factory workers is a function of the level of comparison with referent members. This finding corroborates opinions of several scholars. For instance, in Geschewender[33], job satisfaction was treated as an evaluation of life situation influenced by the person's position in terms of experiences in the social network of opportunities, relative to others who serve as a meaningful point of reference.

**Hypothesis 3**

**Ho:** Most factory workers do not change members of reference group as they progress in the factory system.

Table 4: Cross tabulation of the respondents' level of comparison and feelings of job Satisfaction/dissatisfaction

| Feelings of job | Level of comparison with referent group | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Always | rarely | Never | Total |
| Job satisfaction | 36 (26.1%) | 22 (57.9%) | 20 (80.0%) | 78 (38.8%) |
| Job dissatisfaction | 102 (73.9%) | 16 (42.1%) | 5 (20.0%) | 123 (61.2%) |
| Total | 138 (68.7%) | 38 (18.9%) | 25 (12.4%) | 201 (100.0%) |

Pearson chi-square = 33.09; df = 5 Asymp. Sig. = .000, phi = 0.16

Table 5: Cross tabulation of the respondents position and changing of referents

| Position occupied | Changing of referent | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Yes | No | Total |
| Casual/Trainee Staff | 8 (29.6%) | 19(70.4%) | 27 (100.0%) |
| Factory worker (blue collar) | 38 (41.3%) | 54 (58.7%) | 92 (100.0%) |
| Adm. Staff(White collar) | 26 (68.4%) | 12 (31.6%) | 38(100.0%) |
| Supervisor(blue collar) | 6 (30.0%) | 14 (70.0%) | 20 (100.0%) |
| Management Staff | 3(30.0%) | 7(70.0%) | 10(100.0%) |
| Total | 86(42.6%) | 116(57.4%) | 202(100.0%) |

Pearson chi-square = 14.759; df = 5; Asymp. Sig. = .011;phi = 0.27

**H1:** Most factory workers do change members of reference group as they progress in the factory system.

The result of chi-square shown above rendered the null hypothesis accepted while the alternative hypothesis was rejected Table 5. Thus, it is statistically significant to make conclusion that most factory workers' reference members persist with them irrespective of their new position. However, from the phi-coefficient of 0.27, it indicates a weak positive relationship between the two variables. In other word, the relationship between present position of factory workers and changing of mates is statistically significant but weak association.

**Theoretical discussions of research findings:** The findings of this study will be anchor and discussed within the context of Eqiuty theory. In a nut shell Equity theory as known as Social comparison theory argues that people at work compare themselves with other workers doing similar work in situation circumstance and judge whether they are being fairy treated. The theory is based on the thesis that a major evaluation of the equity or fairness of the reward he or she is receiving. According to Hodgetts and Altman[34] the theory holds that in order to be motivated individuals must believe that the rewards they are receiving are fair. This results in people determining whether their salary for instance, is commensurate with the work they are doing and is fair when compared to the salaries others are receiving for the work they are doing. According to the theory, equity exists when employees perceives that the ratios of their inputs and to outcomes are equal to the ratios of other employees. Inequity occurs when there is an imbalance between the ratios as a result of the comparison process. There are therefore two possible types of equity when inputs exceed outcomes (over-reward) and when outcome exceed inputs (under-reward).

When an employee feels or perceives that inequity exists, a state of tension develops within him or her. The existence of perceived inequity creates tension to restore equity. That is, when individual perceive inequity, they seek to reduce it. Measures that may be used to do this include increased satisfaction, attempt to get compensation raised, quitting the job for more equitable one, changing one's perceptual comparison and so on. On the other hand, if inequity occurs because an employee is over rewarded (outcome exceed inputs), he or she may attempt to resolve this type of inequity by putting forth more efforts. Another action that has been identified is a re-comparison, whereby the employee might decide that he or she evaluated his or her efforts inaccurately and he or she really was not overpaid[35-37].

Equity theory when applied in organizations is used in this second sense in which an individual coma pares his or her performance and the rewards received with the performance and rewards other (co-workers) receives for doing similar work. Usually discussion on the equity theory center on financial reward as it is considered the most important reward in the work environment.

From this study it is evident that most workers are not earning enough to support the contributions they making in their work organizations. This of course could be attributed to general inflation and the stagnant income of workers. Hence, it become inevitable for workers to from to time to time compare themselves not only with their colleagues who are doing the similar job in their organizations but they also go beyond that to compare themselves with members of reference group who work in type other organizations other their own. However the information they are fed with either correctly or incorrectly will definitely influenced their attitude, aspirations and expectations in their place either positively or negatively and even extends to influence their level of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The fact that most these workers studied are actively evaluating their objective job situations especially outside the context of their own job underscores their conscious effort to establish the equity or otherwise of their involvement in the production process. In addition, it has been established in this study that most workers were selecting members of referent group more in the non factory than factory system. This indicates the social mobility conscious of the these factory workers to using the standards found outside their own domain as the basis to measure not only how well themselves were doing in their chosen profession but also how fairly they are being treated by their present employers. As a result of this comparison the study showed that the workers feeling of either job satisfaction or dissatisfaction is a function of level of comparison with referents members. The implication for this that when a worker compares himself with some members of referent group he set out with in life (e.g. schoolmates, friends, relatives etc) and evaluates himself as being better off than them, such a worker is likely to be satisfied with his or her job and vice versa. This underscores the power, influence and reevance of reference group in shaping the attitude and behaviour of a worker in his or her place of study.

Moreover the study showed that most factory workers do not change their referent group members as they progress in their career. This may largely be attributed to their desire to maintain continuity and have a clear and precise standard against which they will continue to evaluate themselves in their career materially and otherwise. Changing reference group members along the line in the process of career building may undermine sense of focus, objective comparison and distort the rationale for equity.

Furthermore, the fact that most workers studied were dissatisfied with their salaries, supervision and company policies indicate that these aspects of job may well be the areas in which workers are actively making comparisons with their referents to establish equity or inequity of the input and output in their work place. This is even more obvious as the study indicated that the main reason why most of the workers would prefer to work in their referents place of study if they left their present of job was purely to receive the same pay as their referents. This finding nonetheless underscores the inequity most workers are feeling in comparison with their reference group and by extension the inability of the present salary to motivate and satisfy these crop of workers.

To complement the equity theory and further explain the behaviour of the workers used in this study *social action* theory is utilized. Social action according to Weber[38] 'includes all human behaviour when and insofar as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning attached to it by the individual. It takes account of the behaviour of others and thereby oriented in its course.' Based on this assertion, individuals act in accordance with their own definition of the situation[39]. This includes, willingness or otherwise to act and active or passive acquiescence and may be oriented to the past, present or expected future behaviour of others[40,41].

For Weber[38] all human behaviour does not amount to action, neither is every human action 'social'. Behaviour should be deliberate to qualify as 'action'. Action in turn must be interpreted in terms of its subjectively intended meaning to the actor including the effect the actor wants the action to have on 'others'. This makes it amount to social action[41-43].

The idea here is that for a sociologist interested in studying human behaviour in any setting, this demands not only that the typical social action of typical actors be determined but also the meaning that actors typically attribute to their actions i.e., an examination of socially distributed subjective motivation is regarded as an essential part of any analysis of patterned conduct.

Parsons[44] and Cohen[45] have identified some features of social action to include;

- The actor has some set of goals to achieve and his action is geared towards achieving these goals;
- Action involves selection of various means towards the achievement of goals;
- The actor always makes some assumptions concerning the nature of his goals and the possibility of achieving them and
- The pursuit of goals and the selection of the means occur within the situation which influence the course of action.

However from the above properties of social action, it is possible to argue that for an individual, action has an end or goals and is rational though from the perspective of an observer such action might seem irrational. What this implies is that the observer or social scientist involved in a different social situation from his or her own must try to understand the action of those people being observed or studied from their perspective, from their subjective interpretation of the situation. In this regard for instance, the selection of members of reference group by workers is a deliberate and rational action, intended to achieve a purpose although from the point of view of another person it may be viewed as subjective and irrational.

According to Parsons[44] action takes place in situation he divided into two: those situations over which the actor has no control, cannot alter or prevent from being altered to fall in line with the sought end; and those situations over which the actor has no control. Those conditions that could not be controlled Parsons[44] termed 'the condition' of action and those that could be controlled, the 'means'. The existence of a choice of alternative means to an end creates room for normative orientation of action. Thus, the means that the actor chooses (within the area of control) is not chosen at random nor is it dependent exclusively on the conditions of action. Rather, this choice is a function of an independent determinant selective factor in making a choice.

Consequently, what social action perspective suggests is that any instance of action (or unit of act)

stems from the ends that the actor is concerned to attain, the definition of the situation. These include that range of alternative actions that are perceived to be available and the choice of means that are likely to be effective bearing in mind what the action will achieve as well as reactions of others. The meaning on which the actor grounds the interpretation and definitions of the situation derived from experience in the wider society. This perspective is chosen because it takes into consideration external factors in addition to internal factors in explaining the level of job satisfaction in view of the fact that most of the workers chose their reference group members outside their organization and professional calling with the purpose of an objective either materially or otherwise.

## CONCLUSION

This study focused on the relationship between workers job satisfaction and reference group. It could be concluded that the researcher has achieved that objectives of carrying out the study. It was observed and concluded that factory workers just like every human being generally gauge their own satisfaction by comparing their lot with that of others. Even when not in face to face contact with others, workers use the others outcomes and relative positions as a yardstick for judging ones own. In the process of comparison, workers find those whose statuses are either for above or below theirs. When this happens, the gross discrepancies revealed may not be tolerated hence reduction in the workers input and job dissatisfaction.

The social pressures confronting most factory workers could make any programme or policies initiated to enhance workers dignity and satisfaction within and outside the work environment almost impractical. As Africans, most factory workers have several responsibilities and expectations to provide for and kith and kins. This ultimately translates into multiple behaviour pattern and role conflict. The quest for high mobility by workers to meet up with expectations could lead to a psychological tension and role strain. In essence the workers have only instrumental orientation to satisfy their expectations only in terms of high income irrespective of the work itself or other intrinsic motivation. This is much needed to meet the social responsibilities and demands.

It is therefore safe to conclude that the factory workers studied are typical Nigerian workers. According to Soleye[46] a typical Nigerian worker is the wage earner whose sources of livelihood and property holdings are derived from no other source except the wage he receives through the sale of his labour. He buys in the same market

as his employers and has similar, if not greater social engagements. Market prices for his basic needs are therefore always above his income and he is always clamoring for wage increase.

The essence of social research is not only to provide explanation to social occurrences but to suggest policy options and recommendations towards a better society. Bearing this in mind, the researchers, having explored the connection between reference group and workers job satisfaction in selected factories make the following recommendations.

First, management should realize that different categories of employees within the organization have different needs and aspirations. Therefore any policy aimed at motivating or providing job satisfaction for the employees which treat them as if all of them have common needs and aspirations may not achieve the desired level of goal. Second, there is an urgent need for Management and Employer to encourage social researches within their organizations bothering on the socio-psychological aspects of the workers. The result of such research should be capable of producing other valves that would modify the psyche of the average Nigerian worker. This should involve consistent lectures, seminars or workshop where avenue is created for exerts to address the issue of social pressure of the Nigerian workers. And finally, the company's Human Resources policy should also be reviewed. The spirit of teamwork could only be in force when the individual tension is resolved.

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