

## **INSIGHTS ON INFORMAL GROUP BEHAVIOUR IN WORK ORGANISATION: AN ENLARGED EPISODE**

**Dr (Mrs.) Nwakaego Chukuigwe**  
**Department of Management, Faculty of Business Studies**  
**Ignatious Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria**

### **ABSTRACT**

*Behaviours of individual in the workplace change over time, be as it may, as they work in group (formal and informal). Though the formal group is well orchestrated by management, the informal group which is formed without the consent of the management are crucial to enhancing the formal group in achieving their common goals. This has informed management that there is need to have an insight on informal group behaviour in work organization which is the fulcrum of this expository paper.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Human Relations Approach to organization studies encouraged students in Organizational Behaviour Science to investigate the motives for the recognition of authority through subordinates. The human relations movement is a crucial shift in management history (Max, 2022). A study of the psychological aspects plus physical and environmental influences in the workplace was conducted at the Hawthorne Plant of the Western Electric Company in Cicero, Illinois, during the 1920s. Workers increased their productivity when they were studied, but it declined when the study finished. The results implied that participants in a research study may change their behaviour simply because of the attention they receive, regardless of any experimental manipulation (Philip, 2012). This is now known in management circle as the "Hawthorn Effect".

The investigators later changed their methods and placed emphasis on studying the informal group, they focused on the workers attitudes on social relationships to work and supervisory behaviour. It was concluded that, attention should be directed to defining the supervisor's role, and his selection and training. This is because, it was argued, supervisor's behaviour was a major determinant of worker's morale at work. Another recommendation made by the investigators was that workers should be given an opportunity for confidential interviews so that they could complain, suggest or express their feeling freely. It is however our belief that, the form and influence of informal groups in work organizations are more than what was found in the Hawthorn studies. Perhaps there would be less tension in present-day work organizations if these long-established findings were applied to the role and behaviour of the worker in work organizations in Africa.

### **NATURE OF GROUPS IN WORK ORGANISATIONS**

Arguing that it is often difficult to draw boundaries connecting groups,, as marginal persons may interact with members of two or more groups, Homans (1972:259) defined a group as a number of persons, or members, each of whom, while the group is meeting interacts with every' other, or is able to do so, or can at least take personal cognizance of every other. Group is a community consisting of one or more individuals who interact with each other in order to accomplish a certain goal (Mehmet et al., 2015). The term, group, used in the daily language, defines "to become plural" in the most general sense. We use the group term for two or more individuals who come together and interact with each other in order to accomplish a certain goal. The group concept is defined diversely in the social psychology and sociology. According to those definitions, the conditions such as joint norms, joint goals and feeling themselves as a group are suggested in order that the crowd becomes a group (Monique & Michael, 2015). The historiography of small group research have shown that the focus of such studies have been

towards face-to-face social behaviour. Some authors have noted that their chaotic nature in many respect have stimulated research whose results have been codified (Homans 1972). Such codification has tendered to produce sufficient theory of groups. This lends support to Homans (1972) observations that, "a theory is nothing if it is not an explanation".

Johnson and Ouchi in Monique and Michael (2015) have shown the importance of groups in the functioning and behaviour of work organizations. Thinking along this line, Leavitt in Burns et al. (2018) accounted for the place of groups in Japanese organizations this way:

The Japanese seem to be very groupy, and less concerned than Americas about issues like-individual accountability. Japanese organizations are acting in consonant with Japanese culture where the notion of individual aggressiveness and stages have different but publicly recognized statues, duties and ceremonials.

Farther, an organization usually comes into existence when explicit procedures are established to co-ordinate the activities of a group in the interest of achieving specific objectives. Hunt in Oyefusi (2022) described an organization as "an identifiable social entity pursuing multiple objectives through the co-ordinated activities and relations among members and objects". It is true that whenever groups of people associate with one another; social organization develops among them\*, but not all such collectivity can be referred to as formal organization. The criteria for describing a formal organization is the existence of a procedure for mobilizing and co-ordinating the efforts of various individuals and groups the pursuit of joint objectives which has been institutionalized by either management or Government.

Over the years, the study of groups at workplace has emerged as an increasingly important part of the organizational behaviour and management literature. This is more so, since it is an accepted fact that group affiliation is part of most employee's work life. More importantly, it is also believed that groups can restrict or enhance the accomplishment of organizational goals. Hence, McDavid and Harari in Mehmet et al. (2015) view organization as an organized system of two or more individuals who are inter-related so that the system performs some functions, has a standard set of role relationships among its members, and has a set of norms that regulate the function of the group and each of its members.

From the definitions shown, there are some important characteristics of groups, such as roles and norm. Tuckman in Hirasaka et al. (2021) explained that each position in the group structure has an associated role which consists of the expected behaviour of the occupant of , that position. These expected behaviours are generally agreed upon not only by. the occupants, but also by other members of the group. Individuals, because of membership of different groups, perform multiple roles and in many instances, the behaviour specified by the different roles are compatible. Norms are the standard that are shared by members of the; group. They have certain characteristics that are important to group members. These characteristics include the fact that norms are only formed with respect to things that have significance for the group. It is accepted in various degrees either wholly or partially. It may apply to every member or they may apply to only some group members.

An age-group has been defined by Otite and Ogjonwo (1979) as a larked status or position with duties and responsibilities appropriate to the age-group concerned. Such duties, they argued, take account of the needs and responsibilities of the society. For instance while those in one grade such as the elders may be concerned with the government of the society, a younger grade of able-bodied men may be concerned with defence matters. It therefore follows that, the various age grades have specific roles to play in their particular societies. Such roles concern things as welfare and continuity of a social unit larger than that of a family, building of roads, public houses and shrines, carrying out the instructions of leaders in matters of government and the provision of police duties such as maintenance of peace, protection of public and private property, the arrest of defaulters and the punishment of offenders. That might be why Otite and Ogionwo (1979) explained that in many respects, it can be argued that the age-grade organization in African was a system of government prior to colonial rule. It involved the youths

and the elders in the making and maintenance of law and order and in the regulations of society in general.

Apart from contributing to the general development of the society age-grade organization also serve various societal and psychological needs outside of the family unit. These needs include, socialization of the young and the adults, the development of one's personality and self-discipline, group identification and interdependence. Also, some writers are of the opinion that age-grade organization is a means of regulating behaviour of members of the society. It is also believed that this kinds of behaviour and relationships involve commitment to societal advantage by way of co-operation and solidarity.

It was also observed that, informal group can come into existence based on religious affiliations. According to Horton and Hunt in Hirasaka et al. (2021), religious institutions are a society's important systems of religious beliefs and \_ practices which are standardized and formulated and which are widely shared and viewed as necessary truism. Although, there are many definitions, religion can be defined as a system of beliefs and practices by which a group of people interpret and respond to what they feel is supernatural and sacred. It is also believed that all societies believe in community as they shared the experiences of marriage, birth, and death and elaborated the planting and harvest seasons and the winter. This united the - prop leaving none to face life alone.

Where different faiths and denominations exists, religion may not easily unite the entire society, but it can unite each religious group in a mutual support system. Thus, religion is a dynamic force after examining the rise of capitalism, felt that it was favoured by the attitudes stressed by ascetic Protestantism. Therefore, rather than religion being without real influence, it actually helps to formulate the direction of economic change.

All institutions be it political, social, or economic, have both manifest and latent functions, and religious institutions are no exceptions. In some societies as observed by Horton and Hunt in Takata (2016) the manifest inactions of religion include actually controlling the state, as in Iran. Religion acts as a setting for sociability; as well as providing opportunity to practice leadership skills, especially among the youth, it also acts as a setting for courtship and mate selection among members. Religion Emulate art and music, provide concerts and festivals; ' Religion, also has be ability to unite the community in human brotherhood. It is also believed that religious beliefs, practices and values are important factors in family life. Leslie in Nakane (2015) observed that the conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity greatly reduced divorce,-adultery, fornication and homosexuality. Religious beliefs affect work habit, patterns of consumption, and the acceptance of rejection of new products and practices.

Religion is said to have an impact on social action. For instance, the conservatives hold that religion should promote personal salvation, help develop the spirit of love, unselfishness and faith which can survive social difficulties. Therefore they may be willing to make minor adjustment but they are convinced that the basic structures of society are sound. They may accept and even support "reform", but revolution is rejected as likely to - bring more harm than benefits.

Religion has the tendency of influencing social stratification. For instance, in United States of America, there are many religious bodies each linked to a certain segment of society. In this way many people reaffirm their identity by affiliating, with a religious body composed primarily of people from his area. Religious stratification sometimes, is based on where they exist they cater for the welfare of its members as well as acting as a buffer in resolving conflicts among members, Although these groups are found mostly in Urban areas as we had earlier pointed out, they are always concerned with news from home and with the economic, social and political development of home base. Consequently these ethnic groups act as a link between their members and those at home.

Apart from these, it is observed that ethnic groups can regulate their membership by payment of fees and contributions. Members may also be mobilized to undertake certain services such as

awarding scholarship, entertaining with dances, helping or visiting the sick, or burying the dead. They can also act as action groups.

Although these ethnic groups start in most cases as cultural or welfare groups, at times they develop to involve themselves in the politics of the country. For example, the Egbe Omo Oduduwa which was formed in 1945 to promote the study of Yoruba culture, language and history, gave rise to the Action Group Political Party in 1951 just as the Ibo State Union originally known as Pan-Ibo Federal Union and founded in 1944 for the education and solidarity of the Igbo people, promoted the affairs of the National Council of Nigeria Citizens political party founded in Nigeria in 1944 (Otite & Ogionwo, 1979).

Membership to ethnic group can be voluntary or compulsory. An example of compulsory membership is the Poro Society formed for all the men in a village in Sierra Leone. Being a member also attract obligation and privileges as well as financial penalties and impersonal sanctions. Although membership is said to be voluntary or compulsory, ethnic relationship has a lot of influence on the members. For instance, Steiner (1968) pointed out that in the 1960s in Europe, a spirit of militant activism arose among the Indian ethnic groups, urging the Indians to reject what he called "Eurocomfrimity" and preserve Indian language, crafts and religion and economic life. This awareness on the individuals based on their membership of ethnic groups, resulted to some changes in the society. Trimble in Min et al. (2019) reported that the image of Indians as a broken people demoralized by helplessness and powerlessness no longer hold.

Studies have tended to focus on the more favoured economic formal groups, to the neglect of the importance of informal groups in determining the functioning and behaviour patterns of formal work organization (Ahiauzu in Oyefusi, 2022).

We accept that the African society is said to have a collectivist system where the informal group is likely to exert a lot of influence of her institutions which include the Work organization. Otite (1978) has succinctly expressed, this kind his analysis of the African society when lie noted that: The African Society is a system of mutually benefiting reciprocities. Society to the African exists for the good of all its members in a system of role reinforcement. This involves, myriad reciprocal relationship.

The foregoing explanation reveals that, in individualistic societies tasks are seen as having priority over relationship whether formal or informal relationship. Whereas in collectivistic society, relationship is seen as having priority over task.

We are aware, that in African Societies, private life play important role in developing the relationship Which is essential in determining the effective functioning of formal work organization. The relationship between the employee and the employer in organizations within collectivistic societies is therefore said to have the tendencies of moral component. This situation can be likened to the relationshipA of a child with its extended family where there are mutual traditional obligation. This lends support to Banton's (1957) observation that, "African do not readily adapt themselves to the impersonal relationship of modern industry such as those of workers to foreman". Thinking along the same line, Etukudo in Takata (2016) noted that:

One fact stands out loud and clear concerning the traditional, African society, is its multiple nature, whereby people are constantly engaged in face-to-face social relations wherein they play many roles. A person may at one time be for the same people a teacher, a preacher, a judge, a medicine man as well as a father. Economic analysis alone cannot explain individual differences across cultural groupings and how this is likely to affect the performance of work organization pointed out that what is important is:

...Seeking to "know how a person felt; what his intimate thinking, reflections and preoccupations were; and what he liked and disliked about his work environments. In other words, what did the booming business, job, his supervision and his working condition mean to him?

The findings of human relations movement in this direction are very relevant here. As Roethlisberger and Dickson in James (2021) posited:

...each person is unique. Each is bringing to the job situation certain attitudes, beliefs, and ways of life, as well as certain skills, technical, social and logical. In terms of his previous experience, each person has certain hopes and expectations of his job situation.

Hicks and Gullet (1974) observed that the basic reason for the emergence of the informal groups at the workplace is that though the formal organization satisfies many of the needs of workers, it does not satisfy all their needs, As the authors explained: We are aware that, the reasons workers have for joining informal groups among others are the satisfaction of social need, sense of belonging and identification, knowledge of approved behaviour, sympathetic ear, assistant in meeting objectives, influence and creativity, perpetuation of cultural values and communications and information (Mayo in James, 2021).

The developmental pattern of informal groups is not quite different from those of the wider society. Just as society formulate laws and beliefs about what is acceptable or otherwise, so does the informal group. By this line of development, informal groups are likely to set standards of behaviour for workers. They tend to serve as pressure posts to make workers to conform to work rules and norms, and provide status systems for workers at the workplace. To achieve all these, they tend to maintain mi efficient and On the contrary, workers are not isolated, unrelated individuals; they are social animals and should be treated as such. On the basis of his western experience and writing on the dynamics if informal groups, Luthans in James (2021) maintained that, informal groups play significant role in the dynamics of the functioning and behaviour of work organizations, The author maintained that, "the major difference between formal and informal groups has officially prescribed goals and relationships whereas the informal ones do not" (Luthans in Mehmet et al., 2015). Despite this distinction, he remarked, it is a mistake to think of formal and informal groups as two distinctively separate entities as the two types of groups co-exist and are inseparable since in every formal organization there must be an informal groups, and every informal group seem to haw evolved from the formal group. Blau and Scott in James (2021) succinctly accounted for his phenomenon this way:

It is impossible to understand the nature of a informal organization without investigating the networks of informal relations and the unofficial norms as well as the formal hierarchy of authority and the official body or rules, since the formally instituted and the informally emerging patterns are inextricably intentional. The . donation between the formal and informal aspects of organization life is therefore only an analytical one.

Bakke (1950) opined that, "as factors influencing human behaviour the formal and inform systems are not separable". The author went on to posit that:

Without denying the danger inconsistency and conflict between the formal and informal systems, we would suggest that the social system to which participants in an organization react, and which is an effective determinant of their behaviour, is a synthesis of both formal and elements (Bakke in James, 2021). These managerial roles bother on: inter-personal roles which covers his figurehead, leader and liaison roles; the informational role such as monitor, disseminator and spokesman; and decisional roles such as the Entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator and negotiator. The case of workers is also similar to that of managers. Gross (1968) had made A comprehensive note of the informal roles of employees. These roles range from task-oriented employees through detached employees to satisfying the needs of the local communities.

There is research evidence which revealed that informal groups have tended to be one way of blocking the holes of the effect of work stressor on the African worker at the workplace (Blunt in Kusaka & Hirasaka (2016). We are aware that because of the alien nature of most forms and operations of formal groups, it seem workers have been expose to a lot of stressful openings. Therefore, stress is "an interaction of the organism with the environment". They went on to opine that:

Stress is an adaptive response, mediated by individual characteristics and/or psychological processes, that is consequence of any external action, situation or event that places special

physical and or psychological, demands upon a person. Although stress is usually tough in negative terms, it could be caused by something bad or good. This lends support to the thinking processes of some researchers that stress is not simply anxiety; it is not simply nervous tension; and it is not necessarily something damaging (Selye in James, 2021).

Informal groups are natural phenomena, that facts of organizational life. As fundamental building blocks: they seem to be good for people; they seem to be good problem solving tools, and therefore serve as beckon for promoting innovation and creativity; in a wide variety of decision situations, they seem to make better decision tan individuals do; they are great tools for implementation, as formal organizations grow.

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