

## FORMS INFORMAL GROUPS TAKE IN NIGERIAN WORK ORGANISATIONS

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### ABSTRACT

*Work organizations are characterized with different humans who apart from the formal system of the organization come together to form informal group for their common interest. It is apparent to note that informal group cannot be disintegrated from the organization as far as socialization is concern. The coming together of informal group paves way for their influence in work organization. It is in this though of line, this chapter explored on forms informal groups takes in Nigerian work organizations. Conclusion and implications are portrayed to guide management in the course of managing the complexities of informal group.*

### INTRODUCTION

Works on the influence of formal groups in shaping the functioning and behaviour of work organization in African and elsewhere have shown that work groups are very significant in work-organizational life (Cross, 2018). Their presence is mostly felt in organization through the amount of interaction that occur between management and these groups; interaction between members of the. groups; and interactions among different forms of groups. Work organizations create opportunities for increased form of these interactions thereby giving itself a character, and ways of doing things. This character is what we refer to as the behaviour of the organization. While the 'way of doing' we refer to as its functioning. In this chapter therefore, we want to examine the forms of informal groups that shape the functioning and behaviour of Nigerian work organizations.

### DIFFERENT BASIS OF FORMATION

We have shown elsewhere (Chukuigwe in Robbins & Coulter, 2016) that, whereas 'ethnicity' was a major basis for informal group formation among work organization in the Southern States of Nigeria, religion was found to be the dominant base for the work organizations in the Northern States of Nigeria, hi that study, it was revealed that, the formation of informal groups in Nigerian work organizations has some association with the nature of social stratification in wider African society. While the Christian dominated people of Southern States of Nigeria tend to have a strong regard for ethnicity, the Moslem dominated people of Northern States of Nigeria tend to incline to their Islamic religion as a basis for group formation in the wider society and this was seen as carried over to the workplace. This is because, "ideology typically reflects particular constellations of 'religious' class interests"; while Ellis (1969) suggests that there is some association between attitudes of individual workers toward formal groups and their perception of social class.

We are however, aware as Ahiauzu (1984) rightly pointed out that "Nigeria does not have a well developed class structure ... and that the word 'class' has no equivalent in any Nigerian language". This lends support to Peil in Cross (2018) argument that:

Anyone trying to answer the question, Are there classes in Africa today?, is caught immediately in the problem of terminology... if the presence of classes mean stable, unified and homogeneous groups of people conscious of their economic interests and working to promote them at the expense of other groups, the answer seems to be not yet.

Ethnicity is a term used to describe a socially assigned 'racial' 'tribal' identity and cultural attributes or origins based on differences in techno- economic position, social prestige, life-style and life chances, and access to political and economic power. Thus, the historical processes that have precipitated the emergence of systems of ethnic stratification are suggestive of certain causal relationship that Were probably important in the formation of systems of informal groups in work organizations. Three factors appear to be fundamental to the existence of a system of ethnic stratification: a level of techno-economic development that allows for true centralization of political power; the use of that power to maintain internal systems of stratification based on a continuum from extra-ordinary privilege to object exploitation; and the extension of this system to other peoples through military conquest, settlement and administrative domination. Research evidence on ethnicity by Little (1967, 1972) and Soen and De-Comarmond in Chukuigwe (1994) provide a good illustration for the place of ethnicity as a basis for forming informal group in Nigerian work organization. This is because there is; a consensus in their findings, in that they showed that,

Arguing that Nigeria has never really been one homogeneous entity, for its widely different peoples and tribes are yet to find any basis for true unity, Madiebo (1980) gave evidence about the weight of ethnicity and Islamic religion in group formation, even among the military organization in Nigeria. Service in Kaplan and Norton (2012) noted that:

As some cultures have successively become larger, more complex, more adaptable and powerful, so also have they increased their dominance over the less advanced. This dominance has taken, many forms: destruction or assimilation of the weaker occupation of its territory, political rule, or modern 'indirect rule' with capital or commercial dominance only...

The differences in the traditional orientation to group formation is of particular relevance here. As we pointed out elsewhere (Chukuigwe 1994), the Ibo worker would want to associate with people from his own ethnic group. The traditional orientation of the Ibo worker to group membership corresponds broadly to that type of behaviour found among the Ibos by Little (1957, 1965). More so, he is conscious of the fact that the sort of social recognition he is given by his Ibo community, depends on how he proves himself to be in the estimation of his ethnic community members, as the Ibo enjoys being referred to as *onye Tike anyi* which in Ibo society means 'our own person'. Such orientation to association is not found among the average Hausa worker, rather his orientation to group membership is associated to Islamic religious beliefs which teaches him to be his brother's keeper. This notwithstanding their organization and activities are similar to those of informal groups formed on the basis of ethnicity, alumni association, title holding and age-grade (Drucker in Cross, 2018; Thomas, 2016).

In his Central Asian study, Kradder in Robbins and Coulter (2016) found that "religious ideas and practices may be elaborated or charged to reflect the people's need for control

over newly relevant aspects of their natural environment and as a means of sanctioning new economic, social, and political arrangements." Durkheim in Oyefusi (2021) saw religion as a system of beliefs and

1. The continuity of man's essential goodness which signifies that the Islamic man never loses sight of his relationship with his maker and other believers even at the workplace;
2. The development of piety, that is, that individual do not only worship Allah but also lead a life that is in accordance with Allah's ways;
3. The services to Allah and man in which cases Islam is not merely the stocking of knowledge, but is affected by the knowledge one has acquired;
4. A high degree of intellectual development; and
5. Individual adjustment in line with the tenets of Islamic belief.

It has been pointed out that informal groups in Nigerian work organizations were also formed along the line of alumni associations. It must be added here that, the level of institution of learning make up the bulk of this form of groupings are employees who attend the same postprimary school and post-secondary school These two classifications of institutions of learning on which informal groups are formed seems to be more militant. However, this is not to suggest that informal groups are not formed on the basis of post-secondary institutions. As one respondent in one of our previous studies noted;

To make management to re-act in favour of a group of persons, such group will be recognized by management as knowing what they the managers know. ***Na wetin passing- six or class five*** passer sabi we him go make management do wetin e - em group ***want (Chuhagwe, 1994).***

Definitely what this employee is saying is. that an alumni association formed on the basis of post-secondary is more militant than those of other class. It is also well, known that the informal groups formed on the basis of those factors are significant in any social status or role system in wider African societies. As Hammond in Thomas (2018) observed:

In all but the smallest and most simply organized African societies, the network of social ties based on ethnicity and traditional religion is complemented by other systems for forming alliances and grouping people, usually on the basis of friendship and mutual interest... The term is loose, for a specific structural principles on which associations ate organized, the effects they have on their members, and their functions within the societies of which they are a part are extremely diverse.

Membership based on friendship is likely to be either ascribed or volitional. It has been argued that "joining may be expected of all persons sharing mutual interest or members may be forcibly inducted", as it occasionally happens in the new but fast growing sects of religious fraternities in Nigeria. Also, Hammond in Thomas (2018) stated that either way, once membership is attained, compliance with the association's rules is expected and enforced. Typically such associations are special purpose groups, perceived by their members as existing for the fulfillment of particular objectives, the pursuit of protection of particular goals. Although some which are formed in the wider African societies may appear to be purely recreational, a closer look at them usually reveal that they are fulfilling other important functions as well.

It is however surprising that friendship which has the advantages of:

1. Organizing people to act as 'corporate' group in the fulfillment of their goals;
2. reciprocal tie through the giving of... time, attention, interest and support, both emotional and socio-economic.

There is a host of research evidence to support this. Gulliver in Thomas (2018) studied farm and pastoral work organizations among the Jie of Uganda and found that "friendship functions as a major organization base for the receipt and reallocation of the cattle and other goods produced". He went on to point out that in the work organizations he studied, friendship provides the context of trust, co-operation, and realistic appraisal of mutual advantage that allows for the fulfillment of several valuable techno-economic functions, that further the network of valuable alliances.

Similarly, in his West African Studies, Hammond in Raza and Sikandar (2018) found among some labour hiring work organizations of the Mossi of Yatenga, Ghana that workers frequently seek release from the obligation to share with their superior supervisors by co-operating with their friends. This compliments what Tegnaeus in Robbins and Coulter (2016) referred to as a 'bloodless brotherhood with blood'\*. A term used to express among the Mossi people that a trust worthy friend is better than an uncompromising blood relation. However, the expectation of mutual co-operation based on friendship function valuably to facilitate trade and travel across tribal frontiers. Research evidence abound in Spain and in the Spanish speaking countries of the New World where friendship was found to be a widespread means of enlarging the individuals supportive social network at the workplace (Coy in Friedkin & Johnsen, 2011).

Another factor which did not receive enough supports as a basis for forming informal group in Nigerian work organizations is the social clubs which are also based on social status. Status is defined as "the ranking or stratification of people in a social system". They went on to explain that "it involves degree of prestige and has implications for good-bad or superiority-inferiority relationship among people", Pfifiher and Sherwood in Chukuigwe (1994) refers to status as "the comparative esteem which members of the various social systems accord to the positions in them" We are aware, as there are two forms of status in society, the social status and organizational status economic specialization is increasing and systems of social stratification has began to find a place in African work organization, differences in other skills, in work, and in socio-economic status of groups are becoming more important than age as a determinant of informal group membership in work organizations. The social role of age-grade is generally subordinate. This implies that because of the size of our Nigerian society and the persistent degree of internal socio-economic diversification, age-grade based on informal groupings in our work organizations are likely going to be so small mat they are organizationally ineffective or, if they are large, so loosely structured that their impact on the functioning' and behaviour of work organizations will be minimal. There are however, some usual exceptions as Dyson-Hudson (1966) found in his study of Karamojong farm work organization in Uganda where he concluded that: In East African, associations based on age are frequently still central to the organization of community life and to the structure and function of the informal group system in work organization. This is because, in every society people are categorized on

the basis of age and are expected to conform to the behaviour culturally defined as approximate to their age category.

### CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter has attempted to identify some of the linkages between informal groups and Nigerian work organizations. The emphasis was not so much on the constituent element of informal groups, but their implications for the functioning and behaviour of Nigerian work organizations. The major question examined in this chapter is on the influence of informal groups on the functioning and behaviour of Nigeria work organizations. On the basis of extrapolation from practice, processes, institutions and structures in wider African societies as documented in organizational sociology and anthropological literature it was shown that:

1. The form informal groups take in Nigeria work organizations range from the basis of ethnicity, religion, title holding and age.

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