Reference Groups and Worker's Job Satisfaction in Selected Work Organisation in Lagos, Nigeria

Emeka E. Okafor and Olaoluwa T. Odulaja
Department of Sociology, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

Workers' job satisfaction is very vital for the achievement of organisational goals and objectives. Studies on job satisfaction have always been limited to examining internal factors within an organisation that predisposed workers to job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. These studies rarely examined the influence of reference group members on workers' job satisfaction. This study was conducted in two purposively selected work organisations in Lagos, Nigeria. Equity theory was used as theoretical framework and research design was a combination of survey and descriptive designs. Two hundred and five respondents were selected through multistage sampling techniques for a survey. Copies of questionnaire were administered on 205 respondents. Nine in-depth interviews were conducted with purposively selected workers from organisations. Quantitative data were analysed at univariate and bivariate levels with appropriate statistics, while qualitative data were analysed using content analysis and verbatim quotations. Results showed that respondents chose their reference members from their relatives, friends, colleagues and boss. Most referent members' comments about the respondents' workplace negatively (60.0%) their job satisfaction. Most respondents were satisfied with achievement (52.7%) and recognition (51.2%) which their jobs accorded them, but were dissatisfied with supervision (55.1%), company policies (53.7%) and salaries (64.0%). Most workers selected reference group members in non-factory than in the factory system ($X^2 = 26.966; > .05$). The feeling of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction among the workers was a function of level of comparison with referent members ($X^2 = 33.09; > .05$). Most workers did not change members of their reference group as they progressed in their career ($X^2 = 8.759; < .05$). The study concluded that reference group is a major factor in explaining workers job satisfaction besides internal organisational factors. Therefore, management of work organisations should improve job situation of workers in order to meet with expectations of reference group member which will ultimate improve workers' job satisfaction.

Key words: Reference groups, job satisfaction, salary, workers, equity.

Introduction
During the traditional period, individuals seemed to derive relative satisfaction from their jobs (Smith, 1955; Dike, 1985; Mohr, 1987). This is evident in the identity of membership. For instance, among the Yoruba of south west Nigeria, offspring were named along the occupations 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 (Fadipe, 1970: 95). These and many more show the level of humanism and satisfaction or dignity individuals derived from their job. However, in the modern society several factors have come to influence workers’ willingness and preparedness to utilise their abilities. These could be extrinsic or intrinsic factors. Variables such as promotional opportunities, salary/wages, job status, fringe benefits and other extrinsic factors may influence their job satisfaction. On the other hand, intrinsic factors are those satisfactions that could emerge within the person, for instance, feeling of accomplishment, enjoyment at work, and self esteem.

The worker as a person, functions and sustains himself through the continuous interaction with ‘significant others’ in a symbolic social situation. The symbolic interactive situation with the ‘significant others’ could influence workers’ willingness and preparedness to utilise their abilities. These could be extrinsic or intrinsic factors. Variables such as promotional opportunities, salary/wages, job status, fringe benefits and other extrinsic factors may influence their job satisfaction. On the other hand, intrinsic factors are those satisfactions that could emerge within the person, for instance, feeling of accomplishment, enjoyment at work, and self esteem.

The worker as a person, functions and sustains himself through the continuous interaction with ‘significant others’ in a symbolic social situation. The symbolic interactive situation with the ‘significant others’ could influence workers’ willingness and preparedness to utilise their abilities. These could be extrinsic or intrinsic factors. Variables such as promotional opportunities, salary/wages, job status, fringe benefits and other extrinsic factors may influence their job satisfaction. On the other hand, intrinsic factors are those satisfactions that could emerge within the person, for instance, feeling of accomplishment, enjoyment at work, and self esteem.
with reference group members, the outcome of that comparisons is likely to predispose the worker to certain patterns of job satisfactory or dissatisfactory behaviour (Mead, 1934; Homan, 1950; 1958; Herzberg, 1959; Clark, 1995). In the world of work, both the extrinsic and intrinsic factors that serve as motivator or satisfier have been so much stressed by intellectuals. Scholars like Locke (1976), Idson (1990); Clark (1996), Abraham (2003) and Onyeononu (2005) have concerned themselves with issues of salaries more than others. However, the social situations in which the workers live have not received vigorous empirical 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/she belongs. To this extent, the accomplishment of his/her goal can be valued through this evaluation (Brooke, 1988).

Studies on job satisfaction have always tended to be limited to the influence of organisational factors (Osuagwu, 1984; Mohr, 1987; Nwachukwu, 1988; Okoh, 1998; Okafor and Bode-Okunade, 2005; Oni, 2007), scholars rarely focused on social reference which could trigger critical evaluation of the organisation by the workers on basis of which their job satisfaction or dissatisfaction could be understood. The study was set to answer the following research questions; how do workers categorise and associate with their reference group members?; how do workers reference group comparison affect their job satisfaction/dissatisfaction?; what are the aspects of workers’ job satisfaction or dissatisfaction despite referents perception about their job; and do the factory workers change reference group members in the course of career progression?

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/she 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 (Scott and Marshal, 2005). The term reference group was coined by Herbert Hyman (1942) to apply to the group against which an individual evaluates his or her situation or conduct. Hyman (1960) distinguished between a membership group to which people belong and reference group which is used as basis for comparison. In coining the term reference group, Hyman (1942) 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, Eisnstadt (1954) and Nevadomsky (1976) found that status evaluation and status aspirations are influenced by reference groups and that changes in reference groups produced changes in values and judgments.

W.G Sumner’s (Cooley, 1964) 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 (1964:96) 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. 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 (2001:8) referred to such power as referent power. Hurado (1994) conducted a study that explored how history and macro-social structures impacted 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 compared themselves with, and this competed 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 (1988) 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 research and raise issues of motivations, satisfaction, identity and choice of comparison. For instance, Rothgerber and Worchel (1997) findings corroborated Tajfel and Turner’s (1979) expectations about perceptions of groups resulting from inter-group comparisons. Whelen and Glaser (1997) concluded that it appears that social comparisons remain a major source of self-evaluation throughout a person’s life.

As regards job satisfaction, Yomere (1998) 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 (1976) 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. Onyeonoru (2005) and Oni (2007) noted that job satisfaction is a multi-dimensional variable that conveys how the worker assesses expectation against reward and non-reward, 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 (1984) 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.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study was anchored on John Stacey Adams’ Equity theory (1965). In a nutshell, equity theory also known as social comparison theory, posits that people at work compare themselves with other workers doing similar work in situation circumstance and judge whether they are being fairly and justly treated. The theory is based on the assumption that a major evaluation of the equity or fairness of the reward a worker receives is a major determinant of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. This theory holds that in order to be motivated, an individual must believe that the rewards he/she is receiving are fair and just. This results in a worker determining whether his/her salary for instance, is commensurate with the work he/she is doing and whether he/she is treated fairly when compared to the salaries others are receiving for similar work he/she is doing. For this theory, equity exists when a worker perceives that the ratio of his/her input and to outcome is equal to the ratio of other workers. Therefore, inequity occurs when there is an imbalance between the ratio as a result of the comparison process. In this case, there are two possible types of outcomes. First, when input exceeds outcomes, there is over-reward and second when outcome exceeds inputs, there is under-reward (Hodgetts and Altman, 1979).

When an employee feels or perceives that inequity exists, a state of tension develops within him/her. The existence of perceived inequity creates tension to restore equity or balance. That is, when a worker perceives inequity, he/she seeks to reduce it. Measures that may be used to do this may include increased dissatisfaction with job, 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 exceeds inputs), he/she may attempt to resolve this type of inequity by putting in more efforts in job, becoming more satisfied with his/her job, becoming more committed to his/job and the organisation. Another action that has been identified is a re-comparison, whereby a worker might decide that he/she evaluated his/her efforts inaccurately and he/she is really not overpaid (Adams, 1965; Greenberg J. and Levelthal, 1976; Mathis and Jackson, 1982).

Equity theory as used in this study therefore refers to the situation in which an individual worker compares his/her performance and the rewards

---

1Pseudonyms (ABC and XYZ) have been assigned to the two companies to conceal their real identities and maintain confidentiality of information obtained as required by the ethical consideration.

1 Although 207 copies of questionnaire were given out, however, only 205 were found useful for analysis.
received with the performance and rewards others receive for doing more or less similar work in other organisations. Usually discussion on the equity theory center on financial reward as it is considered the most important reward in the work environment.

**Methods**

This study was conducted in Lagos metropolis, using two industrial establishments namely Company ABC Consumer Nigeria Plc and Company XYZ Nigeria Plc. Company ABC is in healthcare sector manufacturing drugs and other associated products while Company XYZ is in the Industrial Domestic product sector. The selection of these companies was purposeful as a result of the researchers' familiarity with both organisations which facilitated access to vital information. The choice of Lagos as the location of study was informed by the fact that it is a cosmopolitan city with large concentration of industries and heterogeneous population. Hence, the study universe was all the factory workers in Lagos, but specifically the study population was Companies ABC and XYZ workers. At the time of this study, the companies had a combined sample of eight hundred and twenty-six (826) workers both head offices and factory sites. Specifically, Company ABC had a total of 504 workers, while Company XYZ had a total of 322 workers.

Research design was a combination of survey and descriptive designs. The multi-stage sampling was adopted in the selection of sample size. Multi-stage sampling according to Sarantakos (1998) 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.

Cluster sampling was used to select a large probability sample of two hundred and seven workers (2072). Twenty-five percent (25.0%) of the estimated population figure was decided as a representative standard of the sample. Hence, two hundred and six (126) workers were selected from Company ABC.

Cluster sampling was used to select a large probability sample of two hundred and seven workers (2072). Twenty-five percent (25.0%) of the estimated population figure was decided as a representative standard of the sample. Hence, two hundred and six (126) workers were selected from Company ABC, while eight-one (81) workers were selected from Company XYZ.

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 (3) 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 to ensure that no department in both work organisations was over sampled or under sampled. Hence simple random sample was later adopted to sample size in this category. This offered a relatively high degree of representativeness. In the selection of unit of response (respondents) at the Senior/Management staff category, a convenient sampling technique was adopted. This was due to the inability to find or have access to a list from which to select the element for the study. Thus research instrument was administered to any willing and available staff in this category.

A total of two hundred and seven copies of questionnaire was administered to the selected sample size for the study. This three-part questionnaire which consisted of both open and closed ended questions was pre-tested for validity and reliability. To complement data obtained through the questionnaire, in-depth interviews were conducted with nine purposively selected respondents from all three cadres (three managers, three supervisors and three plant floor workers) in both study organisations. This probed into matters or ideas, which the open-ended and closed-ended potency of the questionnaire could not capture.

A combination of univariate and bivariate analyses was employed in the analysis of quantitative data. Specifically, frequency distribution tables, percentages, and chi-square statistical techniques were applied. For qualitative data, content analysis and verbatim quotations were used.

**Results**

**Socio-economic and demographic Characteristics**

Results on socio-economic and demographic characteristics showed that 62.4 percent of the respondents were males while 37.6 percent of the respondents were females. Also, 42.4 percent of the respondents were between 18 years and 30 years, while 34.2 percent were under the age bracket of 31...
years to 45 years. Furthermore, it was observed that 23.4 percent of the respondents were between 46 and 60 years. Moreover, 38.1 percent of the respondents were single while 50.3 percent were married. However, 11.7 percent were divorced, separated or widowed. The ethnic group of the respondents showed that 55.0 percent were Yoruba; 21.3 percent were Igbo while 4.5 percent were from other ethnic groups such as Benin, Idoma, Igala and Urhobo. This could be explained on the basis of the fact that the study was conducted in the Yoruba speaking area despite the cosmopolitan nature of the Lagos.

On religion, result showed that 67.3 percent of the respondents were Christians, while 32.2 percent were Muslims and only 0.5 percent practiced traditional religion. Also, 20.3 percent of the respondents were HND/Bachelor degree holders, 44.1 percent had secondary/technical school certificate, 14.9 percent had primary school certificate and another 14.9 percent had ordinary national diploma while 3.0 percent had no formal education. Higher degree holders of the total respondents were 3.0 percent. This shows that most respondents were literate. On the number of years of service spent by the respondents in their various organisations, results showed that the respondents who had spent below one year consisted 9.3 percent, those who had spent between one and four years constituted 33.2 percent, five to nine years 5-9 years (27.8 percent); between ten and fourteen years (18.0 percent), between fifteen and nineteen years (6.8 percent) and those who had spent twenty years and above consisted only 4.4 percent. This finding showed that recruitment into the workforce of study organisations was dynamic as new entrants outnumbered old staff. It can be inferred here that the organisations had a high labour turnover.

As regards positions occupied by the respondents, result revealed that 13.7 percent were either casual or trainee staff. Also, 45.9 percent were blue collar staff working in the plant floor. Further, 18.5 percent of the total respondents were white collar staff working in the administrative section, while 9.8 percent were in the supervisory category of blue collar workers, and 7.3 percent were white collar supervisor. The senior/management staff consisted only 4.9 percent. This finding is not surprising since blue collar workers either unskilled or semi-skilled are mostly needed for production in the work organisations studied. Finally, on monthly income, results showed 16.3 percent earned N20,000 and below, 34.7 percent earned N20,001-N50,000; 27.7 percent earned between N50,001-N80,000; 12.4 percent earned N80,001-N110,000; 3.0 percent earned between N110,001-N130,000 and 5.9 percent earned above N130,000. One can deduce that in a place like Lagos with high cost of living, the monthly income of the respondents was fairly moderate.

2. Association/Interactions with Reference Group Members

Data for this study showed that 28.8 percent of the respondents said they had never visited their mates in their working places. Also, 8.3 percent always visited their mates in the office, while 60.0 percent of the respondents rarely visited their mates in working places. However, only 2.9 percent of respondents did not respond. A female floor worker from Company XYZ said,

In a place like Lagos it is very difficult to visit any worker during the working hours. 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....(IDI/Female/34 yrs/Floor worker/Company XYZ).

On how often do workers receive visit from friends during working hours, the result showed that 77.1 percent rarely received visitors, 13.7 percent had never received visits from friends, and 5.9 percent always received visits from friends. Furthermore, results showed 40.5 percent spent most of their non-working hours with their families, 24.9 percent of the respondents spent theirs with friends, 20.5 percent spent theirs mostly with colleagues, and 4.9 percent mostly with neighbours and 2.0 percent spent their non-working hours alone. It is therefore sociological to assume that most respondents valued family life and relate more with their family members during their non-working hours.

Pseudonyms (ABC and XYZ) have been assigned to the two companies to conceal their real identities and maintain confidentiality of information obtained as required by the ethical consideration.
Moreover, 67.3 percent of the respondents said they often discussed about their places of work with their visitors, 12.2 percent had never discussed anything about place of work with friends while 18.5 percent rarely discussed with friends about places of work. With a relatively percentage of respondents who often discussed about their places of work with their visitors, one can infer that the extent and contents of such discussions may likely influence the attitude and behaviour of the workers in demanding for better working conditions from their management. On whom they discussed with about their job conditions, 38.5 percent of the respondents mentioned relatives, 22.4 percent said friends, 21.0 percent said colleagues and 12.2 percent mentioned their bosses. This confirms Mohr (1987) and Oni’s (2007) assertions that for most Nigerian workers, relatives remain the major influence on individuals’ life. In such case, there is bound to be strong expectations from individual workers. Further on this, 59.5 percent said they found the influence of friends/relatives difficult to resist, while 33.7 percent found such influence easy to resist. The implication here is that since influence on job situation could sometimes be difficult to resist, workers may experience internal and societal pressure that may make self-career evaluation inevitable. A Male Manager from Company ABC remarked:

...nobody is an island, if a person or people had contributed to sending you 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. If you are not doing well, they tell you to work hard or even change your job if there is such an opportunity... (IDI/Male/42yrs/Manager/Company ABC).

For the respondents who had elicited comments from members of reference group on their workplace, such comments were on work status (6.8 percent), working environment (6.8 percent), quality of products and technology in their working place (18.8 percent), cooperation among members of staff (13.5 percent), television sponsored programmes (10.5 percent), salary and welfare package (20.3 percent) and company policies and professionalism (7.5 percent) and every aspect of the job (5.3 percent).

Result further showed that 75.1 percent of the respondents who compared themselves with members of reference group working in other work organisations on the whole felt better off, while only 20.5 percent...
Olaoluwa T. Odulaja and Emeka E. Okafor: Reference Groups and Workers' Job Satisfaction in Selected Work Organisations in Lagos, Nigeria

felt worse off. In Company ABC, one of the casual workers who had OND said:

You see, this my job is as bad one. I'm look forward to a permanent job... I have been managing it for some time now. However, I get frustrated when I realise that my friends who work in a less productive sector receive higher wages and better conditions of service than those of us who spend our energies working here. It's really frustrating and sometimes I consider my self as failure. But considering my poor family background, I still thank God (IDIIMale/33 yrs/Casual Floor worker/Company ABC).

When the respondents were asked reasons to support their feelings of being better off, 20.5 percent cited salary; 34.1 percent mentioned material achievement and 20.5 percent said professionalism/career building. On the other hand 12 percent cited just trying to survive and 9.3 percent mentioned no achievement/recognition respectively as reasons to support their feelings of being worse off. The implication here is that on the whole, most factory workers in these organisations felt better off than their referents in other companies.

On their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their jobs when compared with members of reference group working in the public sector, 48.8 percent felt more satisfied working in a factory than their mates in the public sector, while 45.4 percent felt more dissatisfied working in the factory than members of reference group in the public sector. It could be inferred that little difference in the percentages of satisfied and dissatisfied workers may be attributed to the reflection of several categories of factory workers with differential background and aspirations. In relation to this a supervisory staff from Company ABC said:

You can see for yourself that just like my colleagues here, I have reasons to be frustrated and quit this job, but where do I go from here? My immediate family members are expecting much from me. They want me to meet their needs and failure to do this is a problem. As a matter of fact some of them don’t even know that my salary is not much. You don't need to explain everything to them. Each time I remember that some people in my category are either unemployed or had been laid-off, I have reasons to thank my stars. After all, half bread, they say, is better than none (IDIIMale/40 yrs/Supervisor/Company ABC).

On the other hand, when compared with their former school mates, 35.6 percent felt more satisfied and 54.6 percent felt more dissatisfied.

4. Aspects of Respondents' Job Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction Level Despite Referents' comments about Job

This study also considered levels of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with different aspects of job variables such as achievement, recognition, supervision, company policies and salary. Results showed that most respondents were satisfied with only achievements (52.7 percent) and recognition (51.2 percent) irrespective of positive or negative comments of referents about their jobs. On the other hand, most respondents were dissatisfied with supervision (55.1 percent); company policies (53.7 percent) and salary (64.0 percent) irrespective of positive or negative attitudes of referents about their jobs. The variations in the responses of the respondents could be attributed to various experiences and expectations from the job as well as comments and remarks from the reference group. For example, the result showed 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 these factory workers ranked non-economic aspects of job (i.e. achievements and recognition) satisfactorily. This finding is consistent with other observations made by various scholars which indicate that in Nigerian working environment, most workers still consider the economic aspects of their jobs as...
dissatisfactory (Soleye, 1989; Okoh, 1998; Onyeonru, 2005; Okafor and Bode-Okunade, 2005; Oni, 2007; Okafor, 2010).

On the respondents’ feelings towards effective performance of job task due to the comments of referents, 32.2 percent felt that the comments of mates about their job had affected them positively in job performances, whereas 60.0 percent claimed that such comments had negative implications on effective task performance. This finding corroborates the idea of referent power as conceptualized by French and Raven (1959) when they argued that reference group has the ability to influence individuals, even when individuals may not be aware of it. They argued that certain groups that individuals use as a point of reference possess 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 of job conditions such as salary, supervision and company policies, as a result of comments from reference group, 53.7 percent of the respondents indicated that they would opt for a different kind of job if they quit their present job; 31.2 percent said they would prefer the same job if they quit job provided they would get the same pay and promotion chances as they had, 9.3 percent preferred going back to school, while 2.0 percent mentioned that they would quit paid employment.

On whom among their friends would they most likely work where he/she was worked, 29.3 percent said telecommunications outfit, 17.6 percent indicated referent in the banks, 14.6 percent said private businesses, 15.1 percent said politics and 8.3 percent said referent in the factories, etc. One can deduce that most respondents used their referents’ work organisations to evaluate their own jobs and aspirations in life. With most respondents wishing to work in the telecommunication sector, it appears that the sector has become the delight of most people seeking employment in Nigeria since deregulation of the sector in 2001. Against this backdrop, a respondent from the Company XYZ commented:

... my parents do not actually have anything against my working here, but the problem is my friends and old school mates. They wonder why I could not find job in the banking or oil sector where I can really receive better pay and improve my quality of life, yet I have not been privileged to meet a someone who will help me to be employed in these sectors. But with crisis in the banking and financial sectors, one has to be carefully changing job (IDI/Female/31 yrs/Floor worker/ Company XYZ).

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

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

**Bivariate Analysis**

In this section, attempts were made to analyse association between responses using chi-square test. First, the researchers wanted to ascertain if most factory workers selected reference group members more in the factory system than non-factory against the respondents’ position in their companies. Result as shown on table 1 below. The table shows that there was association between respondents’ position and selection of reference group from factory more than non-factory. This is inferred from the chi-square result which showed there was association ($X^2_{c} = 26.966; >.05$). It is therefore statistically significant to conclude that factory workers selected reference group members more in non-factory than in the factory system. Also, the phi value and the Crammer’s V of 0.30 also indicated a moderate positive association between factory workers and selection of members in non-factory system. The association 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 buttresses the popular opinions among scholars in literature reviewed. For instance, Major (1993) and Scott and Marshall (2005) argued that more often than not, most people compared themselves with out-group members rather than in-group members in ascertaining their level of status and progress in life.
Table 1: Chi-square Test of association between Respondents’ Job position and Reference members’ workplace

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents’ Workplace Position</th>
<th>Reference members’ place of work</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Factory</td>
<td>Non-factory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual/trainee staff</td>
<td>6 (22.2%)</td>
<td>21 (77.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue collar (factory)</td>
<td>56 (60.2%)</td>
<td>37 (39.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White collar (admin)</td>
<td>13 (34.2%)</td>
<td>25965.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue collar (supervisor)</td>
<td>7 (35.0%)</td>
<td>13 (65.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White collar (supervisor)</td>
<td>4 (26.7%)</td>
<td>11 (73.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior management</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>10 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86 (46.4%)</td>
<td>117 (57.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ X^2_c = 26.966; X^2_t = 11.070; df = 5; Ls. = 0.05; \phi = 0.30; \nu = 0.30 \]

Second, the researchers wanted to ascertain if the feeling of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction among factory workers was a function of the level of comparison with referent members. Results as shown in table 2 below indicated that 73.9 percent of respondents who always compared themselves with reference group members had feeling of job dissatisfaction, while only 26.1 percent had feelings of job satisfaction. Furthermore, 57.9 percent who rarely made comparison with reference group members had feeling of job satisfaction while 42.1 percent had the feeling of job dissatisfaction. Moreover, 80.0 percent of respondents who had never made comparison with reference group members had network of opportunities, relative to others who serve as a meaningful point of reference.

Table 2: Chi-square test of association between respondents level of comparison with referent group and feelings of Job of Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feelings of job Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction</th>
<th>Level of comparison with referent group</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job satisfaction</td>
<td>36 (26.1%)</td>
<td>22 (57.9%)</td>
<td>20 (80.0%)</td>
<td>78 (38.8%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job dissatisfaction</td>
<td>102 (73.9%)</td>
<td>16 (42.1%)</td>
<td>5 (20.0%)</td>
<td>123 (61.2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>138 (68.7%)</td>
<td>38 (18.9%)</td>
<td>25 (12.4%)</td>
<td>201 (100.0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ X^2_c = 33.09; X^2_t = 5.991; df = 2; Ls. = 0.05; \phi = 0.16 \]

Third, the researchers wanted to ascertain if factory workers ever changed their members of reference group as they progressed in the factory system. The result of chi-square test as indicated below showed that most factory workers never changed their members of reference group as they progressed in the factory system \( (X^2_c = 8.759; \phi = 0.05) \). Thus, it is statistically significant to make conclusion that most factory workers’ referent members persisted with them irrespective of the position they occupied. However, the phi-coefficient of 0.27 indicates a weak positive relationship between the two variables. In other word, the association between present position of factory workers and changing of mates is statistically significant but weak association.
Table 3: Chi-square test of association between Respondents' Job Position and Ever changed referent members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents' Job position</th>
<th>Ever changed referent member?</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual/Trainee Staff</td>
<td>8 (29.6%)</td>
<td>19 (70.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factory worker (blue collar)</td>
<td>38 (41.3%)</td>
<td>54 (58.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adm.Staff (White collar)</td>
<td>26 (68.4%)</td>
<td>12 (31.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor (blue collar)</td>
<td>6 (30.0%)</td>
<td>14 (70.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Staff</td>
<td>3 (30.0%)</td>
<td>7 (70.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86 (42.6%)</td>
<td>116 (57.4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$X^2_c = 8.759; \ X^2_t = 9.488; \ df = 4; \ Ls. = 0.05; \ phi = 0.27$

Furthermore, respondents' workplace was cross tabulated with reference members' workplace and feeling of job satisfaction/dissatisfaction as shown on table 4 below. Result of chi-square test showed that there was no association between respondents' workplace and reference members' workplace ($X^2_c = 0.342; \ < 0.05$). In other words, irrespective of their workplaces, most respondents from both work organisations chose their reference member from non-factory system. As could be observed from the table 4, most (57.6 percent) of the respondents chose from non-factory system as opposed those that chose from the factory system. Specifically, 56.0 percent of the respondents from Company ABC and 60.3 percent from Company XYZ respectively chose from non-factory system.

Table 4: Chi-square test of associations between Respondents' Workplace and Referent member Workplace/ Feelings of Job Satisfaction/ Dissatisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents' Workplace and Referent member workplace</th>
<th>Referent Members workplace</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Factory</td>
<td>Non-Factory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company ABC</td>
<td>55 (44.0%)</td>
<td>70 (56.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company XYZ</td>
<td>31 (39.7%)</td>
<td>47 (60.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86 (42.4%)</td>
<td>117 (57.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$X^2_c = 0.342; \ X^2_t = 3.841; \ df = 1; \ Ls. = 0.05$

Finally, chi-square test as shown on table 4 showed there was no association between respondents' workplace and feeling of job satisfaction/dissatisfaction ($X^2_c = 0.278; \ < 0.05$). In other words, irrespective of their workplaces, most respondents from both companies felt dissatisfied with their job. As could be observed from table 4, most (61.2 percent) of the respondents felt dissatisfied with their job opposed those (38.9 percent) who felt satisfied with their job. In specific terms, 62.0 percent of the respondents from Company ABC and 60.0 percent from Company XYZ respectively felt dissatisfied with their jobs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents' Workplace and Feelings of Job Satisfaction/ Dissatisfaction</th>
<th>Job Satisfaction</th>
<th>Job Dissatisfaction</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Company ABC</td>
<td>46 (38.0%)</td>
<td>75 (62.0%)</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company XYZ</td>
<td>32 (40.0%)</td>
<td>48 (60.0%)</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>78 (38.9%)</td>
<td>123 (61.2%)</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$X^2_c = 0.278; \ X^2_t = 3.841; \ df = 1; \ Ls. = 0.05$

1 Respondents who did not respond to the questions have been excluded.
Discussion of Findings

From the findings above, it is evident that most workers were not earning enough to support the contributions they making in their work organisations. This of course could be attributed to general inflation and the stagnant income of workers. Hence, it become inevitable for workers to from time to time compare themselves not only with their colleagues who are doing the similar job in their organisations, but they also go beyond that to compare themselves with members of reference groups (friends, relatives or former school mates, etc who may have similar qualifications as they themselves) who work more or less in the type organisations as other their own. However the information they are fed with either correctly or incorrectly, usually definitely influenced their attitude, aspirations and expectations in their place of work either positively or negatively and even extends to influence their level of job satisfaction/dissatisfaction.

The fact that most of the workers used in this study were actively evaluating their objective job situations especially outside the context of their own job underscores their conscious effort to establish the equity between their input and the outcome. 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 that the consciousness of career mobility of these workers is located outside the domain of chosen profession/career on the basis of which they judged whether they are fairly and justly treated by their present employers. Thus this choice of location of members of referent members plays a major factor in explaining job satisfaction/dissatisfaction of these workers. This is not out of place, in African context and Nigeria in particular, when a worker is engaged he/she expected to make career progression (Onyeonoru, 2005; Okafor, 2010). This is a legitimate aspiration and expectation. In addition, the significant and even generalized others have their expectations of this worker as well. In anticipation (either rightly or wrongly) that the worker is making steadily progress in his chosen career, the referent group may increase demands made of the worker. However, in reality the worker may not be making career progression as expected which may not be his or her own making entirely. Several reasons may be responsible for this, for example, in Nigeria, many organisations are operating under a very harsh economic climate, in which high inflation is affecting the consumers’ effective demand for company’s products. An employer in response to this challenge and being fully aware that labour market is saturated may freeze wages, sack permanent workers and recruit more of casual workers and for few remaining workers make their career progression more stringent. The inability of the workers to meet the expectations of the referent groups may result in sarcastically remarks about the job which may compel the worker to reevaluate his/her involvement in the production process of his/her work organisation. The outcome of such evaluation may result in either job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. This underscores the power, influence and relevance of reference group in shaping the attitude and behaviour of a worker in his/her place of work.

Moreover, the study has demonstrated that most factory workers did not change their referent group members as they progressed in their career. This may largely be attributed to their desire to maintain continuity or consistent benchmark 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 and progress may undermine sense of focus, objective comparison and on the long run 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 work 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.

Conclusion

This study has focused has on the reference groups and workers job satisfaction. The study has shown that factory workers just like any other groups gauge their
own job satisfaction by comparing their lot with that of others. Sometimes, even when not in face to face contact with others, workers use the others outcomes and relative positions as a yardstick for judging their 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.

Therefore, management of various work organisations in Nigeria should continuously review workers ‘conditions of service as dictated by the economy in which the worker live and operate. This is informed by the fact that in the African context in which the practice of extended family is prevalent, workers will continue to be put under pressure by referent members and significant others to meet certain aspirations and expectations. The inability to meet by these expectations may engender job dissatisfaction among workers. A dissatisfied worker is not likely to be a productive worker. There are a number of options opened to a dissatisfied worker. One of such is quitting the job. This has the tendency to undermine and destabilise a stable work group. However, when a worker is unable to quit his/her job because of labour market situation, he/she may stay put and may engage in passive resistance and other forms of workplace deviant behaviours which on the long run will negatively affect the goals and objectives of the work organisation.

References
Biographical Note

Emeka Emmanuel Okafor, Ph.D, is a senior lecturer in the Department of Sociology University of Ibadan, Ibadan Nigeria. His major research interests include; Industrial Sociology, Organizational Studies and Sociology of Development.

Olaoluwa Thomas Odulaja completed his Master of Science (M.Sc) degree in the Department of Sociology, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria. His major research areas are Industrial Sociology and Political Sociology.