

Group Characteristics: a correlate to performance of Co-operative Societies in Lagos Metropolis

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ABSTRACT

Observations have shown that group success is determined in part, by the actions of the others and that the degree of cohesiveness will determine the success of groups' activities. The study investigated the relationship that exists between group characteristics and performance of co-operative societies in Lagos State, Nigeria. Three hundred and eighty-one (381) respondents were selected using multi-stage sampling procedure. Questionnaire was used to elicit data from respondents. Research questions were answered using descriptive statistics while Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient and Regression Analysis were used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Major findings of the study revealed that: members of co-operative societies are active and effective; the level of performance of co-operative societies in key areas of their operations were acknowledged to be high by members: (84.51% met their objectives; 71.39% said loans/facilities are always available and 78.14% are highly satisfied with level of societies' activities); group characteristics is significantly related to performance of co-operative societies in key areas of their operation (meeting members' objectives $R = .364$ $p < 0.05$, available of loans/facilities $R = .292$ & level of satisfaction $R = .312$, $p < 0.05$). Based on these findings, The study recommended that a close knit relationship should be established by members of the societies through formation of comprehensive bye laws since the study has established that cohesiveness is one of the characteristics of a group which gave rise to performance; that rules and bye-laws of the societies should be used in monitoring of members and help the leader have a standard or framework with which to exercise control.

Keywords: Group, Group characteristics, Performance, Co-operative performance, Co-operative societies

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1. INTRODUCTION

Observations have revealed that, on a daily basis, co-operative societies are being established in large numbers. According to Kareem, Arigbabu, Akintaru and Badmus (2012), there is hardly any workplace in Nigeria today, especially government establishments, where a co-operative society is not operational. Same goes with every business sector. The rate at which these societies are spreading is a sign that the benefits are sustaining. As at 1967, there were 108 co-operative societies with 8,091 members in Lagos.

Currently, the number of co-operative societies has increased to more than 20,000 co-operative societies with 1,690 of them registered as at June 2011 in Lagos State (Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives Lagos State, 2011). The role co-operatives play in inculcating the habit of thrift and savings which ensures discipline accumulates wealth for investment and discharge of social responsibilities cannot be over emphasized. Through attendance, participations at meetings and management of co-operatives, members imbibe the democratic value, which in essence recognizes that minority have a say while majority have their way which ensures co-existence in the society. Through co-operatives members develop entrepreneurial spirit which is part of the principles of cooperation. This exposes members to several areas of business operations.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The underlying philosophy of cooperative movement emphasizes service and the well-being of members. Among its stated principles is the groups' economic participation in the cooperatives' activities, and thus the group's performance depends largely on the degree of relationship or cohesiveness between the cooperatives and their members (Bin Harun and Mahmood, 2012). Effective group exhibit a sense of belonging which ensures acceptance or readiness to accept responsibilities and cohesiveness. Members' participation in the activities is expected to encourage the society to achieve their objectives. It is against this background that the study sought to examine the relationship that exists between group actions and activities and performance of co-operative societies in Lagos Metropolis. Indicators of group characteristics (in terms of meeting activities, observance of rule of laws and bye-laws, and cooperation among the members) were analyzed in the study in order to determine the extent to which they relate to performance of the co-operative societies.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The main aim of this study is to assess the relationship between group characteristics and performance of co-operative societies in Lagos Metropolis. Specifically, the objectives are to:

1. Determine the group characteristics of members of the co-operative societies.
2. Assess the performance of co-operative societies in key areas of their operation.
3. Determine the level of relationship between group characteristics and performance of co-operative societies.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised for the study

1. What are the characteristics demonstrated by group members of the co-operative societies?
2. What is the level of performance of the co-operative societies in key areas of their operation?
3. What level of relationship exists between group characteristics and performance of co-operative societies in key areas of their operation?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested based on the research questions:

1. Group characteristics have no significant relationship with performance of co-operative societies in key areas of their operation.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Groups

Groups are fundamental part of a social life. A group entails individuals who share something in common, individuals with shared perception and a common motivation or goal. They are collection of people who come together for some purpose and a collection of individuals among whom a set of interdependent relationship exists (Winadapo and Afolayan, 2006 cited in Ofuoku and Urang, 2009). As a social unit, group consist of a number of individuals who stand in status and role relationships to one another, stabilized in some degree at a given time and who possess a set of values regulating their behaviour in at least a matter of conscience to the group (Sheriff, 1968 cited in Ofuoku and Urang, 2009). Group activities afford individuals opportunities of interacting with other members of the group in order to achieve group objectives and goals. It also gives people the opportunity to cope with the complexities of our society.

Members of a group interact with one another, so that one person's action affects and are affected by another person's (Shaw, 1981); and they perceive that there is potential for mutual goal accomplishment (Mills cited in George and Jones, 2002). Therefore a group is a set of two or more people who interact with each other to achieve certain goals or meet certain needs (George and Jones, 2002).

2.2 Group roles

Behaviour of groups differs according to their degree of formality. Participants in interpersonal situations tend to have greater freedom in satisfying personal needs than group participants (Abe, 2000). Members in groups tend to assume certain roles that help them to satisfy psychological needs. These behaviour patterns often times contribute to either solving group's problem or hinder solution to it. Group roles can be categorized into task roles or maintenance roles (Clinton, 2001; Abe, 2000) and leadership, task specialist, human relations specialist and self-serving (Abe, 2000).

2.3 Group Characteristics

Groups emerge when individuals have similar concern, perceptions and fate. Goals are shared to show common concern and mutually interdependence purpose. Existing research and theory about groups justifies the following set of characterizations (Arrow, McGrath & Berdahl, 2000):

Groups serve more than one purpose or function.

- They influence members' attitudes, values, and behaviors,
- Pattern member interactions.
- Can aid individual learning and self-fulfillment,
- Process information, manages conflict, and attain consensus,
- Motivate, regulate, and coordinate member activities,
- Have intentions and goals,
- Carry out activities to attain these goals, shape society

Although a group contains individuals who are its members, it is more than just a collection of individuals. Unlike networks, groups are systems with boundaries, but are never completely isolated or closed. Groups have mutually interdependent purpose both in interaction and organizational structure, for the success of their goals. Group members' success is determined in part, by the actions of the others. They exhibit a sense of belonging which ensures acceptance or readiness to accept responsibilities. According to Ofuoku and Urang (2009) groups are characterized by interaction, shared values and beliefs, common goals, structure and ideology. Groups exhibit cohesiveness which is a bond of interpersonal attraction that unites the group members. Cohesive groups often have less tension and hostility which ensures more focus to group goals and better output. Characteristics of effective group are assessed based on the achievement of objectives set, the improvement made in the lives of members of the group and in the actions or activities towards the group goals. These group characteristics are categorized based on author's perceptions. Some of the attributes are: group size, composition, function and status (George and Jones, 2002) common goal, common fate, interdependence, interaction and organizational structure, and group interaction, interdependence, structure, goals and cohesion (Smith, 2008).

2.4 The Society

Co-operative society is an association formed to solve the economic and social needs of individuals which they have identified but could not solve individually; and that putting their meager resources together; they will easily solve them collectively. Co-operative society is an association of individuals with common goals who have voluntarily come together through the formation of a democratically controlled organization making equitable contribution and accepting a fair share of the risks and benefits of the undertaking in which the members actively participate (Berko, 2007). It is a learning ground where members can learn how to interact and help one another to meet their individual needs. Co-operative society is guided by seven principles as articulated by ICA in 1995. The principles are:- Voluntary and open membership, Democratic member control, member economic participation, autonomy and independence, education, training and information, co-operation among co-operatives and concern for community.

2.5 Performance in Co-operative Societies

Assessing performance of social groups like co-operative societies appear more difficult and involves measuring how well resources are combined and used (Ifenkwe, 2007). Kyriakopoulos, Meulenberg & Nilsson, (2004) agree that performance is difficult to measure and interpret especially with cooperatives, which generally aim to pay their members the best price for the products received, or to charge the lowest possible price for the inputs and services supplied. It therefore shows that performance in organizations is measured based on the objectives set by such organizations. In organizations like co-operative societies, where performance is based on members' satisfaction, their performance will be assessed by members being able to meet up with their objectives as set upon membership to the organization. Co-operative societies inculcate the habit of savings on members. It imposes a saving habit on members, since its funds are pooled from deductions from salaries or from regular savings, in the case of self-employed (Olesin, 2007). Onuoha (1996) argues that co-operative methods liberate people from the state of inferiority, economic dependence and insecurity; and that it ensures elevation of the social and economic conditions of the masses.

2.6 Group and Performance

Co-operative societies function as a group of people with common goal. Mohd Zainal and Rosli (2012) examined "the relationship between group cohesiveness and performance: an empirical study of cooperatives movement in Malaysia". Specifically, the researchers examined respondent's perceptions of the relationship between task and social cohesion and performance in the cooperatives movement.

Data was collected from a 371 respondents using questionnaire. The results showed that group cohesiveness significantly related to the organizational performance. In addition both task and social cohesion were significantly correlated with organizational performance as predicted by hypotheses. The results also presented new perspectives for cooperative movement where members' strong relationship can further contribute to the growth of the movement's performance. The degree of cohesiveness among members determines the success of cooperative's performance in stirring toward its future direction. Research has also shown that group cohesion is enhanced by demonstration of liking, respect and harmony among group members (Hoegl & Gemuenden, 2001). In other studies it was found that groups can develop cohesion, in part, by establishing clear behavioural norms and enforcing these norms through rejecting deviant behaviour (Williams, 2001).

2.7 Significance of the Study

The study will be significant to policy makers in that it will help them to fine tune their regulatory frame work to ensure that the least served will benefit in the activities of co-operative societies in the State.

The study is also significant in that it will help operators of co-operatives in their community based groups to inculcate sense of entrepreneurial spirit, reduce financial dependence of people and improve their general welfare.

3. METHODOLOGY

Ex-post facto survey research design was employed in this study. This is used because the variables under study are already in existence, and cannot be manipulated during the research process.

The population was 1,690 co-operative societies registered with Department of Co-operatives, Lagos State as at 2011 which is the record available as at the time of study.

Multi-stage sampling procedure was employed. Stage 1 involved the use of table of sample size by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). This table is used when the population of study is finite, just as in the current study. The table suggests a sample size of 313 societies out of the total population of 1,690. In stage 2, the 313 societies were selected using the systematic random sampling technique. This technique involved listing out and numbering the 1,690 registered societies and picking the society sample at an interval of five societies. Stage 3 involved selection of subjects in the 313 selected co-operative societies. The population of members of the 313 societies was 61,360 members. Again, Krejcie & Morgan's Table of Sample Size gave an estimated sample size of 381 members, sample size significant at 95% level of confidence. The 381 member sample was drawn from the 313 societies using the stratified proportionate sampling technique.

Questionnaire was used to elicit data. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained from the pilot study conducted to test the stability and internal consistency of the instrument. Cronbach's Alpha Reliability test applied showed a coefficient of 0.65. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics of simple percentage scores, arithmetic mean and standard deviation. Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was employed to analyze relationships among variables and to test hypotheses while Multiple Regression Analysis and F-test were used to examine the extent of relationship of the variables in the hypotheses.

4. DATA PRESENTATION

Respondents reacted using four response categories – Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Disagree (D); and Strongly Disagree (SD). These are further coded as follows; SA & A = A; D & SD = D.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution Showing the Respondents' Perception on the Group Characteristics of Members of Co-operative Societies

S/N	Group Characteristics	A N	(%)	N	D (%)	N	Total (%)
1.	Our Members: Attend meetings regularly	242	63.51		139	36.48	381 100
2.	Do not attend meetings Punctually	107	28.87		271	71.03	381 100
3.	Do not make contributions at meetings	78	20.48		303	79.53	381 100
4.	Accept responsibilities	324	85.56		56	14.70	381 100
5.	Readily accept committee nomination		325	85.30		56	14.70 381 100
6.	Do not patronize society products	49	12.86		332	87.14	381 100
7.	Apply and repay loans	337	88.46		44	11.54	381 100
8.	Stand as guarantor for others		360	94.48		21	5.51 381 100
9.	Do not observe rules/bye law	107	28.81		274	71.91	381 100
10.	Do not engage in conflicts		265	69.56		116	30.55 381 100
11.	Depend on one another to meet their needs		256	67.20		125	32.81 381 100
12.	Do not form cliques	205	53.80		176	46.20	381 100
13.	Participate in group activities as 'our' not 'their' society	304	79.79		77	20.21	381 100

Source: Fieldwork, 2013

Table 1 shows that 242(63.5%) of respondents agreed that members attend meetings regularly while 139(36.48%) disagree; 271(71.03%) disagreed that members do not attend meetings punctually while 107(28.87%) agree. While 303(79.53%) members disagree, 78(20.48%) agreed that members do not make contributions at meetings. Regarding members' acceptance of responsibilities and acceptance of committee membership, 324(85.56%) and 325(85.30%) of respondents agree respectively. Again, 332(87.14%) of respondents disagreed that members do not patronize products of the society; 337(88.46%) agreed that they apply for and repay loans; 360(94.48%) observed that members accept to stand as guarantors while 274(71.91%) disagree to the fact that members do not observe rules and regulations. Also, 69.96% agreed that members do not engage in conflict while 256(67.26%) agreed that members depend on one another to meet their needs. Respondents also said that members do not form cliques 205(53.80%) while 304(79.79%) agreed that members participate in group activities as 'ours' not 'theirs' while 77(20.21%) disagree

Table 2: Observed Proportions for Performance of Co-operative Societies in Key Areas of their Operations.

	Meeting members objectives for joining the society				Availability of funds and other facilities				Level of satisfaction of members on society's activities			
	LM	M	FM	NM	AA	OA	OcA	NA	HS	MS	LS	NS
N	211	111	51	8	272	65	32	12	195	137	39	10
%	55.38	29.13	13.39	2.10	71.39	17.06	8.40	3.15	51.18	35.96	10.24	2.62

Source: Fieldwork, 2013.

Key:

Largely Met (LM), Met (M), Fairly Met (FM), Not Met (NM); Always Available (AA), Often Available (OA), Occasionally Available (OcA), and Never Available (NA); Highly Satisfied (HS), Moderately Satisfied (MS), Lowly Satisfied (LS), and Not Satisfied (NS).

Table 2 shows that 211(55.38%) of the members said their objectives for joining the group were largely met; 111(29.13%) said their objectives for joining the group were met; 51(13.39%) said their objectives for joining the group were fairly being met, while the remaining 8(2.10%) said their objectives for joining the group were not met. Also, 272(71.39%) of the members said the funds and other facilities were always available; about 165(7.06%) said the funds and other facilities were often available; 32(8.4%) said the funds and other facilities were occasionally available while the remaining 12(3.15%) said the funds and other facilities were never available. Respondents, 272(71.39%), who said that funds and other facilities are always available, exceeded the expected proportion of 95.3. In addition, 195(51.18%) of the members said they were highly satisfied with the manner of release of the available funds and other facilities; 137(35.96%) said they were moderately satisfied with the manner of release of the available funds and other facilities; 39(10.24%) said they were lowly satisfied with the manner of release of the available loans and other facilities while the remaining 10(2.62%) said they were not satisfied with the manner of release of the available funds and other facilities.

Table 3: Correlation of Performance Indicators and Group Characteristics

S/N	Meeting Members' Objectives	Availability of Funds/facilities	Level of Satisfaction with Societies Activities	Group characteristics
1. Meeting members' objectives	1.000			
2. Availability of funds/facilities	.253**	1.000		
3. Level of Satisfaction with Societies	.256**	.549**	1.000	
Group Characteristics	.224**	.159**	.191**	1.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed)

Table 3 shows positive and significant correlation between group characteristics and performance indicators: meeting members' objectives, availability of funds/facilities, and level satisfactions of members with societies' activities. This contradicts the stated hypothesis that "There is no reliable relationship between Group characteristics of members and performance of co-operative societies in the key areas of their operation." Hence, the hypothesis is rejected.

Table 4:1: Model Summary and Regression ANOVA (b) for F-test showing Group Characteristics indicators and Meeting members' Objectives

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std Error of the estimate		Sum of sq	df	Mean sq	F	Sig.
1	.364(a)	.133	.116	.72943	Regression	30.349	7	4.336	8.419	.000(a)
					Residual	198.459	373	532		
					Total	228.808	380			

a) Predictors: (Constant), group characteristics indicators

b) Dependent Variable: meeting members' objectives.

From the regression, the coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.133, implying that about 13.3% of the variation in meeting members' objective for joining the group is explained by the collective effect of the independent variables. The F -statistic (8.149) is highly significant (0.00), hence, the model perfectly fits the data.

Table 4:2 Model Summary and Regression ANOVA (b) for F-test showing Group Characteristics indicators and Availability of Funds and other Facilities

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std Error of the estimate		Sum of sq	df	Mean sq	F	Sig.
1	.292(a)	.086	.068	64383	Regression	14.463	7	2.066	4.985	.000(a)
					Residual	154.613	373	.415		
					Total	169.076	380			

a) Predictors: (Constant), group characteristics indicators

b) Dependent Variable: Availability of funds/facilities.

From the regression table above, the coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.086, implying that about 8.6% of the variation in the availability of loans/facilities is explained by the collective effect of the independent variables. The F -statistic (4.985) is highly significant (0.00), hence, the model perfectly fits the data.

Table 4:3: Model Summary and Regression ANOVA (b) for F-test showing group Characteristics and Level of satisfaction of Members on Society's Activities

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std Error of the estimate		Sum of sq	df	Mean sq	F	Sig.
1	.312(a)	.096	.078	.64082	Regression	16.487	8	2.061	5.019	.000(a)
					Residual	152.752	372	.411		
					Total	169.249	380			

a) Predictors: (Constant), group characteristics indicators

b) Dependent Variable: Level of satisfaction of Members

From Table 4:3 the coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.097, implying that about 9.7% of the variation in members' satisfaction is explained by the collective effect of the independent variables. The F -statistic (5.019) is highly significant (0.00), hence, the model perfectly fits the data.

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of the study reveals that group characteristics of members of the co-operative societies in Lagos State are positive. The result corroborates the study by Bin Harun and Mahumd (2012) which found that the degree of relationship among members of a group will determine the performance of members. This is because more can be accomplished when people coordinate their efforts with each other and take concerns and talents of others into considerations (Reeves, 2003). Group success is determined in part by the actions of the others. This result is supported by Sapran's (2010) study which noted that the degree of cohesiveness will determine the success of groups' activities. Findings of the study indicate that performance level of the co-operative societies is significant and positive with 84.51% of respondents meeting their objectives for joining the group, 71.39% agreed that loans and other facilities of the societies are always available while 78.14% are satisfied with the level of service delivery. This result supports Ifenkwe (2007)'s study which observed that performance in an organization or group is evidenced in the level of satisfaction derived by such group. Clarke (199) agreed that performance is organization's ability to meet promised deliveries. The result of this study indicates that performance of co-operative societies in key areas of their operation is directly and significantly related with group characteristics of members. The result aligns with Michalisin, Karau, & Tangpong's (2007) study which reported that group cohesion had a strong, significant and positive relationship with performance. This finding also corroborates the study by Mohd Zainal and Rosli (2012) which found that cooperative members' strong relationship can further contribute to the growth of the society's performance.

6. CONCLUSION

The study correlated group characteristics to the performance of co-operative societies in Lagos State. The results of the study reveal that group characteristics of members are positive and are significantly related to performance in a co-operative society. It was also discovered in the study that a group performs better when they are cohesive and articulated. The study highlighted that group dynamics directly impacts on performance.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations are advanced:

- ❖ Group members of co-operative societies should strive to be active members in their societies since performance of these societies depend partly on their actions and activities. A close knit relationship should be established by members of the societies because the study has established that cohesiveness is one of the contributors to group member characteristics which gave rise to performance.
- ❖ Rules and bye-laws of the societies should be firmly established to ensure that members have guide to their actions and activities. This will ensure monitoring of members and help the leader have a standard or framework with which to exercise control.

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