



Perception of secondary school students towards the teaching profession

Lilly-West BR

National Teachers Institute, Kaduna, Nigeria

Abstract

Events over the years have shown that the status and perception of teachers by the society and the teaching profession in Nigeria and many other countries of the world have nosedived. An assessment of the student's perception towards the teaching profession was carried out. A self-structured questionnaire named Students' Perception of Teaching Profession Questionnaire (SPTPQ) was interviewer-administered to 250 senior secondary school, students in Port Harcourt. The study showed that the students agreed that becoming a teacher may be attractive and be appropriate for them (Likert mean ≥ 2.5). However, they disagreed that the teaching profession suits their lifestyle and personality (Likert mean < 2.5). Based on the results of the study, the students indicated that their parents think teaching is a noble profession. However, they rejected the statement that their parents think the teaching profession is suitable for them. The data showed that 52 (38.81%) of the male students agreed that the idea of becoming a teacher attracts them and 82 (61.19%) disagreed. Among the female students, 60 (51.72%) agreed that the idea of becoming a teacher attracts them, while 56 (48.28%) disagrees. The null hypothesis "There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female students towards the teaching profession" was rejected (Chi-square = 4.19, $p = 0.0405$). The null hypothesis "There is no significant difference in the perception of art and science students towards the teaching profession." was not rejected (Chi-square = 1.13, p -value = 0.2877). The study showed that parental influence and gender are significant influences in the perception of choosing teaching as a profession.

Keywords: teaching, perception, profession, secondary school

Introduction

Education is the key to participation in the highly competitive global economy of the 21st century based on technological revolution, communication and transfer of information as well as major changes in production, transport, distribution and the economic value of knowledge. In other words, education is the fulcrum of modern day socio-political and economic development. The binding relationship among education, economy and society is interactive. To this end, the teacher plays a pivotal role in the educational development of any society and nation ^[1]. It has been said that no nation can grow beyond the quality of its education (teachers) and that a nation can only develop meaningfully and attain professionalism through a virile teaching profession ^[2].

The positive perception helps teacher to develop a conducive learner friendly environment in the classroom. Therefore, it is a teaching profession that makes all other professions possible ^[3]. The preparation of such important functionary must conceivably get the highest priority. Globally, teaching is classified as a profession. The pertinent question however is whether it is so in Nigeria. Is teaching as a profession enjoying the same prestige and privileges being accorded other highly rated occupation which are often considered to be at the forefront of professional spectrum? Teaching in Nigeria over the ages has been stigmatized with derogatory terms such as a profession for the poor or exclusion occupation for the down-trodden ^[4]. To some people in Nigeria, teaching is engaged in by people considered as altruistic social labourers whose rewards are in heaven ^[5]. On this perception, many school leavers embark on teaching just as a stepping stone pending the time they would find a

lucrative job. However, teaching is a noble profession that encompasses the characteristics of other occupations capable of providing gainful living and prospects ^[1]. The pathetic situation of teaching in Nigeria has been worrisome to major stakeholders of the profession. Therefore, this has led to conflicting perceptions towards the teaching profession. These conflicting views about the teaching profession have resulted into different perceptions of the teaching profession in Nigeria at large. Oftentimes, when secondary school students are asked of their desired career, hardly could any be found to desire becoming a teacher. They would rather prefer other careers which they considered to be professional like Medicine, Engineering, Accountancy, Banking and Finance, Marketing, Law and the like, based on their acceptability in the society ^[Error! Bookmark not defined., 6] This presumes that they do not see teaching as a major profession like others. Therefore, this study intends to examine public perceptions about the teaching profession in Nigeria.

Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was tested in the study:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female students towards the teaching profession.

Method

Research design

The study adopted the descriptive research design.

Study Sample

The population of the study consists of students attending Senior Secondary School III (SSS III) in various secondary schools in Port Harcourt Local Government Area

(PHALGA), Rivers State, Nigeria. Purposive sampling was used to select two hundred and fifty (250) students from the thirteen (13) approved senior secondary school in PHALGA. Simple random sampling was used to select nineteen (19), SS3 students from each of the schools until a sample of 250 students are achieved the 19 students were selected at an interval of every 13 students in each school as shown below:

$$k \text{ (selection interval)} = \frac{\text{Sample Size}}{\text{target number}} = \frac{250}{19} = 13$$

Study Instrument

The instrument used for the study is a self-structured questionnaire named Students’ Perception of Teaching Profession Questionnaire (SPTPQ) as adapted from Lawal [7]. The questionnaire consists of two parts; A and B. Section A will elicit demographic information of the respondents while Section B was designed in a modified four-point Likert scale to determine the perception of students on teaching as a profession. The instrument was interviewer-administered to the secondary school students in the selected schools.

Data Analysis

The data collected was presented in frequencies, percentages and means. The responses on the student’s

perception were measured at an acceptable mean of 2.5 on a 4-point Likert scale. The hypotheses were be tested using chi-square test, all tests were done with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 software and a p-value of less than 0.05 was considered significant.

Results

Table1 shows the demographic distribution of the respondents. There were 134 (53.6) males and 116 (46.4) females. Among the 250 students, 133 (53.2%) were in art class and 117 (46.8) were in science class. The mean age of the respondents was 16.6±18.1 years.

Table 1: Demographic Distribution of Respondents

Variables	Frequency (n=250)	Percentage
Gender		
Male	134	53.60%
Female	116	46.40%
Class		
Art	133	53.20%
Science	117	46.80%
Age group		
10 - 19 years	238	95.20%
Above 19 years	12	4.80%
Mean age ± Standard deviation	16.6±18.1 years	

Table 2: Student’s perception of teaching as a profession

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Likert Mean	Remark
The idea of becoming a teacher attracts me	42	70	98	40	2.5	Accepted
The teaching profession is boring for me	22	71	102	55	2.2	Rejected
The teaching profession is appropriate for me	46	89	77	38	2.6	Accepted
I think teaching does not suit my lifestyle	57	58	76	59	2.5	Accepted
I think teaching suits my personality	40	69	83	58	2.4	Rejected
I believe I will be successful in the teaching profession	64	82	71	33	2.7	Accepted
I would like to work as a teacher even under difficult conditions	35	63	89	63	2.3	Rejected
I believe I have a special talent for teaching	52	85	71	42	2.6	Accepted
I think teaching will provide me with opportunities to be productive and creative	84	98	46	22	3.0	Accepted
The idea of teaching people things they do not know pleases me	100	98	32	20	3.1	Accepted
I feel attracted to people working as teachers	62	102	55	31	2.8	Accepted
I would not recommend teaching to those who are to choose a profession	36	65	85	64	2.3	Rejected
The working conditions of the teaching profession attract me	44	90	73	43	2.5	Accepted
I believe teaching will bring me a prestigious status in society	61	91	65	33	2.7	Accepted
I voluntarily chose the teaching program I am currently attending	45	90	69	46	2.5	Accepted
I fear I will have troubles in the teaching profession	43	67	82	58	2.4	Rejected
Teaching suits females better	62	63	60	65	2.5	Accepted

Table 2 shows the responses to questions on the perception of the students’ towards teaching as a preofession. The statement that were accepted had a Likert mean of at least

2.5 while the rejected statement had a Likert mean of less than 2.5

Table 3: Influence of parents on the student’s perception of the teaching profession

Parental/Guardian Influence on perception on teaching	SA	A	D	SD	Likert Mean	Remark
My parents/guardian thinks teaching is a noble profession	74	92	55	29	2.8	Accepted
My parents/guardian thinks teaching is a suitable profession for me	37	72	84	57	2.4	Rejected
My parents/guardian will support my decision if I decide to become teacher	61	87	63	39	2.7	Accepted
My parents/guardian will not be happy if I become a teacher	29	57	93	71	2.2	Rejected
My Parents/guardian believe that teachers are poor and that is why the discourage their children from taken teaching as a profession	46	50	78	76	2.3	Rejected
My Parents/guardian feel that teachers are not adequately paid	69	71	59	51	2.6	Accepted

Table 3 shows the responses to questions on the parentel influences on the students’ perception towards teaching as a preofession.

The statement that were accepted had a Likert mean of at least 2.5 while the rejected statement had a Likert mean of less than 2.5

Table 4: Perception of male students towards the teaching profession

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Likert Mean	Remark
The idea of becoming a teacher attracts me	20	32	56	26	2.3	Rejected
The teaching profession is boring for me	14	39	54	27	2.3	Rejected
The teaching profession is appropriate for me	26	51	42	15	2.7	Accepted
I think teaching does not suit my lifestyle	29	29	44	32	2.4	Rejected
I think teaching suits my personality	16	34	49	35	2.2	Rejected
I believe I will be successful in the teaching profession	38	43	37	16	2.8	Accepted
I would like to work as a teacher even under difficult conditions	22	33	51	28	2.4	Rejected
I believe I have a special talent for teaching	26	49	35	24	2.6	Accepted
I think teaching will provide me with opportunities to be productive and creative	50	48	27	9	3.0	Accepted
The idea of teaching people things they do not know pleases me	49	58	17	10	3.1	Accepted
I feel attracted to people working as teachers	37	47	31	19	2.8	Accepted
I would not recommend teaching to those who are to choose a profession	23	32	50	29	2.4	Accepted
The working conditions of the teaching profession attract me	25	45	41	23	2.5	Accepted
I believe teaching will bring me a prestigious status in society	34	49	35	16	2.8	Accepted
I voluntarily chose the teaching program I am currently attending	28	44	34	28	2.5	Accepted
I fear I will have troubles in the teaching profession	25	37	42	30	2.4	Rejected
Teaching suits females better	32	38	32	32	2.5	Accepted

Table 4 shows the responses of the male students to questions on the perception of the students' towards teaching as a profeession. The statement that were accepted

had a Likert mean of at least 2.5 while the rejected statement had a Likert mean of less than 2.5

Table 5: Perception of female students towards the teaching profession

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Likert Mean	Remark
The idea of becoming a teacher attracts me	22	38	42	14	2.7	Accepted
The teaching profession is boring for me	8	32	48	28	2.6	Accepted
The teaching profession is appropriate for me	20	38	35	23	2.2	Rejected
I think teaching does not suit my lifestyle	28	29	32	27	2.5	Accepted
I think teaching suits my personality	24	35	34	23	2.5	Accepted
I believe I will be successful in the teaching profession	26	39	34	17	2.5	Accepted
I would like to work as a teacher even under difficult conditions	13	30	38	35	2.6	Accepted
I believe I have a special talent for teaching	26	36	36	18	2.2	Rejected
I think teaching will provide me with opportunities to be productive and creative	34	50	19	13	2.6	Accepted
The idea of teaching people things they do not know pleases me	51	40	15	10	2.9	Accepted
I feel attracted to people working as teachers	25	55	24	12	3.1	Accepted
I would not recommend teaching to those who are to choose a profession	13	33	35	35	2.8	Accepted
The working conditions of the teaching profession attract me	19	45	32	20	2.2	Rejected
I believe teaching will bring me a prestigious status in society	27	42	30	17	2.5	Accepted
I voluntarily chose the teaching program I am currently attending	17	46	35	18	2.7	Accepted
I fear I will have troubles in the teaching profession	18	30	40	28	2.5	Accepted
Teaching suits females better	30	25	28	33	2.3	Rejected

Table 5 shows the responses of the female students to questions on the perception of the students' towards teaching as a profeession. The statement that were accepted had a Likert mean of at least 2.5 while the rejected statement had a Likert mean of less than 2.5

Test of Hypothesis

The hypotheses were tested with the Chi-square analysis based on relevant responses on selected items in the study instrument (questionnaire).

Ho: There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female students towards the teaching profession.

Table 6: Test of Hypothesis: The idea of becoming a teacher attracts me

Gender	Male (n, %)	Female (n, %)	Chi-square(p-value)
Agree	52 (38.81)	60 (51.72)	4.19 (0.0405) *
Disagree	82 (61.19)	56 (48.28)	
Total	134 (100.0)	116 (100.0)	

*Difference of between the male and female is statistically

significant ($p < 0.05$)

The table above showed that 52 (38.81%) of the male students agreed that the idea of becoming a teacher attracts them and 82 (61.19%) disagreed. Among the female students, 60 (51.72%) agreed that the idea of becoming a teacher attracts them, while 56 (48.28%) disagrees. The chi-square statistic was 4.19 and a p-value of 0.0405. Hence, the null hypothesis "There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female students towards the teaching profession" is rejected.

Discussion

The findings of this study are consistent with the findings of a study by Peter and Peter (2011) which revealed a range of perspectives for pursuing a teacher training course to include; failure to follow a desired career, springboard to other careers, to upgrade, and teaching out of vocation. However, a previous study showed that about 50% of secondary school students in Ibadan did not perceive the teaching profession as appropriate for them and they didn't

see the profession as attractive [7]. The perception of teaching as a profession could be attributed factors such as; low pay with no incentives and low status profession as perceived by many people. The results also showed that the students rejected the notion that they will have troubles in the teaching profession. However, they did accept the statement that teaching suits females better. Similarly, Peter and Peter [Error! Bookmark not defined.] reported there was a lack of trust of male trainee teachers with most respondents preferring female teachers. A similar study by Kikechi *et al.*, reported that most secondary school students in Kenya have reportedly indicated that teaching requires a special talent which they may not possess and they aren't attracted to people whom are teachers [8]. The findings of the Lawal [Error! Bookmark not defined.], in Lagos also showed that at least 50% of about 400 secondary school students interviewed revealed that they do not have the required zeal or skills meant for the teaching profession. These perceptions of teaching as a profession have been attributed to different factors ranging from the relatively low income package of teachers, the poor quality of teachers in the public school setting in Nigeria and the perception of a low quality of education available in public secondary schools as reported in different studies across Nigeria [Error! Bookmark not defined., Error! Bookmark not defined., Error! Bookmark not defined., 8] (Lawal, 2012; Obemeata, 2014; Owoyele, 2017; Oweyle and Toyobo, 2018).

Parents/guardians have been reported to have a significant influence on their children/ward's life choices, most especially occupation. Based on the results of the study, the students indicated that their parents think teaching is a noble profession. However, they rejected the statement that their parents think the teaching profession is suitable for them. This is consistent with the findings of Owoyele [Error! Bookmark not defined.] which reported that parents of secondary school children in Ogun state mostly prefer that their children are either doctors, engineers, lawyers and other seemingly lucrative profession, but would not choose teaching as a first option if they could influence their children's choice of occupation. Similarly, Desforges & Abouchaar [Error! Bookmark not defined.] reported that parents would mostly encourage their children to choose professions that they think are more lucrative and teaching is not necessarily seen as a lucrative profession especially in developing countries such as Nigeria.

The findings of the current study also showed that the students agreed that their parents would support their decisions should they decide to become teachers, but the parents feel that teachers are not adequately paid. This may be attributed to the notion that teaching may be a stop-gap measure towards getting a better job as reported by Bandura [9] and Ololube [Error! Bookmark not defined.] The findings of this study are also consistent with the findings of Owoyele [Error! Bookmark not defined.] which reported that many parents will support their children to choose teaching only as a stop-gap profession till they get more lucrative job offers.

Studies on the perception of teaching as a profession among parents of secondary school students across Nigeria have shown that factors such as parent's occupation and low remuneration for teachers are the most common factors influencing parent's perception of teaching as a profession. The results of the current study showed that more than 50% of the parents are self-employed and 18% were in private sector employment, with only 0.4% of the parents been a

teacher. This could be responsible for the parent's seemingly low perception of teaching as a profession and could influence their decisions on the choices of profession for their children/wards as reported in similar studies [1. Error! Bookmark not defined., Error! Bookmark not defined.].

The male students rejected the statement that becoming a teacher attracts them (Likert mean = 2.3). They also rejected the statements that the teaching profession is boring for them and the statement that they will have troubles in the teaching profession. In contrast, the responses from the female students indicated that they accepted "the idea of becoming a teacher attracts me". However, they also indicated that the teaching profession is boring for them and rejected the statement that "the teaching profession is appropriate for me". The responses of the male students also showed that they accepted the statement that "teaching suits females better" (Likert mean = 2.5). However, the female student rejected the statement "teaching suits females better". These findings are consistent with the reports of other studies which showed that many male students indicated that the teaching profession is mainly for females and does not suit men [10, 11]

The results of the current study showed that 52 (38.81%) of the male students agreed that the idea of becoming a teacher attracts them and 82 (61.19%) disagreed. Among the female students, 60 (51.72%) agreed that the idea of becoming a teacher attracts them, while 56 (48.28%) disagrees (Chi-square = 4.19, $p = 0.0405$). Hence, the null hypothesis "There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female students towards the teaching profession" is rejected. This is consistent with the findings of Kikechi *et al.* [Error! Bookmark not defined.] which reported a significant difference in the perception of teaching as a profession between male and female secondary school students in Enugu. Similarly, Marina-Stefania *et al.*, also reported that a significant proportion (at least 50%) of female students disagree that the teaching profession suits females better, which is contrast to the perception of male students, where about 70% indicated that the teaching profession better suits females [12]. Sahayarani and Stanly [13] reported that at least 50% of male students in secondary schools in India indicated that teaching is most suitable for females and that male student's prefer professions in engineering, medicine and banking to teaching. It has been established that many men are of the perception that the teaching profession suits females better and shouldn't necessary be a man's first option for a career choice [5, 14] These reports are consistent with the social learning theory postulated by Krumboltz which indicated that career selection is mostly influenced by the social perception of the profession [15].

Conclusion

The study showed that the students accepts that teaching as a profession could be attractive, but there was an acceptance of the notion that teaching suits females better. They also accepted that they would be successful as teachers. The results showed that parental influence on choosing teaching as a profession is based on the fact the students think that their parents/guardians did not think that the teaching profession is suitable for their children/wards and they also think that teachers are not adequately paid. It was shown that the perception teaching as a profession was different between male and female students. While male students think teaching suits females better, the female students

disagree. In conclusion the study showed that parental influence and gender are significant influences in the perception of choosing teaching as a profession. Based on the following recommendations are made; An increase in the awareness of the importance of teaching to parents; The disposition that teaching is for only females should be discouraged at all levels; An improvement in the remunerations and welfare of teachers in the public secondary schools, to make the profession look more attractive.

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