

STUDENTS' DISPOSITIONS TOWARDS SOCIOLOGY AS A CAREER: A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ABEOKUTA METROPOLIS IN OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the dispositions of Senior Secondary School Students towards career in Sociology. A total of four hundred respondents were randomly selected from eight public secondary schools in Abeokuta metropolis. Data were generated through the use of both questionnaire and oral interview. Data generated through questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive technique such as frequency counts and percentage while data obtained through interview were content analysed. The study revealed among others that majority of the respondents who intend to enroll for tertiary educational degree/diploma after completion of their secondary school education are ignorant of the discipline of Sociology and this accounted for its low preference among the respondents as only 35.5 percent showed positive disposition towards career in Sociology while 63.7 percent preferred studying other courses and the remaining 0.8 percent were neutral. The study concludes with a set of recommendations which will help to popularize the course as well as arouse the interest of students in the discipline of Sociology.

Keywords: *Disposition, Sociology, Students, Career, Abeokuta.*

INTRODUCTION

Since the word sociology was coined by Auguste Comte (1798 - 1857), it has become widely accepted not only in Europe but also in United States of America, Japan, Canada and in other parts of the world as an academic discipline and a tool for analyzing and understanding the society. Several scholars such as Kornblum (1994), Ross and Haag (1961), Wilmot (1985), Henslin (1997), Lindsay and Beach (2003), have explained the meaning of sociology. For instance, Kornblum (1994) defines sociology as the scientific study of human societies and of human behaviour in the groups that make up a society. It is concerned with how social conditions influence the lives of individuals.

Ross and Haag (1961) on their part define sociology as the study of the formation and transformation of groups and the relationship of groups and group members with one another. To Wilmot (1985), sociology is a science of human companionship, fellowship, association and interaction. While all these definitions may be accurate and correct, however, Smelser (1994) defines sociology as the scientific study of social relations, institutions and societies. Although not all sociologists accepted the scientific status of the discipline (Tukura, 2004; Haralambos and Holborn, 2004) it is accurate to characterize the discipline as a scientific one

given the very strong emphasis placed on empirical investigation and systematic explanation according to the scientific method. Most importantly, it utilizes a set of procedures that minimizes the personal bias of researchers while at the same time maximizes precise measurement (Isiugo-Abanihe, Isamah and Adesina, 2002).

Sociology is an important discipline in faculties of social sciences in Nigeria universities. The social sciences are academic disciplines that deal with people in their social and cultural context (Oтите and Ogionwo, 2006). Other disciplines in the social sciences include Anthropology, Psychology, Political Science and Economics. Some faculties of the social sciences include other disciplines such as Demography, Geography, Social Work, and Accounting. But what distinguishes Sociology from the other social science disciplines is that as each of these social science disciplines studies an aspect of the society, sociology is interested in all aspects of the society. Also, sociology has a unique way of analyzing reality which has been referred to as the sociological perspective or way of seeing (Hess, Markson and Stein, 1996).

A major in sociology gives one distinct skills to look beyond the often neglected and taken-for-granted aspects of our social environment and examine them in fresh and creative ways (Berger, 1963; James and Zanden, 1996). People trained in sociology work in a wide range of interesting jobs, in the public, corporate and community sectors. Sociologists work in neighbourhood and community development, in ageing, urban, youth or women's services in health program evaluation or program management. They work in media, not-for-profit organizations and many works as researchers in areas of family life to educational change. They are found in large corporations, public as well as private establishments, and in civil and public service with government (Huber, 1984; American Sociological Association, 1984).

In spite of many job opportunities available for sociologists, information (Nworah, 1997; Iheanacho, 2000; Joshua, 2003) indicate that many secondary school students always aspire to study courses such as Medicine, Accounting, Pharmacy, Business Administration, Engineering and Law without a single thought on a course like Sociology. This phenomenon is a threat as it has implication for planning the recruitment into the sociology profession in Nigeria. Hence, this study was conceived to find out how far such findings hold for the generality of senior secondary school students in Abeokuta metropolis. In pursuance of this, attempts were made to provide answers to the following research questions: (i) What are the career goals/intention of students after secondary school education? (ii) Who influences their career choices? (iii) Are they aware of the discipline of Sociology? (iv) Would they like to choose sociology as a course to study in tertiary institution after their secondary school education? Is Sociology/Social Studies taught in their different schools?

METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out in Abeokuta, a city in South Western Nigeria. Abeokuta is the capital of Ogun State. It hosts two local government areas namely Abeokuta

South and Abeokuta North. Most of the inhabitants of Abeokuta are Egba, a subgroup of the Yoruba people. Other Nigerians from other parts of the country as well as expatriates are also living in the city. Abeokuta has over twenty public secondary schools. The study population consisted of the final year senior secondary school commercial class students in Abeokuta metropolis. The science and art oriented students were excluded because of their subject combinations which cannot permit them to study Sociology in any Nigerian university. As regards selection of sample, a total of eight public secondary schools were selected using random sampling technique. The schools selected were African Church Grammar School, Gateway Secondary School, Lisabi Grammar School, Unity High School, Premier Grammar School, Olumo High School, Abeokuta Girls' Grammar School, and Baptist Boys High School. Selection of sample of students was done through the use of simple random sampling technique. A total of fifty students were chosen from each of the eight selected schools to give four hundred participants. Equal number of students were selected in order to ensure equitable representation and reduce bias.

Data for the study were collected through the use of both structured questionnaire and oral interview. The questionnaire revolved around the respondents social background and disposition towards Sociology as a career. Oral interviews were also held with some of the respondents in order to have in-depth information on some of the issues raised in the research questions. However, before administering the questionnaire, the permission of the selected school authorities was sought and obtained after introduction of the study. The verbal consent of the respondents was also sought and obtained. The four hundred copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents in their various schools during the school hours to ensure maximum return of the instrument. In all, the one hundred percent return rate was achieved. Data collected through questionnaire were analysed using descriptive techniques such as frequency counts and percentage while the data obtained through interviews were content analysed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
<i>Sex</i>	Male	201	50.3
	Female	199	49.7
	Total	400	100.0
<i>Age</i>	0-10	-	-
	11-12	-	-
	13-14	02	0.5
	15-16	137	34.2
	17-18	142	35.5
	>18	119	29.8
	Total	400	100.0

Position in the family:	First born	99	24.8
	Second born	110	27.5
	Third born	121	30.2
	Others	70	17.5
	Total	400	100.0
Fathers' educational level:	No formal educational	42	10.5
	Primary school certificate	100	25.0
	Secondary/technical school certificate	130	32.5
	Tertiary certificate	128	32.0
	Others	-	-
	Total	400	100.0
	Mothers' educational level:	No formal educational	60
Primary school certificate		140	35.0
Secondary/technical school certificate		125	31.3
Tertiary certificate		75	18.7
Others		-	-
Total		400	100.0

Source: Survey, 2010

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents. From the table, a little more than half of the respondents were males while the remaining were females. The higher figure of male respondents is an indication that males enrolled in secondary schools in the study area more than females. Current age of the respondents shows that about 35.5% fell within age 17-18 years, 34.2% were within age 15-16 years while 29.8% were age 18 years and above. The high proportion of those whose age ranges between 17-18 years is an indication that most of the respondents began their educational career at the national official age of six years.

Respondents position in the family shows that about 30.2% were third born, 27.5% were second born while the remaining others were 17.5%. Education levels of the respondents fathers show that about 32.5% had secondary/technical school certificate, 32.0% had tertiary school certificate while 25.0% had primary school certificate. The findings imply that the respondents' fathers were fairly literate. Respondents mothers' educational levels show that about 35.0% had primary school certificate, 31.3% had secondary/technical education certificate, 18.7% hold tertiary education certificate while the remaining respondents mothers never attended school. This result also indicates that the mothers of the respondents were equally fairly literate.

Table 2: Respondents career goals/intention after secondary school education

Career Goals/Intention	Frequency	Percentage
Enroll for tertiary educational degree/diploma	236	59.0
Work immediately after completion of Secondary school education and later enroll for tertiary educational degree/diploma	81	20.3
Enroll for short term vocational training	66	16.4
No response	17	4.3
Total	400	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2010

Table 2 shows the intention of the respondents after leaving secondary school. Majority of the respondents intend to enroll for tertiary education degree/diploma. About 20.3% intend to work for some time and later enroll for tertiary educational degree/diploma; 16.4% intend to enroll for vocational training such as tailoring, carpentry, painting, hairdressing, barbing saloon, etc, while the remaining respondents did not respond. A situation where more than half of the respondents intend to enroll for tertiary educational degree/diploma could be as a result of the role of education in the enlightening and liberation of man from the vagaries of nature. It enables man to be self sufficient materially and philosophically (Martin, 2003). Furthermore it is the most potent weapon of political influence and power (Amingo, 2003). Also, in a country like Nigeria of over 400 language groups (Otite, 2000) higher education seems the sole open sesame to elite status (Amingo, 2003).

Table 3: Influence on Respondents Career Choice

Influence on career choice	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Teacher	62	15.5
Career guidance	47	11.7
Parents	251	62.8
Peers	34	8.5
Others	06	1.5
Total	400	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2010

Table 3 shows influence on respondents' career choices. From the table, more than half of the respondents rated their parents as the most important influence on their career choice followed by teachers, peers and others. By and large, a situation where more than half of the respondents rated their parents as the influence on their career choices indicates that parents are the most significant individuals influencing career choices of their children in the study area. This finding conforms with Breakwell, Fife-schaw and Devereux (1998), Dick and Rallis (1991), Ferry (2006), Agarwala (2008) who unanimously found parents to have important influence on children career choice.

Table 4: Respondents Awareness of the Discipline of Sociology

Awareness of the Discipline	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	57	14.3
No	339	84.7
No response	04	1.0
Total	400	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2010

Table 4 shows the respondents awareness as regards the discipline of sociology. Majority of the respondents were ignorant of the discipline of sociology. About 14.3% are aware of the discipline of sociology while the remaining did not respond. It is unfortunate that as much as 84.7% of the respondents were ignorant of the discipline of sociology. Ignorance about the existence of the discipline of sociology and what it entail is likely to be a key factor responsible for its low level popularity. This is unlike the case of other courses such as Medicine, Pharmacy, Engineering,

Law, Accountancy and Business administration where awareness and interest among students are very high before they are ready for tertiary level of education. Respondents who are aware of the discipline of sociology were asked to state the source of their information. Majority of them claimed to know of the discipline through the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination/Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (UTME/JAMB) brochure while others heard it through their school teachers.

Table 5: Respondents Disposition towards Career in Sociology

Career in Sociology	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	142	35.5
No	255	63.7
No response	03	0.8
Total	400	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2010

Table 5 shows that majority of the respondents signify no disposition towards career in sociology. Though 14.3 percent are aware of the discipline, yet 35.5 percent it as a career, while the remaining did not respond. The result of the interviews equally corroborates this finding as many of the interviewees show unfavorable disposition towards career in sociology. Majority of the respondents perceived that sociology is a course that cannot fetch them good income, high social status and respect. They however, prefer careers in accountancy, banking and finance and business administration to a career in sociology. They perceived that these courses and the ones that can enhance their social status as well as prospects of securing high paying jobs in the banking, oils and gas, shipping, insurance and manufacturing industries.

In the words of one of the interviewees: I would like people to address me either as an Accountant or a Banker than a Sociologist. The unfavourable disposition of majority of the respondents could be attributed to their ignorance of the essence, utility and career prospects of the discipline of sociology. The findings indicate that majority of the respondents have negative disposition towards career in sociology. This, however, conforms with the findings of scholars such as Nworah (1997), Iheanacho (2000) and Joshua (2003). For instance, Nworah (1997) in his work entitled “Factors Influencing Career Choice among Secondary School Students in Onitsha Zone” observes that students preferred reading courses such as law, accounting, banking and finance, medicine and geology. Similarly, Joshua (2003) in his work entitled “Aspiration Pattern of Senior Secondary School Students in Calabar Municipality” indicates greater number of students aspiring to study medicine, law, accountancy and business administration.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the disposition of senior secondary school students towards career in Sociology using Secondary Schools in Abeokuta metropolis, Ogun State. The finding revealed among others that majority of the respondents intended to pursue

tertiary educational degree/diploma after their secondary school education. Despite this, it was revealed that many of the respondents were ignorant of the discipline of Sociology. This ignorance makes the course to be largely unpopular in the study area and thus accounted for its low preference. Based on these findings the study concludes that senior secondary school students in Abeokuta metropolis have negative disposition towards career in Sociology after leaving secondary school. In view of the above, it is recommended that:

- i Adequate and sustained publicity especially among the students in the secondary schools should be made by the Nigerian Sociological Association in order to increase awareness on the benefits of the discipline of Sociology to society and to popularize the course.
- ii Government through Ministry of Education can provide schools with career guidance counselor who will be enlightening students on the career prospect of the discipline of Sociology.
- iii Parents being most important influence on career decision of their children should be enlightened by the Nigeria Sociological Association on the essence, utility and career prospects of the discipline of Sociology.
- iv Accomplished sociologists can take up responsibilities in organising and sponsoring mass publicity programmes on the discipline of Sociology. Apart from its obvious advantage of wider outreach, this strategy will help to bring great public awareness about the course among a wider audience.

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