

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Disposition of senior secondary school students towards career in Sociology: A study in Abeokuta Nigeria

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This study examined the disposition of senior secondary school students towards career in Sociology. A total of four hundred (400) respondents were randomly selected from eight (8) public secondary schools in Abeokuta metropolis. Data were generated through the use of both questionnaire and oral interviews. Data generated through questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive technique such as frequency counts and percentage while the data obtained through interviews were content analysed. The study revealed among others that majority of the respondents intend to enroll for tertiary educational degree/diploma after completion of their secondary school education. Despite this, it was revealed that majority of the respondents were 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.

**Key words:** 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 State of America, Japan, Canada and other parts of the world as an academic discipline and as a tool for analyzing and understanding society. But what is sociology? Several scholars such as Kornblum (1994); Ross and Haag (1961); Wilmot (1985); Henslin (1997); Lindsay and Beach (2003); etc have explained the meaning of sociology. For instance, Kornblum (1994) defined 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 our lives and individuals. Ross and Haag (1961), on their own, defined 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/correct, however, in this study, Smelser (1994)'s definition was adopted. He defined 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 researcher

while at the same time maximizing precise measurement (Isiugo-Abanihe et al., 2002).

Sociology is an important discipline in faculties of social sciences in Nigeria universities. The social sciences are academic discipline that deals with people in their social and cultural context (Otite and Oginwo, 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 sciences discipline is that as each of these social sciences discipline 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 by scholars such as Hess et al. (1996) as the Sociological perspective or way of seeing.

A major in sociology give ones 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 from family life to educational change. They are found in large corporations, community groups, and the three levels of government, that is Federal, State and Local (Huber, 1984; American Sociological Association, 1984).

In spite of many job opportunities available for sociologist, information from literature (Nworah, 1997; Iheanacho, 2000; Joshua, 2003) indicates 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 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 finding hold for the generality of senior secondary school students in Abeokuta metropolis. In pursuant 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?. The result of this study will contribute to a better understanding of the disposition of senior secondary school students in Abeokuta towards career in sociology. The finding will also go a long way in

making an empirical contribution to the literature on career education and sociology in Nigeria.

## AREA OF STUDY AND METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out in Abeokuta, a city in South Western Nigeria. Abeokuta is the capital of Ogun State. It is located between latitude 7°00'W – 7°30'N and longitude 3°00'E – 3°30'E, and 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 consists 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/allow them to study sociology in any Nigerian universities. As regards selection of sample, a total of eight (8) public secondary schools were selected using random sampling technique. The schools selected were African Church Grammar School, Abeokuta; Gateway Secondary School, Abeokuta; Lisabi Grammar School, Abeokuta; Unity High School, Abeokuta; Premier Grammar School, Abeokuta; Olumo High School, Abeokuta; Abeokuta Girls' Grammar School, Abeokuta; and Baptist Boys High School, Abeokuta. Selection of sample of student was done through the use of simple random sampling technique.

A total of fifty (50) students were chosen from each of the eight (8) selected schools to give 400. Equal number of students was selected in order to ensure equitable representation and reduce bias.

Data for the study were collected through the use of both questionnaire and oral interviews. The questionnaire revolved around getting information on the (i) respondents' social background (ii) other issues raised in the research questions of the study. Oral interviews were also held with some of the respondents so as 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 researcher personally administered the questionnaire to all the respondents in their various schools during the school hours to ensure maximum return of the instrument. In all, 100 percent return rate was achieved. Data collected through questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive technique such as frequency counts and percentage while the data obtained through interviews were content analyzed.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents. From the table, a little more than half (50.3 percent) of the respondents were males while the remaining (49.7 percent) were females. The high figure of male respondents is an indication that more male than female enrolled in secondary schools in the study area. Current age of the respondents shows that about 35.5 percent fell within 17-18 years, 34.2 percent were within 15-16 years while 29.8 percent were 18 years and above. The high proportion of those whose age ranges between

**Table 1.** Socio-demographic profile of the respondents.

Variables	Categories	F	%
Sex	Male	201	50.3
	Female	199	49.7
	Total	400	100.0
Current age of the respondents (years)	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
Respondents 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	15.0
	Primary school certificate	140	35.0
	Secondary/technical school certificate	125	31.3
	Tertiary certificate	75	18.7
	Others	-	-
	Total	400	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2009.

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 percent were third born, 27.5 percent were second born while the remaining others were 17.5. Education level of the respondents' fathers shows that about 32.5 percent had secondary/technical school certificate, 32.0 percent had tertiary school certificate while 25.0 percent had primary school certificate. This finding implies that the respondents' fathers were fairly literate. Respondents' mothers educational level show that about 35.0 percent had primary school certificate, 31.3 percent had secondary/technical education certificate, 18.7 percent hold tertiary education certificate while the remaining (15.0 percent) respondents never attended any school.

This result also indicates that the mothers of the respondents were fairly literate.

Table 2 shows the intention of the respondents after leaving secondary school. Majority (59.0 percent) of the respondents intend to enroll for tertiary education degree/diploma. About 20.3 percent intend to work for some time and later enroll for tertiary educational degree/diploma; 16.4 percent intend to enroll for vocational training in either tailoring, carpentry, painting, hairdressing, barbing saloon, etc, while the remaining (4.3 percent) 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

**Table 2.** Respondents career goals/intention after secondary school education.

<b>Career goals/intention</b>	<b>No of respondents</b>	<b>(%)</b>
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
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2009.

**Table 3.** Influence on respondents' career choice.

<b>Influence on career choice</b>	<b>No of respondents</b>	<b>(%)</b>
Teacher	62	15.5
Career guidance	47	11.7
parents	251	62.8
peers	34	8.5
others	06	1.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2009.

**Table 4.** Respondents' awareness of the discipline of Sociology.

<b>Awareness of the discipline</b>	<b>No of respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	57	14.3
No	339	84.7
No response	04	1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2009.

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 shows influence on respondents' career choices. From the table, more than half (62.8 percent) of the respondents rated their parents as the most important influence on their career choices while teachers (15.5 percent) were the next followed by career guidance (11.7 percent), peers (8.5 percent) and others (1.5 percent). 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 individual influencing career choices of their children in the study area. This finding conforms to that of Breakwell et al. (1998), Dick and Rallis (1991), Ferry (2006) and Agarwala (2008). These scholars in their

**Table 5.** Respondents' disposition towards career in Sociology.

<b>Career in sociology</b>	<b>No of respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	142	35.5
No	255	63.7
No response	03	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2009.

various studies unanimously found parents to have important influence on their children's career choice.

Table 4 shows the respondents' awareness of the discipline of sociology. Majority (84.7 percent) of the respondents were ignorant of the discipline of sociology; about 14.3 percent knew of the discipline of sociology while the remaining (1.0 percent) did not respond. It is unfortunate that as much as 84.7 percent 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 of and interest among students is very high before they are ready for tertiary level education. Respondents who claimed to have the awareness of the discipline of sociology were asked 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 the remaining had knowledge of the discipline through their school teacher.

Table 5 shows the respondents' view towards career in sociology. Majority (63.7 percent) of the respondents signify no; about 35.5 percent indicate yes, while the remaining (0.8 percent) did not respond. The result of the interviews equally corroborates this finding as many of the interviewees show unfavourable disposition towards career in sociology. Majority of the respondents perceived

sociology as unprestigious course that cannot fetch them good income, high social status and respect. They however preferred career in accountancy, banking and finance and business administration. They perceived these courses as the one that can enhance their social status as well as prospects of securing high paying job in the banking, oils and gas, shipping, insurance and manufacturing industries. In the words of one of the interviewees: *I would like to be addressed by people either as an Accountant or Banker than 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. In sum, this finding indicates that majority of the respondents have negative disposition towards career in sociology. This however partly confirmed the finding of scholars such as Nworah (1997), Iheanacho (2000) and Joshua (2003). For instance, Nworah in his work titled "Factors Influencing Career Choice among secondary school students In Onitsha Zone" found out that students preferred reading courses such as law, accounting, banking and finance, medicine and geology. Similarly, Joshua (2003) in his work titled "Aspiration Pattern of Senior Secondary School students in Calabar Municipality" found greater numbers of students aspiring to read medicine, law, accountancy, and business administration.

## Conclusion

This study has examined the disposition of senior secondary school students in Abeokuta metropolis towards career in Sociology. The finding revealed among others that majority of the respondents intend to pursue tertiary educational degree/diploma after their secondary school education. Despite this, it was revealed that majority of the respondents were ignorant of the discipline of sociology. This ignorance makes the courses to be largely unpopular in the study area and thus accounted for its low preference as only 35.5 percents showed favourable disposition towards career in sociology while 63.7 percent preferred studying other courses such as Accountancy, Banking and Finance, etc and the remaining (0.8 percent) were neutral. Based on the findings of this study one can conclude that senior secondary school students in Abeokuta metropolis have negative disposition towards career in Sociology after leaving secondary school.

## RECOMMENDATION

In view of the forgoing findings and conclusion, it is hereby recommended that:

(1) 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 courses.

(2) Government through Ministry of Education should provide schools with career guidance counselor who will be enlightening students on the career prospect of the discipline of Sociology.

(3) 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.

(4) Accomplished sociologists should 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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