DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AS CORRELATES OF LOW RATING OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
This study investigated demographic variables as correlates of low rating of the teaching profession in Nigeria. Using the correlational survey design, four hypotheses were formulated and tested. Data were collected with a questionnaire entitled “Low Rating of the Teaching Profession Questionnaire (LRTPQ)”. The questionnaire was validated by two experts in Educational Research and Statistics. The reliability of the instrument was determined by administering the instrument to thirty parents and the data obtained were analyzed using the Cronbach Alpha formulae and an internal consistency reliability of 0.76 was obtained showing the instrument as reliable. Data collected by the researchers and two research assistants were analysed with the Pearson’s r. The study revealed that there is a high relationship between the mode of admission of students into teacher education and the age of teachers with the low public image of the teaching profession in Nigeria. However, it was found that the presumed predominance of females in the teaching profession and the family background of teachers do not have any significant relationship with the low public image of the teaching profession in Nigeria. One of the recommendations is that the minimum age of any person to be recruited into the teaching profession school be twenty five years. This would allow for long time academic and practical training after secondary education.

Keywords: Demographic variables, teaching profession, low rating, correlates

Introduction
The teaching profession is arguably a disparaged profession in Nigeria. Some members of the Nigerian society and governments at all levels are guilty of the disparagement of this noble profession. The poor conditions of service provided for teachers in Nigeria lend credence to the position of the researchers. Poor conditions of service range between salary irregularity, salary insufficiencies, poor physical environment, poor promotional prospect and stagnation. For instance, one cannot compare the conditions of service of a banker and a teacher in a typical rural setting in Nigeria owing to the fact that while the former lives in the city with access to at least relatively good roads, electric power supply, pipe born water/borehole, good schools for his children and recreational centres for relaxation after the day’s toil.

Poor conditions of service are part of the causes of low rating of teachers and the teaching profession (Ekwukoma, 2008). In a similar vein, Osunde and Izevbige (2006) remarked that the poor conditions of service and wider society negative influence are crucial factors responsible for teachers’ low status. Awanbor (1996) added that government in different parts of Nigeria finds it convenient to withhold/delay teachers’ salaries sometimes for up to four months in areas and that teachers’ promotions are the slowest to come among other debasements. He concluded that this state of economic dystrophy is also inevitably
accompanied by lack of social muscle or might and hence the low social rating of teachers and the teaching profession. Ekwukoma (2008) found that poor conditions of service not only contribute to the low status of the teaching profession in the Nigerian society, but also causes low self-esteem among some education students in Nigerian universities. It is low self-esteem that causes some education students in the university to introduce themselves, among students studying other professional courses, with their major courses, with their major courses/teaching subjects only – without attaching “Education”. For instance, those in English/Education introduce themselves as English and Literature students, those in Accounting/Education introduce themselves as English and Literature students, those in Accounting/Education introduce themselves as English and Literature students, those in Accounting/Education introduce themselves as Accounting students, those in Economics/Education introduce themselves as Economics and Statistics students and so on. A visit to Faculties of Education would reveal that these low self-esteemed Education students are the ones that are too ashamed to even be identified with the Faculties of Education. Osarenren (2012) stated that such students are always hanging around in co-operating faculties where they take their teaching subjects. To them, Education is degrading and humiliating.

Osam’s (2014:43) assertion that “teachers of old assumed a position of prestige and were held in high esteem in the nineteenth century when the Christian missionaries arrived in Nigeria” suggests that the low rating of teachers and the teaching professional is not age-old. Ekwukoma (2014) remarked that within the Nigerian society, there is a nosedive of the usual high esteem enjoyed by teachers. Teachers at all levels in the past were regarded as fountains of knowledge and all-purpose fixers. Their influences extended tremendously beyond their areas of specialization. In rural communities, they were looked on as the mainstays of the communities in which they resided. Fafunwa (1967) posited that the influence of a teacher in those days was greater for everyone expected him to be a reservoir of all knowledge and skill. He noted that the confidence and respect were to high that very often a teacher would be called on to help draft a village constitution or give fiscal advice; give advice on agriculture; sit on the governing board of a secondary school; conduct a town meeting; participate in settling a minor chieftaincy dispute, and so on. Although some of the responsibilities given to teachers then out of confidence and high regards were outside their areas of specialization, yet most of them were able to discharge such responsibilities effectively and satisfactorily without betraying the confidence reposed on them. The story is not the same today in the Nigeria society.

Some researchers have advance several factors contributing to the dwindling status of the teaching profession. One of such factors according to Peretomode (1992) is the age of contemporary teachers. Osam (2014) argued that before the advent of Western education in Nigeria, much respect was accorded to old age because the elders were believed to be custodians of knowledge. Because of the importance accorded to old age, societies were organized in age grade system. The teachers old were mature and were elderly people who combined teaching with counselling as a result of life experience. Ocitti (1993) added that elders were believed to commune with the spirits of the ancestors, and it was further believed that the spirits could be invoked to punish the living that disrespected the elders. The Christian Missionaries came and gave credence to this belief with the biblical injunction that states “Honour your father and mother so that your days may be long.” They explained that it was not only one’s biological father and mother but every individual in the society that is older than one. Peretomode (1992) stated that age is a strong determining factor in public image because of the culture and custom where the elder is superior to the younger one. This air of superiority made people accord teaching low public image in Nigeria because most of the new generation teachers in Nigeria are generally very young. Many people start teaching at an age less than twenty years. They move out as soon as they get better jobs. Peretomode’s position is that the influx of very young people into the teaching profession is a contribution factor to the declining status of the profession.

Another factor is the predominance of the female gender in the teaching profession. It is believed
that sex is a determining factor of public image in the traditional Nigerian society. The presumed superiority of the male gender over the female gender plays out in almost all aspects of our traditional life. In some cases, the presumption degenerates into female subjugation to men. Musa and Musa (2010) identified widowhood practices as an aspect of our custom where the presumed superiority of the male over the female plays out. For instance, a widower (a man whose wife died), is usually surrounded by friends and relatives to take care of him. They give him the best treatment to help him overcome his grief almost immediately. They do this by giving him choice girls or women to keep him “warm” in the lonely night; they ensure that his meals are regular and balanced; that he drinks and sleeps well. Many widowers do not wear black attires to mourn their wives, they do not wake up early in the morning to wail, and they are never accused of being responsible for the death of their wives or made to sit or sleep on bare floor. On the flip side however, the widow’s condition is a far cry from that of the widower. In some cases, she is forced to have sex with her husband’s brothers, the first stranger she meets on the road, or some other designated male. Similarly, in some cases were the widow has to prove her innocence in the death of her husband, she may be forced to drink the water the corpse has been washed in (Owen, 2001). Even in family inheritance, the first male child usually takes over his father’s assets irrespective of the number of females that are ahead of him. These practices attest to the fact that a better public image, honour and respect are given to the male child more than the female child. Osam (2014) is of the opinion that this has been extended to the teaching profession. He posited that at present, there appears to be more female teachers than males, and this has greatly eroded the image of the teaching profession. In most of the highly respected orthodox professions like law and medicine, the percentage of females appears insignificant. The preponderance of females in the teaching profession, according to Osam’s opinion, may not allow it to have high public image under the present value system of our society.

On his part, Nkang (2008) linked the low status of the teaching profession to the admission policies in faculties of education and teacher-training institutions. According to Nkang, the NCE programmes in Colleges of Education draw their intakes from less bright secondary school leavers who would in no way get admission into other tertiary institutions because of poor academic performance.

The purpose of this study is to determine if such demographic variables like age of teachers, gender, family background and mode of admission of teachers into teacher education programmes influence the public image of the teaching profession in Nigeria. That is, this study seeks to find out if there is a relationship between demographic variables (such as age, gender, family background and mode of admission) and the low public image of the teaching profession.

**Methodology**

This study adopted the correlational survey research design. The population of the study comprised all parents in Nasarawa State who have children in primary and secondary schools. It was from this population that the researchers sampled a total of one thousand four hundred parents. The selection of schools where these parents have their children was purposively done to cover all types of schools such as urban, rural, public and private schools. However, the parents were randomly selected during their parent-teacher association meetings in schools. Therefore, the purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used in this study.

Data collection instrument was a questionnaire entitled “Low Rating of the Teaching Profession Questionnaire (LRTPQ)”. The researcher-designed questionnaire was subdivided into two sections: Sections A and B. Section A comprised items that elicited the demographic data of the respondents. Section B contained twenty items of the forced choice Likert scale format. The items elicited parents’ opinions about the relationship between the demographic variables listed above and the poor rating of the teaching profession in Nigeria.

The face-validating of the instrument was determined by two experts in Educational Research and Statistics. The two experts certified the instrument valid even though they made some corrections which were incorporated in the final
copy of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was determined by administering the instrument to thirty parents and the data obtained were analyzed using the Cronbach Alpha formulae and an internal consistency reliability of 0.76 was obtained showing the instrument as reliable. Data collected by the researchers and two research assistants were analyzed with the Pearson’s r.

**Presentation of results**

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between age of teachers and low public image of the teaching profession in Nigeria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Pearson’s r</th>
<th>Sig.(2-tailed)</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Rating of the Teaching Profession</td>
<td>1400</td>
<td>.812</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows a calculated r value of .812 and a P value of .021. Testing at an alpha level of .05, the P value is less than the alpha level (i.e. P=.021<.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Consequently, it can be concluded that there is a high and significant relationship between age of teachers and the low rating of the teaching profession in Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between the predominance of the female gender in teaching and low public image of the teaching profession in Nigeria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Pearson’s r</th>
<th>Sig.(2-tailed)</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Predominance of the female gender</td>
<td>1400</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.521</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows a calculated r value of .012 and a P value of .521. Testing at an alpha level of .05, the P value is greater than the alpha level (i.e. P=.521>.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis is retained. Consequently, it can be concluded that there is no significant relationship between the predominance of the female gender in teaching and low public image of the teaching profession in Nigeria.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between family background of teachers and low public image of the teaching profession in Nigeria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Pearson’s r</th>
<th>Sig.(2-tailed)</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Background of Teachers</td>
<td>1400</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>.401</td>
<td>Not Significant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows a calculated r value of .011 and a P value of .401. Testing at an alpha level of .05, the P value is greater than the alpha level (i.e. P=.401>.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis is retained. Consequently, it can be concluded that there is no significant relationship between family background of teachers and low public image of the teaching profession in Nigeria.
Table 3 shows a calculated $r$ value of .110 and a $P$ value of .401. Testing at an alpha level of .05, the $P$ value is greater than the alpha level (i.e. $P=.401>.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is retained. Consequently, it can be concluded that there is no significant relationship between the family background of teachers and low public image of the teaching profession in Nigeria.

Hypothesis Four: There is no significant relationship between the mode of admission of teachers into teachers’ education programmes and low public image of the teaching profession in Nigeria.

Table 4: Pearson’s $r$ of the relationship between the mode of admission of teachers into teacher education programmes and the low public image of the teaching profession in Nigeria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Pearson’s $r$</th>
<th>Sig.(2-tailed)</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mode of Admission of Teachers into Teacher Education Programmes</td>
<td>1400</td>
<td>.718</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Public Image of the Teaching Profession</td>
<td>e = .05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 shows a calculated $r$ value of .718, which the researchers consider high – and a $P$ value of .000. Testing at an alpha level of .05, the $P$ value is less than the alpha level (i.e. $P=.000<.05$). Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This therefore implies that there is a significant relationship between the mode of admission of teachers into teacher education programmes and the low public image of the teaching profession in Nigeria.

Discussion of findings

This study found that there is a significant and high relationship between age of teachers and the low rating of the teaching profession in Nigeria. This finding is in agreement with Itedjere (1992), Octti (1993), Peretomode (1992) and Osam (2014) who asserted that the teaching profession in Nigeria is suffering low public image because most of the teachers are generally very young. They further added that in Law and Medicine, for example, people spend longer periods to study. This, more or less makes graduates from these professions look more mature and experienced in life than teachers of the same category. Many of such under age teachers are found in private schools. There are some of them who start teaching at an age less than eighteen, that is, immediately after completing their secondary education. As a result of their inexperience and immaturity, many of such young teachers display certain attitudinal dispositions that reduce the public image of teachers generally.

The study also found that there is no significant relationship between the predominance of the female gender in teaching and low public image of the teaching profession in Nigeria. This finding is not in agreement with the opinion of Osam (2014) who asserted that the performance of females in the teaching profession may not allow the teaching profession to have high public image under the present value system of the Nigerian society. Osam’s presumption is negated by the fact that some of the professions and occupations that are enjoying high public image in Nigeria have many women members. Examples include the legal profession and lecturing job. Civilization, the emancipation of women in various professions worldwide have laid to rest, a long time ago, gender-based arguments like that of Osam’s.

Furthermore, the study also found that there is no significant relationship between the family background of teachers and low public image of the teaching profession in Nigeria. This is obvious because it is not only the teaching profession that has members from low class background. Some of the highly respected professions like Law, Medicine, Engineering, etc. have a lot of members from very poor backgrounds. Additionally, some of the highly placed politicians and stupendously
rich business moguls in Nigeria were from very low status background and yet, they are hardly disparaged.

Lastly, the study found that there is a significant relationship between the mode of admission of teachers into teacher education programmes and the low public image of the teaching profession in Nigeria. This finding is consistent with Musa and Ekwukoma’s (2013) assertion that of the all the recognized professions in Nigeria today, only teaching requires less than a full secondary education as its minimum qualification for admission into training institutions. In other professions like Law, Medicine and Engineering an ordinary level General Certificate of Education (GCE) certificate with 5 papers at credit level or at least a good secondary education are basic requirements for the Bachelor’s degree programme. Some Colleges of Education even admit candidates with passes in English and Mathematics and one or two credits. Additionally, most teacher training institutions have become “dumping grounds” into which candidates who could not secure admissions in other disciplines are pushed (Ekwukoma, 2008). In most universities, candidate who have no interest or aptitude whatsoever in the teaching profession are usually ‘pushed’ to the faculties of education as a last resort by the admission authorities. Similarly, Osarenren (2012) lamented the practice of some university authorities in Nigeria whereby admission seekers who have passion for education are thrown aside in order to accommodate high scoring candidates who could not meet the cut off marks for the supposed fashionable courses like Mass Communication, Engineering, Medicine, Law, and so on. Part of the implications of the faulty mode of admission into teacher education programmes is the low rating of the teaching profession because people see it as a profession for the rejects from other discipline (Ekwukoma, 2011).

Conclusion
From the preceding, it can be concluded that the mode of admission of students’ into teacher education and the age of teachers correlate with the low public image of the teaching profession in Nigeria. However, the presumed predominance of females in the teaching profession and the family background of teachers do not have any significant relationship with the low public image of the teaching profession in Nigeria.

Recommendations
Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- The minimum age of any person to be recruited into the teaching profession should be twenty-five years. This would allow for long time academic and practical training after secondary education.
- Admission into faculties of education in universities should be offered to only candidates who chose to study education in the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examinations. The act of offering candidates admissions into faculties of education for consolation, compensation or as stepping stone should be completely discouraged by the university authorities. In fact, faculties of education should screen out such candidates.

References


