

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC VARIABLES AND STUDENT'S
CHOICE OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE IN
THE UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH-EAST AND SOUTH-
SOUTH ZONES OF NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

The study revolves round the socio-economic variables and student's choice of Library and Information Science in the South-East and South-South Zones of Nigeria. It investigates the variables of societal perception, job attraction and opportunity, and their influence on student's choice of Library and Information Science studies. The ex-post facto design is used for the study with full population of 530 first year undergraduates offering Library and Information Science in the universities. Validated socio-economic variables and student's choice of Library and Information Science questionnaire (SVSCLISQ) is used for data collection. Three hypotheses are tested, using Chi-square statistical technique. The influences established are significant at 0.05 significant levels. It infers that job attraction and job opportunity have significant influence while societal perception has insignificant impact on the student's choice of Library and Information Science in the universities. Concludes that career awareness in Library and Information Science profession need to be intensified to encourage students to consider Library and Information Science as a course of study in the universities in South-East and South-South zones of Nigeria.

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KEYWORDS

Socio-Economic Variables-Library and Information Science profession; Job attraction; Job opportunity; Librarianship career awareness.

INTRODUCTION

The problem of educated youth in Nigeria is about choosing a profession as the applicants are numerous but the opportunities few. Since the second half of the twentieth century, some of the developing countries, including Africa, have been making appreciable progress in the social, economic, scientific and technological development. With such advancement the need arises for modern libraries of all hues to support the education, information and research basic for development. Consequently, Library and Information services are expanding in these countries. Hence, personnel, particularly professionals, are the indispensable for effective and efficient library services. Hence, qualified librarians are required to plan, establish and administer all libraries (Nzotta, 1983). A study conducted by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), reveals that many candidates join courses which are believed to hold the key to jobs and regarded, by the society, as being prestigious and money making (Abubakar, 2004). Besides, it is not usual for school and college management in Nigeria to include career guidance in the curriculum. It is still rarer to include Library and Information Science in their career guidance list. Besides, we breathe in a society where a large percentage of the people neither read nor understand the role, librarians and libraries play in nation building. In the light of the above facts, this study endures to investigate the socio-economic variables that influence student's choice of Library and Information Science in the universities in the South-East and South-South zones of Nigeria.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are:

- To determine the influence of societal perception of library profession on students' choice of Library and Information Science.
- To assess the influence of job attraction on students' choice of Library and Information Science.
- To assess the influence of job opportunity in the profession on students' choice of Library and Information Science.

HYPOTHESES

The investigator used following null hypotheses to guide the study.

- Societal perception of library profession has no significant influence on students choice and Library & Information Science.
- Job attraction has no significant influence on students' choice of Library and Information Science.
- Job opportunity has no significant influence on students' choice of Library and Information Science.

LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the attributes of a profession, according to **Mernon (1991)**, is that society holds the profession in esteem. Therefore, societal perception is a rationalized factor that influences career option. **Onyemerekeya and Uhegbu (1998)** argue that individuals prefer one profession to the other due to the social prestige attached to it. It may be on the basis of how the society views those in that particular profession, the ethics of the profession or the respect accorded to the individual as a result of the profession. The society recognizes the profession and respects those associated with it.

Societal perception may imply mode of dressing, comportment and interaction with people. They, therefore, conclude that societal perception is a factor that influences career choice of individuals. In studies conducted by **Agumanu (1991)** and **Bello (1996)** the respondents affirmed that societal perception of a profession is a very important factor in influencing its choice as a career. Possible factors that create low society's image for Library and Information Science profession have been identified by **Abubakar (2004)**.

Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) lend support to the finding of **Abubakar (2004)** when they identified societal misconception of the role of the library in national development as a problem facing the library profession in Nigeria. They revealed that very few Nigerians can be said to understand the librarians' social role. Thus, the primary problem of the library profession is that of being misunderstood by the members of the society. This emanates from a high illiterate rate (bordering on 75% of the population), lack of the appreciation of the crucial value of information in the solution of our complex economic, political and technological problems. From studies by Bryan (1952) and Morrison (1969) (**as cited in Nzotta, 1983**), one gets the impression that one of the factors that influence students' choice of Library and Information Science as a profession is job attraction. Prominent among these are work environment and motivation. Salary is one of the job attraction elements in the Library and Information Science profession and an influential factor in students' choice of Library and Information Science. According to **Lawal (2002)**, the grading definition of librarians according to salary scales and library position is one of the most significant factors of status concerns. Usually, the principles guiding any grading exercise are followed strictly in academic communities where appropriate factors are taken into account. However, in the public and government sectors of the profession,

the librarian's salary is closely related to the scales of clerks. This situation is universally undesirable. He goes further to stress that in the U.K, the Library Associations Manpower and Conditions of Services Committee in liaison with the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) have jointly conducted a national review of the existing grading prescription for librarians so as to determine whether it is relevant to the changing needs of the library service. Lawal shows concern on the local authorities who seem to place librarians below the minimum scales recommended by the profession. This situation has great implication on the students' choice of Library and Information Science as a course of study. In an Internet Discussion (**Urban Libraries Council, 2009**) most of the participants saw job attraction as a great influence in the choice of Library and Information Science because they liked searching for information for others. It is a profession that helps one to explore all kinds of information and provides continuing opportunities to gain knowledge and to help people learn in a more effective way to get what they are looking for.

Kolrlik (1987) and **Hudson (1988)** found the leading factors influencing students' in their career selection as "working conditions" and "salary". These studies corroborate an earlier study by **Nzotta (1983)** for the group who had their first contact with Library and Information Science as a course in the university, their influencing factors were attractive working environment, good salary, job security and promotion prospects. They are summed up as job attraction variables. Job opportunity is another variable that influences career choice. The marketability of a profession influences its choice. **Chapman et al (1999)** in a Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS) in Los Angeles determined what led the students to opt for Library and Information Science. From the responses based on job opportunities, it seemed that everyone felt good about job

prospects for the profession. With 16% of the respondents answering "great," 60% answering "good," and 24% answering "fair," it was clear that the Library and Information Science profession had great prospects for them which made them feel that more opportunities will be open to them in the field upon graduation. The availability of positions as a construct of job opportunity has also been seen as another factor that appears to be a positive asset or 'selling point' for student's choice of Library and Information Science. The expanding number and types of positions in Library and Information Science are likely to be an attractive inducement for those who are selecting it as a career field (**Winston 1997; Hallam and Partridge, 2005**).

Even though some of the literature reviewed did not isolate Library and Information Science; they nevertheless provided insight into the socio-economic factors that influence student's choice of Library and Information Science.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The ex-post-facto design of the survey method is adopted. It is a design found appropriate in this type of study where the variables are not manipulative because the phenomenon has already taken place.

SCOPE

The study covered the universities in the South-East and South-South zones of Nigeria that offer Library and Information Science as a course of study. Nigeria has six geographical zones, namely, North-East, North-West, North-Central, South-East, South-West and South-South. For the purpose of this study, the researcher used the South-East and South-South zones of Nigeria because more Library Schools are located in these two geo-political zones. The universities in the South-East zone that offer Library and

Information Science are Imo State University, Owerri, Abia State University, Uturu, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State University of Technology, Enugu, Nnamdi Azikiwe Univeristy and Awka. The universities in the South-South zone that offer Library and Information Science are University of Uyo, Delta State University, Abraka and Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma.

POPULATION

The population of the respondents consisted of 530 first year undergraduate degree students offering Library and Information Science as a course of study. This is due to the fact that it is always during the first year that the true opinion of students for their choice of course/career is normally get hold of. Other students, who are 'indoctrinated' in the course of study, may alter their career choice influence. The distribution of the population for the study is shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Distribution of the Population of the Study

| Universities | Ownership | Population |
|--------------|-----------|------------------|
| ABSU | State | 86 (16.2) |
| IMSU | State | 125 (23.6) |
| ESUT | State | 28 (5.3) |
| NAU | Federal | 20 (3.8) |
| UNN | Federal | 36 (6.8) |
| UNIUYO | Federal | 15(2.8) |
| AAU | State | 60 (11.3) |
| DELSU | State | 160 (30.2) |
| Total | | 530 (100) |

**Note Figures in parantheses indicate %age*

Source: Schools' Registration Records (Researcher's Field Survey)

INSTRUMENT

A questionnaire was designed using the modified Likert-type rating scale: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3) Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1).

DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected is analyzed making the use of inferential statistics using the Chi-square analysis. All the hypotheses testing were conducted at 0.05 level of significance for rejection or retention. Out of the 530 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 464 copies were returned and all are found useful for the analysis.

Hypothesis 1: Societal perception of library profession has no significant influence on student's choice of Library and Information Science.

To test this hypothesis, the data collected was analyzed using Chi-square analysis. The results obtained are presented in

Table 2.

Table 2: Chi-Square Analysis of the Influence of Societal Perception on Choice of Library and Information Science

| Item | No. | Cal- χ^2 | Crt- χ^2 | df | P | Decision |
|---|-----|---------------|---------------|----|------|----------|
| The profession is rated high in the society | 1 | 5.000* | 7.815 | 3 | 0.05 | NS |
| Librarians and information scientists are seen to be highly knowledgeable | 2 | 1.983* | 7.815 | 3 | 0.05 | NS |
| Librarians and information scientists are orderly and humane | 3 | 5.190* | 7.815 | 3 | 0.05 | NS |

* Note Not significant at 0.05 level; $df = 3$; critical χ^2 -value 7.815

The obtained χ^2 -values were 5.000, 1.983 and 5.190. These values were tested for significance by comparing them with the critical χ^2 -value at 0.05 level with 3 degree of freedom. Since the calculated χ^2 -values of 5.000, 1.983 and 5.190 are less than the critical χ^2 -value of 7.815, the tested null hypothesis is retained. Societal perception of Library and Information Science profession therefore, has no significant influence on student's choice of Library and Information Science in the universities in South-East and South-South zones of Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: Job attraction has no significant influence on students' choice of Library and Information Science.

To test hypothesis, the data collected was analyzed using Chi-square analysis. The results obtained are presented in **Table 3**.

Table 3 Chi-Square Analysis of the Influence of Job Attraction on Choice of Library and Information Science

| Item | No. | Cal- χ^2 | Crt- χ^2 | df | P | Decision |
|---|-----|---------------|---------------|----|------|----------|
| Librarians and information scientists are well paid | 1 | 140.517* | 7.815 | 3 | 0.05 | S |
| The library working environment is conducive | 2 | 153.845* | 7.815 | 3 | 0.05 | S |
| The profession offers job security | 3 | 38.345* | 7.815 | 3 | 0.05 | S |

*Note Significant at 0.05 level; $df=3$; critical χ^2 -value 7.815.

The calculated χ^2 -values were 140.517, 153.845 and 38.345. These values were tested for significance by comparing them with the critical χ^2 -value at 0.05 levels with 3 degree of freedom. Since the calculated χ^2 -values of 140.517, 153.845 and 38.345 are

greater than the critical χ^2 -value of 7.815, the tested null hypothesis is rejected. Job Attraction therefore, has significant influence on Student's Choice of Library and Information Science in the universities in South-East and South-South zones of Nigeria.

Hypothesis 3: Job opportunity has no significant influence on Student's Choice of Library and Information Science using Chi-square analysis.

To test hypothesis, the data collected was analyzed using Chi-square analysis. The results obtained are presented in **Table 4**.

Table 4 Chi-Square Analysis of the Influence of Job Opportunity on Student's Choice of Library and Information Science

| Item | No. | Cal- χ^2 | Crt- χ^2 | df | P | Decision |
|---|-----|---------------|---------------|----|------|----------|
| There is availability of job vacancies in library and information centres | 1 | 125.810* | 7.815 | 3 | 0.05 | S |
| I can be self-employed | 2 | 136.741* | 7.815 | 3 | 0.05 | S |
| The job vacancies are not too competitive. It is for librarians and information scientists only | 3 | 61.017* | 7.815 | 3 | 0.05 | S |

**Note Significant at 0.05 level; df=3; critical χ^2 -value 7.815*

The obtained χ^2 -values were 125.810, 136.741 and 61.017. These values were tested for significance by comparing them with the

critical χ^2 -value at 0.05 levels with 3 degree of freedom. Since the calculated values of 125.810, 136.741 and 61.017 are greater than the critical χ^2 -value of 7.815, the tested null hypothesis is rejected. The implication is that job opportunity has significant influence on Student's Choice of Library and Information Science in the universities in South-East and South-South zones of Nigeria.

FINDINGS

Societal perception has no significant influence on Student's choice of Library and Information Science in the universities in the South-East and South-South zones of Nigeria. The non-significance of the result is in agreement with **Bello (1996)** who reported that the image of the Library and Information Science profession in Nigeria is a little clouded. This confirms the fears of **Aguolu and Aguolu (2002)** and **Abubakar (2004)** who also identified low societal image for Library and Information Science profession in Nigeria. In an earlier study by Ashiem (**as cited in Lawal, 2002**), he asserts that of all the characteristics identified with professionalism which Librarianship has been striving to attain, the one in which librarians and information scientists in Nigeria have been least successful is that of sanction by the community. These studies validate the findings of this study that societal perception has no significant influence on Student's Choice of Library and Information Science in the universities in South-East and South-South zones of Nigeria. Job attraction has significant influence on Student's Choice of Library and Information Science in the universities in South-East and South-South zones of Nigeria. The significance of the result is in agreement with the findings of **Nzotta (1983)** that one of the factors that influences choice of Library and Information Sciences as a course of study in Nigeria is job attraction in the profession. **Bello (1996)** agrees that job attraction such as security of job,

satisfactory earnings, and working conditions are great influences on choice of career. **Spear (2002)** summaries these findings when she confessed in her top ten reasons to be a librarian. Job opportunity has significant influence on Student's Choice of Library and Information Science. The significance of the result is in agreement with **Chapman et al (1999)** who determined what led students to pursue Library and Information Science professionally and found that the major influence was job opportunity. This finding is similar to studies by **Winston (1997)** and **Hallam and Patridge (2005)** who identified availability of positions and job opportunities as positive asset or 'selling point' for the Library and Information Science profession. **Lawal (2002)** corroborates these studies when he writes that since time immemorial, information workers are required to manage knowledge successfully and that Library and Information professionals are found in a wide range of environments, not just in conventional libraries. He confirmed that there are opportunities for work in Library and Information centres, which serve as influencing factors in choosing Library and Information Science as a course of study in higher institutions by students.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study show that certain socio-economic variables influence Student's Choice of Library and Information Science in the universities in the South-East and South-South zones of Nigeria. Job attraction and job opportunity were found to have significant influence on Student's choice of Library and Information Science. However, societal perception of the profession was not found to have significant influence on Student's choice of Library and Information Science in these universities.

Based on the research findings, it is recommended that career awareness in Library and Information Science profession should be intensified to encourage students to consider Library and Information Science as a course of study in the universities in South-East and South-South zones of Nigeria.

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