

THE PERCEPTION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS TOWARD SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION IN EGOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF EDO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Social Work is a practice based profession that utilizes values, knowledge, skills and focus on issues, needs and problems that arise from the interactions between individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities. The principles of collective responsibilities and respect for human diversities are central to social work. The study objectives were to find out the perception of secondary school students toward social work profession in Nigeria and to ascertain if parents and guidance encourage their children to study social work. The study adopted Social information processing theory as its theoretical framework. The study applied cross sectional research design using both quantitative and qualitative research approach. Semi structured questionnaire was used for the quantitative data and interview guide was developed for the collection of qualitative data from respondents. For the quantitative data, 411 Senior Secondary School Students were selected while for the qualitative data, in-depth interview were conducted for seven principals from the seven selected Senior Secondary Schools. The data generated were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and presented using descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage distribution. The major finding of the study was that 257(62.5%) of the sampled respondents were not aware of social work profession in Nigeria while 154(37.5%) of the respondents affirmed that they have heard of the profession. The study further recommended that there was need to increase the awareness of social work profession among students and the general public and Parents and guidance

should encourage their children or wards to develop academic interest in social work.

Keywords: Profession, Society, Social Work, Perception, Secondary School

Social Work is a sub-discipline of the Social Sciences that focuses on the human interactions and other social interactions. As a Social Science, Social Work focuses on the vulnerable and marginalized members of the society and also stands in the gap for the oppressed members of the society, some of these vulnerable members include; women, children, physically challenged, the aged, amongst others. However social work as a social science evolved in Europe and America because of humanitarian needs. Social Work according to the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW, 2014)

‘Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing’.

Social work practice comprises the professional application of social work values, principles, and skills to one or more of the following ends: assisting people obtain real services; counseling and psychotherapy with individuals, families, and groups; helping communities or groups provide or improve social and health services, and take part in legislative processes and social action. The practice of social work requires information on human development and behavior; of social, economic and cultural institutions; and of the interaction of all these factors (National Association of Social Workers, 2009).

As an academic discipline, Social Work builds its identity on the study of social problems. The goal is to generate knowledge about causes, consequences and feasible solutions for these social problems. This knowledge is expected to be useful to practitioners working with clients affected by different adverse conditions. Empirical Social Work research on poverty, discrimination, social exclusion, homelessness, juvenile delinquency, domestic violence and human trafficking is usually taken for granted as to what the ‘social problem’ is. The social problem is treated as a deplorable circumstance "about which something must be done" (Holstein and Miller, 1993). It is therefore considered to be a deviation from a desirable condition (how society ought to be), how exposed groups suffer from these conditions (Gould and Baldwin, 2004; Healy and Link, 2012) and what social work practitioners need to take into consideration when dealing with those bearing the symptoms of such conditions. (Okoye, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

Social work profession is unique and distinct among helping professions in that it functions on a core principle of self-determination, which is a person's right to decide what is best for himself or herself (Freedberg, 1989). Another distinct nature of the social work profession is its focus on both the person needing services and the environment in which the person lives (Gibelman, 1999). This means that social workers do not only help people in solving their personal problems to improve their functioning, they also work to improve the conditions in society that often create problems for individuals and their families. Despite the usefulness of the profession, many people still have skeptical views towards the profession because of its low popularity when compared to other professions.

The rapid social change in less developed countries like Nigeria is associated with technological, economic and political changes and higher educational attainment but not enough attention has been given to Social Work profession by the government and society (Rwomire, 2012). The perception of Social Work among students in secondary schools has not been addressed since the course is not being taught at post primary level. The lack of awareness of social work profession can as well affect their career choice. It is on the basis of these gaps that the study seeks to examine the perception of secondary school students of Social Work profession.

Research Questions

What is the perception of secondary students towards Social Work profession?

Objective of the Study

To find out the perception of secondary school students toward social work profession.

Literature Review

Social Work profession contributes to social change, solving problem in human connections, and the strengthening and freedom of individuals to improve their wellbeing. Using theories of human conduct and social systems, social work intercedes at points where individuals connect with their surroundings. Standards of human rights and social justice are key to social work International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW 2001). Specifically, it promotes change, and furthermore finds the social work task at the interface between the individual and the Society; the individual and his/her environment. It additionally recognizes the significance of social justice and human rights and working with sabotaged/defenseless individuals from Societies. It underlines the linking between social work, the human rights traditions and the later enactment that fortifies the requirement of human rights. (Association of Directors of Social Work (ADSW, 2004).

Social work has its foundations in the battle of society to manage poverty and the resultant issues and it developed into a profession in the later part of the nineteenth

Century when England was in the time of flitter-flourishing (Mere, 1982). Britain was a noteworthy Sea Power amid the time of industrialization. This industrialization and enhanced farming made the populace relatively served because of enhanced wellbeing and natural sanitation inside the different networks. This industrialization wasn't all blasts as it was joined by the marvels of social issues for the majority, since a portion of the real issues were lodging, poor working conditions, stuffed situations, vagrancy, kid surrender, truancy, misconduct, frailty and joblessness. The work conditions were poor and the state couldn't intercede. In the then England, there were poor people, the simple poor and the capable poor. As a ponder worry for aiding the poverty stricken and less advantaged individuals from the general public, the underlying foundations of social work go back to religious and compassionate driving forces apparent in the narratives of most civic establishments (Ekpe and Mamah, 1997).

Theoretical Framework

Social Information Processing Theory was propounded in 1992 by Joseph Walther who was concerned about the information an individual has toward a profession and how it affect their career choice The theory looks at how social information can affect the decision making of students at the secondary level and how it will help them form perception about any course of study in the higher institutions. Social information processing theory tries to clarify why students will pick social work profession as a course of study in the college/University based on their perceptions. There are five phases that promotes where information is acquired and processed that eventually helps students to form perception towards course of discipline. The stages are encoding, making mental portrayals, reaction getting, assessment, and establishment. Social Information Processing Theory was adopted to the study because it tries to explain the phenomenon under investigation.

Research Methods

The study adopted one-time survey research design in the collection of data from the selected public secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area. The data collected through questionnaire were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The output of the analyses necessitated the use of tables to show frequencies and percentages. The population of this study was Six thousand nine hundred and fifty four (6954) made up public senior secondary school students from SS 1 to SS 3 in Egor local government area of Edo State. Post Primary Education Board (PPEB) Statistical Department (April, 2018)

Table 1: Public Senior Secondary Schools Egor Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria

S/N	NAMES	SS1(SEX)		SS2(SEX)		SS3(SEX)		TOTAL
		M	F	M	F	M	F	
1.	Asoro Grammar School	231	238	201	203	227	205	1305
2.	Ohonre Grammar School	29	47	33	44	23	27	203
3.	Evbuotubu Secondary Sch	155	184	109	133	21	23	625
4.	Uselus Secondary School	97	129	124	152	50	59	611
5.	Edo Boys High School	235		240		220		695
6.	Egor Secondary School	110	150	130	145	115	126	776
7.	Evbareke Secondary School	180	203	170	185	140	160	1038
8.	Eweka Secondary School	45	57	40	47	40	42	271
9.	Iyoba Girls College		220		200		185	605
10.	Okhokhugbo Grammar School	45	56	30	45	20	40	236
11.	Useh Secondary School	50	59	47	50	35	42	283
12.	Uwelu Secondary School	45	57	50	60	45	49	306
13.	Grand Total	1222	1400	1174	1264	936	958	6954

Source: Post Primary Education Board (PPEB) Statistical Department (April, 2018)

The sample size for the study was drawn from seven selected schools names; Evbareke Senior Secondary School 1038, Iyoba Girls Senior Secondary School 605, Uwelu Senior Secondary School 306, Uselu Senior Secondary School 611, Edo Boys High School 695, Egor Senior Secondary School 776 and Eweka Senior Secondary School 271 and the total is **4,302**.

The Cochran (1977) sample size determination formula was used to calculate the sample size.

$$N = \frac{Z^2 P(1 - P)}{e^2}$$

Where N = Sample population

Z = Statistics level of confidence (1.96)

P = Expected prevalence (0.50)

I = Constant

E = Marginal error (0.05)

Cochran sample size determination formula states that sample size should not be less than 384.16

420 selected sample size

Since seven (7) schools were selected, therefore for equal number of respondents the sample population will be divided by seven.

Therefore 60 respondents were selected from each of the schools

Table 2: Distribution of Sampled Population among schools in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria

SCHOOLS	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Uselu Secondary School	30	30	60
Edo Boys High Sch	60		60
Iyoba Girls College		60	60
Egor Secondary School	30	30	60
Uwelu Secondary School	30	30	60
Eweka Secondary School	30	30	60
Evbareke Secondary School	30	30	60
Grand Total	210	210	420

Source: Researcher Computation

Since the targeted respondents were between SSS1 and SSS3 hence 10 males, 10 females across the three levels, 60 respondents were randomly selected since they are not mixed schools. This study adopted simple random sampling technique. In addition to the quantitative data, seven (7) principals were interviewed, one from each schools.

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Socio-Demographic Characteristics (N=411)

Variables	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Male	183	44.5
Female	228	55.5
Total	411	100.0
Age (Years)		
14-19	407	99.0
20 -24	4	1.0
Total	411	100.0
Religion		
Christianity	401	97.6

Muslim	8	1.9
Others	2	0.5
Total	411	100.0
Educational level		
S.S.S 1	142	34.5
S.S.S 2	136	33.1
S.S.S 3	133	32.4
Total	411	100.0
Name of School		
Uselu secondary school	64	15.6
Edo Boys secondary school	63	15.3
Iyoba girls secondary school	56	13.6
Egor senior secondary school	58	14.1
Uwelu secondary school	54	13.1
Eweka secondary school	56	13.6
Evbareke secondary school	60	14.6
Total	411	100.0
Occupation of father		
Farming	72	17.5
Non farming	337	82.0
Total	411	100.0
Occupation of mother		
Farming	60	14.6
Non farming	359	85.4
Total	411	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2018

In this section, socio-demographic variables such as gender, age, educational attainment, occupation of father and mother of the respondents were examined. Table 3 therefore shows the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents for the study. The gender distribution of the respondents revealed that 183 (44.5%) of the respondents were males and 228(55.5%) were females. This indeed reflects the distribution of respondents in the research endeavor by gender and the data therefore suggests that there are more females students in the seven public schools in Egor Local government Area of Edo State. The data is depicted in a bar chart showing the gender distribution of respondents.

More so, the data obtained on the age distribution of respondents also revealed that majority of the respondents fall within the age bracket of 14 -19 years which represents 401(99.0%) of the total respondents that participated in the research. This

finding suggest that the respondents selected for this study are teenagers and the study seeks to reveal the level of awareness of teenagers on the social work profession in general. On the other hand, 1.0% of the respondents fall within the age bracket of 20-24 years; it therefore imply that a minute fraction of the respondents are adult.

Data on religion distribution of the respondents revealed that majority of the respondents with 401(97.6%) of the respondents that participated in the research affirmed that they were of the Christian faith while 8(1.9%) of them are of the Islam faith; 2(0.5%) of the respondents practice other forms of religion. From the foregoing, it can be deduced that majority of the respondents are Christians.

Table 3 above, the result for the educational level of respondents also showed that a greater percentage of the respondents 142(34.5%) are SS1 students; 136(33.1%) of them are SS2 students in the seven public secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area while 133(32.4%) of the respondents are SS3 students. The result suggests that the respondents that were selected for the study are all in the senior cadre of the seven public secondary schools selected for the study.

The result also revealed that the respondents that participated in the research were selected from the seven selected senior secondary schools in Egor Local government Area of Edo State. The result showed that 64(15.6%), of the respondents are students in Uselu secondary school; 63(15.3%) of the respondents are from Edo Boys High School; 56(13.6%) of them are senior secondary students in Iyoba Girls college while 58(14.1%) are students in Egor Senior Secondary School; 54(14.4%) are from Uwelu Secondary School, 56(13.6%) of the respondents that participated in the research are students in Eweka Senior Secondary School while 60(14.6%) of them are students in Evbareke Senior Secondary School. It can be deduced that distribution of the respondents cut across the selected public schools.

From the table 3 below, the data on occupation of father revealed that majority of the respondents with 82.0% affirmed that their father engage in non-farming occupations ranging from clerical services, business, trading, civil servants and other forms of white and blue collar occupations. On the other hand 17.5% of the respondents also noted that their father engage in farming activities as their source of livelihood.

The data on the occupation of mother showed that 60(14.6%) of the respondents' mother engage in farming activities while 359(85.4%) of the respondents affirmed that their mother engage in non-farming activities. It can be deduced that majority of the respondents are employed in different spheres of occupational services.

Perception of Secondary School Students towards Social Work profession in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State

Table 4: Respondents View on Social work profession in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State, Nigeria

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Responses</i>	<i>Frequency (F)</i>	<i>Percent (%)</i>
Do you think social work profession has achieved expected results	Yes	109	26.5
	No	300	73.0
	Total	411	100.0
Do you think most students will love to study social work in the University	Yes	219	53.3
	No	192	46.7
	Total	411	100.0
After knowing the benefit of social work, would you advice a friend to study social work	Yes	252	61.3
	No	159	38.7
	Total	411	100.0
Do you think social work profession is admirable in Nigeria	Yes	117	28.5
	No	294	71.5
	Total	411	100.0
Do you think social work profession is highly respected in Nigeria	Yes	89	21.7
	No	322	78.3
	Total	411	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2018

The data on the perception of respondents about the social work profession revealed that majority of the respondents with 300(73.0%) were of the opinion that social work profession has not achieved the expected results while 26.5% of the respondents had a positive view. Social work as a discipline is a practice-based profession that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. But as it stands, the discipline has not been able to achieve its objectives in totality. On whether students will love to study social work in the university; the data revealed that 219(53.3%) of the respondents were affirmative while 192(46.7%) had a contrary view. The students were asked if they will advise their friend to study social work if they are conversant with its benefits; majority of the respondents with 252(61.3%) were affirmative while 38.7% had a negative view. The results therefore shows that secondary school students would love to study the profession provided they have insight about the social work line of work.

Qualitative data for the study also revealed that one of the interviewees highlighted why it is necessary to encourage students to choose the discipline in the higher institution. Her remarks are as follows:

Take for instance, there are some students that just have some dispositions, there are some characters you see in some persons or you just see them, the way they care, sociable, the way they want to know how persons are faring there are some of the things that would even help one more to conclude if an individual should be in this profession or not. So, if i want to advise a student on career choice maybe to study social work. If i understand it very well the person should be good at social sciences first and foremost, because sociology really has to do with the society and culture of the people and i think i will encourage them because it is supposed to be a noble profession but the way we go about it i don't think the awareness has been created enough both among the schools even in the curriculum, it is still silent in terms of highbrow courses. I don't think whether it is the society, but the comparison with some of these courses, so it really takes time, even in the social sciences, you see students going into accounting, business administration, Public administration, etc. we try to talk to them but the first thing they are going to ask you is where will they work if they study such courses. These schools don't have a guidance and counseling unit to guide students on choice of course. (IDI/Uselu Secondary School/ Principal/ Tuesday 30th Oct. 2018)

The result also showed that 89(21.7%) agreed to the fact that social work profession is highly respected in Nigeria while a greater fraction 322(78.3%) disagreed. In the same vein, 117(28.5%) of the respondents that participated in the research posited that the social work profession is admirable in Nigeria while 71.5% had a contrary view.

The qualitative data also revealed the perception of parents towards the social work profession; the interviewee made the following observations which are as follows: *My perception as a person is that it ought to be a profession that is far reaching but in the context of Nigeria I don't think they have gone that far because I think we are more or less theorizing than doing practice. In Nigeria, we are very much obsessed with academic paper qualification, head knowledge so when we talk about social work, as good as the course maybe, I don't think we have been able to pratitalize it as much as it should be. We see what people do at least by watching documentaries and movies in other countries; we see the work of social workers caring for their wellbeing, community wellbeing and all others. But here, in Nigeria I don't think we have been able to come that far (IDI/Uselu Secondary School/ Principal).*

Discussion of Results

With the objective, we were able to show, due to the low level of awareness and the respondents' view towards the social work profession the perception of secondary school students toward the profession is not impressive. The result of the objective shows that most students will not love to study social work discipline as a profession

except they are educated and properly enlightened on the benefit and importance of studying the discipline. Hence, the decline in the level of awareness and interest among the students who are respondents for the study becomes prevalent.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the social work choice of study and profession is still under professed and this has a great implication for future generation as the society will pay for its negligence. The study also added that parent and the academic institution should allow their children to take a course that they are free with. Finally the study concludes that the un-popular picture of the social work profession is not only socially inclined (which is at the macro level) but also at the micro level where the family influences decision of children especially culturally incline society as Nigeria.

Implication of Findings to Social Work Practice in Nigeria

The following are the implication of findings:

- (a) Social profession help to put in place initiatives that will combat the problems of moral degeneration among young people. The problems of family instabilities, corruption, high unemployment levels and general hypocrisy cannot be addressed through policy and legislation but mostly by awareness of social work profession by all and sundry. Society needs social workers to do the development, prevention, and therapy to its dysfunctional/problematic members and dysfunctional social structures/institutions. In order to achieve this, social workers need to recognize the existence of a problem, which is the beginning of the solution. Therefore, we must recognize that the conceptualization of social work is in a chaotic situation.
- (b) Social workers orient parents through family therapy to totally embrace their responsibility and start acting like parents by checkmating their children activities as it relates to their academic career choice in the higher institutions. Thus, the perception of Parents about the profession will go a long way in educating and encouraging their children and wards in studying course that will help bring solution to societal problems.

Recommendations

1. Social work being one of the study that focuses on humanities and also one of the professions that is internationally recognized need to be re-emphasize to children especially in their secondary education as this will give them a hint of what the study entails and the benefit of choosing the study for future career.
2. The policy maker should make policy that will create an enabling environment for the social work to thrive and also assist in making available grant that are educationally inclined especially in the area of the humanities where social work is a major.

3. Government should create in the educational curriculum in line with social work practice and also employ teacher in this specialized field to educate the younger generation on the role and benefit of studying courses like social work.

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