EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE TEACHING PROFESSION AMONG EDUCATION FINALISTS AT UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS, NIGERIA

Ajibola[1], F.A., Thomas[2], I.O., & Manuel[3], M.N.

[1,3]Dept. of Arts and Social Sciences Education, University of Lagos, Nigeria.

Abstract

The value of a teacher in personal and national growth cannot be overstated because all those who establish a nation were educated and taught by teachers. This study explored the correlation between the perspectives of education finalists and their attitudes towards the teaching profession in Lagos, Nigeria, specifically focusing on the University of Lagos. The study employed a descriptive survey research design and tested three research hypotheses. A total of 327 education finalists were chosen at random from the University of Lagos, Akoka. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire which consisted of 25 closed-ended items was validated and produced a Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.79. The data collected were analysed using frequency and Pearson Correlation, utilising SPSS 23.0, at 0.05 significance level. The findings indicated no statistically significant association between the gender of education finalists and their perceptions and attitudes towards the teaching profession. However, a significant correlation existed between education finalists' perceptions and their attitude towards the teaching profession. Additionally, the perceptions of education finalists regarding teachers' working conditions were significantly correlated with their attitude towards the teaching profession. Consequently, this study suggested that students should be motivated to pursue education and view teaching as a respected and esteemed occupation. Additionally, the government should enhance the working conditions of teachers, including their pay, opportunities for advancement, and overall work environment.

Keywords: Education finalists, Perception, Attitude, Teaching Profession, Gender, working conditions

Introduction

Education is universally acknowledged as a cornerstone for national development. It plays a pivotal role in shaping the economic, political, socio-cultural, and human capital dimensions of a nation. The word "education" originates from the Greek term *educare*, which means "to lead out." Conceptually, education can be described as the comprehensive process of human learning through which knowledge is transmitted, skills are developed, and individuals are prepared to contribute meaningfully to society. Education not only equips individuals with the knowledge and skills to contribute meaningfully to society, but also fosters innovation, technological progress, and civic responsibility (Urevbu, 1991; Ajayi & Ekundayo, 2019).

Recognizing its importance, the Nigerian government enshrined education as an instrument of national development in the National Policy on Education (2013). The policy underscores the transformative power of education in fostering unity, reducing inequality, and promoting sustainable development. Within the formal education system, the teacher occupies a central position in translating curricular intentions into measurable learning outcomes. The success of any educational policy or programme is largely dependent on the competence, motivation, and disposition of teachers.

At the tertiary level, universities, especially faculties and colleges of education are tasked with producing professionally qualified teachers who will drive the nation's educational goals. Students in their final year of teacher training, often referred to as education finalists, are at a decisive stage in their professional journey. Their perceptions of and attitudes toward the teaching profession can significantly influence whether they choose to remain in or leave the profession after graduation. These perceptions are shaped by multiple factors, including academic experiences, teaching practice, societal views, and anticipated working conditions (Olanrewaju, 2020; Adeyemo, 2021).

Despite the vital role teachers play, the teaching profession in Nigeria faces numerous challenges. These include low societal prestige, poor remuneration, limited opportunities for career advancement, and unfavourable working conditions. Such conditions have contributed to increasingly negative perceptions of the profession, particularly among young and aspiring teachers. Research indicates that when teaching is perceived as a low-status or unattractive career, it affects students' enthusiasm, professional identity, and long-term commitment (Olanrewaju, 2020; Adeyemo, 2021).

Studies such as Ogunyemi (2021) have highlighted that education finalists' attitudes toward teaching are influenced by their understanding of the profession's status, benefits, and difficulties, as well as their experiences during teaching practice. Positive attitudes are often associated with a strong sense of purpose and vocation, while negative attitudes stem from concerns about low salaries, poor working conditions, and a general lack of societal respect (Eze & Okafor, 2019). Moreover, factors such as gender, societal expectations, media portrayals, and government policies have been identified as influential in shaping these perceptions and attitudes (Halim & Sastrawati, 2020; Ingersoll, 2018; Olawale & Awodun, 2021).

Despite numerous reforms aimed at professionalising teaching in Nigeria, the profession continues to suffer from low prestige, poor working conditions, and high attrition rates. Many education students approach the teaching profession with scepticism, influenced by societal undervaluation, limited financial incentives, and perceived job dissatisfaction. These attitudes, if left not addressed, may result in the exodus of potential teachers or their disengagement from effective classroom practice. At the University of Lagos, little empirical evidence exists regarding the actual perceptions of education finalists and how these influence their attitudes towards teaching as a career. There is also a paucity of research that examines the extent to which gender and perceived working conditions shape these attitudes. This study, therefore, investigates the relationship between education finalists' perceptions and their attitudes towards the teaching profession, with the aim of offering insights that can support improved recruitment, retention, and motivation of teachers.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between gender and education finalists' perceptions and attitudes towards the teaching profession at the University of Lagos
2. To explore the relationship between education finalists' perceptions of the teaching profession and their attitude towards it.
3. To determine the relationship between education finalists' perceptions of teachers' working conditions and their attitude towards the teaching profession.

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between gender and education finalists' perceptions and attitudes towards the teaching profession.
2. There is no significant relationship between education finalists' perceptions of the teaching profession and their attitude towards it.
3. There is no significant relationship between education finalists' perceptions of teachers' working conditions and their attitude towards the teaching profession.

Literature Review

The Teaching Profession in Nigeria

The significance of teachers in both individual and national development cannot be overstated, as all individuals involved in nation-building have received some type of educational instruction, typically provided by teachers. According to Yusuf (2022), despite ongoing cultural, operational, and technical changes in our lives, the teacher continues to be the most important element in the educational system. Fafunwa (2022) expresses the significant impact that teachers have on students' future careers and potential by stating that inadequately trained teachers will diminish students' enthusiasm for pursuing a teaching profession and result in the production of badly trained professionals in teaching and other domains. Education is a program that many students are reluctant to enrol in with the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) due to their unfavourable perception of teaching. The majority of students admitted into education faculties and colleges of education in Nigeria lack a genuine interest in studying education. Their intention is not to become teachers upon completion of the program. Rather, they only choose to study education as a fallback option after failing to secure admission into their preferred course(s). They saw it as a means to advance towards other occupations. Individuals in education faculties have been admitted due to their inability to achieve the necessary scores in the JAMB examination. These students typically exhibit a pessimistic attitude towards the teaching profession (Odunisi, 2004).

The profession of teaching no longer earns positive regard from the public and society. Additionally, the prevalence of disobedience and arrogance displayed by students may have caused aspiring teachers to develop a negative perception and become disinclined to pursue a career in teaching after completing their studies. Aghenta (1981) argued that teachers are deprived of positive feedback and motivation. While their wages may be substantial, they are not consistently paid and their allowances are diminished. Education administrators face threats, students exhibit hostility towards them, and members of the public withhold sympathy from them. As a result, they are experiencing frustration as a significant number of them are being laid off from their jobs without considering the fact that they have received any training (Ogumogu, 2006).

The National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004) asserts that teaching practice is a means of professionalising the teaching profession, equivalent to the industrial training and internships undertaken by engineers and medical professionals, respectively. Afe (1990) states that teaching practice exercise is equivalent to an internship for medical doctors or an apprenticeship for technicians in the context of training teachers. Omoregbe (2004 in Audu & Egharevba, 2016) stressed the importance of teaching practice in preparing skilled teachers to

effectively run our education system and achieve national goals. Secondary school students who want to pursue post-secondary and higher education courses in the field of teaching will acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively practise the profession after completing their training.

The perception and attitude of students towards the teaching profession in Nigeria are influenced by the way society and the government see the prospects of teachers. An educated population is crucial for any society as it enables improved awareness, economic growth, and technical improvement. These benefits are achieved through education and the dedicated efforts of teachers. An educator necessitates optimal teaching settings and a favourable environment in order to carry out their duties and responsibilities efficiently. The National Policy on Education demonstrates the government's deliberate attempt to enhance the working conditions and environment for teachers. However, these efforts are hindered by individuals entrusted with the task for guaranteeing the effective implementation of these policies (Audu & Egharevba, 2016).

Nexus between the gender of education finalists and their perceptions about teaching profession

Studies suggest that gender has a notable impact on the way education finalists perceive and see the teaching profession. Research indicates that female students studying education are more inclined to perceive teaching as an attractive and satisfying profession in comparison to their male peers (Adeyemo & Uche, 2020). The gender gap in teaching can be explained by conventional gender roles, social norms, and the idea of teaching as a nurturing occupation; which is generally associated with stereotypical feminine characteristics (Ogunyemi, 2021).

In Lagos, Nigeria, cultural and economic variables exert additional effect on these views. According to Adedokun (2019), female finalists frequently view teaching as a secure and socially esteemed profession that provides a harmonious blend of work and family life. Conversely, male finalists may perceive the teaching profession as having fewer prestige and financial rewards, resulting in a reduced willingness to pursue a career in teaching (Fasakin & Akintunde, 2022). The disparity in how individuals perceive gender can have a substantial effect on the attitudes of education finalists towards the teaching profession, potentially impacting the gender makeup of teachers in Nigeria.

To address these gender gaps, it is necessary to implement specific interventions that challenge conventional gender norms and advocate for teaching as a profession that holds equal value for both men and women.

Nexus between the gender of education finalists and their attitudes towards teaching profession

Considerable research has been conducted on the correlation between the gender of education finalists and their attitudes towards the teaching profession. Various cultural, economic, and social variables influence gender disparities in career choices, including the field of teaching. Research has indicated that female education finalists frequently exhibit a more positive attitude towards the teaching profession in comparison to their male peers. This phenomenon can be attributed, in part, to conventional gender norms that associate teaching

with a caring profession, which is more in line with society expectations for women (Halim & Sastrawati, 2020).

On the other hand, male finalists may display reduced excitement in the profession, perceiving it as having lower prestige or financial rewards. This attitude is strengthened by cultural norms that link masculinity with professions that offer higher salaries and greater social standing (Alves, Rodrigues, & Xavier, 2019). Furthermore, the discrepancy in gender attitudes about teaching can be attributed to the distinct incentives underlying job decisions. According to Smith and Pilling (2017), female finalists may have a greater tendency to prioritise work-life balance, which is frequently seen as an advantage of the teaching profession.

Hence, gender exerts a substantial influence on the attitudes of education finalists towards the teaching profession, thereby impacting the future gender makeup of the teaching workforce.

Correlation between education finalists' perceptions and their attitude towards teaching profession

An essential field of research is the association between the perspectives of education finalists and their attitudes towards the teaching profession, especially in the specific setting of Lagos, Nigeria. This is crucial since the quality of education in Lagos has a substantial impact on the growth of the nation. Research has indicated that the beliefs and opinions of education students on the teaching profession have a significant impact on their attitudes and decisions regarding their future careers. A study conducted by Adebayo and Adetunji (2023) found that students who view teaching as a prestigious and fulfilling profession are more inclined to cultivate a favourable attitude towards the field. This positive attitude ultimately results in higher levels of job satisfaction and dedication. In contrast, individuals who hold unfavourable impressions may demonstrate a dearth of enthusiasm and commitment, ultimately impacting their effectiveness as educators.

Olawale and Ojo (2022) conducted research that emphasises the influential role of social perspectives, compensation, and professional growth possibilities in shaping these beliefs. In Lagos, a city characterised by a wide range of socio-economic difficulties, these characteristics might either increase or decrease the attractiveness of the teaching profession for education graduates. Gaining insight into the relationship between these views and attitudes is crucial for formulating strategies to attract and retain dedicated teachers. Furthermore, by implementing focused interventions like mentorship programs and career counselling, it is possible to enhance positive perceptions and cultivate a teaching workforce that is more dedicated and motivated. This, in turn, can lead to improved educational outcomes in the area (Adewuyi & Akinola, 2021).

Relationship between education finalists' perceptions regarding teachers' working conditions and their attitude towards teaching profession

The correlation between the views of teachers' job conditions and the attitudes of education finalists towards the teaching profession plays a pivotal role in influencing their career decisions. Research indicates that education students' attitudes towards entering the teaching profession are greatly affected by their perception of the quality of working conditions, which includes factors such as remuneration, workload, administrative assistance,

and professional development possibilities (Ingersoll, 2018). Education finalists who view the teaching environment as friendly, with fair salary and moderate workloads, are more inclined to cultivate a good attitude towards the profession and contemplate teaching as a genuine career choice (Richardson & Watt, 2019). In contrast, unfavourable views, such as insufficient compensation, excessive pressure, and insufficient assistance, can result in hesitancy or lack of enthusiasm towards pursuing professions in teaching (OECD, 2020).

A study conducted in Nigeria has revealed comparable patterns, wherein education graduates frequently voice apprehensions regarding unfavourable working conditions, which can diminish their excitement for pursuing a career in teaching (Olawale & Awodun, 2021). These perspectives are frequently influenced by their experiences during teaching practice and observations of the difficulties faced by common teachers. Enhancing working circumstances might be a crucial approach to attract and retain competent teachers, since it directly influences the perspectives of potential educators (Salifu & Agbenyega, 2020).

Theoretical framework

This study is underpinned by the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) by Ajzen (1985), which posits that individual behaviour is driven by behavioural intentions where three components are central: attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control.

- ***Attitude towards the behaviour*** refers to the degree to which a person has a favourable or unfavourable evaluation of the behaviour in question—in this case, pursuing a career in teaching.
- ***Subjective norms*** relate to perceived social pressures to perform or not perform the behaviour—such as societal views about the teaching profession.
- ***Perceived behavioural control*** reflects the ease or difficulty an individual perceives in performing the behaviour, which includes factors such as working conditions and career opportunities.

The TPB provides a useful lens to understand how education finalists' attitudes and perceptions formed by societal norms, gender expectations, and experiential knowledge influence their intention to enter and remain in the teaching profession**.**

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive survey research design and tested three research hypotheses. According to University of Lagos Pocket Statistics (2020), 17.0% of the total first-degree graduates of the university are from the Faculty of Education, while Ileyemi (2024) asserted that 10,578 students bagged first-degree from the university in 2024. Hence, UNILAG education finalist is estimated at 1,798 students. Hence, the population for this study comprised 1,798 education finalists from the University of Lagos, Akoka. Using the TaroYamane (1967) sample calculation formula, a total of 327 education finalists were random chosen from the University of Lagos, Akoka. Primary data was collected with the use of a designed(self-constructed) questionnaire consisting of 25 closed-ended items was validated and produced a Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.79. The data collected were analysed using frequency counts and percentages to present the participants personal data and Pearson Correlation was used to test the hypotheses, utilising SPSS 23.0, at 0.05 significance level.

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Faculty of Education, University of Lagos. Participants were provided with a clear explanation of the study's purpose and were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents, and participation was entirely voluntary. No identifying information was collected, and all data were used solely for academic purposes.

Results

Of the 327 questionnaires distributed, a total of 246 were duly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 75.2%. Consequently, the analysis presented in this section is based on the 246 valid responses received.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	Options	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	99	40.2
	Female	147	59.8
	Total	**246**	**100.0**
Age	20-25 years	76	30.9
	26-30 years	111	45.1
	31-35 years	59	24.0
	Total	**246**	**100.0**
Department	Adult Education	21	8.5
	Arts Education	14	5.7
	Human Kinetics & Health Education	12	4.9
	Educational Foundation	27	10.8
	Educational Management	31	12.6
	Science Education	60	24.4
	Social Science Education	49	19.9
	Technology and Vocational Education	32	13.0
	Total	**246**	**99.8**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 1 above showed that the majority (59.8%) of the participants were female and the remaining 40.2% of them were male. This corroborates the fact that there are more female than there are male in the teaching profession. 30.9% of the participants were within the age bracket 20-25 years, 45.1% of them were 26-30 years, while the remaining 24.0% of them were 31-35 years. Concerning their departments within the education faculty, 8.5% and 5.7% of them were from the Departments of Adult Education and Arts Education, respectively; 4.9% and 10.8% of them were from the Departments of Human Kinetics & Health Education and Educational Foundation, respectively, 12.6% and 24.4% of them were from the Departments of Educational Management and Science Education, respectively; while the remaining 19.9% and 13.0% of them were from the Departments of Social Education and Technology & Vocational Education, respectively. This shows that the study cuts across all the available departments under Education Faculty in the University of Lagos.

Hypothesis One

Table 2

Relationship between gender and education finalists' perception and attitude towards the teaching profession.

		Perceptions	Attitude
Gender	Pearson Correlation	.193	.152
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.133	.085
	N	246	246

Table 2 showed that there is an association between participants' gender and their perceptions and attitudes towards the teaching profession. As for their perception, the table shows that *r=.193*, indicated a direct and very weak association between education finalists' genders and their perception, while *p=.133* showed that the correlation between the two variables is insignificant. Similarly, the table also shows that *r=.152*, indicating a direct and very weak association between education finalists' genders and their attitude, while *p=.085* shows that the association between the two variables is also insignificant. Hence, null hypothesis that states "there is no significant association between the gender of education finalists and their perceptions and attitude towards the teaching profession" is not rejected.

Hypothesis Two

Table 3

Relationship between education finalists' perception of the teaching profession and their attitude towards it.

		Attitude
Perceptions	Pearson Correlation	.812**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
	N	246

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 shows *r=.812*, indicated that a direct and very strong correlation exists between education finalists' perceptions and their attitude towards the teaching profession, and *p=.001* showed that the relationship between the two variables is significant. Hence, null hypothesis that states "no significant correlation exists between education finalists' perceptions and their attitude towards the teaching profession" is rejected, while its alternative that states "a significant correlation exists between education finalists' perceptions and their attitude towards the teaching profession" is accepted.

Hypothesis Three

Table 4

Relationship Between Education Finalists' Perceptions of Teachers' Working Conditions and their Attitude Towards The Teaching Profession.

		Attitude
Teachers' Working Conditions	Pearson Correlation	.759**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003
	N	246

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 shows *r=.759*, indicated that a direct and very strong correlation exists between education finalists' perceptions regarding teachers' working conditions and their attitude towards the teaching profession, and *p=.003* showed that the relationship between the two variables is significant. Hence, null hypothesis that states "the perceptions of education finalists regarding teachers' working conditions do not significantly correlate with their attitude towards the teaching profession" is rejected, while its alternative that states "the perceptions of education finalists regarding teachers' working conditions significantly correlate with their attitude towards the teaching profession" is accepted.

Discussion of findings

From the test of the first hypothesis, it was found that there is no significant association between the gender of education finalists and their perceptions and attitude towards the teaching profession. This is in contrast with previous studies suggesting that gender has a notable impact on the way education finalists perceive and see the teaching profession. Research indicates that female students studying education are more inclined to perceive teaching as an attractive and satisfying profession in comparison to their male peers (Adeyemo & Uche, 2020). The gender gap in teaching can be explained by conventional gender roles, social norms, and the idea of teaching as a nurturing occupation; which is generally associated with stereotypical feminine characteristics (Ogunyemi, 2021). Research has indicated that female education finalists frequently exhibit a more positive attitude towards the teaching profession in comparison to their male peers. This phenomenon can be attributed, in part, to conventional gender norms that associate teaching with a caring profession, which is more in line with society expectations for women (Halim & Sastrawati, 2020). On the other hand, male finalists may display reduced excitement in the profession, perceiving it as having lower prestige or financial rewards. This attitude is strengthened by cultural norms that link masculinity with professions that offer higher salaries and greater social standing (Alves, Rodrigues, & Xavier, 2019)

The test of the second hypothesis indicated that a significant correlation exists between education finalists' perceptions and their attitude towards the teaching profession. This is in agreement with the previous findings that the beliefs and opinions of education students on the teaching profession have a significant impact on their attitudes and decisions regarding their future careers. A study conducted by Adebayo and Adetunji (2023) found that students who view teaching as a prestigious and fulfilling profession are more inclined to cultivate a favourable attitude towards the field. This positive attitude ultimately results in higher levels of job satisfaction and dedication. In contrast, individuals who hold unfavourable impressions may demonstrate a dearth of enthusiasm and commitment, ultimately impacting their effectiveness as educators.

The test of the hypothesis three found that the perceptions of education finalists regarding teachers' working conditions significantly correlate with their attitude towards the teaching profession**.** This agrees with the argument that the correlation between the views of teachers' job conditions and the attitudes of education finalists towards the teaching profession plays a pivotal role in influencing their career decisions. Research indicates that education students' attitudes towards entering the teaching profession are greatly affected by their perception of the quality of working conditions, which includes factors such as

remuneration, workload, administrative assistance, and professional development possibilities (Ingersoll, 2018). Education finalists who view the teaching environment as friendly, with fair salary and moderate workloads, are more inclined to cultivate a good attitude towards the profession and contemplate teaching as a genuine career choice (Richardson & Watt, 2019). In contrast, unfavourable views, such as insufficient compensation, excessive pressure, and insufficient assistance, can result in hesitancy or lack of enthusiasm towards pursuing professions in teaching (OECD, 2020).

Conclusion

The study's findings emphasize significant connections between the perspectives of education finalists and their attitudes towards the teaching profession. The data indicates that there is no significant correlation between gender and the perceptions or attitudes of education finalists towards the teaching profession. This suggests that gender does not have a fundamental influence on shaping these opinions. The study demonstrates a strong association between the overall perceptions of education finalists and their attitudes towards teaching. This highlights the crucial role that the perception of the teaching profession plays in determining career choices. Furthermore, the research demonstrates a strong connection between the views of education finalists on the working conditions of teachers and their attitudes towards the teaching profession. This highlights the importance of working conditions in influencing the attractiveness of teaching as a career option. These findings indicate that enhancing the working circumstances and public image of the teaching profession could play a crucial role in cultivating favourable attitudes and enticing a larger pool of highly qualified individuals to enter the field.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended:

1. Given the lack of a substantial link between gender and attitudes towards the teaching profession, it is important to implement gender-neutral initiatives that motivate both male and female education finalists to consider teaching as a feasible career choice;
2. Considering the strong correlation between the perceptions of education finalists and their attitudes towards the teaching profession, it is recommended that teacher training programs prioritise enhancing the image and comprehension of the teaching profession. This can be achieved by emphasising the benefits and prospects for professional development within the field;
3. Given the strong correlation between education finalists' perceptions of teachers' working conditions and their attitude towards the profession, it is crucial for education policymakers to prioritise enhancing working conditions. This should include offering higher salaries, providing resources for professional development, and creating favourable work environments in order to draw in and retain dedicated teachers.

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