



## MOTIVATION FOR PRESERVICE STUDENTS TO CHOOSE A TEACHING CAREER BY GENDER, AGE, AND SUBJECT AREA IN NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

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This research study aimed to investigate the motives of preservice students in choosing a teaching career in Nigeria. It also examined the beliefs underpinning their choice according to gender, age, and subject area. The study conducted a survey among 225 participants selected through purposive sampling from students at Delta State University Abraka, Nigeria. A 61-item questionnaire was adapted from Watt and Richardson's FIT-Choice scale, the descriptive and inferential statistics from which were analyzed. The results revealed that unlike subject area, gender and age played a significant role in relation to motivational factors. These findings are discussed and recommendations offered.

**Contribution/Originality:** This study has shown that while age and sex were significant motivational factors, subject area was not. Female preservice teachers were also found to be intrinsically motivated unlike the males. This study will therefore be of help to the Nigerian policymakers in understanding the motivating factors between male and female preservice teachers and thus helping to meet the needs of teaching and learning in the country.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Studies have asserted that students across the world face problems choosing a career (MacGregor, 2007 and Watson, McMahan, Foxcroft, & Els, 2010, as cited in Shumba and Naong, 2012), including preservice students in many countries selecting teaching (Safdarian, Ghyasi, & Farsani, 2014), and Nigeria is no exception. Teachers are crucial to achieving quality in education, for which every country strives, but must be genuinely motivated and committed to their career and students (Heinz, 2015).

UNESCO's Institute of Statistics (2013, as cited in Heinz, 2018) identified teacher shortages as a global problem and that 1.6 million teaching posts would be needed by 2015, and 3.3 million by 2030, to attain universal primary education. This implies that the recruitment and retention of motivated teachers is a challenge worldwide: Glazer (2018) observed that teachers in the United States left the profession before retirement age. However, in Nigeria, trained teachers graduating from university remain unemployed, as most states have not recruited additional or replaced retired teachers since 2015, resulting in an acute shortage of schoolteachers: about 1,371,619 teachers are required by the national educational system (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2014). Meanwhile, teachers complain of working in manual and other menial jobs to earn a living due to the poor remuneration in teaching. This raises the question of who would choose a teaching career, and this research study therefore

investigates the factors that motivate preservice students to enter and remain in teaching. In addition, it explores their choice of such an unattractive profession, according to their age, gender, and subject area.

Moreover, these are little-studied areas, even though policymakers need to understand the different motivational factors for male and female preservice students to ensure their needs are met. Various factors motivate students to choose a teaching career, but these can be categorized as altruistic, intrinsic, and extrinsic, which Kyriacou, Hultgren, and Stephens (1999, as cited in Erten, 2014) explained as follows: altruistic reasons view teaching as a socially worthwhile and exceptional job, fulfilling the desire to help improve society; intrinsic reasons involve aspects of the job itself; and extrinsic reasons include issues such as remuneration, status, and leave entitlement. Richardson and Watt (2006) also recognized these categories, referring to altruistic factors as social utility values.

Likewise, Moran, Kilpatrick, Abbott, Dallat, and McClune (2001) suggested that individual motivation were likely a combination of the three categories in different proportions, which was revealed by most research studies of teachers' and preservice students' reasons for choosing a teaching career (Andrews & Hatch, 2002). One of the variables investigated in this study is gender, which has been covered in previous studies, such as Saban (2003) who reported that female students had chosen teaching for intrinsic and altruistic reasons. While Reid and Thornton (2000, as cited in Azman, 2013) found that female preservice students placed greater importance on educational and personal motivations than their male counterparts, the findings of Kilinc and Mahiroglu (2009) showed no significant difference between male and female preservice students. Similarly, Erten (2014) revealed that female teachers were more intrinsically motivated than their male counterparts, whereas Sinclair (2008) discovered that all the participants were more intrinsically than extrinsically motivated. Finally, Korb (2010) found that women were more influenced by having time for their family, shaping the future of children, working with children, and exploitation than men. In other words, social influences were stronger for women than men.

Another variable investigated in this study for its potential influence on the choice of teaching was the age of preservice students: whether the same factors influenced those under and over the age of 20 were examined. Richardson and Watt (2005, as cited in Evans, 2011) found that mature students changing career were more influenced by personal utility values, whereas those students of traditional age were more likely to be motivated by personal utility values and their previous teaching experiences. Sinclair (2008), however, reported that the majority of participants were more motivated by intrinsic and extrinsic factors.

Finally, subject area was also investigated as a variable by this study, following on from earlier researchers, such as Topkaya and Uztosun (2012) who found no statistical difference between students in their career choice. Furthermore, Boz and Boz (2008) and Kilinc and Mahiroglu (2009) discovered students chose to teach mathematics and chemistry and biology, respectively, for intrinsic and extrinsic reasons.

### *1.1. Educational System in Nigeria*

Nigeria operates a 9-3-4 educational system: Universal Basic Education of nine years up to junior secondary education; senior secondary education of three years; and tertiary education of four years. Four years are then spent at university, at the end of which students sit examinations for not only their degree but also the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria. After completing the compulsory one year with the National Youth Service Corps, students are thus prepared to enter the teaching profession.

### *1.2. Framework*

This study employs the FIT-Choice (factors influencing teaching choice) Model developed by Watt and Richardson (2007) in Australia. The framework has since been widely adopted in other countries: Ghana (Salifu, Alagbela, & Gyamfi Ofori, 2018); Indonesia (Suryani, Watt, & Richardson, 2013); Turkey (Eren & Tezel, 2010);

Topkaya & Uztosun, 2012; Kilinc, Watt, & Richardson, 2012; and the Netherlands Fokkens-Bruinsma and Camrinus, 2012).

The framework is based on the expectancy–value theory of Eccles (Parsons) *et al.* (1983), which states that an individual's choices are determined by how well they expect to perform in and the value they attach to a specific job (Suryani *et al.*, 2013). As a result, this framework reveals why individuals choose a teaching career and their perceptions of the demands and rewards of a teaching career, as well as the level of career satisfaction (Richardson & Watt, 2006).

### 1.3. Research Questions

1. What factors influence preservice students' choice of a teaching career according to their on gender, age, and subject area?
2. What are preservice students' beliefs about teaching according to gender, age, and subject area?
3. What factors influence preservice students' decision to remain in teaching according to their gender, age, and subject area?

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This study conducted a survey of 225 students, selected by purposive sampling from the Faculty of Education, Delta State University, Abraka. The participants were then grouped into either under 20 or over of age, as well as male/female, while the various subjects were categorized into three areas: Science, Social Science, and Arts. Unfortunately, not all participants completed all sections of the questionnaire; therefore, numbers vary in the analysis.

### 2.1. Ethics

The appropriate permissions were obtained to use the research instrument, from Watt and Richardson, and to undertake the research study, from the university authorities. Only those students who expressed an interest were selected to participate.

### 2.2. Research Instrument

Watt and Richardson's (2007) FIT-Choice scale was adapted for this study (see Appendix), comprising 61 items across 4 sections (A–D) that required responses to be recorded on a 7-point assessment scale ranging from “Not at all important” to “Extremely important.” Akpochofa (2020) performed a confirmatory factor analysis to ascertain whether this scale was appropriate for Nigeria. Seven motivational factors were extracted, with three subscales for the belief factors (Table 2) and two for decision factors Table 3.

### 2.3. Analysis

**Research Question 1:** *What factors influence preservice students' choice of a teaching career according to their gender, age, and subject area?*

Age is significant for Ability/Intrinsic Career Value ( $t(193) = 2.52$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ), Make Social Contribution/Prior Teaching and Learning Experiences ( $t(193) = 2.02$ ,  $p = 0.05$ ), and Social Influence/Job Security ( $t(193) = 2.12$ ,  $p = 0.04$ ). This result implies a significant difference in age as a variable that influences the choice of a teaching career (see Table 1 and Figure 1).

Gender is significant for Ability/Intrinsic Career Value ( $t(209) = 2.23$ ,  $p = 0.03$ ), Bludging/Time for Family ( $t(209) = 2.08$ ,  $p = 0.04$ ), and Work with Children/Adolescents/Shape Future of Children/Adolescents/Enhance Social Equity ( $t(209) = 2.70$ ),  $p = 0.01$ ) (see Table 1).

Subject area was not significant for any of the motivational factors, which implies that preservice students do not take subject area into consideration when choosing a teaching career (see Table 1 and Figure 2).

**Research Question 2:** *What are preservice students' beliefs about teaching according to gender, age, and subject area?*

In terms of belief factors, Table 2 shows that both age ( $t(193) = 2.49, p = 0.01$ ) and gender ( $t(193) = 1.98, p = 0.05$ ), were significant for Expert Career/High Demand (see Figures 3 and 4). Subject area, though, was significant for Good Salary ( $F(193) = 3.21, p = 0.04$ ) (see Figure 5).

**Research Question 3:** *What factors influence preservice students' decision to remain in teaching according to their gender, age, and subject area?*

None of the variables were significant in motivating preservice students' to remain in teaching, as seen in Table 3, which implies that regardless of gender, age, or subject area, they would pursue their teaching career for similar reasons.

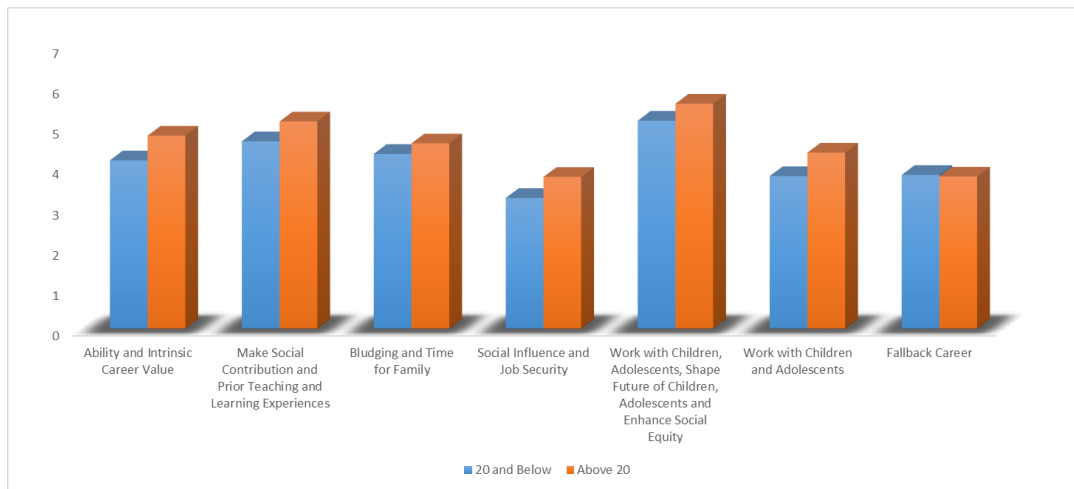


Figure-1. Influence of motivational factors on preservice students' choice of a teaching career by age.

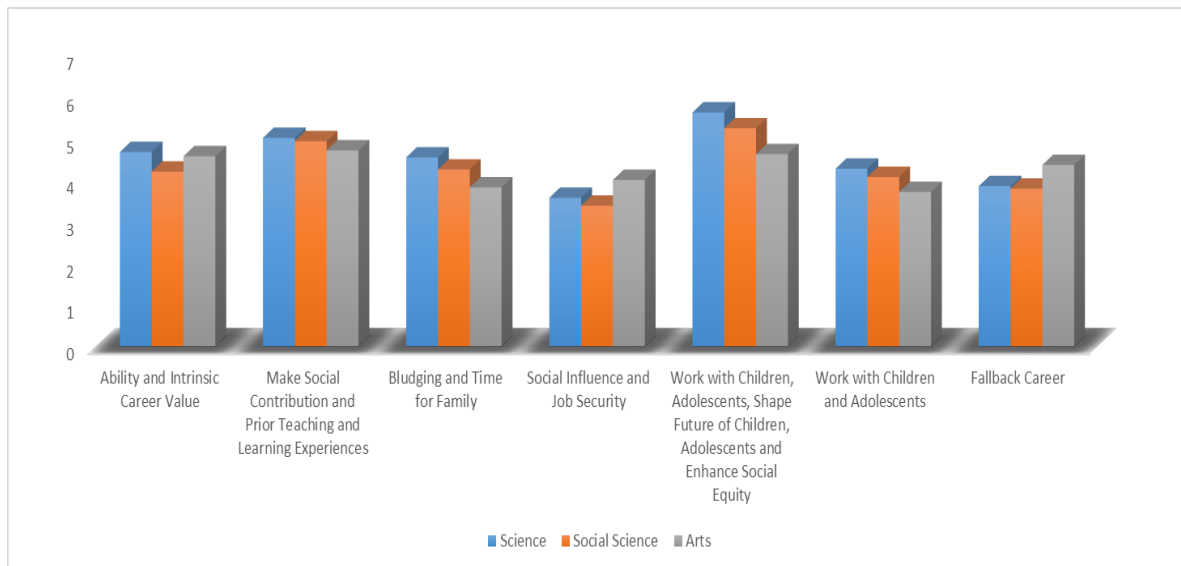


Figure-2. Influence of motivational factors on preservice students' choice of a teaching career by subject area.

Table-1. Motivational factors.

Motivational Factors	Ability/Intrinsic Career Value	Make Social Contribution/Prior Teaching and Learning Experiences	Bludging/Time for Family	Social Influence/Job Security	Shape Future of Children/Adolescents/Enhance Social Equity	Work with Children/Adolescents	Fallback Career
<b>Age</b>							
Under 20	4.16 (1.59)	4.63 (1.59)	4.32 (1.60)	3.23 (1.37)	5.14 (1.67)	3.77 (1.84)	3.80 (2.02)
Over 20	4.77 (1.41)	5.12 (1.39)	4.58 (1.46)	3.75 (1.47)	5.56 (1.39)	4.35 (1.75)	3.76 (1.72)
t-value	2.52	2.02	1.02	2.12	1.71	1.93	0.14
p-value	0.01*	0.05*	0.31	0.04*	0.09	0.06	0.89
<b>Gender</b>							
Male	4.13 (1.60)	4.76 (1.58)	4.03 (1.41)	3.52 (1.44)	4.86 (1.81)	3.91 (1.74)	3.82 (1.47)
Female	4.70 (1.52)	5.03 (1.51)	4.55 (1.50)	3.56 (1.47)	5.63 (1.33)	4.38 (1.77)	3.79 (1.82)
t-value	2.23	1.06	2.08	0.17	2.70	1.61	0.09
p-value	0.03*	0.29	0.04*	0.87	0.01*	0.11	0.93
<b>Subject Area</b>							
Science	4.67 (1.57)	5.01 (1.59)	4.54 (1.57)	3.57 (1.50)	5.62 (1.38)	4.27 (1.83)	3.85 (1.83)
Social Science	4.20 (1.48)	4.93 (1.47)	4.25 (1.33)	3.38 (1.45)	5.24 (1.59)	4.07 (1.66)	3.79 (1.71)
Arts	4.57 (1.02)	4.71 (0.91)	3.82 (1.76)	4.00 (1.45)	4.62 (1.46)	3.71 (1.93)	4.36 (1.28)
F-value	2.25	0.17	1.47	0.78	2.86	0.57	0.33
p-value	0.11	0.85	0.23	0.46	0.06	0.57	0.72

Note: \* $\alpha = 0.05$  level of significance.

Table-2. Belief factors.

Motivational Factors	Good□Salary	Expert Career/High Demand	Teacher Morale/Social Demand/High Demand/Teacher Morale
<b>Age</b>			
Under 20	3.15 (1.50)	4.72 (1.33)	4.14 (1.68)
Over 20	3.65 (1.59)	5.28 (1.31)	4.64 (1.38)
t-value	1.88	2.49	1.82
p-value	0.06	0.01*	0.07
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	3.58 (1.60)	4.80 (1.46)	4.27 (1.54)
Female	3.48 (1.59)	5.24 (1.30)	4.53 (1.50)
t-value	0.40	1.98	1.00
p-value	0.69	0.05*	0.32
<b>Subject Area</b>			
Science	3.29 (1.59)	5.29 (1.26)	4.39 (1.56)
Social Science	3.85 (1.46)	4.85 (1.48)	4.50 (1.40)
Arts	3.86 (1.89)	5.09 (1.42)	4.43 (1.47)
F-value	3.21	2.50	0.14
p-value	0.04*	0.08	0.87

Note: \*α = 0.05 level of significance.

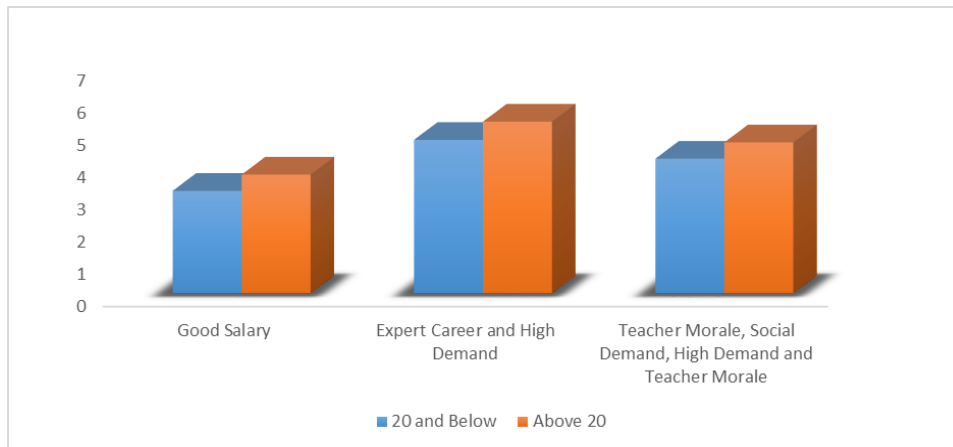


Figure-3. Influence of beliefs according to age.

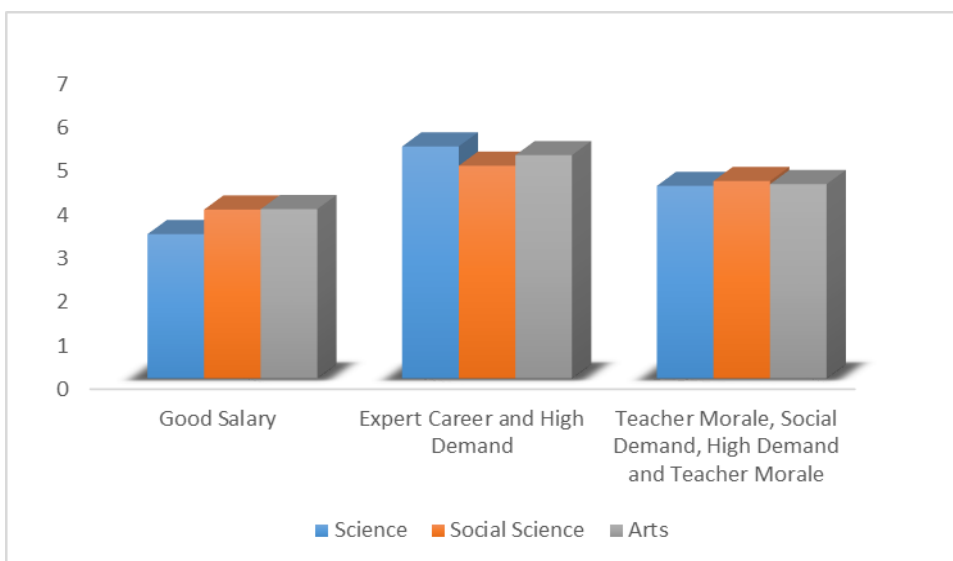


Figure-5. Influence of beliefs according to subject area.

Table-3. Decision factors.

Motivational Factors	Satisfaction with Choice	Social Dissuasion
<b>Age</b>		
Under 20	4.38 (1.95)	4.35 (1.50)
Over 20	4.55 (1.82)	4.18 (1.63)
t-value	0.51	0.59
p-value	0.61	0.56
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	4.22 (1.81)	3.93 (1.57)
Female	4.56 (1.88)	4.18 (1.65)
t-value	1.01	0.83
p-value	0.32	0.41
<b>Subject Area</b>		
Science	4.60 (1.95)	4.27 (1.65)
Social Science	4.16 (1.74)	3.95 (1.57)
Arts	4.14 (1.65)	4.38 (1.80)
F-value	1.34	0.90
p-value	0.27	0.41

### 3. DISCUSSION

The findings in relation to motivational factors according to gender revealed that women were more intrinsically motivated than men: Ability/Intrinsic Career Value; Bludging/Time for Family; and Work with Children/Adolescents/Shape Future of Children/Adolescents/Enhance Social Equity. Although this agrees with those of Erten (2014) and Korb (2010), it disagrees those of Topkaya and Uztosun (2012), which found that both male and female preservice students were motivated to become teachers for the same altruistic, intrinsic, and extrinsic reasons. However, as early as 1999, Johnston, McKeown, and McEwen asserted that extrinsic motives, such as salary, motivated men while women were intrinsically motivated. In general, the role of mothers in caring for their children is highly valued in African culture, which may influence women's choice of teaching that also involves caring and nurturing children. The results from this study also showed those students aged over 20 were more motivated by Ability/Intrinsic Career Value, Make Social Contribution/Prior Teaching and Learning Experience, and Social Influence/Job Security than those under 20. In an era of unemployment, it is not surprising that job security is important to the more mature, who are more conversant with real world.

In contrast, there was no significant difference between the motivational factors in terms of the science, social science, or arts subject areas. Kilinc. *et al.* (2012), however, did reveal a significant difference between science and non-science students: the former being less positively motivated than the latter. Moreover, Boz and Boz (2008) found that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors influenced the choice to teach among mathematics and chemistry students, and likewise, Kilinc and Mahiroglu (2009) among biology students, while Topkaya and Uztosun (2012) discovered English students were motivated by altruistic and intrinsic reasons. The motivational effect of Expert Career/High Demand beliefs were found to be significant in terms of gender and age, and beliefs in Good Salary significant in relation to subject area. Similarly, Kilinc. *et al.* (2012) found women more than men were motivated to choose a teaching career by the belief in an Expert Career/High Demand. Furthermore, the finding of this study that subject area was significant for choosing a teaching career owing to the belief in a Good Salary showed that this perception exerted a greater influence on arts students. Contrary to this study, Kilinc. *et al.* (2012) found that women were more satisfied with their choice of teaching than men. The findings of this study imply that both men and women, those aged under and over 20, and students in all subject areas decided to remain teachers for the same reasons: there were no significant factors affecting their decision-making; they were satisfied with their choice.

### 4. LIMITATIONS

Despite the strength of this study in contributing a Nigerian perspective to the existing body of literature, there are some limitations. First, the sample population was small and selected from only a few departments, in

which student numbers were disproportionate, at a single university. Consequently, the findings cannot be generalized to the whole country, or even the whole university. Furthermore, the participants did not complete all sections of the questionnaire, and only those that were complete were included in the analysis.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Nevertheless, some important conclusions can be deduced from these research findings. In terms of gender and age, it is evident that both are significant in relation to not only motivational factors but also the beliefs underpinning those motivations. Furthermore, female more than male preservice teachers were motivated by intrinsic factors. However, none of the gender, age, or subject area variables played a significant role in the decision-making process.

## 6. RECOMMENDATION

As women are already strongly motivated to work with and develop children and adolescents, and enhance social equity, as well as greatly influenced by their perceived ability in and value of teaching, both the federal and state governments can improve the attractiveness of the profession by providing better remuneration and offering promotion as and when appropriate. The Ministry of Education should also formulate retention strategies making the teaching profession more appealing and respected in the long term, since preservice student teachers are satisfied with their initial choice of profession. Moreover, preservice student teachers, especially women, believe that teaching is an expert career; therefore, the opportunity for in-service training and to attend seminars and workshops and should be provided and encouraged to enable professional development.

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