

Beliefs and Attitude towards Male Child Preference among Residents of Igando Community, Alimosho Local Government, Lagos State.

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Abstract

Every day in Nigeria, many women struggle for their health and survival while trying to give birth to a baby boy, often to satisfy their husbands. In numerous cases, these women endure severe physical and psychological distress in their marriages due to their inability to bear a male child. Son preference is a significant social issue and a form of gender discrimination rooted in the belief that daughters are less valuable than sons. This mindset fosters harmful practices and biased attitudes toward female children. This study explored the beliefs and attitudes of residents in the Igando community regarding male child preference. A descriptive research design was adopted, and a self-designed, closed-ended questionnaire was used to gather responses. A total of 150 residents participated in the study. The collected data were analyzed using tables, frequency counts, and percentages. Findings revealed that the majority of respondents favored male children over female children, believing that sons are preferable because they continue the family name, while daughters are seen as temporary members who eventually leave. Many respondents stated that if they could only have one child, they would prefer a male over a female. Therefore, addressing the root causes of parental preference for male children is crucial, rather than focusing solely on eliminating the practice itself.

Keywords:

Attitude, Beliefs, Male Child, Preference

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

The preference for a male child has led to situations where husbands pressure their wives to have more children, putting their wives' health at risk. When this fails to yield the desired outcome, some men resort to polygamy in the hope that another wife will give them a son (Franka, 2019). To avoid divorce, many women continue having multiple children, endangering their lives in pursuit of a male child. This practice has contributed to the high maternal mortality rate in Africa and has also fueled population growth in Nigeria (Milazzo, 2021). One distinctive aspect of Yoruba culture is the preference for male children over female ones. Son preference is a form of gender discrimination based on the belief that having sons offers more social, economic, religious, and political benefits than having daughters (Oluduro, 2019). It reflects gender inequality and has gained global attention in efforts to combat violations of women's and girls' rights. In 1979, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which has been ratified by over 180 countries. The convention urges member states to develop policies to eliminate

discrimination against women, address the social causes of gender inequality, and eradicate harmful laws, stereotypes, and prejudices that negatively impact women's well-being (UN, 2007 as cited by Bradley, 2022). Despite these international declarations, traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, child marriage, son preference, and sex-selective abortions remain widespread in both developed and developing nations. Additionally, despite various gender equality programs, the 2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDG) report on Nigeria indicates that son preference persists, contributing to poverty, educational disparities, unequal inheritance rights, and limited access to healthcare and paid employment for women. Across various parts of the world, including Bangladesh, Pakistan, Korea, Thailand, India, China, and many patriarchal African countries, sons are generally more valued than daughters. However, different cultures manifest son preference in unique ways. For instance, in India, Jha, Kumar, Vasa, Dhingra, Thiruchelvam, and Moineddin (2006) reported a severe decline in the child sex ratio, with over half a million female fetuses aborted annually due to concerns about dowry and marriage expenses (Bhattacharya, 2018). Similarly, in China, Zhou, Wang, Zhou, and Hesketh (2012) examined the persistent gender imbalance and found that, due to the strict One-Child Policy, many couples opted for sex-selective abortions to ensure the birth of a male child (Ding & Zhang, 2021).

Given these realities, it is crucial to explore the consequences of not having a male child on women. This gender-focused study could inform policies in Nigeria to promote gender equality and ensure that women receive the same opportunities and privileges as men in a male-dominated society.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Every day in Nigeria, women risk their health and lives in the pursuit of bearing a male child to satisfy societal and marital expectations. Many endure severe physical and psychological distress within their marriages due to their inability to give birth to a son (Franka, 2019). The deep-rooted preference for male children has fueled various forms of violence against women, an issue that continues to escalate, as highlighted by the European Union and United Nations (EU-UN) Spotlight Initiative. According to recent UNICEF data, approximately 40 million women of reproductive age (15–49 years) in Nigeria experience disproportionately high health risks related to childbirth. Son preference is a significant social issue and a form of gender discrimination, rooted in the belief that daughters are less valuable than sons. This mindset leads to harmful cultural practices and biased treatment of girls. On March 15, 2016, the Nigerian Senate rejected, for the second time, a bill advocating gender equality, women's empowerment, and equal employment opportunities. The bill was dismissed on the grounds that it conflicted with traditional and religious beliefs in Nigeria. Despite ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1985, the Nigerian government has yet to fulfill its commitments under the agreement. The reluctance of policymakers to pass gender equality legislation reflects the deeply entrenched patriarchal structure of Nigerian society. The special preference for sons is widely observed across Nigeria's diverse cultural groups and is driven by social expectations, often to the detriment of women and girls (Nwoko, 2020). Some of the consequences include early marriage for girls, aimed at reducing the financial burden on their parents, high birth rates due to societal pressure on parents to have a male child, and even separation or divorce when a

woman fails to produce a male heir. Ideally, both genders should be valued equally rather than one being regarded as superior to the other.

This study aims to examine the beliefs and attitudes of residents in Igando, a community in Yoruba land, Lagos State Nigeria regarding the preference for male children.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to explore the present attitude of parents towards gender preference of a child in a culture that has been recognized to value sons. The specific objectives of this study are:

- To explore the beliefs of residents in Igando community towards Male Child preference.
- To determine the attitudes of residents in Igando community towards Male Child preference.
- To identify factors influencing Male Child preference among residents in Igando community.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What is the belief of residents in Igando community towards Male Child preference?
2. What is the attitude of residents in Igando community towards Male Child preference?
3. What are the factors influencing Male Child preference among residents in Igando community?

1.5 Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between level of education of parents and their attitude towards male Child preference

1.6 Significance of the Study

- This study is particularly relevant in the current era, where gender inequality is a

global concern, as it supports gender equality advocacy by challenging traditional ideologies that perpetuate discrimination against women.

- It also promotes advocacy efforts aimed at redefining the value of female children, emphasizing their worth as individuals rather than as subjects of male dominance and control.
- The findings from this research will contribute to raising public awareness about the need to eliminate disparities in inheritance and education between males and females.
- This study will serve as a valuable resource for policymakers and program administrators, highlighting the urgency of government intervention to eliminate all forms of gender discrimination, particularly those that violate women's rights.
- It provides essential insights for couples experiencing the consequences of son preference, helping them better understand its impact.
- By contributing to existing literature on gender dynamics in developing countries, this study connects to various other fields of study.
- The findings offer concrete evidence to support the development of policies that address gender inequality and its societal effects.
- Additionally, this study serves as a foundation for further research and exploration of gender-related issues within the general population.

1.7 Scope of Study

The study is carried out among men and women residing in Igando community, Alimosho LGA, Lagos State.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

- **Beliefs:** an acceptance about male Child preference among resident of Igando community.

- **Attitudes:** the feelings or emotions of residents of Igando community about male Child preference.
- **Male Child preference:** attitude formulated on the belief that girls are inadequate and of lesser value than boys among residents in Igando community.
- **Resident:** men and women living in Igando community

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Review

One of Nigeria's major challenges is the rapid and uncontrolled population growth. Despite the availability of various contraceptive methods and widespread media campaigns, population control remains difficult to achieve, particularly in rural areas. This issue is largely driven by parental gender preferences in the country (Milazzo, 2021). Marleau and Saucier (2019) argue that Western societies have transitioned from a preference for sons to no gender preference, which has significantly contributed to stabilizing their population growth rates. Similarly, Seidl (2018) notes that when couples have a strong preference for a specific gender, they tend to have more children than they otherwise would. This is because they continue having children until they achieve the desired sex—most often, at least one male child. The perception of daughters as a financial loss further reinforces this trend. Upon marriage, a girl leaves her parental home, and the benefits of the investments made in her upbringing shift to her husband's family, creating a perceived loss for her natal family. Conversely, sons are seen as valuable long-term assets. They are expected to continue the family trade, carry on the family name, and provide financial support for their parents in old age. As a result, sons are considered indispensable in societies where they play a crucial role in caring for elderly family

members (Bumiller, 2020). Among the Igbo people, the bond between fathers and daughters, as well as between mothers and sons, is notably strong. Fathers go to great lengths to protect their daughters and often spend significant amounts to celebrate their weddings. However, once a daughter transitions from being a child to a wife, her perceived value diminishes, as she becomes socially regarded as an extension of her husband.

Beliefs about Male Child

Culture is a complex system that encompasses knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, customs, and all other capabilities acquired by individuals as members of society. It represents the collective way of life of a given society, shaped by prevailing circumstances and environmental factors (Nakpodia, 2019). Culture can also be understood as the traditions, behaviors, and values of a social group that are passed down from one generation to the next, often with modifications. According to Nakpodia, culture consists of various elements, both material and non-material, that can only be learned and transmitted through social interactions within a group. It is a shared experience practiced by a community and evolves over time due to factors such as modernization and civilization. This dynamic nature of culture means it is not inherited but rather acquired through learning and socialization. Among the fundamental aspects of culture that influence girl-child education in Nigeria are beliefs, values, traditions, and customs. Religion, on the other hand, is defined as the belief in a higher power, encompassing practices, sentiments, and opinions related to worship. Research has shown that certain cultural and religious beliefs in Nigeria significantly impact the educational aspirations of girls (Onochie, 2018). For example, in some parts of northern Nigeria, certain Islamic

interpretations discourage girls from pursuing formal education. Idabawa, as cited in Onochie (2018), attributes this issue to a misunderstanding of Islamic teachings regarding female education, leading many parents to believe that formal education is not meant for Muslim girls. Similarly, in some cultural communities, there is a perception that education makes women less submissive to men, discouraging rural men from marrying educated women. As a result, many rural parents are reluctant to invest in their daughters' education, fearing it may hinder their chances of early marriage. Several studies (Okojie, Chiegwe, and Okpokunu, 2014; Idabawa, 2018; Ayodele, Popoola, and Akinsola, 2014, as cited by Iruloh, 2020) indicate that girls are often discouraged from prolonged schooling due to the fear of becoming "old spinsters" while still living in their parents' homes. This belief is particularly prevalent among low-income families, where it is commonly thought that staying too long in school may reduce a girl's chances of getting married. Many young women, influenced by societal expectations, fear that higher education will delay marriage and limit their prospects. In northern Nigeria, early marriage and pregnancy are often encouraged, further hindering female education. Sandhu, Chaudhry, Akbar, and Ahmad (2021) highlight that outdated traditions, caste systems, and misinterpreted religious beliefs contribute to the restriction of female education in rural areas of Faisalabad, Pakistan. Similarly, Bunyi G.W. (2019) argues that in many rural Kenyan families, educating girls is seen as a poor financial investment since the benefits are perceived to go to their future husbands' families rather than their natal families. This aligns with Ekwukoma's (2021) view that some Nigerian cultural groups consider investing in a girl's education a waste of resources, as she will ultimately contribute to another

family's wealth after marriage. These perspectives underscore that the cultural barriers to female education extend beyond Nigeria and are prevalent in other developing societies. Furthermore, in many rural Nigerian communities, there is a strong cultural belief that domestic responsibilities are the primary duties of female children. It is widely thought that women are naturally suited for domestic chores, and this belief reinforces the idea that their primary role is to care for their husbands and children. Onochie (2018) notes that many rural parents view education as valuable only insofar as it helps women become better homemakers, thus discouraging higher education for girls. Within households, patriarchal norms often dictate that female children prioritize household duties over academics, limiting their opportunities for private study and schoolwork. This entrenched perception of women as subordinate figures within the home continues to hinder female education and empowerment in Nigeria. Girls are often burdened with household responsibilities, many of which are based on societal stereotypes. As a result, they are rarely given sufficient time at home to focus on their studies. Additionally, some parents, particularly those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, hold the belief that once a girl reaches puberty, she should no longer depend on them financially. Instead, they expect her to use her "natural gifts" to provide for her needs.

Due to this deeply ingrained mindset, girls from such households may resort to seeking financial support from men to afford personal items such as cosmetics, jewelry, and clothing. Unfortunately, this often leads to early exposure to sexual relationships, increasing their risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) or experiencing unplanned pregnancies. Such circumstances frequently derail their educational pursuits,

leaving them with limited opportunities for personal and professional growth. Furthermore, in some Nigerian cultural groups, discussing human sexuality openly between parents and children is considered taboo. This prevents many parents from providing their daughters with essential knowledge about reproductive health. As a result, many girls remain unaware of the risks of pregnancy once they begin menstruating. This lack of awareness frequently leads to early pregnancies, which in turn disrupts their education and hinders their chances of achieving academic success.

Challenges Women Encounter Due to Preference for Sons

The preference for sons and the decline in the status of women emerged alongside the rise of patriarchal systems, which inherently favored men (Bandyopadhyay & Singh, 2019). Son preference, along with other gender inequalities, has become a pressing social issue that has gained international attention and requires urgent intervention (United Nations, 2009, as cited by Anukriti, Maurizio, Bussolo&Nitsha, 2021). Scholars have highlighted the challenges women face in attaining political power, securing employment opportunities, participating in decision-making, and achieving gender parity in education (Azeez et al., 2018; Bradley, 2022). Research also indicates that son preference is not limited to men—women in India have also exhibited a strong bias toward having male children (Guilomoto, 2022). This preference may be rooted in cultural influences that inadvertently cause women to uphold harmful gender norms, thereby reinforcing gender inequality. A statistical index measuring expectant mothers' gender preferences found that 57% of women preferred having sons, while only 2.3% expressed no preference (El-Gilany& Shady, 2018). Over the past decade, various women

empowerment initiatives have been launched in Nigeria to address child sex preference among couples and improve women's social standing (Eguavoen, Odiagbe&Obetoh, 2007, as cited by Olonade O. Y., 2020). However, these efforts have not been particularly effective, as deeply ingrained gender roles and stereotypes continue to persist. Furthermore, the gender equality bill in Nigeria has yet to be passed, meaning the necessary legal framework to implement gender-related policies remains absent. The preference for male children contributes to the greater societal value placed on sons and the negative repercussions for women who do not bear male offspring (Babington-Ashaye, 2018; Jha et al., 2021). This is evident in the immediate recognition of a son at birth as the family's successor, responsible for continuing the lineage and providing financial and emotional support for parents in their old age (Izugbara, 2018).

Imbalance in Sex Ratio and Maternal Health

Sex ratios are significantly skewed in countries where extreme gender discrimination occurs, such as female infanticide and sex-selective abortions (Seager, 2009a; Bhattacharya, 2018, as cited by Ritchie, 2019). Jayachandran (2014) also notes a steady increase in sex ratio in relation to overall fertility rates in India, indicating that advancements in medical technology are often used for selective abortions. The imbalance in sex ratios persists globally, as the overall number of desired children has declined, but the preference for sons remains unchanged (Jayachandran, 2014, as cited by Ritchie, 2019). This aligns with findings suggesting that women tend to continue childbearing until they have at least one son (Eguavon et al., 2020). According to a United Nations report, female infant mortality rates are

highest in China and India, while Nigeria also records one of the highest maternal and infant mortality rates worldwide (United Nations, 2011, as cited by Ritchie, 2019). These figures highlight the severe health risks women face in their attempts to bear a son, with inadequate child spacing further jeopardizing children's health. In southeastern Nigeria, patriarchal traditions have had severe negative consequences on maternal health (Kinanee & Ezekiel-Hart, 2019). Son preference and broader gender inequality have both direct and indirect impacts on the overall health and well-being of women and girls (Milazzo, 2021). In Africa, gender preference is regarded as a "socio-cultural phenomenon" with significant implications for women's health, particularly increasing the risks associated with pregnancy and childbirth (Adebowale et al., 2019). For instance, in China, where strict child policies were enforced, women with only one child were more likely to have another if their firstborn was a daughter, whereas women with a son showed less urgency to have additional children (Zheng et al., 2019). This socio-cultural factor not only contributes to high birth rates but also undermines the effectiveness of fertility reduction programs (Adebimpe, 2022).

Factors Contributing To Son Preference

Several cultural, social, religious, and economic factors influence parental gender preferences by shaping the perceived benefits and costs of having a son or daughter (Eguavoen et al., 2020; Seager, 2021).

Socio-Cultural Beliefs

In many developing societies, there is a strong preference for sons over daughters due to traditional beliefs, societal values, and economic considerations (Ekmund, 2019). In Nigeria, both men and women place great importance on fertility and the ability to bear sons, which is seen as a key

factor in marriage (Oyefara, 2020). A study conducted among the Yoruba ethnic group in Ibadan revealed that the preference for sons was significantly higher than for daughters (Azeez et al., 2018). Son preference is deeply rooted in cultural norms that define gender roles. Understanding these traditional beliefs provides insight into gender dynamics (Lei & Pals, 2011, as cited by Bradley, 2022).

One of the key ways gender roles are reinforced is through proverbs and taboos, which play a crucial role in shaping societal attitudes (Familiusi, 2018). Proverbs hold great significance in Nigerian culture, as they serve as a means of passing down values and norms across generations (Olabode, 2019; Tiamiyu & Olaleye, 2020). Among the Yoruba, certain proverbs reinforce the superior status of males. For example, one Yoruba proverb states, "*Adekunle l'orukookunrin, Adetule l'orukoobinrin,*" which means "A son strengthens the family, while a daughter depletes it." This reflects the perception that male children uphold the family lineage, while female children are viewed as temporary members who eventually leave to join their husband's household. Another proverb, "*Ai lokurinnilelobinrinnjogunada,*" translates to "A woman inherits a cutlass only in the absence of a man," symbolizing that women can only take on leadership roles when there are no men available (Familiusi, 2018). Some proverbs even stigmatize families with only daughters, associating them with witchcraft. It is commonly believed that a woman who gives birth exclusively to girls is a witch, destined to endure a miserable existence, as witches are said to be incapable of bearing sons (Tiamiyu & Olaleye, 2020). Among the Yoruba, witchcraft is considered a serious taboo, often leading to ostracization or, in extreme cases, death (Olabode, 2019). This belief contributes to the marginalization of women who do not have sons, subjecting

them to societal labels that diminish their status (Gaudin, 2018; Oluduro, 2019). Additionally, in patriarchal societies, a woman's status and her husband's happiness are often linked to her ability to bear male children (Familusi, 2018). Despite the existence of legal frameworks aimed at addressing gender discrimination, son preference continues to persist due to deeply ingrained cultural practices (Oluduro, 2019). This preference manifests in various forms, including the neglect of daughters, early marriage, and other forms of child abuse—issues that remain global concerns (Nnadi, 2020). A study conducted among newly married couples in Ohio found that only 5.9% preferred their firstborn to be a girl, while a significantly higher percentage preferred a boy (Sensibaugh & Paul, 1997, as cited by Nnadi, 2020). Although women's education, economic participation, and political engagement have increased, gender inequality has continued to rise in parallel (Ekmund, 2019). For instance, an increase in female enrollment in education has not necessarily translated into equal employment opportunities, as women often face stiff competition with men for limited job positions. Research in both China and Yoruba tradition highlights the belief that sons remain part of their birth family, while daughters eventually leave to join their husband's household. This has led to the notion that, unlike daughters, sons are more reliable in providing financial support for aging parents.

Economic Considerations

Despite ongoing efforts to promote gender equality, women and girls still face significant barriers to accessing resources, achieving social mobility, and securing paid employment (Jones et al., 2018). Many discriminatory social institutions restrict women's access to opportunities for self-fulfilment.

In Vietnam, for example, patriarchal family norms contribute to gender disparities by limiting women's access to financial services, property ownership, and economic empowerment (Jones et al., 2018). Son preference is often linked to economic security, as parents view sons as a form of financial investment for old age (Almond, Edlund & Milligan, 2022). Traditionally, children have been seen as a type of "retirement plan," with parents relying on their sons for financial support once they are no longer able to work (Ding & Zhang, 2019). Cultural beliefs continue to reinforce gender inequalities by restricting women's access to resources, education, and employment, thereby exacerbating poverty and economic dependency (Jones et al., 2018).

Patriarchal norms play a significant role in controlling women's access to education and paid employment. Women are often expected to take on domestic responsibilities without financial compensation, limiting their economic independence. Additionally, the lower investment in girls' education stems from the belief that daughters will eventually marry and benefit their husband's family rather than their own. As a result, many fathers see investing in their daughters' education as an unprofitable endeavor, further perpetuating financial dependence among women (Adebimpe, 2022).

Cultural and Economic Implication of Son Preference

Cultural norms establish gender roles even before birth, making them difficult to alter. Any deviation from these prescribed roles often results in severe consequences (Kinanee & Ezekiel-Hart, 2018). Culture plays a crucial role in shaping the roles and authority exercised by men and women, influencing the opportunities and privileges available to each gender (Eguavoen et al.,

2022). This is particularly evident in traditional female roles, which revolve around caregiving, motherhood, and domestic responsibilities—tasks that typically do not require formal education (Kinane& Ezekiel-Hart, 2018). In various African and Asian cultures, male and female children are perceived as having distinct capabilities and potential, with male children often being prioritized, especially regarding inheritance rights (Izugbara, 2018; Aluko, 2019). In many patriarchal societies, women's property ownership is largely dependent on their spouses. However, Aluko (2019) argues that Yoruba women enjoy a certain degree of independence in owning property that their husbands cannot claim. Despite this, inheritance practices among the Yoruba remain largely unfavorable to women. Traditionally, wills were uncommon, and after a man's burial, the division of his property—including wives, titles, and material assets—was determined by an oracle. Family leadership roles were exclusively male-dominated, and even a young boy could hold more authority than female relatives in inheritance matters (Famulusi, 2018). Although single daughters might sometimes inherit property, married women were typically excluded due to the belief that they belonged to their husbands, making it inappropriate for them to claim their father's assets (Aluko, 2019). Inheritance rights in Igbo culture are even more restrictive. Women are entirely excluded from inheriting their father's property. If a man dies without a male heir, his belongings are transferred to his brother or uncle, reinforcing the belief that a male child is essential for preserving the family name. This ideology is reflected in the Igbo name "Ahamefula," meaning "My name is not lost" (Nnadi, 2020).

Furthermore, while women cannot inherit property, they themselves may be inherited. Traditionally, a widow could be passed on as

part of her late husband's estate, even to a relative much older or younger than her (Ndu& Uzochukwu, 2021). Culture continues to reinforce gender inequality in Nigeria. Among the Igbo, for instance, only male children can assume certain religious and cultural roles. The first son traditionally inherits the "Ofor" title, which symbolizes family authority and religious leadership (Oluduro, 2019). A Hausa saying, "Ba ayikomaiba, mace ta haifi mace," translates to "Nothing is gained when a woman gives birth to a daughter," highlighting the preference for sons and the exclusion of women from inheritance rights (DFID, 2005 as cited by Aduradola, 2020). Additionally, in some societies, having a son provides financial security by eliminating dowry payments and instead receiving them (Seager, 2021a). In countries with discriminatory inheritance laws, having a male child ensures that property remains within the family (Seager, 2021b). Advancements in medical technology now allow for the selection of a child's sex before birth, contributing to gender imbalances in countries like India and China. Sex-selective abortions and female infanticide have significantly altered the male-to-female ratio (Jha et al., 2018). Some parents opt for these measures to prevent their daughters from experiencing lifelong discrimination (Seager, 2021a). A disproportionate male population can lead to severe consequences, including increased human trafficking, abductions of women and girls, a rise in sexual crimes, and a societal structure that further diminishes the value of women (Seager, 2021b). Education is a powerful tool for challenging gender norms and empowering women. Exposure to education broadens perspectives and fosters changes in societal attitudes. There is a strong correlation between the adoption of Western education and an improved status for women, highlighting how cultural

globalization influences gender roles in Sub-Saharan Africa (Shola, 2022). In Nigeria, women who embrace Western values and behaviors are sometimes perceived as more progressive (Okome, 2018), but this perception does not necessarily translate into a shift in cultural expectations regarding their roles, regardless of their educational achievements. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines economic empowerment as the ability of men and women to actively participate in and benefit from economic growth in a way that recognizes their contributions, respects their dignity, and ensures fair distribution of resources (Malaba, 2021). Globally, women make up over 70% of the poor, with limited access to stable employment and financial resources (Eyben, 2018). This financial disparity affects their access to essential services such as healthcare, education, safe housing, clean water, and sanitation (Malaba, 2021). Poverty is exacerbated by inadequate infrastructure, restricted access to productive resources such as land and credit, and the absence of supportive institutions. Women, in particular, face exclusion and discrimination in these areas (Malaba, 2021). In some cultures, women are still treated as property. Among the Yoruba in Nigeria, for instance, women are expected to be fully submissive to their husbands, who hold decision-making authority over them, including control over their finances and bodies (Oluduro, 2019). Skalli (2020) describes poverty as a complex interplay of material deprivation, social exclusion, insecurity, powerlessness, humiliation, and marginalization.

Women are disproportionately affected, often sacrificing their own basic needs, such as food, to support their children or spouses (Bastos et al., 2018). Despite their significant contributions to the global labor force, especially in agriculture, women

receive only about 10% of total income. This is in stark contrast to the fact that women perform 66% of the world's labor, produce more than half of the world's food, yet own only 1% of property (Clinton, 2019). Empowering women is crucial for global development. Addressing gender discrimination, particularly those rooted in ethnicity and culture, is essential in achieving gender equality (OECD, 2010 as cited by Bradley, 2022). A major barrier to women's inclusion in the workforce is the unequal distribution of domestic labor. Women, especially mothers, are burdened with unpaid household responsibilities, which limits their participation in the labor market and contributes to the cycle of poverty (ILO, 2009 as cited by Bradley, 2022).

Implication of Male Child Preference on Female Education

Before the introduction of Western education, the Yoruba people had an established system for passing down cultural values to future generations. For the average Yoruba person, education primarily meant home training, which encompassed various skills, including household chores, appropriate speech and behavior, especially towards elders (Familusi, 2018). It also involved lessons on traditional ethics, norms, language development, and the interpretation of customs (Oguntomisin, 2018). Both direct methods—such as folktales, stories, proverbs, songs, chants, and oral expressions—and indirect methods—such as signs, gestures, and symbolic communication—were used in both formal and informal settings to educate children (Aduradola, 2020). While both boys and girls received home training, girls were the primary focus of domestic instruction, as they were expected to apply these skills in their future homes after marriage. Consequently, boys had greater access to

Western education, while girls remained at home to manage domestic responsibilities (Adebisi, 2019). Regarding Western education, Sultana (2019) argues that patriarchal societies often favor boys' education over girls', as parents tend to perceive educating daughters as unnecessary. From an early age, girls are discouraged from developing their potential in the same way boys are. Familusi (2018) highlights that parents often view investing in girls' education as unprofitable, believing that daughters will eventually leave their families and become part of their husbands' households. As a result, girls' access to education is further constrained by their families' financial limitations, which influence how resources are distributed (Gaudin, 2018). The belief that women's traditional roles do not require formal education has significantly restricted girls' access to quality education (Nagaraja et al., 2022). This perception contributes to the low levels of female education in developing countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India (Bhattacharya, 2018). A similar situation exists in Kenyan culture, where sons have inheritance rights while daughters are excluded, further reinforcing the reluctance to invest in girls' education (Jackson, 2010; Quisumbing, 2007, as cited by Milazzo, 2021).

2.2 Theoretical Review

This study is based on the Social Action Theory, which was developed by German sociologist Max Weber. This theory emphasizes the significance of human behavior in relation to cause and effect within a social context. According to Weber, social action refers to an individual's behavior that takes place in a social setting and is intended to influence, or is influenced by, the actions of others (Cuff, Sharock & Francis, 2005, as cited by Eyben, 2018). For an action to be considered social, it must

hold meaning for the actor, and these meanings are often shaped by socio-cultural factors (Ritzer & Turner, 1993, as cited by Eyben, 2018). The Social Action Theory suggests that individuals' behaviors are influenced by their unique backgrounds and social attachments. This means that different socio-cultural contexts lead to different behavioral expressions. For instance, dancing and drinking at a party are deemed appropriate, whereas the same actions would be considered inappropriate at a funeral. While the theory acknowledges the influence of social structures on individual behavior, it also asserts that individual actions play a role in shaping these structures. In other words, social structures and human behavior influence each other in a reciprocal manner. Max Weber (1949) argues that people adjust their actions based on social settings and the impact these actions may have on others. Social action not only explains individual behaviors and their consequences but also highlights how such behaviors can collectively influence others, eventually evolving into broader social movements rather than isolated actions. Social action serves as a mechanism for achieving specific goals through interaction and organization. For example, within a company, employees are assigned different roles and tasks, but their actions are interconnected to ensure the smooth operation of the organization. The responsibilities and regulations followed by employees help structure social action within the organization, allowing them to work together to fulfill the company's objectives.

Four Types of Social Action According To Max Weber

In his work *Economy and Society* (1921), Max Weber mentions four forms of social action:

1. Traditional Social action (Custom)

These actions stem from traditions and customs and are carried out in specific situations. For instance, having a family lunch every Sunday is an example of such a practice. Traditional actions can serve as cultural markers. Tradition itself can be categorized into two main types: customs and habits. A custom refers to a widely recognized and commonly practiced activity within a culture, often passed down through generations. In contrast, a habit is something that is gradually learned and integrated into daily life, sometimes becoming an inherent part of an individual's personality.

2. Affective Social Action

Also referred to as emotional action, this occurs when individuals act impulsively without necessarily considering the consequences. For example, shedding tears in moments of victory or mourning at a funeral are instances of affective social actions. This type of action is further categorized into two subgroups:

- **Uncontrolled Reaction:** In this case, individuals prioritize their own emotions over the feelings of others.
- **Emotional Tension:** This arises when a person experiences frustration due to unmet aspirations, leading to internal dissatisfaction.

3. Value-Rational Social Action

This type of social action is guided by moral or ethical principles that are collectively upheld for the betterment of society. It is driven by ideology or collective values, with religion being a prominent example.

4. Instrumental-Rational Social Action

These are goal-oriented actions taken to achieve a specific outcome. For instance, Natalia, a 19-year-old aspiring medical student, understands that she must pass a rigorous entrance exam to pursue her studies. Aware of this requirement, she commits to daily study sessions to increase

her chances of success. Natalia's actions exemplify instrumental-rational social action, as each step she takes has potential positive or negative consequences based on her efforts. In this case, discipline and dedication shape her journey toward achieving her goal.

Influence of Social Action

Max Weber emphasized that social action is shaped by past, present, and future circumstances. As a result, it undergoes changes over time, evolving in response to societal shifts and developments in human behavior. Social action is inherently dynamic, adapting to transformations in societal structures and influencing individuals within a given social context.

Application of Theory to the Study

Child gender preference is shaped by a set of socially constructed values and norms that emerge through complex interactions among individuals. Parents, grandparents, and couples develop shared understandings based on these societal influences. As a result, sons and daughters are assigned different symbolic values based on their perceived economic and social contributions to the family. In Igbo society, male children are highly valued because they are seen as the key to preserving the family name and lineage, while daughters are expected to marry and become part of their husband's family (Nnadi, 2020). Furthermore, sons provide financial and social security for their parents in old age and serve as a source of protection and prestige.

According to Croll (2018), while daughters contribute significantly by performing household chores and caring for family members, their labor is often undervalued compared to that of sons. Since sons typically work outside the home and generate income, they are perceived as enhancing the family's economic standing. These symbolic values are developed

through social interactions and are continuously reshaped through interpretation and experience.

2.3 Empirical Review

El-Gilany et al. (2018) conducted a study on the factors influencing son preference among women giving birth in Mansoura, Egypt. The findings showed that only 2.3% of the 400 pregnant women surveyed had no gender preference for their child. However, 57.0% expressed a preference for a son, while 40.8% preferred a daughter. The most common reasons for preferring a particular gender were psychological (such as having all children of the same gender) and social (such as assistance with household chores, reduced risk of divorce, and support in old age). Economic reasons were primarily associated with son preference, including inheriting family property or business and contributing to household income. Similarly, Kanikwu (2021) explored gender preference among men in Isoko South Local Government Council, Oleh, Delta State. His study revealed that 90 men (62.9%) preferred male children. Among them, 55.2% cited psychological satisfaction in marriage as a key reason, while 53.8% believed male children had better initiative and were easier to train (70.6%). Additionally, 99.3% preferred male children to secure family inheritance, while 98.6% valued sons for ensuring the continuity of the family name. On the other hand, those who preferred female children highlighted their ability to care for younger siblings (69.2%), their support for aging parents (80.4%), and their role as reliable emotional support (61.5%). The study concluded that male preference was strongly prevalent among men and recommended increased male involvement in reproductive health services. In another study by Nithin et al. (2019) on gender preference among antenatal women in coastal South India,

findings showed that the majority of pregnant women (60.6%) had no preference for their child's gender. However, among the 39.4% who did have a preference, 55.7% favored male children, while 44.3% preferred female children. The overall son preference index was recorded at 1.3, but no consistent correlation was found between socio-demographic factors and gender preference.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter is a detailed explanation of the methods that was used for the study. The section describes the methods and procedures that was used in this research which includes; the research design, study population, research settings, sample size, sampling techniques, instrumentation, validity and reliability of the instrument, the data collection techniques, methods of data analysis and ethical consideration.

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive non-experimental quantitative research design. A descriptive design was used to observe, describe and document aspect of the situation. It provides an accurate account of the characteristics of a particular individual, events or group in real life situation for the purpose of discovering new meaning, describing what exist and the frequency of occurrence.

3.2 Research Settings

This research was conducted among men and women residing in Igando community located in Alimosho local government area of Lagos State Nigeria.

3.3 Target Population

The target population for this study includes men and women residing in Igando community.

3.4 Sampling Technique

A Convenience sampling technique was used to select the required sample for the study.

3.5 Sample Size

Using Yamane's formula;

$$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$$

N= population (estimated value of 240 residents in Igando community)

n= sample size

e= assumed error of 0.05

$$n = 240 / (1 + 240(0.05)^2)$$

$$n = 240 / (1 + 240(0.0025))$$

$$n = 240 / (1 + 0.6)$$

$$n = 240 / 1.6$$

$$n = 150$$

Attrition rate of 5% was used; therefore, the total number of questionnaires distributed was 150 questionnaires.

3.6 Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used for the data collection is structured questionnaire that was developed by the researcher through literature search based on the objective of the study. The questionnaire consists of section A, B, C, and D.

Section A: Social Demographic Data

Section B: Belief towards male Child

Section C: Attitude towards male Child

Section D: Factors influencing male Child preference

3.7 Validity of Instrument

The validity of instruments was established through face and content technique. Face validity was determined by examining appearance of instruments, ensuring that it appears satisfactory and looks good, while content validity was determined by ensuring that instrument reflects the content revealed

in the literature and was given to experts in the field of study.

3.8 Reliability of Instrument

The reliability of instrument was established by administering 15 copies of questionnaires to residents of Igando community which represents 10% of the sample size. The inclusion criteria include: married man or woman residing in Igando community, age between 18-49 years, parents who must have given birth to at least a child. The exclusive criteria include: age not between 18-49 years, married couple who hasn't given birth to any child. Data was subjected to Pearson product moment correlation co-efficient to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. The test-retest method was used to ensure the reliability of the instrument used.

3.9 Method of Data Collection

The data for this study was collected through distribution of questionnaire by the researcher to residents in Igando community of Alimosho local government area. Duly filled questionnaires were retrieved by the researcher for onward collation and coding.

3.10 Method of Data Analysis

Data generated was manually sorted out and analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency percentage) and presented as tables and bar charts.

3.11 Ethical Consideration

Letter of ethical consideration was collected from the college research committee. Permission was obtained from the district head of Igando community. Respondent was duly informed about the research topic, objectives and scope of the study. Also, the respondents were assured of confidentiality of their responses and given the autonomy of either participate or not in the research. Every respondent was treated with respect.

CHAPTER FOUR**Results****4.1 Introduction**

This chapter deals with analysis of data collected and interpretation of data. The data were analyzed using Statistical Package for

Table 1: Shows the distribution of respondents by Age, Sex, Religion, Ethnicity, and Marital status, Level of education and Occupation.

Social Science (SPSS) window 27.0. Data was analyzed in simple frequency tables, percentages and charts to allow for direct comparison.

Section A: Socio-Demographic Data

A	AGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
	18 – 25 years	33	22.0
	26– 33 years	91	60.7
	34 – 41 years	24	16.0
	42 – 49 years	2	1.3
	TOTAL	150	100.0
B	SEX		
	Male	67	44.7
	Female	83	55.3
	Total	150	100
C	RELIGION		
	Christianity	124	82.7
	Islam	24	16.0
	Traditional	0	0.0
	Others	2	1.3
	TOTAL	150	100.0
D	ETHNICITY		
	Yoruba	122	81.3
	Igbo	13	8.7
	Hausa	4	2.7
	Others	11	7.3
	TOTAL	150	100
E	MARITAL STATUS		
	Married	84	56.0
	Widowed	20	13.3
	Divorced	46	30.7
	TOTAL	150	100
F	LEVEL OF EDUCATION		
	Primary	15	10.0
	Secondary	56	37.4
	Tertiary	79	52.6
	TOTAL	150	100.0
E	OCCUPATION		
	Self employed	93	62.0
	Civil servant	57	38.0
	TOTAL	150	100

G	NUMBER OF CHILDREN		
	1 – 3	128	85.3
	4 – 6	22	14.7
	7 & above	0	0.0
	TOTAL	150	100

The data presented in Table 1 above illustrates the age distribution of 150 respondents. The majority (60.7%) fall within the 26–33 age range, followed by 22.0% in the 18–25 category, 16.0% in the 34–41 bracket, and a small percentage (1.3%) aged between 42–49 years. Regarding gender distribution, 44.7% of respondents are male, while the majority (55.3%) are female. In terms of religious affiliation, most respondents (82.7%) identify as Christians, while 16.0% are Muslims, and 1.3% belong to other religious groups. This distribution reflects the Christian dominance in the study area. Similarly, the ethnic composition shows that the majority (81.3%) are Yoruba,

which aligns with the study being conducted in a Yoruba-populated region. Meanwhile, 8.7% are Igbo, 2.7% are Hausa, and 7.3% belong to other ethnic groups. Marital status data reveals that 56.0% of respondents are married, 30.7% are divorced, and 13.3% are widowed. Regarding educational attainment, 52.6% have completed tertiary education, 37.4% have attained a secondary education level, while only 10.0% have a primary school education. Employment status indicates that the majority (62.0%) are self-employed, while 38.0% work as civil servants. Finally, family size data shows that most respondents (85.3%) have between 1–3 children, while 14.7% have 4–6 children.

Section B: Beliefs towards Male Child

Table 2: Responses of respondent on beliefs towards male child

VARIABLES	AGREE		DISAGREE	
	F	%	F	%
Male children are better than female children because they carry on the family name.	88	58.7	62	41.3
Inability to give birth to male children is a woman's fault.	82	54.7	68	45.3
Only male children can be heirs.	87	58.0	63	42.0
Girls are inadequate and of lesser value than boys.	65	43.3	85	56.7

Girls are transient being who will eventually leave.	77	51.3	73	48.7
Raising a daughter is like watering the neighbor’s garden.	68	45.3	82	54.7
Girls are financial burden on the family	63	42.0	87	58.0
Male children are easy to raise.	85	56.7	65	43.3
Girls are too emotional and physically weak.	58	38.7	92	61.3
Males provide more economic support for parents in old age.	93	62.0	57	38.0

The data presented in Table 2 above highlights respondents' beliefs regarding male children. The findings indicate that a majority (58.7%) believe that male children are preferable to female children because they carry on the family name, while 41.3% disagree. Additionally, 54.7% of respondents agree with the notion that a woman is to blame for the inability to bear male children, whereas 45.3% disagree. Similarly, 58% of respondents support the belief that only male children can inherit family assets, while 42% disagree. However, a larger proportion (56.7%) disagree with the idea that girls are inadequate or of lesser value than boys, while 43.3% believe otherwise. Moreover, 51.3% of respondents agree with the perception that girls are temporary members of the family since they eventually leave, whereas 48.7% disagree. Furthermore, 54.7% agree that raising a daughter is equivalent to investing in another family, while 45.3% do not share this belief. On the other hand, a

majority (58%) disagree with the notion that girls are a financial burden on the family, whereas 42% agree.

In terms of upbringing, 56.7% of respondents believe that male children are easier to raise, while 43.3% disagree. Additionally, 61.3% reject the belief that girls are overly emotional and physically weak, whereas 38.7% agree. Finally, 62% of respondents agree that male children provide greater economic support to parents in old age, while 38% disagree. Lastly, majority (43.5%) of respondents strongly agreed with the belief that males provide more economic support for parents in old age, while 41.3% of respondent disagreed.

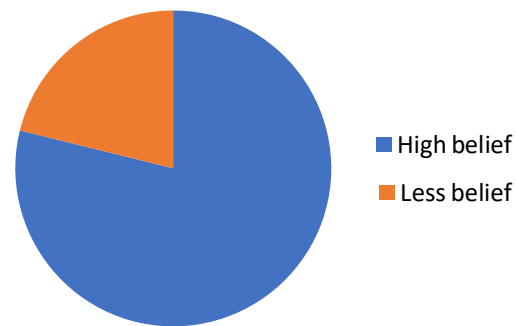


Figure 2: Level of belief towards male child

Section C: Attitude towards Male Child

Table 3: Responses on attitude towards male child

VARIABLES		F	%
I prefer boys over girls.	Yes	97	64.7
	No	53	35.3
Suppose you are expecting a new child, which sex would you prefer?	Boy	65	43.3
	Girl	42	28.0
	Any	28	18.7
	I don't know	15	10.0
Suppose you could only have a child which sex would you have preferred?	Boy	75	50.0
	Girl	51	34.0
	Any	24	16.0
Will you keep reproducing till you bear a male child?	Yes	77	51.3

Table 3 above presents respondents' attitudes toward male children. The results indicate that the majority (64.7%) prefer having a boy over a girl, while 35.3% hold the opposite view. Most of the reasons provided for this preference are linked to emotional Desires. Additionally, 43.3% of respondents stated that if they could have another child, they would prefer a boy, a preference largely associated with social desires. In contrast, 28% would choose a girl, 18.7% expressed no preference, and 15% were unsure. Furthermore, when asked which

gender they would prefer if they could have only one child, half of the respondents (50%) opted for a boy, while 34% preferred a girl, and 16% expressed no specific preference. The reasons given were also largely connected to social desires. Lastly, 51.3% of respondents admitted they would continue having children until they bore a male child, while 48.7% disagreed. This outcome appears to be driven by both emotional and social motivations.



Figure 3: Level of attitude towards male child

Section D: Factors Influencing Male Child Preference

Table 4: Responses on factors influencing male child preference

VARIABLES	STRONGLY AGREE		AGREE		DISAGREE		STRONGLY DISAGREE	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Economic factors	57	37.7	87	58.0	4	2.9	2	1.4
Religion	63	42.0	76	50.7	7	4.3	4	2.9
Social and emotional desires	59	39.1	74	49.3	15	10.1	2	1.4
Cultural belief	44	29.0	78	52.2	19	13.0	9	5.8
Literacy	46	30.4	83	55.1	19	13.0	2	1.4
Family size	76	50.7	65	43.5	9	5.8	0	0.0
Media	61	40.4	45	30.3	22	14.6	22	14.6
Family and friends	58	39.0	54	36.0	20	13.0	18	12.0

Table 4 above presents the respondents' views on factors influencing male child preference. The results show that the majority (58.0%) agreed that economic factors play a role in male child preference, while 37.7% strongly agreed, 2.9% disagreed, and only 1.4% strongly disagreed. Additionally, 50.7% of respondents agreed that religion is a key factor influencing male child preference, with 42% strongly agreeing, 4.3% disagreeing, and 2.9% strongly disagreeing. Furthermore, 49.3% of respondents agreed that social and emotional desires contribute to male child preference, 39.1% strongly agreed, while 10.1% disagreed and 1.4% strongly disagreed. Similarly, 52.2% of respondents agreed that cultural beliefs influence male child preference, with 29% strongly

agreeing, 13% disagreeing, and 5.8% strongly disagreeing.

In addition, 55.1% of respondents agreed that literacy plays a role in male child preference, while 30.4% strongly agreed, 13% disagreed, and 1.4% strongly disagreed. Moreover, 50.7% of respondents strongly agreed that family size is a factor influencing male child preference, 43.5% agreed, and only 5.8% disagreed. Regarding the media, 40.4% of respondents strongly agreed that it influences male child preference, 30.3% agreed, while 14.6% disagreed and strongly disagreed, respectively. Lastly, 39% of respondents strongly agreed that family and friends influence male child preference, 36% agreed, while 13% disagreed and 12% strongly disagreed.

4.2 Answering of Research Questions

Research question 1: What is the belief of residents in Igando community towards male child preference?

Based on the responses in Table 2 above regarding the beliefs of residents in the Igando community toward male child preference, it can be inferred that the majority of respondents favor male children over female children. Most respondents agreed with the belief that male children are superior because they carry on the family name and that the inability to give birth to a male child is the woman’s responsibility. Additionally, a significant portion of respondents supported the notion that only male children can be heirs and that girls are temporary members of the family who will eventually leave.

Research question 2: What is the attitude of residents in Igando community towards male child preference?

Based on table 3 above, the responses gathered on the attitude of residents in the Igando community toward male child preference is evident that most respondents exhibit a more favorable attitude toward male children than female children. The

majority expressed a preference for boys over girls and indicated that if they could have only one child, they would choose a boy.

Research question 3: What are the factors influencing male child preference among residents in Igando community?

From table 4 above, the responses gathered on the factors influencing male child preference among residents of Igando community indicate that respondents acknowledged several key factors, including economic considerations, religious beliefs, social and emotional desires, cultural traditions, literacy levels, family size, media influence, and the role of family and friends.

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

H01: There is no significant correlation between parents' level of education and their attitudes toward male child preference. The hypothesis is tested using the Pearson Chi-square method. Table 5 below presents a cross-tabulation of respondents' level of education and their attitudes toward male child preference, while a summary of the analysis is provided in Table 6.

Table 5: Educational level* Attitude Cross-tabulation

		Attitude towards male child preferences		Total	
		More favorable attitude	Less favorable attitude		
Educational level	Primary education		13	2	15
			8.7%	1.3%	10%
	Secondary education		43	13	56
			28.7%	8.7%	37.4%

	Tertiary education		49	30	79
			32.6%	20.0%	52.6%
Total			105	45	150
			70%	30%	100%

Table 6: Chi-Square test of the association between the level of education of participants and their attitudes towards male child preference

Statistics		Df	X ² Cal	X ² Crit.	p-value
Pearson Chi-Square		2	27.969 ^a	5.991	0.010

*Significant at <0.05 , (X^2 Crit. = 5.991, at df 2, $p < 0.05$)

The Pearson Chi-Square test results in Table 6 above indicate that the calculated Chi-Square value of 27.969 exceeds the critical value of 5.991, with a p-value of 0.010. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This confirms a significant relationship between participants' level of education and their attitudes toward male child preference.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion of Findings, Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Discussion of Findings

This study examined the beliefs and attitudes toward male child preference among residents of Igando community in Alimosho LGA, Lagos State. Findings revealed that the majority of respondents favored male children over female children. This aligns with a study by Kanikwu (2021) on gender preference among men in Isoko South Local Government Council, Oleh, Delta State, which found that 62.9% of men preferred male children. For 55.2% of respondents, gender preference was linked to psychological satisfaction in marriage, while 53.8% believed that male children had better initiative and were easier to train (70.6%). Additionally, male children were

Preferred for securing family inheritance (99.3%) and ensuring the continuity of the family name (98.6%). On the other hand, some respondents preferred female children for their ability to care for younger siblings (69.2%), provide greater support to elderly parents (80.4%), and offer emotional reliability (61.5%). However, these findings contrast sharply with a study conducted by Nithin et al., (2019) on gender preferences among antenatal women in coastal South India, which found that 60.6% of the participants had no gender preference and did not favor one gender over the other. Attitude plays a crucial role in understanding human behavior, as individuals perceive the world and approach life's challenges differently. People's actions are often influenced by their attitudes, making it possible to predict their behavior in different circumstances. This study examined respondents' attitudes toward male child preference. Based on the responses gathered, it was observed that the majority of respondents exhibited a more favorable attitude toward male children than female children. Most respondents expressed a preference for boys over girls and indicated that if they could have only one child, they would choose a boy. These findings align with a study by Joseph A. O. et al. (2019) on The Dilemma of Male Child

Preference Vis-À-Vis the Role of Women in the Yoruba Traditional Religion and Society, where 74% of respondents preferred a male child as their firstborn. Additionally, 52% of respondents generally favored male children over female children. Regarding the domestic value of children, only 14% of respondents believed that male children were more caring than females. Similarly, the results of a study by El-Gilany (2018) on the determinants and causes of son preference among women delivering in Mansoura, Egypt, support the findings of this study. In that study, only 2.3% of 400 pregnant women had no gender preference, while 57.0% preferred a son and 40.8% preferred a daughter. Furthermore, this study assessed the factors influencing male child preference among residents of Igando community.

The results revealed that respondents acknowledged several key factors, including economic factors, religious beliefs, social and emotional desires, cultural norms, literacy levels, family size, media influence, and the opinions of family and friends. These findings closely align with El-Gilany's (2018) study, which identified psychological reasons (such as all siblings being of the opposite sex) and social factors (such as assistance with household tasks, lower risk of divorce, and old-age support) as common motivations for gender preference. Economic factors were primarily associated with son preference, as sons were seen as contributors to family income and potential heirs to family businesses or land.

5.2 Implications of Findings to Nursing Profession

Based on the findings of this study, as well as insights from similar studies and reviews, it is evident that gender preference—particularly for male children—or an imbalanced gender preference remains a prevalent trend. These findings are

concerning and pose a challenge to achieving Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals, which focuses on promoting health and well-being for all. Additionally, male child preference has significant implications for the reproductive behaviors of both men and women. Therefore, it is essential for nurses and midwives to develop innovative family life education programs aimed at reducing the emphasis on sex preference. Furthermore, recognizing male child preference as an independent risk factor is crucial for healthcare providers. Addressing this issue can help prevent negative outcomes such as depression and family instability, ultimately contributing to healthier family dynamics.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

This study cannot be fully generalized due to several limitations. One key limitation is that the sample population was drawn from a society with a patriarchal system, which may have influenced the study's outcomes. The findings might have been different if the study had been conducted in a matriarchal society. Additionally, the majority of the respondents were Yoruba men and women, which further limits the generalizability of the results. Differences in beliefs and cultural norms among various ethnic groups may yield different findings in other settings.

Moreover, time constraints due to the demanding work schedule made data collection slow and challenging. Financial limitations also posed a constraint on the study.

5.4 Summary of the Study

The preference for male children has contributed to various forms of violence against women, a growing concern in the country, as highlighted by the European Union and United Nations (EU-UN) Spotlight Initiative. This study was

conducted to assess the beliefs and attitudes toward male child preference among residents of Igando community in Alimosho LGA, Lagos State.

A review of relevant literature related to the study's objectives provided insights that guided the research. The study employed a descriptive design, using a randomly distributed questionnaire to collect data from 150 respondents. Findings revealed that the majority of respondents favored male children over female children. This preference is reflected in the belief that male children are superior because they carry on the family name, while girls are viewed as transient individuals who will eventually leave. Although most respondents disagreed with the notion that girls are inadequate or of lesser value than boys, a significant majority still expressed a preference for having a male child if they could only have one. Therefore, addressing the underlying parental motivations for male child preference is crucial rather than focusing solely on methods to eliminate the practice.

5.5 Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, as well as insights from similar research and reviews, it can be concluded that gender preference, particularly for male children, or an imbalanced gender preference—leading to unequal gender composition—remains a prevailing trend. Unfortunately, this trend poses a significant challenge to achieving Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals. Given the study's setting, the results were not unexpected, considering the high female literacy rate and the deeply ingrained patriarchal system in the region. It is concerning that a majority of participants expressed a preference for male children. However, continuous efforts are needed to reshape societal perceptions of gender and eliminate the undervaluation of girls in many communities. A striking observation

from this study was that a significant number of those who favored male children were educated and employed individuals. This suggests that their preference may be influenced more by prevailing social and cultural norms rather than economic reasons. One key takeaway is that gender preference is not solely dictated by a society's level of socioeconomic development but is largely driven by deeply rooted socio-cultural factors. These influences often override economic and educational progress. Therefore, it is essential to explore these socio-cultural factors at both regional and micro levels to better understand the specific determinants of gender preference, which may vary for each individual. Policymakers should develop targeted strategies to address these determinants rather than relying on a one-size-fits-all approach, which may not be effective across different communities.

5.6 Recommendations

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

- Increased educational and social programs are essential to reshape societal perceptions of gender and eliminate the undervaluation of girls in many communities.
- It is crucial to address the underlying parental motivations behind gender preference rather than focusing solely on the methods used to enforce these preferences.
- While Nigeria's worsening sex ratio demands policy attention, equal focus should be placed on the well-being of surviving girls. Beyond issues like female feticide and excess female mortality, gender-based health and nutritional discrimination must also be addressed.
- As a progressive society, it is vital to ensure that both genders receive equal

respect and are free from biases or preferences. Raising awareness about the consequences of gender imbalance and adverse sex ratios is necessary to promote equality.

- Policies should be formulated and effectively implemented to change societal attitudes toward gender preference and encourage adherence to the two-child norm.
- Gender preference is not solely influenced by socioeconomic development but is deeply rooted in cultural and social norms. These factors must be examined at both regional and micro levels to identify determinants of gender preference, as they may vary for different individuals. Policymakers should adopt targeted strategies tailored to specific cultural contexts rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.
- Nurses and midwives should develop innovative family life education programs to reduce the emphasis on sex preference and promote gender equality in parenting and reproductive health discussions.

5.7 Suggestions for Further Studies

Given the strong beliefs and attitudes of residents of Igando community toward male child preference, it is recommended that further studies be conducted on this topic in other communities, particularly those with a predominant presence of other ethnic groups.

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