# PARENTS' SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL STATUS AS DETERMINANTS OF CHILD GENDER PREFERENCES: A STUDY OF IGBOS IN LAGOS WEST SENATORIAL DISTRICT, LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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**Abstract**

*The phenomenon of child gender preference is not new; it has existed for centuries. In fact, in the last few decades, many studies have been conducted on it, particularly in South Asia and North Africa. In Nigeria child gender preference has seldom been examined with keen emphasis on the social and financial factors. Thus, this study examines the social and financial factors underlying child gender preference among the Igbo people in Lagos West Senatorial District. The study uses the survey method to execute the research agenda. Multi-stage random sampling was used to pick respondents for the survey. The symbolic interactionism theory was used to explain the prevalence of gender preference for children in the study location, while chi-square was used to test the two formulated hypotheses that centre on socio-financial factors and child gender preferences. The paper found that there is a significant relationship between education and parental preference for the gender of their children. The higher the education of the parents, the lower the parental preference was for a particular gender. Also, the study finds that income is significantly related to parental preference for the gender of their children. The lower the income and wealth of the household, the higher the parental preference to have a male child. The study concludes that efforts should be made to raise the educational level of people and to ensure that the government tackles poverty aggressively in the society.*

**Keywords:** Gender Preference, Son, Daughter, Igbo, Wealth and Education

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most fundamental problems Nigeria is facing is the uncontrolled growth of the population. In spite of the availability of a wide range of contraceptive methods and mass media campaigns, population control remains a distant dream to achieve, especially in the rural areas. This situation can be attributed to the prevalence of parental gender preferences in the country (Milazzo, 2012). Marleau and Saucier (2002) assert that Western societies appear to have experienced a transition from son preference to no gender preference and this has helped greatly in having a controlled population growth rate. Seidl (1995) asserts that when couples have gender preferences, they seem to have more parities than they would have ordinarily had. This is because couples would

continue to give birth to children until the desired sex compositions are satisfied, which is mostly after the delivery of at least one male child.

It is believed that daughters are associated with a loss. The girl child leaves her parents' home upon her marriage and the benefits from investments made in her upbringing accrue to her new family, thus constituting a loss for the natal family. Sons, on the other hand, are considered assets worthy of short and long-term investment (Bumiller, 1991). Sons can continue the family trade, carry the family name, and are expected to provide financial resources for their parents in old age. Sons, therefore, are indispensable in societies as they provide welfare support for frail older people (Sen, 1992; 1999; Qadir, Khan, Medhin & Prince, 2011).

The close relationship between daughters and their fathers and between mothers and their sons among the Igbos is too strong to be overlooked. A father can do anything to protect his daughter and spend a lot of money to celebrate his daughter's marriage. However, the girl-child appears to lose value as she transits from daughter to wife and begins to live life as an appendage to the husband.

### Statement of the Problem

Child gender preference largely reflects the underlying socio-economic and cultural patterns of the society. The Igbo society is basically a patriarchal and patrilineal society, one characterized by the dominance of men in virtually all spheres of life. Igbo women were expected to be subservient to their husbands. Women in Igbo society and Nigeria as a whole are disadvantaged as compared to men in terms of both education and earnings, factors that greatly influence the economic status of women and child gender preference (National Population Commission & ICF, 2014). This, therefore, conditions couples to desire to have and nurture a child who has the socially and culturally accepted status and economic potential. This preference influences the parents'behaviour and may result into gender biases and stereotypes that negatively affect the health, welfare, and survival of girls and women (El-Gilany & Shady, 2007).

Various studies (for example, Ushie, Agba, Olumodeji & Attah, 2011; Oyefara, 2010) had explored factors affecting fertility in Nigeria. However, the impact of social and economic factors on child gender preference for children has not been well documented in the region. This gap is what this paper was expected to fill.

### Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study aims at examining the impact of socio-economic factors on gender preferences for children among Igbos in Lagos -West Senatorial District. Specifically, the study intends to:

1. Find out the effect of the parents' level of education on child gender preference among the Igbos in Lagos West Senatorial District.

**2.** Investigate the influence of the parents' income on child gender preferences among the Igbos in Lagos West Senatorial District

### Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between the parents' level of education and child gender preference.
2. There is no significant relationship between the income of the parents and their preference for the gender of their children.

### Definition of Concepts

Gender preference can be described as the parents' preference to have a child of a particular gender. In other words, it is the quest for having a particular gender (male or female) as offspring(s).

### Literature Review

The prevalence of child gender preferences has been well documented mostly in South Asian countries (Rossi & Rouanet, 2014; Haldar, Dasgupta, Sen & Laskar, 2011; Das-Gupta, Zhenghua, Zhenming & Hwa-Ok, 2003). However, the phenomenon of child gender preference is not peculiar to the South Asian countries alone; a considerable level of preference for a male child has also been reported in Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa (Ndu & Uzochukwu, 2011; Adeleye & Okonkwo, 2010; Kana, 2010).

A number of broad social, cultural and economic factors have been identified as the causes of child gender preferences. A study by Bhattacharjya, Das and Mog (2014) on the factors affecting child gender preferences among mothers attending an antenatal clinic at the Agartala Government Medical College, Agartala, India shows that 40.8% of the respondents preferred a son, 29.7% preferred a daughter, while only 29.5% had no gender preference. The reasons given for the son preference were that sons provide better security in old age, status symbol, and generation continuation. Furthermore, the study also shows that there is a significant relationship between the socio-economic condition of the respondents and their child gender preference as a higher male child preference was observed among the rural, poor and illiterate women. Hence, the poorer the socio-economic condition of the women, the higher the preference for a son.

Fuse (2008) carried out a multi-country study of gender preference for children. He reported that a son preference is more prominent in Senegal and Burkina Faso where over 30% of women preferred a male child. This phenomenon also exists in West and South Asia as well as in North Africa. He used the multinomial regression to examine the link between socio-economic variables and son preference. The result shows that education, wealth and place of residence are significantly related to a son preference. Specifically, he found that the lower the household wealth is, the higher the odds of having a son preference are. This shows that women in households with lower income are more likely to have a male child preference. This finding is not uncommon as it is consistent with the

popular belief mostly by the poor people that male children have a higher potential to support the family economically than the girls (Fuse, 2008).

A study by Reeve, Desai and Vikram (2012) also confirmed that there is a significant relationship between gender preference and the socio-economic factors. The researchers found that women who say they want more sons than daughters are less likely to be employed; they are more disempowered; more likely to be in an exogamous marriage where they met their husband on the wedding day; and less likely to share meals or outings with their husbands.

A study by Gaudin (2011) on the influence of wealth on a son preference in Indian families also shows that higher standards of living at the macroeconomic and households levels are associated with lower son preference. More specifically, Gaudin reported that "*higher absolute wealth is strongly associated with lower son preference, and the effect is 20% - 40% stronger when the household's community-specific wealth score is included in the regression. Coefficients on relative wealth are positive and significant, although lower in magnitude*". This implies that economic development reduces the preference for a male child.

However, a study by Pande and Malhotra (2006) on a son preference in India shows there is no significant relationship between wealth and a son preference. The study reported that village-level economic development does not have a significant relationship with a son preference. Also, ownership of assets does not have any relationship with a son preference, suggesting that economic development does not increase a son preference.

It is crucial to observe that the relationship between the place of residence and child gender preference has been examined by some studies. For example, Fuse (2008) examined the effect of place of residence on child gender preference. He discovered that rural dwellers were more likely to have gender preference for a son when compared to the urban dwellers. The reason for this might be that rural residents may not be well exposed to modern ideas and new opportunities. Also, rural dwellers are more likely to own land; hence there would be a need for sons to inherit it (Fuse, 2008).

It is believed that education shapes people's attitudes and values. It is not unexpected to see well educated people not to have child gender preference. A study by EL-Gilany and Shady (2007) on the causes and determinants of male child preference among women in Mansoura, Egypt, shows that education is one of the fundamental determinants of child gender preference. The higher the educational qualification of people is, the lower the gender preference becomes. Specifically, the study found that mothers with illiterate husbands were 10 times more likely to prefer a male child than those married to educated husbands.

Fuse (2008) shows that education is a key predictor regarding child gender preference. The researcher unveiled that attaining primary school education reduces the odds of having a preference for a male child by 20%, while above secondary level education reduces the odds for male child preference by 32%. In the same vein, Pande and Malhotra (2006) show that education is

the most significant factor that can reduce a son preference. They found that uneducated women are more likely to have a son preference compared to educated women. Specifically, they reported that attaining at least a primary school level of education reduces parental preference for having a son, while exposure to secondary or higher level of education is even more significant.

In addition to the educational level of the parents, it is expected that their access to information will further reduce male child preference. Pande and Malhotra (2006) established a relationship between access to information and a son preference. They revealed that exposure to various sources of media (print and electronic) is significantly associated with weaker male child preference. This is so because access to the mass media exposes people to information on the modern way of lifestyle and contributes to making people's preferences more egalitarian.

A study by Fuse (2008), however, discovered no relationship between mass media and a son preference. The contradiction between Fuse (2008) and Pande and Malhotra's (2006) research on the effect of media on a son preference could be partly as a result of different methodologies used. While Fuse (2008) examined the effect at the macro level, Pande and Malhotra (2006) examined the effect at the micro level.

## Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the social action theory. Social action is central to the Weberian school of thought. Weber conceived Sociology as a science of social action (Cuff, Sharock & Francis, 2005). Weber (1949) opines that one of the fundamental objectives of sociological analyses should involve the understanding and analysis of action in terms of its subjective meaning. Social action, according to Weber, can be defined as the actions of an actor done in a social context. Social action is an actor's behaviour that is intended to influence and is influenced by the actions of others in the society (Cuff, Sharock & Francis, 2005). For social action to occur there must be meaning attached to it by the actors. It is this meaning that will give rise to social action. Hence, there is an intimate link between action and the subjective meaning given to it by the actor. These subjective meanings are usually influenced by the socio-cultural factors (Ritzer, 2008; Turner, 1993).

The Social Action Theory believes a different background and attachments will result in different behaviour. That is, there is a nexus between the actor's behaviour and his or her peculiar socio-cultural situation. For instance, dancing and drinking at a party is acceptable, however, the same behaviour is not acceptable at a funeral. The Social Action Theory does not completely neglect the impact of social structure on the action of an individual. It posits that the individual behaviour shapes the social structure; in the same vein the social structure also influences the individual behaviour.

Child gender preference is based on a set of values and norms that are produced and reproduced in a complex interaction between people. Couples, parents (and grandparents) have an essentialist understanding of what sons and daughters can be or do, and this understanding is socially constructed. Therefore, daughters and sons are ascribed different symbolic values related to the perceived economic and social contributions they make to their families. The custom in Igbo society is that male children are valued for their role in retaining or perpetuating the family name to remain in the family so as to keep the lineage of the family growth, while women will be married out. In addition, male children also serve as a provision to old-age security and a source of defence and social prestige to the parents. Croll (2000) notes that daughters may contribute much in terms of performing household chores and caring for family members, but that this work is not valued as highly as sons' labour, which typically takes place outside the household and generates income thus enhancing the economic status of the family. These symbolic values are derived from interaction and modified through an interpretative process.

## Methodology

The study was conducted in Lagos West Senatorial District, Lagos, Nigeria. Lagos West district is one of the three senatorial districts that make up Lagos State. The district has 10 local government areas. These are: Agege, Ifako-Ijaiye, Alimosho, Badagry, Ojo, Ajeromi/Ifelodun, Amuwo-Odofin, Oshodi/Isolo, Ikeja and Mushin. The district occupies an area of 1077 km$^2$ and has a population of 5,574,680 people (National Population Commission, 2010).

The research design used for the study was survey. The adoption of this research design helped greatly in the generation of quantitative data for the study. The study population was male and female Igbo residents of Lagos West district.

A multi-stage random sampling was used to select the eligible respondents in which the sampling went through five stages. The first stage involved dividing the district into local government areas. All the ten local government areas within the district were selected at this stage. The second stage involved dividing the local government areas into wards out of which two wards were randomly selected from each local government area. Thus, 20 geo-political wards were selected. The third stage involved a random selection of one street in each geo-political ward. Thus, a total of 20 streets were selected. The fourth stage involved using purposive sampling to select 12 Igbo households from each street. Thus, a total of 240 households were selected. The final stage involved a random selection of an eligible respondent in each sampled household. An eligible respondent is either a male or female Igbo between 16 and 75 years old.

The questionnaire schedule was used to obtain data from the respondents, while SPSS was used to analyse the quantitative data. The percentages, mode and chi-square were the statistical methods used for the analysis.

*Sample Characteristics*

Table 1 shows that 50.8% (99) of the respondents were female, while 49.2% (96) were male. As for the age of the respondents, 35.4% (69) were in the age group 36 - 45years; 28.7% (56) were in the age group 26 - 35; 26.2% (51) were in the age group 46 - 55 years; 6.2% (12) were in the age group 16 - 25 years; 2.1% (4) were in the age group 66 and above, while 1.5% (3) were in the age group 56-65. The majority of the respondents - 73.3% (143) - were married; 8.2% (16) were single; 8.2% (16) were separated; 6.2% (12) were divorced, while 4.1% (8) were widowed. Furthermore, the table shows that 61% (119) had 1 - 4 children; 23% (45) had 5 - 8 children; 12.3% (24) had no child, while 3.6% (7) had 9 - 12 children. At 89.7% (175) Christians were a huge majority; 5.6% (11) were Muslims, while 4.6% (9) were traditional worshippers.

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by their Socio-Economic Characteristics

| Socio-Economic Characteristics | No | % |
|---|---|---|
| **Sex** | | |
| Male | 96 | 49.2 |
| Female | 99 | 50.8 |
| Total | 195 | 100 |
| **Age** | | |
| 16-25 | 12 | 6.2 |
| 26-35 | 56 | 28.7 |
| 36-45 | 69 | 35.4 |
| 46-55 | 51 | 26.2 |
| 56-65 | 3 | 1.5 |
| 66 and Above | 4 | 2.1 |
| Total | 195 | 100 |
| **Marital Status** | | |
| Single | 16 | 8.2 |
| Married | 143 | 73.3 |
| Separated | 16 | 8.2 |
| Divorced | 12 | 6.2 |
| Widowed | 8 | 4.1 |
| Total | 195 | 100 |
| **No of children** | | |
| 0 | 24 | 12 |
| 1-4 | 119 | 61 |
| 5-8 | 45 | 23 |
| 9-12 | 7 | 4 |
| Total | 195 | 100 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Religion** | | |
| Christianity | 175 | 89.7 |
| Islam | 11 | 5.6 |
| Traditional | 9 | 4.6 |
| Total | 195 | 100 |
| **Education Qualification** | | |
| No formal Education | 27 | 13.8 |
| Primary Education | 71 | 36.4 |
| Secondary | 52 | 26.7 |
| Higher | 45 | 23 |
| Total | 195 | 100 |
| **Occupation** | | |
| Trading | 47 | 24 |
| Artisan | 28 | 14 |
| Farming | 4 | 2 |
| Private Sector employee | 23 | 11.8 |
| Civil/Public Servant | 44 | 22.6 |
| Professional | 19 | 9.7 |
| Student | 4 | 2.1 |
| Retiree | 3 | 1.5 |
| Housewife | 23 | 11.8 |
| Total | 195 | 100 |
| **Economic Statius** | | |
| Low income | 82 | 42 |
| Medium income | 84 | 43 |
| High income | 29 | 14.9 |
| Total | 195 | 100 |
| **Level of interaction with the male child** | | |
| Very often | 108 | 55 |
| Often | 40 | 21 |
| Not quite often | 19 | 10 |
| Don't know/declined | 28 | 14 |
| Total | 195 | 100 |
| **Level of interaction with the female child** | | |
| Very often | 107 | 55 |
| Often | 52 | 27 |
| Not quite often | 16 | 8 |
| Don't know/Declined | 20 | 10 |
| Total | 195 | 100 |
| **Relationship with the male child** | | |
| Warm and friendly | 127 | 65 |
| Not so friendly | 40 | 21 |
| Cold | 12 | 6 |
| Don't know/Declined | 16 | 8 |
| Total | 195 | 100 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Relationship with the female child** | | |
| Warm and friendly | 123 | 63 |
| Not so friendly | 36 | 19 |
| Cold | 8 | 4 |
| Don't know/Declined | 28 | 14 |
| Total | 195 | 100 |
| **Child Gender preference** | | |
| Male | 129 | 66.2 |
| Female | 18 | 9.2 |
| Any one | 48 | 24.6 |
| Total | 195 | 100 |
| **Is the male child more important than the female child?** | | |
| Yes | 139 | 71 |
| No | 48 | 25 |
| Don't know/Declined | 8 | 4 |
| Total | 195 | 100 |
| **Benefits of the male child** | | |
| Provide more economic support than female | 78 | 40 |
| Inheritance right | 64 | 32.8 |
| Carry on the family name | 30 | 15.4 |
| More values attached to male child than the female child | 23 | 11.8 |
| | 195 | 100 |
| Total | | |

*Source: Researcher's Survey (2016)*

Furthermore, regarding the respondents' education Table 1 shows that 36.4% (71) had primary education; 26.7% (52) had secondary education; 23% (45) had higher education, while 13.8% (27) were illiterates. By occupation, 24% (47) of the respondents were traders; 22.6% (44) were civil servants; 14.4% (28) were artisans; 11.8% (23) were private sector employees; 11.8% (23) were full housewives; 9.7% (19) were professionals; 2.1% (4) were farmers; 2.1% (4) were students, while 1.5% (3) were retirees. As for the economic status of the respondents, 43.1% (84) were medium income earners; 42.1% (82) were low income earners, while only 14.9% (29) were high income earners.

When asked how often they interact with their male children, 55.4% (108) of the respondents answered that they interact very often; 20.5% (40) often interact with their male children; 14.4% (28) declined the question, while 9.8% (19) said "not quite often". On the other hand, 54.9% (107) of the respondents very often interact with their female children; 26.7% (52) often interact with their female children; 10.3% (20) declined the question, while 8.2% (16) said not quite often. The answers to the question on the relationship of the respondents with their male children indicate that 65.1% (127) had warm and friendly relationship with their male children; 20.5% (40) said their relationship with their male children was not so friendly; 8.2% (16) declined the question, while 6.2% (12) had a

cold relationship. A similar question on the respondents' relationship with their female children shows that 63% (123) had warm and friendly relationship with their female children; 18.5% (36) relationships with their female children were not so friendly; 14.4% (28) declined the question, while 4% (8) had a cold relationship.

It is important to note that 66.2% (129) of the respondents preferred to have a male child rather than a female child; 24.6% (48) had no preference, while only 9.2% (21) preferred a female child. Most respondents, that is, 71.3% (139) believed that boys are more important than girls; 24.6% (48) discarded the assertion that boys are more important than girls, while 4% (8) declined the question. On why the male child is more important than the female child, 40% (78) believed that the male child would provide more economic support to them when they are old than the female child; 32.8% (64) said it was because the male child has more inheritance rights than the female child; 15.4% (30) believed it is only the male child who can carry on the family tree, while 11.8% (23) believed more values are accorded to the male child than the female child in the society.

## FINDINGS

Table 2 depicts the co-relationship between the sex of the respondents and child gender preference. Among the male respondents, 59.4% had preference for the male child; 29.2% had preference for any gender, while 11.5% had preference for the female child. As for the female respondents, 72.7% had preference for the male child; 20.2% had preference for any gender, while 7.1% had preference for the female child.

Table 2: Sex and Child Gender Preference

| Sex | gender | | | | | | Total | |
|-----|--------|---|--------|---|--------|---|-------|---|
| | male | | female | | anyone | | | |
| | No | % | No | % | No | % | No | % |
| Male respon-dents | 57 | 59.4 | 11 | 11.5 | 28 | 29.2 | 96 | 100 |
| Female respon-dents | 72 | 72.7 | 7 | 7.1 | 20 | 20.2 | 99 | 100 |
| Table 3: Total | 129 | 66.2 | 18 | 9.2 | 48 | 24.6 | 195 | 100 |

**Source:** *Researcher's Survey (2016)*

Table 3 illustrates the co-relationship between the number of children and age of the respondents. Of those who had 9 - 12 children, 42.9% were in the age group 46-55 years and another 42.9% were above 65 years old, while 14.3% were 56 - 65 years. As for those who had 5 - 8 children, 86.7% were 46 - 55 years; 4.4% were 36 - 45 years old; 4.4% were 56 - 65 years old; 2.2% were 26 - 35 years, while 2.2% were above 65 years old. Of those who had 1 - 4 children, 56.3% were 36 - 45 years old; 33.6% were 26 - 35 years old; 7.6% were 46 - 55 years old, while 2.5% were 16 - 25 years old. Lastly, 62.5% of those who had no children, where 26 - 35 years, while 37.5% were 16-25 years old.

Table 3: No of Children and Age

| No of Children | Age | | | | | | | | | | | | Total | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | 16-25 | | 26-35 | | 36-45 | | 46-55 | | 56-65 | | Above 65 | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | %. | No | % | No | % | No | % |
| 0 | 9 | 37.5 | 15 | 62.5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 24 | 100 |
| 1-4 | 3 | 2.5 | 40 | 33.6 | 67 | 56.3 | 9 | 7.6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 119 | 100 |
| 5-8 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2.2 | 2 | 4.4 | 39 | 86.7 | 2 | 4.4 | 1 | 2.2 | 45 | 100 |
| 9-12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 42.9 | 1 | 14.3 | 3 | 42.9 | 7 | 100 |
| Total | 12 | 6.2 | 56 | 28.7 | 69 | 35.4 | 51 | 26.2 | 3 | 1.5 | 4 | 2.1 | 195 | 100 |

Source: Researcher's Survey (2016)

Table 4 shows the co-relationship between the number of children in the household and their sex. It shows that all respondents who had 9-12 children had only female children. Among those who had 5-8 children, 71.1% had only female children, while 28.9% had only male children. For those who had 1- 4 children, 60.5% had both male and female children, while 39.5% had only male children.

Table 4: No of Children and Sex of Children

| No of Children | Children | | | | | | | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No child | | Both male and female | | Only male | | Only female | | | |
| | No | % | No | % | No | % | No | % | No | % |
| 0 | 24 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 24 | 100 |
| 1-4 | 0 | 0 | 72 | 60.5 | 47 | 39.5 | 0 | 0 | 119 | 100 |
| 5-8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13 | 28.9 | 32 | 71.1 | 45 | 100 |
| 9-12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 100 | 7 | 100 |
| Total | 24 | 12.3 | 72 | 36.9 | 60 | 30.8 | 39 | 20 | 195 | 100 |

**Source**: Researcher's Survey (2016)

Table 5 shows the co-relationship between the number of children and income of the respondents. All the respondents who had 9 - 12 children were high income earners. Out of those who had 5 - 8 children, 51.1% were medium income earners, while 48.9% were high income earners. Of those who had 1- 4 children, 51.3% were medium income earners, while 48.7% were low income earners. Lastly, all the respondents who had no child were low income earners.

Table 5: No of Children and Income

| No of Children | income | | | | | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | low | | medium | | high | | | |
| | No | % | No | % | No | % | No | % |
| 0 | 24 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 24 | 100 |
| 1-4 | 58 | 48.7 | 61 | 51.3 | 0 | 0 | 119 | 100 |
| 5-8 | 0 | 0 | 23 | 51.1 | 22 | 48.9 | 45 | 100 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9-12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 100 | 7 | 100 |
| Total | 82 | 42.1 | 84 | 43.1 | 29 | 14.9 | 195 | 100 |

Source: Researcher's Survey (2016)

Table 6 shows the co-relationship between the respondents' number of children and educational qualification. All respondents who had 9 - 12 children had attained higher education. Of those who had 5 - 8 children, 84.4% had attained higher education, while 15.6% had attained secondary education. Out of those who had 1 - 4 children, 59.7% had attained primary education; 37.8% had attained secondary education, while 2.5% had no formal education. Lastly, all respondents who had no children were illiterates.

Table 6: No of children and  Education

| No of Children | education | | | | | | | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | no formal education | | primary | | secondary | | higher | | | |
| | No | % | No | % | No | % | No | % | No | % |
| 0 | 24 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 24 | 100 |
| 1-4 | 3 | 2.5 | 71 | 59.7 | 45 | 37.8 | 0 | 0 | 119 | 100 |
| 5-8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 15.6 | 38 | 84.4 | 45 | 100 |
| 9-12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 100 | 7 | 100 |
| **Total** | 27 | 13.8 | 71 | 36.4 | 52 | 26.7 | 45 | 23.1 | 195 | 100 |

**Source**: Researcher's Survey (2016)

Table 7 shows the co-relationship between the respondents' number of children and their gender preference. The table unveils that among those who had 9 - 12 children, 71.4% had preference for any gender, while 28.6% had preference for the male child. Of those who had 5 - 8 children, 73.3% preferred any gender, 17.8% had preference for female child, while 8.9% had preference for a male

child. As for those who had 1 - 4 children, 83.2% had preference for a male child, 8.4% had preference for a female child, while another 8.4% had preference for any gender.

Table 7: No. of Children and Child Gender Preference

| No of Children | Gender | | | | | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | male | | female | | any one | | | |
| | No | % | No | % | No | % | No | % |
| 0 | 24 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 24 | 100 |
| 1-4 | 99 | 83.2 | 10 | 8.4 | 10 | 8.4 | 119 | 100 |
| 5-8 | 4 | 8.9 | 8 | 17.8 | 33 | 73.3 | 45 | 100 |
| 9-12 | 2 | 28.6 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 71.4 | 7 | 100 |
| Total | 129 | 66.2 | 18 | 9.2 | 48 | 24.6 | 195 | 100 |

**Source**: Researcher's Survey (2016)

RESULTS

Table 8 shows the output of the cross-tabulation of the two variables (education and gender preference). The chi-square value of the relationship is 105.945[a], the degree of freedom is 6, while the P = 0.000. The contingency coefficient is 0.593.

Table 8: Education and Child Gender Preference

| Education | Gender Preference | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | | Female | | Any one | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| No formal education | 26 | 96.3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3.7 |
| Primary | 63 | 88.7 | 4 | 5.6 | 4 | 5.6 |
| Secondary | 34 | 65.4 | 10 | 19 | 8 | 15.4 |
| Higher | 6 | 13.3 | 4 | 8.8 | 35 | 77.8 |
| Total | 129 | 66.2 | 18 | 9.2 | 48 | 24.6 |

| $X^2$= 105.945[a] | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| d.f. =6, P = 0.000, C= 0.593 | | | | | | | |

Table 9 shows the output of the cross-tabulation of the two variables (income and gender preference). The chi-square value of the relationship is 69.600[a], the degree of freedom is 4, while the P = 0.000. The contingency coefficient is 0.513.

Table 9: Income and Child Gender Preference

| Income | Gender Preference | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | | Female | | Anyone | |
| | No | % | No | % | No | % |
| Low Income | 73 | 89 | 4 | 4.9 | 5 | 6.1 |
| Medium income | 52 | 61.9 | 12 | 14.3 | 20 | 23.8 |
| High income | 4 | 13.8 | 2 | 6.9 | 23 | 79.3 |
| Total | 129 | 66.2 | 18 | 9.2 | 48 | 24.6 |
| | | | | | | |
| $X^2$= 69.600[a] | | | | | | |
| d.f. =4, P = 0.000, C= 0.513 | | | | | | |

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study seems to reveal that the sex of the respondents affects their child gender preference. For instance, 72.7% of the female respondents, as against 59.4% of the male, had preference for a male child. Also, it seems that the sex of the child affects the number of children the respondents had. For instance, all the respondents with 9 - 12 children had only female children. This finding is in line with what was discovered by Agbor (2011). He found that in Calabar, Nigeria having more female than male children leads to an increase in the family size as people kept giving birth hoping that they would eventually have a male child to satisfy their desire to have sons rather than daughters.

This study seems to indicate that a higher number of high income earners were more likely to prefer a larger family size of five children and above than the low income earners. This is contrary to what was discovered by Agbor (2013). He reported that respondents with lower income were more likely to have large family size compared to their counterparts with higher income. Also, we were taken aback by the finding on education and family size. We found that those with higher educational qualification were more likely to have large family size. This is contrary to the findings of most studies on education and family size. For example, Agbor (2013) discovered that the level of educational attainment was found to have an inverse relationship with large family size as

respondents with higher educational attainment were more likely to have smaller family size as compared to respondents with no formal and primary education.

Furthermore, the relationship between level of education and gender preference for children was examined. The data reveal that the higher the educational qualification of the respondents, the lower the gender preference for the male child. For example, 96.3% of the respondents who had no formal education preferred a male child. This relationship is statistically significant at $P < 0.05$. The null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between education and gender preference for children was rejected. Therefore, the study accepted the hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between education and gender preference. This finding is contrary to the work of Igwenagu (2013) who found no significant relationship between parental education and gender preferences for children.

Lastly, we examined the relationship between income and gender preference for children. The data reveal that respondents who had low income were more likely to have preference for a male child when compared to respondents who were medium and high income earners. For example, 89% of respondents who were low income earners preferred to have a male child. This proportion was higher than that of those who were medium and high income earners; hence, the higher the income of the respondents, the lower the gender preference for sons. This relationship is statistically significant at $P < 0.05$. The null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between income and gender preference for children was rejected. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between income and gender preference for children. This finding corroborates the work of Agbor (2011) who discovered that gender preference for children is a function of parental income.

From our findings, it is established that education and income contribute significantly to the gender preferences for their children among the Igbos in Lagos West district of Lagos State, Nigeria.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

With reference to our findings, and in order to eradicate the phenomenon of gender preference in our society we recommend that the Government of Nigeria at all levels should pursue with vigour poverty reduction and eradication programmes. Furthermore, the Government should focus on creating sustainable jobs for both the unemployed men and women in the country so that they can as well become responsible parents who will cater and cherish both their sons and daughters. There must be concerted efforts in ensuring that the standard of living of the citizenry is raised.

The government should intensify efforts on revalidating the Universal Basic Education (UBE) in a manner that will enable children of low income parents to have access to formal education at a critical formative stage of education delivery. This should be tuition-free at the primary, secondary and higher school levels.

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