

**ORIGINAL ARTICLE****Socio-cultural Factors and Male-Child Preference among Couples in Ilorin-West Local Government Area of Kwara-State, Nigeria**

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**Abstract**

In most human societies, the socio-cultural practices cause the prevalence of male child preference among couples. In fact, the issue of male-child preference has attracted global attention ranging from individuals, scholars, intellectuals as well as other relevant professions among others. It is on this ground that, this study looked at the socio-cultural factors responsible for male child preference among couples in Ilorin. To execute the research agenda, the study used cross-sectional survey, while multi-stage random sampling was used to select 384 respondents. Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS/PC) Version 20.0 was used to analyze the quantitative data. The statistical methods employed in the analysis included the percentages, the mode, and cross-tabulation. Chi-square was used to test the two hypotheses formulated. The study discovers that there is a significant relationship between the understanding of religion and preference for male child. The research also discovers that there is a significant relationship between culture and male child preference. Based on these findings, the study recommends that the cultural practices that oppress women or see women as subordinate such as the small inheritance rights given to women and the tradition that forbids women from bearing their fathers' name after marrying should be abolished.

*Keywords:* Couples/ Custom/ Gender/ Male-Child/ Preference/ Religion

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

The phenomenon of male child preference is not new. It has in fact existed for centuries. Females have suffered degradation and dehumanization through the ages. In India, inheritance was traced only through males. In Athens, women were regarded as minors regardless of their ages. They could neither inherit nor own property. In Rome, women were treated like wards without any political or legal power. The scenario was the same in Arab societies before the advent of Islam. Women could not inherit their parents' properties (Akintola, 2001). Through time, the male child has been given more recognition and acceptance than his female counterpart. This practice appears not to be a peculiar problem with the Ilorin of Kwara State Nigeria alone, but a worldwide phenomenon (Bumiller, 1991; Basu, 1992; Das Gupta and Chung, 2007 and Milazzo, 2012).

The existing socio-cultural practices in the society cause the prevalence of male child preference among couples is wide-ranging and has huge impact. In many societies including Nigeria, the birth of a baby boy is received with great joy; the rites are more elaborate and the mother receives huge compliments for giving birth to a male child. The dad enjoys great pride and respect with the assurance of the protection of his assets and continuity of the family line. The birth of a girl, on the other hand, is less ceremonial with reduced value attributed to the mother and the child. The reception ritual is minimal and less colorful (Ras-Work, 2006).

The desire for a male child has resulted in a situation where husbands keep pressuring their wives to have more children, which in turn predispose the health of the wives to danger. When this fails to produce the desired results, men might resort to polygamy in the hope that the other women would give them the son they need (Elele, 2002). To avoid being divorced, most women give birth to many children, jeopardizing their lives in the search for that elusive boy. This practice is one of those observed issues that have contributed to high rate of maternal deaths in Africa and increase in Nigeria's population growth rate (Milazzo, 2012).

Also, a considerable number of men look outside their matrimonial homes in search of male children. Many marriages become shaky simply because the woman was unable to have a male child. The Ilorin culture believes a woman is just an extra to humanity. They believe she has a little portion of her father's house, and the same thing happens when she gets to her spouse's household. A girl child is made to accept that her existence is just to get married and raise children (Amara, 2011).

Male child preference has been a major issue that has led to female infanticide, sex-specific abortions, and pre-marital sex selection. Preference for sons among couples has also contributed immensely to a large family size, high population, gender discrimination and low girl-child empowerment (Milazzo, 2012; Dudeja, Singh, Jindal & Bhatnagar, 2013).

There are many studies on the prevalence of male child preference. For example, Rossi and Rouanet (2014) research on gender preferences in Africa shows that male child preference is more prevalence in North Africa than other regions in Africa. Similarly, Kojima (2012) found that preference for male child is very common in South Korea and Singapore than Japan. However, the socio-cultural factors causing male child preference have not been well accounted for in Ilorin, Kwara-State, Nigeria. This gap is what this paper filled.

## 1.2 Objectives of the Study

The following are the objective of the study.

1. To examine the influence of custom on male child preference;
2. To investigate the effect of the understanding of religion on male child preference and

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 General Factors and Male Child Preference

The underlying workings of female discrimination are indisputably complex. However, some general factors have been identified which together create a situation where sons are preferred, and daughters suffer discrimination and neglect; most of these factors are deeply rooted in cultural assumptions about gender identity and relations. Boys and girls are expected to and, indeed, do exhibit different behaviors, undertake various physical and emotional tasks, and participate in and perform different practical and ritual activities within families and kinship groups. Male child preference is an important component of patrilocal marriages and patrilineal kinship system. Hence, ethnographic proof suggests that son preference emanates from the larger system of norms governing family formation, practices and attitudes in a given cultural setting (Bélanger, 2002; John, Ravinder, Rajni, Saraswati & Alpana, 2008; Greenhalgh, 2013; Guilmoto, 2015).

The underlying patriarchal attitudes and behavior, as well as discriminatory gender norms and structures are the root causes of male child preference in human society. Abara (2012) opines that there is also the belief that husbands are mostly the heads of the families and their decisions are final while women must respect them, and obey their husbands at all times. Nigeria is an extremely patriarchal society, where men control and dominate all spheres of women's lives. Women are in a subordinate position (particularly at the community and household levels). The impact of the mother and the father is particularly powerful in shaping and continuing patriarchy. The mother shows the role model for daughters while the father demonstrates to sons what it means to 'be a man' (World Bank, 2001). Ideas about manhood are deeply embedded. From an early age, male children may be socialized into gender roles aimed at keeping men in power and control. Many grow up to know that dominant behavior towards girls and women is part of being a man. They are therefore constructed in the minds of men as dependent and inferior partners who need to listen to and follow their spousal leadership and instructions.

In Nigeria, many cultures are patriarchal which emphasize male dominance and subservience of women. In this kind of society, couples prefer to have sons rather than daughters because a daughter takes her husband's family name dropping that of her parents', depends on the male child by couples for financial support at old age, also helps them on their farm or business (Eguavoen, Odiagbe & Obetoh, 2007).

Traditions and customs are among the factors causing gender inequality. Some traditions require that only sons can perform certain functions under religious

and cultural traditions such as death rituals for parents. For instance, among the Igbos, the first son (Opara) by tradition inherits the Ofo for title – the symbol of family authority and represents the family in religious matters. Inheritance rights of male children also contribute greatly to couples' preference for sons, in which female children are often denied the right to inherit from their family as they are considered to belong to their husbands; therefore, they get less than the male children (Isiugo-Abanihe, 2003). Also the male child serves as widowhood insurance for his mother, because widow's claim on the deceased husband's properties enjoys a higher social legitimacy if she has a male child (Das Gupta, Zhenghua, Bohua, Zhenming, Chung, &Hwa-Ok 2003).

Other factors that also determine couples' preference for sons are family pressures and peer influence, concern for successor ship. For instance, there is a customary practice (NrachiNwanyi) in Igbo land where, when a man dies without a male child, the family selects one of his daughters to stay back in his household, chooses lovers with whom she cohabits to raise male successors (Olubayo, 2013).

The inclination for sons over daughters can be connected to religion. A critical look at all the major religions of the world reveals that they are controlled by men in the form of clergy and religious authorities. We will also find that most of the religions have a male-dominated imagery and language about God. Onwutuebe (2013) asserts that religious understandings of certain portions of Holy Books fuel general descriptions regarding women's submission to men. Though, some of these religious texts and doctrines have, particularly in recent times, become highly disputed. However, the sustenance of patriarchy, mostly through religious conservatism still significantly influences the persistence of unequal gender relations and son preference. Many religious leaders are most especially Christian, and Islamic have, for example, espoused teachings and dogma that acknowledged women as minors in the spheres of religion. These forms of religious understandings often emphasize certain portions of religious texts while disregarding other areas in a bid to sustain the foundation of patriarchy which ultimately is one of the salient factors causing male child preference in Nigerian society.

## **2.2 Socio-Cultural Factors and Male Child Preference: An Empirical Overview**

The perceived importance of having a son among couples have been analyzed along with different social, economic, political and cultural reasons that significantly determined couples' desire for the sex of child they prefer to have especially as their first child. A study by Edewor (2001) on "the fertility and the value of children among the Isoko of Delta State" claimed that male children are respected for their contribution to retaining or preserving family name, serving as a source of social prestige and defense to parents, provision of old-age security and so on.

Das Gupta and Chung (2007) researched on why son preference is declining in South Korea. The researchers analyzed the 1991 and 2003 data collected in the Korea National Fertility and Family Health Surveys. They used multivariate logistic regression analysis to estimate the odds ratio for the association between a respondent's characteristics and having strong son preference. The researchers discovered that religion, parental pressure, and woman's birth control positively affected son preference. Das Gupta and Chung (2007) discovered that "if the husband

is his parents' only son – and therefore the only source of a continued line of male descendants – there is a significantly higher likelihood of the woman reporting that she must have a son'.

Study by Eguavoen *et al.* (2007) on “the status of women, sex preference, decision making and fertility control in Ekpoma community of Nigeria” unveiled that 89.5% of women preferred sons to daughters. The reasons given for the preference of male child were that the female children cannot continue to bear their fathers' family names once that have married. The fear that one's family will pale into extinction if they give birth to only female children is one of the fundamental reasons for male child preference among the respondents. Also the tradition gives more power to the male when it comes to inheritance than female.

It is believed that religion exerts a huge effect on people's attitudes and values. Various studies (for example, Kim & Song, 2005; Das Gupta & Chung, 2007; Kojima, 2012; Rossi & Rouanet, 2014) had examined the nexus between religion and male child preference. Study by Kim and Song (2005) on the influence of religion on male child preference in Korea discovered that at the regional level, religion (Buddhism) rather than the socio-economic factors is more associated with male child preference. Buddhism according to the researchers has a positive correlation with male child preference. That is, the higher the prevalence of Buddhism, the higher the prevalence of male child preference. However, being Catholic or Protestant does not have a significant relationship with male child preference (Kim & Song, 2005). This finding is akin to Das Gupta and Chung (2007) finding on the effect of religion on male child. Das Gupta and Chung (2007) found out that Buddhism is strongly associated with higher son preference in the case of women. However, being Buddhist does not have a significant relationship with male child preference in the case of their husbands.

However, Rossi and Rouanets' (2014) analysis of gender preferences in Africa unveils a negative relationship between religion and gender preferences in Sub-Sahara Africa. They discovered that in Sub-Sahara Africa, religion is not correlated with gender preferences: within a country, Muslims exhibit the same taste for balance as other religious groups.

### 2.3 Theoretical Framework

Social construction feminism theory was used to explain the social and cultural factors affecting male child preference. The social construction feminism comes out of the general school of thought entitled social constructionism. Social constructionism is derived from the work of Berger and Luckmann (1967) on "The Social Construction of Reality", which introduced the term social construction to sociologists. Social constructionism proposes that everything people "know" or see as "reality" is partially, if not entirely, socially situated. A social construction is something that is created or invented by the society and not something that exists independently or by itself in the "natural" world. Norms and cultural practices give rise to the emergence and existence of social constructs. The social constructs are being governed and managed by cultural practices and norms of the society.

Social construction feminism which is an offshoot of social constructionism theory examines the anatomy of the established gendered social order as a whole. It sees gender as a society wide institution that is built into all the major social organizations of society (Marecek, Crawford & Popp, 2004). As a social institution,

gender determines the allocation of economic resources, privileges and power. Gendered expectations and norms get built into men's and women's sense of "self" as a certain form of human being, and alternative ways of acting and arranging work and family life are literally unthinkable (Lober, 2001).

Inequality according to the social construction feminists is the core of gender itself: men and women are socially discerned in order to justify the unequal treatment meted to them. Although gender is entangled with other unequal statuses, alleviating the gendered part of these immanent structures of inequality can be said to be a tall order, because gendering is so pervasive. In fact, it is as a result of this pervasiveness that makes so many people to have the belief that gendering is natural because it is biological (Marecek, Crawford & Popp, 2004).

Social construction feminism asserts that the construction of gender is invisible. However, it focuses on the processes that create gender differences. The common social process that permits us to see the gender differences is the gendered division of labour in the home that allocates child care and housework to women. Gender segregation and gender typing of occupations that do not allow women and men to do the same kind of work are among the social processes that differentiate genders. Another important social process that distinguishes between genders is selective comparisons that ignore similarities between women and men such as women's and men's separate sports competitions (Lober, 2001).

According to the social constructionism feminism theory, the processes of gender segregation, endorsement of accepted gendered behaviour, and condemnation of deviations from the established norms are all manifestations of social control and power. Religion, the law and other social intuitions reinforce the borderlines between men and women. Social constructionism feminism, therefore, analyzes the cultural and historical context in which sexuality is enacted and learned. What sexual behaviours are approved, and proscribed differ for men and women and vary over time and place (Diamond & Butterworth, 2008). Sexuality, in this context, is a product of social pressures, cultural values and learning. Changing this established gendered social order, therefore, requires a conscious restructuring of the gendered division of labour at work and in the family, and at the same time neglecting the taken-for-granted assumptions about the strengths and capabilities of men and women that justify the status quo.

This theory provides a useful explanatory tool for the study. One of the fundamental concepts of the theory is that 'gender' is socially situated. That is, it is created by the society and not something that exists independently or by itself in the natural world. It is being governed and managed by cultural practices, religion, and norms of the society.

Another crucial concept of the theory is the concept of 'inequality'. Inequality according to the social construction feminists is the core of gender itself. Men and women are socially differentiated and they occupy unequal positions and this justifies the unequal treatment given to them. This inequality is the reason couples cherish a particular gender over other and this is rooted in a set of values and norms that are produced, and reinforced by tradition, religion and all other social institutions of the society. Therefore, addressing gender preference will require deliberate readjustment of the cultural practices and norms governing gender.

### 3. Methods

The study was conducted in Ilorin-West local government area of Kwara-State. Ilorin-West is one of the sixteen local government areas that makes up Kwara-State. Its headquarters is in Wara. The local government is situated between latitude 8°30'N and longitude 4°35'E. It has an area of 105 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 364,666 at the 2006 census. The local government is divided into four quarters namely: Ajikobi, Alanamu, Magaji-Nigeria and Waraon/Egbejila. It has twelve geopolitical wards namely- Adewole, Ajikobi, Alanamu, Badari, Baboko, Magaji-Nigeria, Ogidi, Oko-Erin, Oloje, Sarumi/Oju-Ekun, Ubandawaki and Wara/Osin/Egbejila (Mohammed, 2007). It is a predominantly Islamic city with people of diverse culture who have come together to live as one in peace and harmony. Eid-Fitr, Eid-Kabir, MaoludNabiyy, Hijrah, and Durbar are the major cultural festivals in the local government. The nature of businesses that can be found in Ilorin-West includes farming, fishing, trading, cloth weaving (Aso-oke), banking and so on.

Cross-sectional survey was used to generate data in the study. A multi stage sampling procedure was used to select respondents for the survey. The non-existence of a sampling frame (i.e. the list of all couples in Ilorin-West local government area of Kwara-State) and the inclusion of respondents from various towns in the study location warranted the adoption of a multi-stage random sampling in the survey exercise. To select eligible respondents, four stages of sampling were adopted. The first stage involved dividing the study location into geo-political wards. It is important to note that the local government has 12 geo-political wards and all of them were used for this study. The second stage involved dividing the geo-political wards into 68 communities (no geo-political ward has more than 6 communities). The third stage involved using simple random sampling to select two communities from each geo-political ward, while the last stage involved using simple random sampling to select eligible respondents from the selected communities.

The sample size for the cross-sectional survey was three hundred and eighty four respondents. The sample size was decided by taking into consideration the need to take a sample large enough to give statistically reliable results and the need to minimize sampling error. Thus, sample size formula was used to determine the required sample size for the survey. The formula goes thus:  $(Z\text{-score})^2 * \text{StdDev} * (1 - \text{StdDev}) / (\text{margin of error})^2$ . This gave us 384 respondents.

Therefore, a total of three hundred and eighty four questionnaires were designed and distributed. In all, 216 questionnaires were returned. After a thorough screening of each and every questionnaire returned, a total of 207 questionnaires were found useful for the analysis (104 males and 103 females). Thus, the analysis of the survey data in this study was based on the 207 questionnaires.

The questionnaire was used to elicit data from the respondents. The questionnaire contains close-ended questions only. It is important to note that the questionnaire has 4 sections. Section A contained questions on the demographic and socio-economic background of the respondents. These include questions on age, sex, marital status, religion, educational attainment, ethnic group and occupation. The total number of questions in this section (A) is 12. Questions in section B bordered on parent-child relationship and gender preference; this section contained a total of 10 questions. In section C, questions were asked on the demographical background of the respondent's parents and gender preference; 6 questions were asked in this section. In the last section, 8 questions were asked on the causes of male child

preference in the study location. In general, the questionnaire used in the survey contained 36 questions.

The questionnaires used in the survey were administered only to people within the marriage age bracket (18-65) who are currently in a marital relationship or might have married in the past. We chose the minimum of 18 years because it is the legal age for marriage in Nigeria. The questionnaire was pre-tested with 20 married people in Ilorin-South local government area of Kwara-State. The respondents were able to comprehend and responded to almost all the questions. However, the pre-test of the questionnaire showed that some terms used in the questionnaire were not understood initially by the respondents of the pilot test. Consequently, there was the need for clarifying these terms in the main questionnaire. The problem was rectified by explaining the terms to some of the respondents in need by the research assistants, which was well understood after that.

Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS/PC) Version 20 was used to analyze the data. The SPSS/PC was done after the returned questionnaires were edited and coded. The statistical methods employed in the analysis included the percentages, the mode, cross-tabulation and chi-square and contingency coefficient.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Respondents' Demographic and Socio-Economic Characteristics

Table 1 (See Appendix A) shows the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. The sex distribution of the respondents shows that 50.2% (104) of the respondents were males while 49.8% (103) were females. Data on age of the respondents shows that 30.4% (63) were in the age group 36-45 years; 23% (47) were in the age group 18-25 years; 20% (41) were in the age group 46-55 years; 19% (39) were in the age group 26-35 years, while 8% (17) were in the age group 56-65. Over three-fourth of the respondents were married 81.6% (169); 8.2% (17) were separated i.e they were married but not staying together with their spouses, while the remaining 10.2% (21) were divorced. On the form of marriage, the table shows that 53% (110) married into monogamous unions, while the remaining 47% (97) married into polygamous homes. Majority of the respondents 61% (126) had been married between 1-10years; 31% (64) had been in marriage between 11-20years, while 8.2% (17) had married over 20 years.

Data on the number of children the respondents have shown that 42% (86) had 1-4 children; 39.1% (81) had 5-8 children, while 19.3% (40) had no child. The majority of the respondents 89% (184) were Muslims, while 11% (23) were Christians. The reason for this is that most inhabitants of the local government are predominantly Muslims. It is important to note that traditional worshippers are uncommon in the study location.

Data on the ethnic group of the respondents show that 86% (178) were Yorubas; 8.2% (17) belong to other ethnic groups; 4.3% (9) were Hausas, while 1.4% (3) were Igbos. Data on the respondents' education show that 42% (86) had had university education; 39% (81) had primary education; 11% (23) had no formal education while 8% (17) had had secondary education.

Majority of the respondents (80%) 166 were currently employed, while 20% (41) were unemployed. Data on the respondents' occupation show that 30.4% (63)



were traders; 19% (39) were civil servants; 12% (24) were full housewives; 12% (24) were farmers; 11%(23) worked with private sector employee; 8%(17) were retirees, while 8% (17) were artisans. Data on the monthly income of the respondents show that 31% (64) of the respondents earned below 10,000 naira per month; 19.3% (40) earned between 10,001 and 20.000 naira; 19% (39) earned between 30,001 and 60,000 naira; 12% (24) had no monthly income; 11% (23) earned between 20,001 and 30,000 naira, while 8% (17) earned between 60,001 and 120,000 naira monthly.

#### 4.2 Respondents' Gender Preference

Table 2 displays information on the gender the respondents had a preference for. 70% (145) opined that boys are more important than girls, while 30% (62) discarded the assertion that boys are more important than the girl child. On why boys are more important than girls, 60.6% (88) were of the opinion that our customs value the male child more than the female child; 15.8% (23) believed girls are too emotionally and physically weak; 11.7% (17) respondents believed boys are more important than girls because they carry on the family name, while 11.7% (17) also believed boys provide more economic support for parents in their old age than girls.

On whether the respondent prefers to have more boys to girls, 70% (145) preferred more boys to girls, while 30% (62) preferred more girls to boys. Also, data on the sex the respondent would prefer if he/she could have a new child show that 39% (81) preferred the sex of the new child to be a boy; 20% (41) preferred the sex of the new child to be a girl; 30% (62) preferred it to be any sex, while 11% (23) declined the question.

It is important to note that 30% (24) of those who preferred to have a boy if they could have a new baby, believed boys have a better chance out in the big world; 28% (23) believed boys are easier to raise; 21% (17) chose a boy because boys provide more economic support for parents in their old age than girls, while 21% (17) chose a boy because they already had girls. Data on those who preferred girl show that all of them 100% (41) already had boys. Data on those who chose any child show that 73% (45) believed both are important while 27% (17) were of the opinion that their religion values both male and female.

Data on the sex the respondent would have preferred to have if he/she could only have a child show that 70% (145) preferred to have a boy, while 30% (62) preferred any sex. It is important to note that 60.6% (88) preferred a boy so as to carry on the family name; 15.8% (23) preferred a boy because they felt boys provide more economic support for the parents in their old age than girls; 11.7% (17) respondents believed boys have a better chance out in the big world, while another 11.7% (17) believed our customs value boys more than girls. Lastly, all 100% (62) of those who preferred to have any sex as their only child believed both are important and are worth having.

**Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Respondents' Gender Preference**

<b>Gender Preference</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Preference of boys over girls</b>		
Positive Response	145	70
Negative Response	62	30
Total	207	100
<b>Reasons why boys more important than girls</b>		
Carry on the family name	17	11.7
Girls are too emotionally and physically weak	23	15.8
Boys provide more economic support for the parents in their old age than girls	17	11.7
Our customs value boys more than girls	88	60.6
Total	145	100
	207	100
<b>Suppose you could have a new child, which sex would you prefer?</b>		
Boy	81	39
Girl	41	20
Any sex	62	30
Don't know/ Declined	23	11
Total	207	100
<b>If any, why</b>		
My religion values both boy and girl	124	100
Both are important		
Total		
<b>Suppose you could only have a child, which sex would you have preferred?</b>		
Boy only	145	70
Girl only	0	0
Anyone	62	30
Total	207	100
<b>If boy why?</b>		
Carry on the family name		
Boys have better opportunities out in the big world	88	60.6
Boys provide more economic support for parents in their old age than girls	17	11.7
	23	15.8
Our customs value boys more than girls	17	11.7
Total	145	100
<b>If any why?</b>		
Both are important	62	100
Total	62	100

Source: Fieldwork (2015)

### 4.3 Hypothesis One

Ho: There is no significant relationship between customs and preference for the male child.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant relationship between customs and preference for the male child.

**Table 3: Cross Tabulation of Customs and Preference for Male**

Customs	Preference for Male Child		Total
	Boys	Any Sex	
Positive Response	99	25	124
Negative Response	46	37	83
Total	145	62	207

**Source: Researcher's Fieldwork**

$$X^2_c = 15.38, df=1, \text{significance} = 0.05 \quad x^2_t = 3.84$$

Therefore  $x^2_c = 15.38 > x^2_t = 3.84$ . Thus reject H<sub>0</sub> and accept H<sub>1</sub>

#### 4.3.1 Decision rule

Table 3 shows the cross tabulation of respondents' perception of customs and preference for male child. The calculated chi-square from the table is  $x^2_c = 15.38$  with the degree of freedom of 1 at 0.05 level of significance and table value  $x^2_t = 3.84$ . Since the chi-square value is greater than the critical table value, the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>) which states that there is no significant relationship between the customs and preference for male child is at this moment rejected. Hence, there is a significant relationship between customs and male child preference.

### 4.4 Hypothesis Two

Ho: There is no significant relationship between the understanding of religion and preference for the male child.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant relationship between the understanding of religion and preference for the male child.

**Table 4: Cross Tabulation of Religion and Preference for Male**

Religion	Preference for Male Child		Total
	Boys	Any Sex	
Positive Response	87	24	111
Negative Response	58	38	96
Total	145	62	207

**Source: Researcher's Fieldwork**

$$X^2_c = 7.59, df=1, \text{significance} = 0.05 \quad x^2_t = 3.84$$

Therefore  $x^2_c = 7.59 > x^2_t = 3.84$ . Thus reject H<sub>0</sub> and accept H<sub>1</sub>

#### 4.4.1 Decision Rule

Table 4 shows the cross tabulation of respondents' perception of religion and preference for a male child in the study area. As such, the calculated chi-square from the table is  $\chi^2_c = 7.59$  with the degree of freedom of 1 at 0.05 level of significance and table value  $\chi^2_t = 3.84$ . Since the chi-square value is greater than the critical table value, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) which states that there is no significant relationship between the understanding of religion and preference for male child is at this moment rejected. Hence, there is a significant relationship between the understanding of religion and preference for the male child.

### 5. Discussion

The supposition which states that there is a significant relationship between customs and preference for the male child was accepted at  $P < 0.05$ . The contingency coefficient result shows that the relationship between customs and male child preference was very strong (0.707). This shows that 70.7 percent of the occurrence of male child preference is a function of the customs of the people. This finding corroborates the work of Wusu and Isiugo-Abanihe (2006) who found a positive correlation between culture and male child preference. The finding also corroborates Edewor's (2001) finding on cultural values and male child preference. Edewor (2001) found that the higher the cultural values placed on the male child, the higher the preference for the male child.

Also, the hypothesis tested on the relationship between religion and preference for a male child was accepted at  $P < 0.05$ . Thus, there is a significant relationship between the understanding of religion and male child preference. The contingency coefficient of the two variables is 0.354. This means that about 35.4 per cent. of the occurrence of preference for male child is a function of the understanding of religion. This finding is akin to what was discovered by Das Gupta and Chung (2007). The researchers found a significant relationship between the interpretation and understanding of religion and male child preference. Specifically, Das Gupta and Chung (2007) discovered that Buddhism is strongly associated with higher son preference in the case of women. However, being Buddhist does not have a significant relationship with male child preference in the case of their husbands.

### 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The objective of the study was to examine the socio-cultural determinants of male child preference with the view to ameliorating the problems emanating from it to create a near egalitarian society in which both male and female children will be equally desired and co-exist to contribute their best to the progress of the community. From the various results of this study, it is established that customs and the understanding of religion contribute significantly to the incidence of male child preference in Ilorin-West Local Government Area of Kwara-State. Based on these findings, the following recommendations are essential in eradicating the phenomenon of male child preference in Nigerian society. These are: Combating cultural practices that oppress women or see women as subordinate, for example, the small inheritance

rights that are given to women, the tradition which forbids women from bearing their fathers' name after marrying and so on. Both governmental and non-governmental organisations that are concerned with gender equality should enlighten people on the negative implications of the aforementioned cultural practices so as to reduce the practices to the bearest minimum or abolished them if possible.

Lastly, various religions of the world constantly preach love, fairness, justice, and social harmony and extremely abhor all forms of gender disparity. Unfortunately, the politicization of religious creed has become widespread. A critical review of religious texts to (or "intending to") having an all-inclusive reassessment of the meanings, inferences, connotations, and significance which they imply, is required. Religious bodies should show a high level of commitment to the phenomenon of son preference and constantly organize conferences, seminars, and workshops focused on the importance of both males and females as both are a special gift from God.

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## APPENDIX A

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

<b>Socio-Economic Characteristics</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	104	50.2
Female	103	49.8
Total	207	100
<b>Age</b>		
16-25	47	22.7
26-35	39	18.8
36-45	63	30.4
46-55	41	19.8
56-65	17	8.2
Total	207	100
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Divorced	21	10.2
Married	169	81.6
Separated	17	8.2
Total	207	100
<b>Form of Marriage</b>		
Monogamous	110	53
Polygamous	97	47
Total	207	100
<b>Years of marriage</b>		
1-10years	126	61
11-20years	64	31
Over 20 years	17	8.2
Total	207	100
<b>No of children or wards</b>		
0	40	19.3
1-4	86	41.6
5 and above	81	39.1
Total	207	100
<b>Ethnic Group</b>		
Yoruba	178	86
Hausa	9	4.3
Igbo	3	1.4
Others	17	8.2
Total	207	100
<b>Religion</b>		
Christianity	23	11
Islam	194	89
Total	207	100



<b>Education Qualification</b>		
No formal Education	23	11
Primary Education	81	39
Secondary	17	8.2
Higher	86	42
Total	207	100
<b>Number of employed couple</b>		
Employed	166	80
Unemployed	41	20
Total	207	100
<b>Occupation</b>		
Trading	63	30.4
Artisan	17	8.2
Farming	24	12
Private Sector Employee	23	11.1
Civil/Public Servant	39	19
Retiree	17	8.2
Housewife	24	12
Total	207	100
<b>Income Per-month</b>		
No Income	24	12
Below 10,000 naira	64	31
10,001-20,000 naira	40	19.3
20,001-30,000 naira	0	0
30,001-60,000 naira	23	11
60,001-120,000 naira	39	19
Above 120,000 naira	17	8
Total	207	100

Source: Fieldwork (2015)