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RESEARCH ARTICLE

CHILD SEX PREFERENCE AND FACTORS THAT INFLUENCED SUCH CHOICES AMONG RESIDENTS OF KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA.

[1] ANGELA UWANUAKWA, [1]ADUKE OLUFUNMILAYO BELLO, & [3]RIFKATU DYAJI

[1-3]Department of Geography, Federal University of Education, Zaria.

ABSTRACT

Sex preference has been a sensitive issue in both urban and rural areas of Africa, Asia and parts of Europe as people have been shown to prefer a particular sex of child over the other. The research work is on child sex preference and factors that influenced such choices among the residents of Kaduna state. The objectives of the study include: (i) to identify the most preferred sex of child in the study area (ii) examine the factors that influenced such choices in the study area. A total of 400 respondents were sampled randomly for questionnaire administration. The collected data were analyzed using frequencies, simple percentages and chi-square test. The result revealed that Sex preference is pronounced in the study area. The study therefore recommend that the government should enforce population policy measures that recommend appropriate family size irrespective of the sex composition of children.

Keywords: child, sex, **urban, rural, sex preference,**

Corresponding Author
Angela UWANUAKWA
E-mail Address: uwanuakwaangela2@gmail.com, Telephone Number: 08051347850

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

Sex refers to the biological and physical differences between men and women (Akpan,1998). Sex preference which is the wish of individuals to have a particular sex of child has been documented in a large number of countries though the degree of such preference varies from one country to another depending on such factors as the level of economic development, social norms, cultural and religious practices, marriage and family systems, degree of urbanization and the nature of social security system (Das Gupta, 1997; Caldwell and Caldwell, 1997;; Akpan, 1998; Bairagi, 2001; Isiugo-Abanihe, 2003).

In this study, a rural area is an area with population of less than 20,000 which has agriculture as its main occupation while an urban area is a large settlement, with population of 20,000 and above which greatly depend on cash income and lower reliance on agricultural activities. Morris (2005) and Mott (2005) in their separate studies observed that the economic motivation for children exerts a weaker influence in the urban area than in rural areas where the demand for child labor in agriculture and allied activities is greater. The changing behavior of parents then turns towards the sex composition of children; as they expect more old age support from male children, they prefer sons resulting in an increase in fertility and poor attitudes towards family planning. Also, in rural areas, intergenerational transfer of land is critical, thus land inheritance norms may affect perceptions of the relative importance of sons and daughters considering the fact that in some societies, land is passed on only to sons regardless of inheritance laws but since urbanites engage in non-agricultural labor, intergenerational transfer of property such as land may be less significant issue. Therefore, urban residents and individual in the non – agricultural labor force may be less likely to have sex preferences for children.

Studies investigating gender preferences at different stages of development have reported substantial gender heterogeneity across developed countries with a tendency towards a

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mild preference for a mixed sex composition (Marleau 2002). In developing countries, most of the literature document son preference (Arnold 1992,Kuate, 1998). The strongest result documenting son preference occurs in the Asian and African countries. There are few instances in which a preference for daughter has been documented. For example, the World Fertility Survey (WFS) found that considerably more women wanted a daughter for their next child than a son in Jamaica and Venezuela (CaldWell etal,1997). It has also been observed that once parents are closer to achieving their total desired number of children, the gender composition of children already born becomes an important determinant of whether parents have another child.

For centuries, traditional African societies have remained patriarchal. It is believed that the family line could only be carried on solely by descendants on the male side. Only the male offspring belonged to the clan community (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1994). According to some authors; Isiuigo-Abanihe, (2003) and Lundberg (2005), sons were traditionally considered advantageous for two economic reasons; first as a means of support for their parents in old age and secondly, for the provision of labor for the farm or family business. In Nigeria as in other parts of Africa, the preference for a particular sex derives from the perceived value or benefits of that particular sex to parents (Kaute,1998). In many parts of Nigeria, male children are valued for their role in retaining or perpetuating family name, staying permanently in or near family or residence, provision of old age security and serving as source of defense and social prestige to parents. This holds true with studies conducted in India Arnold (1996); Bairiga (2001) which heighted three dimensions of the utility of having a son. The first is the economic utility, which is mainly based on assistance in agricultural production, wage earnings and security in the case of illness and during old age. The social utility stems from the kinship and descent system, the status and strength provided to the family by sons, and the premium to be expected from having a son in the form of dowry payments.

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A variety of historical, moral, ethical and economic factors underlie sex preference, the patriarchal family structure and the resulting strong preference for sons became institutionalized values and therefore formed part of the way of life of the people. These traditions also stress the significance of carrying on the family line through male progeny. Also, sex preference has not kept pace with societal changes because of posterity; the desire for a son to carry on the family name and guarantee father‟s pseudo-immortality. Mother‟s are blamed for producing girls, even by those who know that a father‟s chromosomes determine the sex of the child. The general acceptance among the educated classes is that a daughter is as good as a son but sons, are still preferred.

Although, the subject of sex preference of children has been studied by many scholars in diverse culture. to the best of my knowledge there is no systematic study of isex preference in Kaduna state. There is thus a need for studying sex preference among urban and rural dwellers of Kaduna state where fertility rates are very high. In the light of the above, this study aims at examining **child sex preference and factors that influenced such choices** among residents of Kaduna state. .

1.1. Research Objectives

The study is on comparative analysis of rural- urban differentials in sex preference in Kaduna state, the following objectives will be used to achieve the aims.

i. to identify the most preferred sex in the study area
ii. to examine the factors influencing sex preference in the state

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1.2. **Scope of the study**

The study covered three (3) Local Government Areas of Kaduna State. The selected LGAs are: Zaria, Igabi, and Zangon-Kataf. In terms of content coverage, the study is on child sex preference and factors that influenced such choices among residents of Kaduna state. The respondents were married persons (males and females) that is ,whether currently married, widowed, separated, or divorced between the ages of 18 and 60 who resides in both rural and urban areas of the state. The research covered the period of eight months from (March- October , 2023).

2.1. **Study Area**

Kaduna State is located in the North of Nigeria, and lies between Latitudes $11^0$34' and 9^0 01' North of the equator and longitude 6^0 11' and 8^0 49' east of the Greenwich meridian as shown on the map in Figure 1 .The basement complex forms the central major geological unit of Kaduna state, and the bed rock geology of the state is predominantly metamorphic rocks of the Nigerian Basement Complex consisting of biotite gneiss and older granite. There are two distinct season experienced in Kaduna state the wet (rainy) season, lasting from April to October and the dry season (harmattan) lasting from November to March. The soils of Kaduna State are of the ferruginous tropical type (Laah, 2003). The soils do not support extensive agricultural practices because of the fact that they are heavily leached. Fertility of the soil is regained with the application of chemical fertilizers or manure. The state is heterogeneous in composition with about 36 ethnic groups scattered across the length and breadth of the state. Most of these ethnic groups have a long history of migration and legend. About 80 percent of the state's population is engaged in peasant farming for food and commercial purposes. Some of the main crops grown in Kaduna state include yam, cassava, cocoyam, maize, cowpea, guinea corn and millet. Cash crops such as ginger, cotton, tobacco, groundnut and soya beans are grown in commercial quantities also.

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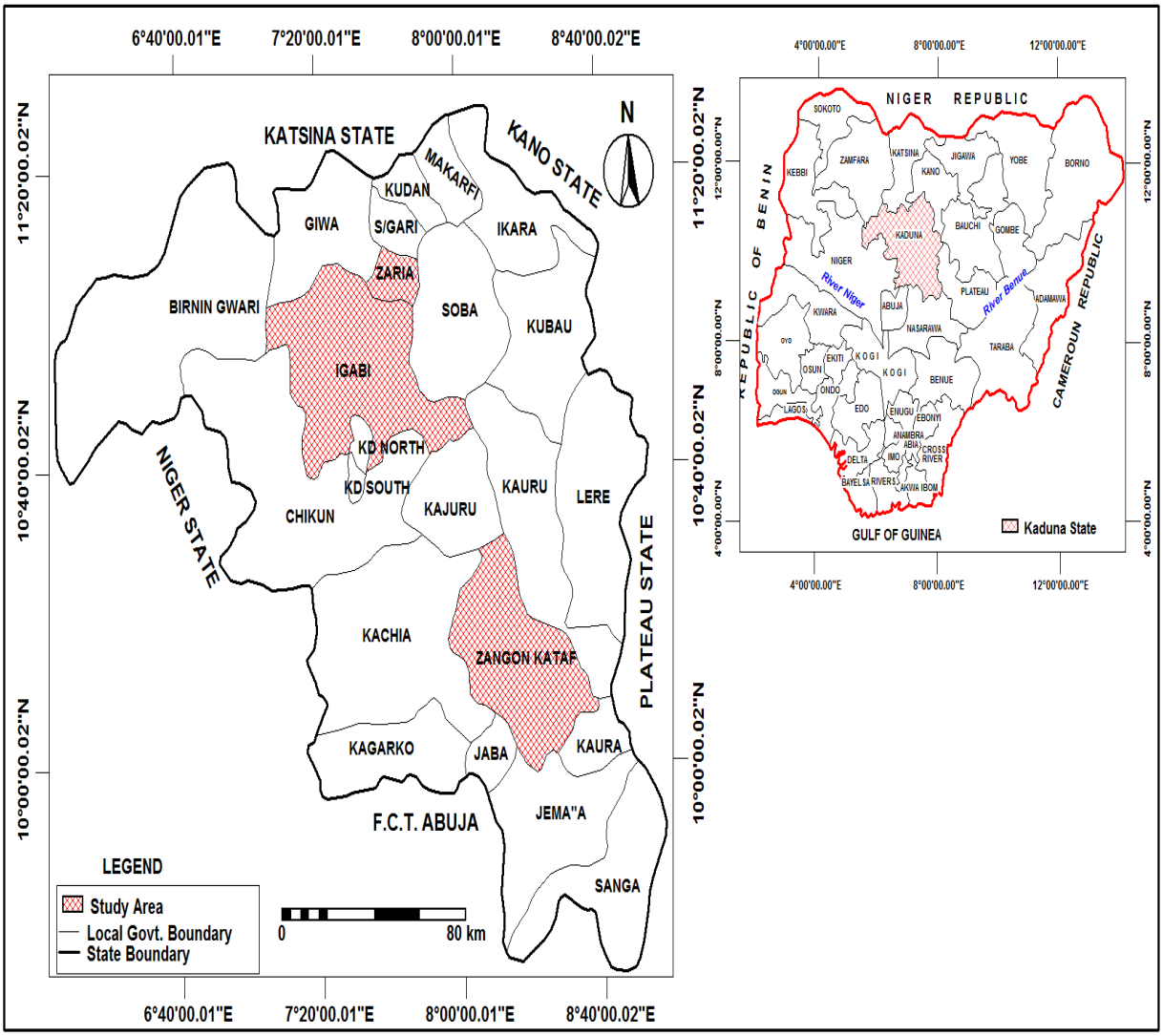

Fig. 1:Kaduna State Showing the Study Areas

Source : Adapted and modified from Administrative map of Kaduna State

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3. 0. MATERIAL AND METHODS

Reconnaissance Survey

A reconnaissance survey was carried out to find out the extent of sex preference practices as well as the factors that fuel the act in the study area.

Types of data: The data required for the study includes: demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the respondents such as: sex, age, income, marital status occupation, family size etc

Sources of data: The primary data was obtained through the administration of questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to collect information on the following: sex, age, level of education attained, place of residence, occupation, religion, income per month, number of children, and sex preference among others. The secondary sources of data collection involve the use of text books, journal publications, library materials, and unpublished works from existing materials, online materials and conference papers.

Sampling design: In order to select respondents for the questionnaire administration survey, a multi-stage sampling procedures was used. The first stage involves identifying the three senatorial zones in the state. After which, the purposive sampling techniques was used to select one LGA from each of the three senatorial zone. The selected LGAs are: Zaria, Igabi and Zangon Kataf..The selected LGAs from each of the 3senetorial zones are based on the LGAs with the highest population.. To determine the the proportion of questionnaire to be administered in the selected LGAs, Yamene T. (1967) formulae for sample size selection was used and it gave rise to 400 respondents. Equal questionnaire was administered to the urban and rural areas of the selected LGA‟s as this was done to avoid skewness of data. The systematic sampling technique was used in selecting individual respondents in the selected urban wards. Houses were counted and numbered from the main street and every third house was selected for questionnaire

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administration in the urban areas. In the case of rural areas, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC‟s) polling units were used to select the sampling points systematically and every third polling unit was selected.

4.0. Data Analysis

Both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were employed in the analysis of data collected. Descriptive statistic was used to describe the characteristics of respondents using frequency distribution, percentages and tables. With respect to the inferential statistics, the chi-square test analysis was employed to compute for the relationship between the independent and dependent variables .All test was conducted at 0.05 significant level.

4.0. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Presentation of Results

Table 1. Distributions of Respondents by Place of Residence and Preferred Sex.

Place of Residence	Preferred Sex				Total	
	Male		Female			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Rural	173	64.6	52	39.4	225	56.2
Urban	95	35.4	80	60.6	175	43.8
Total	**268**	**100.0**	**132**	**100.0**	**400**	**100.0**

Pearson Chi-Square- 21,735,Df=1,P Value=0.001
Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Table.1 above shows the distribution of respondents by place of residence and preferred sex. This shows that majority of the respondents (56.2 percent) that reside in the rural area have preference for both male and female children, compared to their counterpart who resides in the urban areas with preference for male and female which constitute 43.8 percent. The result further reveals that more respondents show preference for males among rural residents which constitutes

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64.6 percent as against 35.4 percent for males for urban resident. The case of female preference is 39.4 percent in the rural and 60.6 percent in the urban. The chi-square result shows a calculated value of 21.835 with 1 degree of freedom and having a significance level of 0.001. which shows there is a significant statistical association ($p<0.001$) between place of residence and preferred sex of the child. Therefore, there is a higher preference for male children among the rural settlers than those in the urban setting.

Table 2 Distributions of Respondents by Age and Preferred Sex

Age Groups	Preferred Sex				Total	
	Male		Female			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
15-19years	3	13	0	00	4	1.0
20-24years	29	12.9	15	8.6	44	11.0
25-29years	71	31.6	49	28.0	120	30.0
30-34years	33	14.7	34	19.4	67	16.8
35-39years	22	9.8	36	20.6	58	14.5
40-44years	36	16.9	31	17.7	67	16.8
45-49 years	27	12.0	5	2.9	32	8.0
50 years and above	4	1.8	5	2.9	8	2.0
Total	**225**	**100.0**	**175**	**100.0**	**400**	**100.0**

Pearson Chi-Square- 21,735,Df=1,P Value=0.001 Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Table .2 shows distribution of age by preferred sex. Among the groups, most respondents from 25-29 year which constitutes the highest percentage of 30.0 followed by those with age group 30-34 years, 40-44 years that comprises of 16.8 percent and the least among the respondents in ranged 15-19 years which constitutes 1.0 percent. However, the result further reveals that majority of respondents of within the age group of 25-29years with preference for (Male and Female) constitutes 31.6 percent and 28.0 percent. The chi-square result gave a calculated value of 26.037 with 7 degree of freedom and having a level of significance of 0.001. This shows that age and preferred sex has a significance relationship. This implies that age have a significant impact on preferred sex.

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Table 3 Distributions of Respondents by Type of Marital Union and Preferred Sex.

Type of Marital Union	Preferred Sex				Total	
	Male		Female			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Polygamous	148	65.8	70	40.0	218	54.5
Monogamous	77	34.2	105	60.0	182	45.5
Total	**225**	**100.0**	**175**	**100.0**	**400**	**100.0**

Pearson Chi-Square- 25,349,Df=1,P Value=0.001
Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Table .3 shows that majority (45.5 percent) of the respondents are in monogamous union compared with those who are in polygamous union which constitutes 54.5 percent. Male and Female analysis in Table .3 shows higher proportion of respondents who have preference for male constitutes65.8 percent and 34.2 percent respectively. Also the preference for females constitutes 40.0 percent and 60.0 percent both in monogamous and polygamous union. The chi-square result yield a calculated value of 25.349 with I degree of freedom and having a level of significance of 0.001. in this regard, the result shows that there is significant relationship between marital union and preferred sex.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Educational Attainment and Preferred Sex

Educational Attainment	Preferred Sex				Total	
	Male		Female			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
No Scholling	6	2.7	8	4.6	14	3.5
Quranic	16	7.1	8	4.6	24	6.0
Primary	4	1.8	22	12.6	26	6.5
Secondary	47	20.9	42	24.0	89	22.2
Tertiary	148	65.8	73	41.7	221	55.2
Others	4	1.8	22	12.6	26	6.5
Total	**225**	**100.0**	**175**	**100.0**	**400**	**100.0**

Pearson Chi-Square- 29,768,Df=1,P Value=0.001
Source: Field Survey, 2023.

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Table 4 shows a cross tabulation of educational attainment and preferred sex. The table reveals that majority of the respondents with tertiary education with male preference constitutes 65.8 percent follow by those with preference for female with the same tertiary education which constitutes 41.7 percent. Respondents with secondary education with preference for both male and female constitutes 20.9 percent and 24.4 percent respectively. The chi-Square analysis on the relationship between education and preferred sex indicates that there is significant relationship between educational attainment and preferred sex with x2 value 29,768, degree of freedom 5 and the p value 0.001

Table 5 Distributions of Respondents by Occupations and Preferred Sex

Occupation	**Preferred Sex**				**Total**	
	Male		**Female**			
	No.	**%**	**No.**	**%**	**No.**	**%**
Civil/Public Servant	2.2	9.8	74	42.3	154	38.5
Farming	80	35.6	15	8.6	37	9.2
Artisan	12	5.3	0	.0	12	3.0
Business /Petty Trading	111	49.3	86	49.1	197	49.2
Total	**225**	**100.0**	**175**	**100.0**	**400**	**100.0**

Pearson Chi-Square- 29,735,Df=1,P Value=0.001
Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Table.5 shows the distribution of respondents by occupation and preferred sex. The table reveals that business /petty trading have the highest preference (male/ female) of 49.2 percent followed by civil/public servant with 38.5 percent. Meanwhile farming, artisan among the occupation accounted for 9.2 and 3.0 percent respectively. Furthermore, business/petty trading ranked the highest among respondents of preferred sex in both male and female with 49.3 percent and 49.1 percent in that order. In addition, artisan are the least which constitutes 5.3 percent of male and 0 percent of female preference. The Chi Square result gave a calculated value of 29.768 with 3 degree of freedom and having significant level of 0.01. This shows a statistically significant

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relationship between occupation and preferred sex. This implies that occupation has a strong relationship with preferred sex.

Table 6: Distribution of Respondents by Knowledge of Family Planning and Preferred

Knowledge of Family Planning	Preferred Sex				Total	
	Male		Female			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	208	92.4	163	93.1	271	92.8
No	17	7.6	12	6.9	29	7.2
Total	**225**	**100.0**	**175**	**100.0**	**400**	**100.0**

Pearson Chi-Square- 0.00531,Df=1,P Value=0.001
Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Table 6 shows the proportion of respondents who have knowledge of family planning and preferred sex. This shows that majority 92.8 percent have knowledge of family planning and have a preferred sex of 92.4 percent male and 93.1 percent female.

Also, the remaining 7.2 percent of the sampled respondents do not have knowledge of family planning, with 7.6 percent preference for male and 6.9 percent preference for female.

The chi square result gave a calculated value of 0.005 with I degree of freedom and having a level of significance of 0.942. therefore, the result shows that there is no significance relationship between the knowledge of family planning and preferred sex. This implies that knowledge of family planning does not have an impact on preferred sex.

5. 0. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has clearly revealed that the study area is a patriarchal society were the majority of respondents have preference for male children compared to the female children and this to a large extent will constitutes a problem for future fertility reduction as past literature has shown that the total fertility rates of the study area would have been lower than it is in the absence of

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sex preference. Therefore, Government has a role to play through public enlightening and legislation to encourage Nigerians to accept their children and treat them equally irrespective of their sex Therefore the following are recommended:

i. Cultural reorientation to modify certain socio-cultural practices and norms (example, inheritance and succession) that are gender biased. This will help to place equal value on each sex of a child.

ii. Government should put in place an initiative such as the proper education of the

girl child, which will improve the status of women and enhance their role and participation in the development process.

iii. There is need for the government to introduction a social insurance scheme for all Nigerian citizens. This will reduce the demand for male children as a form of support in old age. .

iv. There is an urgent need for enforcement of the population policy measures that recommend an appropriate family size irrespective of the sex combination.

Competing Interest

The authors declared that no conflicting interest exist in this paper.

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