SOCIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF SEX PREFERENCE FOR FERTILITY AND MARITAL STABILITY IN CROSS RIVER STATE

BY

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DECLARATION

I declare that the work in the dissertation entitled **Sociological Implications of Sex Preference for Fertility and Marital Stability in Cross River State** has been carried out by me in the Department of Sociology. The information derived from the literature has been duly acknowledged in the text and a list of references provided. No part of this dissertation was previously presented for another degree or diploma at any University.

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CERTIFICATION

This dissertation entitled **Sociological Implications of Sex Preference for Fertility and Marital Stability in Cross River State** by **Igbolo Magdalene Agbor** meets the regulations governing the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) of Ahmadu Bello University and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary presentation.

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DEDICATION

To the memory of my late husband, Frank Igbolo, who did not live long enough to see this dream come through.

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ABSTRACT

The issue of high fertility and its causes have received much attention of recent from experts in diverse areas of study. One of such causes that has been identified and taken up for study is sex preference. This work takes a look at the sociological implications of sex preference for fertility and marital stability in Cross River State. Data for the study were drawn from the people of Cross River State. The respondents for the study were systematically selected from the population of study (ever married persons) and altogether a total of 1200 respondents were selected. Data for the study was gathered using a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques of data collection. A questionnaire was used for the quantitative aspect. Focus group discussions and indepth interviews were also held with participants and key informants who were selected purposively for their experience in marriage and the issue under discourse. One important feature of the people studied is their lineage system. They are patrilineal in nature and prefer large families for economic purposes as well as the continuity of the lineage. The study found that because the society is a patriarchal one, there is a strong relationship between sex preference and fertility behaviour. Where there was a strong preference by couples for a particular sex, there was also a resultant increase in family size. The study also found that, where there was a strong preference for a particular sex in marital unions, the marriage was more likely to be unstable. Once unions in which the preferred sex was not born, especially in the later stages of the marriage, sex preference becomes a factor in marital stability. The study also found that cultural norms and values prevalent in the State enhance and sustain sex preference. The study therefore calls for development, especially of the rural areas as one of the remedies for curbing those aspects of the culture that support sex preference, high fertility and marital instability. This, it is believed, will enable the populace to stick to a particular number of children irrespective of their sex as well as enhance the stability of marital unions.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NPC:	National Population Commission
UNAID:	United Nations Aid for International Development
NDHS:	Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey
ICPD:	International Conference on Population and Development
MDG:	Millennium Development Goals
UNECA:	United Nation Economic Commission for Africa
ECA:	Economic Commission for Africa.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Population is a vital component of the resource base of any country. It is one of the most valuable assets, especially with regards to its demographic characteristics. The last century witnessed the total world population double in 38 years and triple in 72 years. The world population in the year 2006 was 6.5 billion, growing at an annual rate of 1.3 percent. (Population report 2005).

Birth rates are declining slightly on the average but with a wide variation between the developed and the developing countries. While experts are concerned about the decline in the population of the developed countries, the population of sub-Saharan Africa is expected to grow dramatically within the next 50 years. With 20.4percent of the total world land area, Africa has a total population of 999 million, that is 14 percent world's human population contributing steadily to the growth of the world's population (PRB, 2009).

The population of Africa varies in density and distribution from one country to another. Available data indicate that Africa has the highest fertility rate in the world, with a crude birth rate of 41 births per 1000 as against the world's average crude birth rate of 21 per 1000 (Weeks 2004).

While the developed countries of the world have experienced a well established decline in fertility and demographic transition from large family sizes to small family sizes, fertility is only beginning to decline in the developing countries. Accordingly May (2006) states *that despite a new awareness and great efforts by African governments, the continent is a late comer, the last region in the world to begin to seriously address over population. But it is like a runner on a tread mill, they are*

running very fast but unfortunately the tread mill is running faster than they are, the population growth is so fast and so rapid in many ways that they cannot just cope with the challenges of providing services, especially in education, health and employment for the population.(pp213)

With a population of a little above 140 million people and an annual growth rate of 3.3 percent (NPC 2007), Nigeria can be termed an overpopulated country when compared with the level of her socio-economic development, and the problem of its development blamed on the population. In the year 2009, Nigeria ranked the eighth most populous nation in the world (Population Report 2008). The growth in Nigeria's population according to Oniboloye (1991) could be occurring because Nigeria has a high rate of both desired and actual fertility. The Federal Ministry of Health in Nigeria and the United Nations Aid for International Development (UNAID 2003) report a total mean number of desired children of 6.7. This has further been corroborated by the 2006 census report (NPC 2007). A woman would bear an average of 5.7 children throughout her child bearing age (NHDS 2003).

High fertility has become an increasingly important concern for many governments in developing countries. As a result of the high fertility rate in Nigeria, the total population has been growing at an alarming rate. For instance, the population of Nigeria which stood at 30.14 million in 1952 had by 1963 increased to 55.7 million and 88.5 million in 1991. According to Ademola (2002), the population of Nigeria has apparently tripled its size in the last four decades.

For the purposes of development and well being of Nigeria, the National Policy on Population was formulated in 1988 and revised in 2004 with the inclusion of HIV/AIDS which has affected the quality of life of most people. Other issues that led to the revision are reproductive and sexual health for all persons at all stages of the life cycle, reproductive rights, adolescent reproductive health, special needs of

the girl child and women empowerment, in line with the goals and aspirations of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs 2000).

Amongst the goals of the 2004 National Population Policy are achieving lower population growth rate by voluntary fertility regulation methods and achieving a more even distribution of population between rural and urban areas. To further achieve these goals, several objectives were outlined such as creating awareness on the country's population problems, educating young people especially the girl child on fertility regulation and family planning before entering the age of marriage and child bearing and assisting them towards maintaining responsible parenthood and reasonable family size, within their ability to foster.

The role of fertility in population dynamics cannot be underestimated, being a major element of population that brings about change in the demographic, socio-economic and political structure of the nation. A rapidly growing population is usually accompanied by a growing proportion of young people, thus a larger share of the population would be dependent and non-productive, demanding food and other necessities of life, but contributing little or nothing to the economy. This will limit the ability of such economy to meet the needs of the expanding population.

Couples once married want to have children. This is expected because of the need for the expansion of the lineages' demographic strength. Men and women have different reasons for wanting some offsprings. Women's primary reason as traditionally conceived is to prove that they are fertile and can physically produce children. According to Fapohunda and Mott (1997), child bearing has traditionally been the most important way a woman could prove her value to family continuity. For men, their reasons include, among others, tradition, religion and to prove sexual prowess. These reasons help in no small measure to keep Nigerian fertility rate as

high as it is. The high fertility according to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA 2006) is caused, particularly in Nigeria by a broad mix of economic, social and cultural factors including early age at marriage, diminishing practice of prolonged breast feeding, limited use of modern contraceptives, relative low status of women and the relative lack of a clear population policy in many countries.

The influences of culture, tradition, and low socio-economic standards have made the rural people remain unchanged in their attitude towards fertility. The desire of couples to have at least one child of either sex, and the continued support given by socio-cultural factors such as patriarchy, support for parents at old age, title inheritance, and morbidity issues are some of the factors that have been identified as contributing directly to continued high fertility in developing countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (Caldwell, 2004). Continued insistence on achieving desired fertility by couples has brought serious strain on the families and marriages thereby leading to a breakdown in family ties, separation and subsequently divorce. The rising rate of marital instability in Nigeria is caused by so many socio- cultural and economic factors but most importantly sex preference (Akpan, 1998).

Preference for sons over daughters is a common phenomenon in many parts of the world including Nigeria. Son preference has been well 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; Bairagi, 2001; Isiugo-Abanihe, 2003; Ottong, 1997; Akpan, 1998). The preference for sons tends to be particularly pronounced in developing countries, in rural areas and among more traditional couples and couples of lower

socio- economic status. Although son preference is still common even in many economically developed countries (Bennett, 1983), the preference often exists side by side with parent's desire to have at least one child of each sex.

In some countries, couples exhibit little or no son preference and there are even few instances in which a preference for daughters 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 (Cleland, Verrall and Vaessen 1983). The WFS also found little or no son preference of any type in South America, in parts of the Caribbean and in Kenya, so also Lesotho and the Sudan. But son preference has been found to be prevalent in all of East Asia and among groups outside that region that share a heritage of patriarchal traditions. According to Arnold and Kuo (1984), son preference in South Korea and Taiwan is both pervasive and extreme. With all of these there is however little evidence that son preference has been a substantial obstacle to achieving significant fertility declines.

In most countries where son preference is strong, it is closely linked to the low status accorded women in the society, where everything that is derogatory is associated with being woman. Thus we see several countries making efforts, though with little results, at achieving some level of equality for men and women. The Chinese government for example has always advocated and promoted sexual equality, and it regards the reduction of sexual inequality as one of the major long-range goals that it must achieve. Although women in China enjoy a relatively high status compared with women in many other countries, the gender inequalities that persist make it difficult to achieve further reduction in son preference, (Arnold and Zhaoxiang, 1986).

Since creation, most traditional societies of Africa have strictly 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. The traditional customs of marriage and the family constituted the foundations of male supremacy. The improvement in marriage and divorce laws of some countries as well as improvement in education, occupation and job opportunities for women have not helped much in improving the status of women in the society. This has led to their continued treatment as second class citizens. Concern about the persistence of son preference and its possible effect on fertility, marriage and family planning programs prompted Mao Zedong to depict vividly its probable outcome when in 1970, he said that in the country side, a woman still wants a boy child. If the first and second babies are girls, she will make another try. If the third one comes and is still a girl, the mother would try again. Pretty soon there are nine of them. Then the mother is already 45 or so she finally decides to leave it at that, (Tischler 2002).

According to some authors, (Lundberg, 2005; Isiugo-Abanihe, 2003) sons were traditionally considered advantageous for two economic reasons: support for their parents in old age and the provision of labor for the farm or family business. The former has however been given important consideration as many social security programs have been put in place in order to help solve the problem.

In order to reduce son preference, it is necessary therefore to understand its root causes. A variety of historical, moral, ethical and economic factors underlie son preference. In Nigeria as in other parts of Africa, the family is dominated by a male patriarch and the practice of ancestor worship is common place. 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.

Thus according to the book of rites a woman is to obey her father before marriage, her husband during married life and her son in widowhood (Tischler, 2002). These traditions also stress the importance of carrying on the family line through male progeny, thus providing the justification for the tradition of female infanticide in countries like China.

Increasing evidence has been documented about sex selective biases in the allocation of food and health care within the house hold. Son preference in parental care, intra family food distribution, feeding practices and utilization of health care services and even access to education are some of the behavioral mechanisms which sex biased attitudes may have led to (Chen; Hug and D'souza, 1989).

In Nigeria, there appears to be high fertility among many families. Among other factors mentioned earlier, sex preference seems to keep fertility rate high in most parts of Nigeria and Cross River State in particular. Sex preference has been taken up here for study to ascertain the extent to which it accounts for high fertility rates and marital stability. Sex preference may not necessarily be assumed to be the sole determinant of high fertility or marital stability in Nigeria, but it may be a major contributory factor and tends to provide part of the answer in the search for the cause of high fertility and marital instability in Nigeria. This study therefore will seek to explore the reasons for preference for sex of child as it affects fertility behavior and marital stability in most parts of Nigeria and Cross River State in Particular.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Today, no problem seems more urgently important to the well being of mankind than the control of population growth. Lauchlin Currie (1972) an official of the United States Government said that he regards the rate of growth in the

population of the under-developed countries as the single most important problem of the world, even out ranking the threat of nuclear warfare in terms of ultimate dread possibilities. In most countries of the developing world, population growth consumes much of their economic growth, condemning the people to perpetual poverty.

Many people see the population problem in the context of number of people versus available food. But it could be seen from many other dimensions, such as undue growth rates versus cultural as well as material resources. Society must do more than feed, cloth, and house its people. It must also satisfy man's mental, emotional and spiritual needs and aspirations. The full solution depends also on society's ability to meet man's higher, non-material needs, to offer every child an opportunity to achieve in life more than mere existence, a chance to live as well as survive (Akpan 1998).

The main cause of high fertility in most developing countries has been identified as the persistence of socio-cultural factors and norms which favour high fertility. One of such factors which has been identified and taken up for analysis in explaining fertility behaviour and marital instability in Cross River State is sex preferences.

Sex preference here means the preference for a particular sex over the other. Usually and most common in Nigeria particularly, is the preference for a male child in the family. In most households, the husband dominates and directs the affairs while the wife or wives and children just follow. In the customs and traditions of many African societies, women like children are to be seen not heard; this illustrates the status of the female in the traditional setting. In Nigeria, tradition accords a low status to the female and prime status to the male. The man is recognized as the one who marries the woman and in most cases the decision to have or not to have

children is that of the man (Ottong, 1997). In the traditional setting, his decision most of the time, favours more children, especially sons, as more and more children further enhances his status as a man in the society.

The effect of male preference on fertility is actually more complicated than might appear at first glance. In Nigeria as in most countries of the world, there is a strong preference for male children. Logically, this does not make much sense because in most developing and underdeveloped countries, daughters typically help their mothers with household chores, thus one can be tempted to believe that their value would have increased but that is not so as clearly there are several countervailing factors to reduce the desire for daughters. This, it has been suggested, may be tied to the expenses of a dowry or the early loss of the daughters help through marriage (Tischler, 2002).

In countries with declining fertility rates, the strong preference for sons may cause the fertility to rise above replacement level as is the case in Bangladesh. Couples may continue to have children until they have the desired son (Ahmed, 1981). In a number of developing countries, there are far fewer women than man. This is not what would normally be expected and is often due to willful acts or discriminatory customs, (Ahmed 2005). One explanation that has been given for the low survival rate for girls is the issue of female infanticide or discriminatory access to health care by girls compared to boys. Other factors include several socio-cultural practices such as widowhood rites and dowry deaths (Tischler, 2002).

To most people, children are precious but sons are essential. This has been attributed to the fact that most parents expect to rely on their sons for old age support, continuity of family name and property inheritance or transfer of titles. Therefore they focus all resources towards their survival. The point is, why do most people still prefer male to female children? Do men want male children for the

purpose of continuity of family name, property or title inheritance? Or are there other reasons why couples desire male children? Do such desires have any effect in the long run on the number of children in the family? Does it have any implication for marriage and family stability? Can it lead to possible dissolution of the marriage? These questions and other issues raised in this section would form the main task of this research.

The essential nature of sons as traditionally conceived prompted the investigation into the relationship between sex preference as it affects fertility behavior and marital stability. Most people find it very difficult to stop having children when they do not have at least a son, even with many daughters (Akpan,1998; Isiugo-Abanihe,2003). Most marriages get dissolved for the sake of the absence of a male child (Katzev et al, 1996). In many instances most men go for a second or more wives just for the simple reason of getting a male child (Lundberg and Rose,2003). This search for a male child seems to be a major source of high fertility and marital instability in Nigeria with its attendant problems of stigmatization of women and subsequent breakdown of marital values. According to Ottong, (1987) the major roles of a woman are child bearing, child rearing and ultimately the care of the home. Therefore the inability of any woman to fulfill these all important roles is viewed with contempt and great disapproval and thus can lead to some major consequences such as separation and divorce. Other research questions emanating from the foregoing, therefore, are; does the differential role a man plays in relationship with the female gender constitute a determinant of high fertility? or can it affect a man's social standing in the society, that is, in terms of taking up traditional positions and titles? What are the possible socio-cultural factors that enhance or sustain this? Does this imply that women do not or cannot take independent decisions as regards their reproductive behavior? What prospects

exist for developing a strategy to guide policy makers and future researchers towards tackling the fertility problem and providing solutions towards making marriages more sustainable given the esteemed position accorded to the males in the society and the implication for the fertility level and population increase?. The major concern of this research therefore, is to examine the effect the preference for sex of child generally has on high fertility rate and marital stability in Nigeria and Cross River State in particular.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the provision of answers to the main issues of the study:

1. Is there a higher preference for males or females?
2. Does preference for sex of child affect the fertility behavior of the people of Cross River State?
3. What is the relative effect of sex preference on marital stability?
4. Does the differential role a man plays in relation to the female constitute a determinant of sex preference?
5. What are the possible socio-cultural factors that enhance or sustain sex preference?
6. What is the relative effect of sex preference on family size?

1.4 Aim and Objectives of the Research

The aim of the study is to examine the sociological implications of sex preference in Cross River State as it affects fertility behavior and marital stability with a view to isolating factors which will be of importance to planners and policy

makers in addressing high fertility levels. Specifically, the following objectives shall guide the conduct of the research.

1. To determine the relationship between sex preference and fertility behavior in Cross River State.
2. To examine the relationship between sex preference and marital stability in Cross River State.
3. To examine the relative effect of sex preference on actual family size
4. To examine the relationship between sex roles performance and sex preferences.
5. To identify the place of socio-cultural factors in determining sex preference.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The importance of studying sex preference in marriage derives from the fact that these preferences are potentially very important in shaping the fertility behavior of the society. Information on reproductive attitudes and motivation may be helpful in understanding the factors that affect fertility and marital stability. The study of fertility is often linked to the population problem: the relation between number of people and their social and economic resources. Population increase has been the central concern of population analysts, economist and social scientists. The concern has been acknowledged mostly if there is a high rate of fertility without a corresponding increase in economic production. It has been generally accepted that the growth, stability and development of any nation is anchored on the stability of the marriage and the family. Being a critical unit of the society, the family needs to be more stable as whatever affects the family affects the society. Thus with the rising rate of instability in marriages (Lundberg, 2005), occasioned by several factors

including sex preference, there is a need to understand what the root causes are, and what should be done to check them. This fact motivated the undertaking of this study, which will go a long way in contributing to the understanding of the factors influencing fertility behaviour as well as marital stability in Nigeria in general and Cross River State in particular.

The findings of this study may be very relevant in establishing the mechanisms for influencing the fertility behavior of rural dwellers in particular and the population situation in the country in general. It is intended to draw the attention of researchers, policy makers and others interested in population studies to another direction in our effort at finding lasting solutions to the problems of high fertility and increasing cases of divorce and separation in Nigeria. This study will also provide information in the field of demography and sociology as well as contribute to knowledge which others may share. It may also serve as a model for surveys on fertility in Nigeria and beyond. It will also draw the attention of the public/policy makers to rising problems of divorce, broken homes and increase marital instability in our society due to the problems associated with sex preference.

1.6 Scope and limitations of the Study

This study which is on the sociological implications of sex preference for fertility behavior and marital stability in Cross River State, is concerned with the role the preference for sex of child plays in enhancing high fertility in the state. Special interest was paid to the lineage system to unravel its connection with property, title inheritance, propagation of lineage name and fertility in the society. The study location is Cross River State. Using a combination of the multi-stage cluster sampling technique, systematic sampling technique and the simple random sampling technique, six (6) LGA's were selected from the 18 LGA's of the state. That

is two (2) each from the three senatorial zones of the state. All together a total of 1200 respondents were selected. Quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques were also used in the collection of data for the study. This involved the use of structured questionnaires as well as focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. The problems encountered in the course of undertaking this study were mainly related to the selection of sample. The problem of deciding on the size of the sample due to no proper sampling frame was very crippling, thus the population figures of 2006 though not very reliable were used to derive the sample size for the study. The initial attempt was to obtain an equal number of respondents for each of the 18 LGAs that make up the State; this however was not possible due the largeness of the state and the cost implication of studying a state as large as Cross River State, thus the decision to study the state on already existing political structures of the three senatorial zones from where two LGAs each were selected. Again, in spite of the fact that some of the questionnaires were administered personally and read out for the illiterate respondents, total success could still not be achieved. Some difference of about fifty was discovered in the course of sorting and analysis of the data, even though this did not have any major influence on the results of the study as responses to each question of importance were weighted against the total respondents in each category.

Another handicap that this study had to face was due to the lack of response from some respondents chosen for the study, especially those who had children of the same sex or experiencing some form of instability or another in their marriages. Most of them were unwilling to provide answers to most of the questions as they felt that their privacy was being invaded. Thus this study is without the contributions of such respondents. However, most of the methodological problems were minimized

by cross checking the data collected from the quantitative technique and those collected from the qualitative technique to ensure their validity and reliability.

1.7 Research Hypotheses

To explain the main concern of this research and show the relationship between sex preference, fertility behavior and marital stability in Cross River State, the following hypotheses are formulated.

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between sex preference and the fertility behaviour of the people of Cross River State.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between sex preference and marital stability in Cross River State.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant association between sex preference for a child and actual family size.

Hypothesis 4: The desire for sons is strongly related to the differential roles performed by males and those performed by females in the society.

Hypothesis 5: There is a significant relationship between cultural norms/values prevalent in Cross River State and the preference for sex of child.

1.8 Operational definition of concepts

The following concepts used in this study are operationally defined below.

Sex preference: This is the wish of individuals to have a particular sex of child. It could be male or female. Usually and most common in Nigeria is the preference for a male child. However, for this study, sex preference is used interchangeably with male child preference, son preference, female preference, child gender as well as preference for sex of child. The variables used as a measure of position in the

preference index are the number of male or female children preferred in a life time as influenced by such factors as continuity of the family, title/property inheritance, sex roles performance and cultural norms and values prevalent in the area. This is suggested by the theoretical orientation adopted and as the guiding principle in the analysis of the research data.

Fertility behavior: The term fertility behaviour as used in this study relates to all manner of behaviour that directly or indirectly influences the biological reproduction of children. The study sought responses to questions relating to fertility behavior and the choice of questions were determined by its implications on fertility outcome. The examination of the data on sex preference and fertility behavior were based on the following; number of living children; willingness to continue child bearing without the preferred sex of child; family size; sex roles and attitude towards children. Fertility behavior as used in this study however has to do with the trend of fertility related attitudes, measured essentially by the number of children ever born and the willingness to continue child bearing in the absence of the preferred sex of child.

Marital stability: This refers to a situation of peace, tranquility, calm and love within the marriage, where marital unions are not experiencing any kind of problems that can creates unnecessary tension in the unions thus making the marriage unstable. Responses relating to issues such as the commonest types of instabilities experienced in marriages, reasons for taking another wife were sought. In the focus on each of the above, a number of issues raised in the questionnaire were addressed.

Family size: This refers to the total fertility experience of an individual woman, even though men could have idea of what size of family they prefer. Given the role that sex preference plays in the ultimate completed family size and its eventual

impact on the overall population growth rate, the determinant of the respondents family size preference gives an insight into the fertility situation in the society. For this study a family size of four children and less is considered a small family size, while a family of five children and above is considered a large family size.

1.10 Synopsis of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into five major chapters. Chapter one is the general introduction containing the background to the study; statement of the research problem; research questions; aim and objectives of the study; significance of the study and the synopsis of the thesis. Chapter two presents the literature review and theoretical framework. It presents a review of existing literature on the sociological implication of sex preference on fertility behavior and marital stability as well as provide a critical analysis of the relevant theories with a view to justifying the need for a comprehensive theoretical base for the study. Chapter three presents the methodology of the study, which laid the methodological foundation for the research, in addition to presenting the various methods of data collection and utilization of the research instruments. Chapter four presents data analysis and presentation of results. It presents data on the causes, effects, trends, patterns and implications of sex preference on family and marital stability as well as fertility behavior in Cross River State. Chapter five presents the discussion of findings; the summary; conclusion and the recommendations made based on the findings of the research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The reasons why people want children vary from society to society. They could be economic, social, political, traditional as well as religious. These reasons help to guide couples in deciding on the sex and number of children they desire. In most traditional societies, manhood is defined in terms of the number of male children a man is able to have. Cox (1999) observed that the actual family sizes of couples are sometimes not really their desired family size. He however sees psychological, economic and moral factors as strong in determining family size. Other factors he noted include variations in the average age at marriage, changes in marriage rate such as those resulting from alteration in the balance of the sexes, trends in divorce, medical advances and many other factors. Chow (1998) writing about fertility and tradition in Taiwan observed that tradition has been one of the factors inhibiting reduction in fertility rates in most countries of the world. According to him, wealth, longevity and many children (sons in particular) have been regarded as the three major sources of happiness in Taiwan. A careful examination of factors affecting fertility behavior and or marital stability shows that the factors could be grouped into many broad categories which include socio-cultural, socio-economic, demographic etc.

2.2 The Impact of Sex Preference on Fertility Behavior

According to Weeks (2004), in virtually every society, individuals feel pressured to have children, although in some societies these pro-natalist pressures are stronger than in others. This view is corroborated by Caldwell (1998). He found

that the position in sub-Saharan Africa often seems to be that "there is an abhorrence of a family with no sons which might mean the extinction of descendants needed to perform the services for their ancestors; in traditional society nearly all parents have social and usually economic gains which increase almost indefinitely with the size of the family and the birth of a son. Societies everywhere have developed social institutions to encourage child-bearing and reward parenthood in various ways. Chapera (1996) discovered that among the Kgatla people in South Africa *it is inconceivable that a married couple should for economic or personal reasons deliberately seek to restrict the number of its off-spring, (pp186)*. He found several social factors that encouraged the Kgatla people to desire male children: *A woman with many sons is honoured. Married couples acquire new dignity after the birth of their first child. Since the Kgatla people have a patrilineal decent system (inheritance passes through the son); the birth of a son makes the father the founder of a line that will perpetrate his name and memory, the mother's kins are pleased because the birth saves them from shame, (pp195)*

Although it is clear in many countries today that the status of women is steadily improving, it is nonetheless true that in many societies around the world, desired social goals can be achieved only by the birth and survival of a son. Since in most societies males have been valued more highly than females, it is easy to understand why families would continue to have children until they have at least one son.

It was reported in one of the National dailies, years ago (National Concord, Feb.25, 1983) that 15 Chinese women had publicly declared that they will rather die than give up their chances of having baby boys. As mothers of girls they lacked status and were targets of maltreatment by their husbands, mothers in-law and even

their own parents. Failure to produce a male offspring in their region was a lot "worse than death" they said. Such cultural and social values attached to male children can have very great effect on total fertility.

Many cultures the world over attach great importance to the act of procreation. In a review of studies on India, Mandelbaum (2001) reports that typically a woman knows of no acceptable alternative role for herself than that of wife-mother. For all but a relative few, a woman's destiny lies mainly in her ability to procreate not just children but male children; the mark of her success as a person is in her having living sons.

In his study in China, Gaisie (1995) found that the Tallensis' regard the perpetuation of their line of decent as of transcendent importance. There is something wrong by native standard with men and women who never marry and they are few. To the Asante, prolific child bearing is honored. A mother often boasts of her achievement and is given a public ceremony of congratulation if she is able to give birth to three male children in a row. By contrast, barren women and those unable to give birth to male children are given little or no prestige and are regarded with contempt and malicious pity.

Another socio-cultural explanation for sex preference and high fertility in certain societies was revealed by Ware (1997). In the study of the Yoruba people of Western Nigeria, families of fewer than four children and with no sons were looked upon with horror. Ware reports that even if it could be guaranteed that two children would survive to adulthood, Yoruba parents would find such a family very lonely, and would always prefer that the two survivors be males so that they can get married in the future and bring in more members for the family. Because, many of the features of large family sizes, which have come to be negatively valued in the west, such as noise and bustle, are positively valued by them.

The prevalence of son preference and its implications for fertility behaviour in developing countries have received a great deal of scholarly attention, but child gender bias is believed to be empirically unimportant in wealthy non-traditional societies (Lundberg, 2005). Studies by sociologists during the past 30 years, however, have documented consistent discrepancies between the behaviour of parents of sons and parents of daughters. Boys tend to increase marital stability and marital satisfaction relative to girls, fathers spend more time with, and are more involved with sons than daughters (Lundberg, 2005).

An extensive social science literature documents the existence of son preference in South and East Asia and the implications of this child gender bias for fertility, marriage and the relative wellbeing of boys and girls. There is little evidence, however, of parental discrimination in favor of sons in most of the developed world. Fertility patterns and surveys from many countries reflect a widespread desire for "balanced families" with at least one boy and one girl. The observable allocation of resources within families is not strongly discriminatory: recent cohorts of young men and women receive comparable levels of education and sons and daughters appear to be treated equally in terms of parental transfers of wealth, (Taubman, 1991).

According to Meadows, Land and Lamb, (2005) the absence of significant discrepancies in the wellbeing of boys and girls does not however, imply that child gender has no impact on marital stability and parental behaviour in wealthy, industrialized societies. Sociologists and psychologists have documented differences in the parenting of sons and daughters, in levels of father involvement and in levels of marital satisfaction reported by parents of boys and girls. Some studies have found that the presence of a son significantly reduces the probability of divorce by American couples. This body of work has been recently augmented by research by

economists who have found significant effects of child gender on marital stability and family structures as well as on parental time allocation and expenditures, Lundberg, (2005).

In general, a recent work by Lundberg (2005) has confirmed and extended the results of previous studies that found different patterns in the parenting of sons and daughters and in particular, greater levels of father involvement and parental time investment in boys. Though the estimated difference in most parental responses to sons and daughters in Europe and America are small in magnitude, the lower levels of father involvement experienced by daughters could affect over all levels of well being for girls. Child gender effects on parental behaviour may also provide a window on a more general set of work-family issues, since they suggest that parenting norms and in particular the expected role of fathers, are influencing both the stability of marital and non-marital relationships.

There are still many unanswered questions concerning child gender effects and how they vary within and across populations, and over time. With the exception of fertility studies from the U.S, almost all the recent studies from across sub-Saharan Africa, South and East Asia suggest that parental responses to sons and daughters vary across cohorts and are heterogeneous within cohorts with parental education being an important determinant. The source of the differential responses to sons and daughters is also unclear, but most empirical patterns can be explained either as the result of a preference for sons or of different constraints facing the parents of boys and girls, (Lundberg and Rose 2002). Distinct child production functions for boys and girls and in particular, real or perceived differences in the returns to parental inputs may play a key role.

When parents express a desire for male rather than female offspring or discriminate against female children in the allocation of resources, care and

attention, they are often described as having a preference for sons. This study takes a look at the prevalence of child gender discrimination in traditional societies, in which cultural institutions such as title inheritance and restriction of the economic activities of women give parents incentive to favor sons. In the parlance of economics, this term suggests differences in parental utility for boys and girls, but what such discriminatory treatment reflects is a difference in parental demand for male and female children or child outcomes. Thus son preference can result from the constraints that individual parents face rather than their preference per se; in either case, son preference can be regarded as a consequence of the distinct economic and social roles that men and women play in traditional societies. It is not surprising therefore that parents who expect to rely on sons for old age support focus resources on their survival.

Relative parental demand for sons is strong enough in parts of South and East Asia as well as Africa to cause juvenile sex ratios well above the biological sex ratio at birth, as a result of sex- selective abortion, sex-selective infanticide and/or differential child mortality. Sen (1990) argued that over 100 million women are missing in Asia and North Africa as a result of high female mortality rates, and Das Gupta and Li (1997) calculated substantial numbers of missing girls in China, South Korea and India. Sex selective abortion has increased the ratio of young boys to young girls in Korea to 112 (Park and Cho 1995). Son preference also affects the family environment of boys and girls via differential stopping behaviour in the fertility of couples trying to achieve a desired number of sons. Girls in India belong to larger families on average than do boys, since the parents of girls are more likely to continue to have children in an effort to acquire sons (Clark, 2000).

Strauss and Thomas (1995) survey the evidence for gender difference in the allocation of household resources to children in developing countries. They

concluded that girls in South Asia and perhaps South East Asia, are disadvantaged in their access to nutritional and health inputs.

The question now is what are the parental motives that lead to an emphasis on the birth, survival and education of sons, relative to daughters? Researchers have emphasized the role of institutions and cultural norms that increase the value of sons and increase the costs of daughters, such as the expectation that sons will care for parents in old age, or the need to provide daughters with a substantial dowry upon marriage. Das Gupta et al (2003) examined the surprising persistence of son preference in the diverse economic environments of China, India and Korea, and argued that these countries are characterized by similar family systems that create disincentives to raise daughters. In patrilocal societies such as the one under study, a woman leaves her parents household when she marries and joins her husband's household. Even when the economic value of women's labour is substantial, a married woman contributes to the resources of her husbands' family: a girl's potential contribution to the welfare of her parents is therefore limited. Other institutions such as dowry and male responsibilities to aged parents and ancestors augment the net economic costs of girls relative to boys in these societies.

Again Graham et al (1998) maintain that son preference has deep cultural roots in many Asian and African countries. The sex ratio at birth in these countries (China, Bangladesh, India) exceeds the expected ratio of 106 males per 100 females, possibly reflecting social or behavioural interference. In China as in Nigeria where son preference has historically been strong, sons are needed to carry out farm work, offer financial support to aging parents, continue the family name and receive the family inheritance. In the past, they also were responsible for ancestor worship. Sons are particularly preferred in rural farming areas of China and among less educated parents. Using a small subset of Ghanaian population, Graham, (2002)

concludes that son preference is more predominant in rural agricultural areas, where the sex ratio at birth is generally higher than the ratio in the urban areas.

Son preference is generally viewed as a socially determined bias in a patriarchal society where couples prefer to raise a child who has the culturally accepted characteristics, status and economic potential associated with the male gender. This preference often influences behaviour and may result in gender biases that negatively affect girls and women's welfare, health and survival. Thus preference may lead to discrimination. Son preference which has its roots in the patriarchal form of society may be an obstacle to further decline in fertility, thus necessitating the need for acceptance rather than rejection of whatever sex of child one has.

Sex preference and fertility behavior have been subjected to the influence of cultural practices, beliefs and values which concede to the man more authority and social privileges than the woman (Tahzib, 1995; Pitttin 1997). Most studies have come to the conclusion that husbands have too much say in their wives fertility behavior. In population Report (2008), it is reported that studies have specifically suggested that this dominant role of the man often extends to a couples' reproductive behaviour and that men have the final say in decisions about family size, sex of children and even the use of family planning methods and services.

Tickamyer (2001) maintains that sex role attitudes related to being either male or female measured directly, may have an effect on the sex of children desired and ultimately on fertility, acting as mediator between social back ground variables and the dependent variable.

Indeed, Caldwell and Caldwell (1997) have argued that the persistence of high fertility in sub-Saharan Africa as a whole can be explained neither by the absence of socio-economic development nor by the ineffectiveness of family

planning programs but by the persistence of socio-cultural and traditional practices that hamper the implementation of programs geared towards fertility reduction.

Using data from four countries in Africa; (Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire) and four other Asian countries (China, India, Indonesia and Thailand), the Caldwells concluded that the explanation lies largely in a religious/cultural belief system and an accompanying social structure that has accorded both spiritual and economic rewards to high marital fertility (Caldwell and Caldwell 1997).

The conclusion here however is particularly relevant to Nigeria and indeed Cross River State where religious belief has a firm hold on the lives of the people and where children are seen as a blessing from God and procreation is an important part of marriage. Thus like many other sub-Saharan African societies, Nigerian traditional societies and religions stress the importance of ancestry and descent. Family life is embedded within the lineage system. Strong obsession exists with the female's procreative function primarily for perpetuation of the family and lineage. Olusanya (1999:) explains this emphatically as follows: *The traditional African family forms part of a lineage, a corporate group whose members are recruited on the basis of filiations. One of its main characteristics is perpetuity. The lineages do not die; its members die and the membership is replenished through birth. Ideally a considerable expansion of membership enhances the power and prestige of the group and reduces the ever present danger of mortality. This really is the crux of the problem of persistent, high fertility enhanced by increasing desire for sons, (pp275)*

It follows therefore that the social pressure arising from the obsession to replenish the lineage by giving birth to sons has conditioned the woman into a kind of "demographic martyr". She has come to believe strongly, that, it is a matter of life and death to marry and bear male children (Olusanya, 1999). Thus demographic

behaviour is part of a larger, more complex whole of behaviour patterns, learned as part of the general behavior pattern in a social group (Hammel, 2000).

In Nigeria, like many sub-Saharan African societies, the lineage structure tends to keep the spousal link emotionally and economically weak, and provides a group of relatives that are usually more numerous than an extended family and more supportive of the actions of its members (Caldwell and Caldwell, 1998).

This support includes wide spread fostering of children (Isiugo Abanihe, 2005) which is common in the Southern part of Nigeria or the *almajiri* which is widely practiced among the Muslims in Northern Nigeria. Thus, a major reason for sex preference and high fertility in Nigerian may be the separation between reproductive decision making and the resultant economic burden or cost of children which is not borne by the decision maker alone, but also by his/her relatives and even the general public.

Sex preference in particular falls under close cultural influence because of its fundamental value for fertility increase. Sons perpetuate the family name and give social and psychological satisfaction to parents, the more male children a mother has, the more blessed she is regardless of the means to sustain the children, which, in the providentialist conception will be provided by God. Therefore performing her procreative function becomes an obsession even to the point of death. In Cross River State a woman who for instance has no children is referred to as "***Ara***", meaning barren and anyone who fails to give her husband a male child consequently suffers an insecure marriage.

This Attitude towards sons/male children and child bearing in general is not unique to Cross River State alone but can be noticed in other parts of Nigeria and the tropics. Ademola (2002) observed that among some traditional Ekiti groups the corpses of adults who die childless were mutilated. In fact the Yoruba word for

barrenness is "***agon***" which derives from the word "***gon***" meaning to despise. These examples indicate the importance of cultural values attached to male children and child bearing in Nigeria.

In several countries of sub-Saharan African, child bearing and high fertility are sanctioned and valued within the adequate framework (marriage), but strongly condemned when one does it out of wedlock (Bledsoe and Cohen, 1997). In Bangladesh for instance, Bairagi (2001) noted that son preference has its roots in patriarchy and that dependence on sons for financial support during old age and continuation of the family name may be an obstacle to further decline in fertility. In most of the countries in South and East Asia, people prefer sons to daughters. This preference often influences people's behaviour and affects both fertility and mortality.

The effects of son preference on fertility and its proximate determinants have been examined in many studies across the world. One study revealed preferential treatment of sons in food distribution and use of health care (Das Gupta, 1997). Other researches demonstrated that preferential treatment escalated during periods of famine, and that excess female child mortality was much higher among girls who had sisters than among those who did not(Bairagi, 2003; Arnold,1987).

In his study on the effect of sex preference on contraceptive use, abortion and fertility in Bangladesh, Bairagi, (2001) discovered that son preference was not found to have an influence in the 1960s in Bangladesh and Pakistan. But in Taiwan and South Korea in the 70s and 80s, couples with more daughters than sons were found to have higher subsequent fertility. Investigations examining the reasons for this inconsistency concluded from the Matlab data that the effect of son preference on fertility would be more pronounced in a population with high contraceptive prevalence than in a population with low prevalence. Therefore, as long as policy

makers do not take the issue of improving the status of women and female children seriously, reducing son preference and its consequent impact on fertility might just be a mirage.

Sex differentials in infant and child mortality are evident. In khanna, Gupta (1997) found that during the neonatal period, male mortality was higher than female mortality. This is what would ordinarily be expected, given that biological factors are preponderant among causes of death in this age group. After the first month of life, environmental and care related factors that are susceptible to societal manipulation come to play. What is however observed is that mortality rates for females are higher than males. What accounts for these mortality differentials? It is generally believed that the answer lies in differential allocation of food and health care within the household, (Chen et al, 2001).

According to Gupta (1997) south Asia is well known as a region of the world where the normally higher number of females than males in the total population is reversed. The excessive mortality of females that this reflects is commonly hypothesized to be due to discrimination against female children, relative to males in the allocation of food and health care within the household. A number of studies have found evidence of such sex bias. For example, in Bangladesh D'souza and Chen (1996) found that female child mortality was higher than male after the neonatal period. Chen et al (2001) found pronounced sex differential in food and health care received by children. A study of two villages in west Bengal found that girls consistently had poorer nutritional status than boys among all socio-economic strata, as defined by landholding and mother's education (Sen and Gupta, 1995). Several other studies also have presented quantitative evidence of sex bias in patterns of child nutrition and health care (Chen et al (2001); Kielmann et al., 1996). Dyson and Moore (1998) found that sex differentials in child mortality are much

higher in North than in South India, and they related this difference to variations between the North and South in kinship systems and female autonomy.

While documenting the existence of sex bias, these studies leave very little understanding of the dynamics of sex discrimination at the household level and its relationship to family-building strategies. All the studies cited seem to be based on the assumption that there is a generalized tendency to give preferential treatment to boys over girls that is rooted in the low value placed on females in South Asian societies. Nothing in these studies suggests that parents may discriminate selectively against some of their daughters rather than in a generalized way against all their daughters. An implication of generalized sex bias is that discriminatory behavior need not occur at a conscious level. Parents in a society may simply have internalized certain norms that lead them to give better care to their sons than their daughters, and excess female mortality may be an unintended consequence.

Yet it is known that innumerable surveys in South Asia have found that parents state clearly that they want to have more boys than girls (Chen,Huo 2003). That parents act on these preferences is revealed by the common finding that the decision to terminate childbearing is strongly related to the number of surviving sons couples have. This raises the possibility that parents may realize their desire to have fewer girls than boys by discriminating particularly heavily against some of their daughters.

Again Gupta (1997) notes that sex differentials by birth order are far stronger than those by socioeconomic status. Moreover, these differentials show a remarkable persistence in the face of socioeconomic development, mortality decline, and fertility decline. In fact, fertility decline appears to heighten such selective discrimination. Interestingly, women's education is associated with reduced child mortality but stronger discrimination appears to be the outcome of women's

structural marginalization in Jats culture, which results in their being of low value to their parents.

A variety of explanations for this phenomenon can be set forth. First, female children may be neglected because their parents are poor, and, faced with difficult choices in allocating resources among their children; they give priority to children of the preferred sex, which suggests that discrimination against female children in Nigeria is not motivated primarily by economic hardship, but rather by cultural factors. What can be said is that where a culture of son preference exists, scarcity of resources may heighten discrimination against females.

Bardhan (1999, 2002, 2004), has also stated that neglect of female children in China, Taiwan and India is related to the low participation of female labour in agriculture and in income-generating activities in general. This idea is based on the observation that females are more disadvantaged in areas of dry land cultivation (which includes the grain-growing areas of Northern Nigeria), where their rates of labour force participation are low, as compared with areas of wetland cultivation. Miller (2004) has hypothesized further that the exclusion of females from production is linked to their exclusion from holding immovable property, particularly land. This in turn is related to intense son preference and discrimination against daughters.

Fertility behavior most often is affected by mortality rates prevailing in the same area. Research on the link between sex preference and mortality in general and that of infant and child mortality and reproductive behaviour and attitudes in particular, seems plausible and attractive. This is because the balance between birth and death rates determines the rate of natural increase of a given population during a given period of time which in turn, has a set of implications for social and economic welfare. In addition, the strength of relationship between the two

variables is central in designing fertility and mortality control programmes and in shaping fertility behaviour and attitude of couples.

Although, the relationship between sex preference and child mortality has long been recognized and discussed in demographic literature, particularly in the traditional demographic transition theory, the issue gained momentum after World War II when the population of this century achieved a remarkable and rapid decline in mortality (Chanaka 1997). When combined with the persistence of sex preference, it resulted in unprecedented increase in the world's population; ninety percent of which is in the low income countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. The consequent disequilibrium between rapidly increasing population and an almost stagnant economy is not only a dilemma encountered by the Governments of the third world nations but is among the main global issues of the time.

Recent research work as well as scientific opinion of analysts and decision makers contend that decline in infant and child mortality is a necessary but insufficient condition for decline or change in fertility behavior, (Freedman 1996; Taylor et al 2006; Preston 1998) Results of empirical studies (Graham et al, 1998; Goldscheider,2003; Chen et al, 2001) both at individual and aggregate levels mostly suggest a statistically significant positive relationship between infant and child mortality and fertility behavior.The most commonly mentioned and often considered operational channels through which infant and child mortality tend to affect reproductive behaviour and attitudes of couples are biological and behavioural in nature. Included in these according to Chanaka (1997) are:

Replacement Effects: This type of effect, it is hypothesized, takes place when actual deaths of children especially males elicit a response from parents to replace dead children by giving additional births, a mechanism that can only be detected in high contraception societies, where there are specified reproductive goals and

means to control family size. As findings of earlier studies suggest, it can be asserted that in all societies, whether developed or developing there is no one to one correspondence between number of additional children born to replace dead children (Free lander, 1996; Preston 1998).

The physiological Effect: The physiological or what is known as biological effect of death of an infant or child being lactated mainly operates through curtailment of duration of breast feeding, which subsequently results in narrow spacing between births, in absence of birth control practice. This type of effect is usually strong and significant in cultures with wide spread breastfeeding habits. For instance, in Lesotho the length of last closed pregnancy interval was shorter for those whose penultimate child was dead, and reduced to only three months when controlled for status and duration of breastfeeding (Chanaka, 1997).

Insurance Effects: Couples or societies may intend to bear many male children as long as they are biologically and physiologically capable, to insure themselves against future child deaths. This happens in anticipation of high child mortality from what has been experienced by neighbours, relatives, friends, or communities, so as to match or even exceed desired family size. This type of effect though very difficult to measure, is very common in agrarian societies such as the one under study.

The behavioural effect of infant and child mortality on fertility related attitudes may operate both at micro and macro levels. Differences in community levels of child mortality can affect the behaviour and attitudes of couple who experienced a child loss and who did not. When the level of infant and child mortality in a given setting or community is high, couples in that environment who even never suffered the loss of a child may, nevertheless, fear such a loss and decide

to have additional children as insurance against the possibility that one or more of their own children may die in the future (Heer and Wu, 2000).

In spite of this fact, it must be noted that both the so called replacement and insurance effects can be experienced by a couple simultaneously. Here, it is argued that couples who have experienced the loss of a child may differ from those who did not in their attitude to future births, desired family size, additional children wanted, sex of children preferred, current and future uses of contraception. The argument further goes that child loss experience would inflate desired family size, additional children wanted and deflate the use of contraception. In other words, any difference in family size preference between women with child loss and those without child loss experience would be used as an indicator of insurance/behavioral effect strategy. (Heer and Wu, 2000).

2.3 Sex Preference and Marital Stability

As a major life event marriage is accompanied by a variety of new expectations and changes in self definitions. It is reasonable to assume that such processes should involve fertility intentions.

Marriage thus can be viewed as a rite of passage or as a major role transition capable of causing fertility intentions to become more fixed. With the occurrence of marriage, a number of changes with potential consequences for fertility intentions may take place. Marriage provides a real spouse to fill the role of the individual who hitherto had been anticipated as a mother or father of one's children. In fact, prospective grand parents may begin to make explicit their expectations regarding grand children. Marriage provides a measure of reality in assessing the cost and benefits of children relative to the couple's present lifestyle as well as their short and long term goals. Marriage provides a partner who is taken into account when

one declares fertility intentions. Indeed, among some groups, marriage does not mark the final transition to adulthood; rather, childbearing and childrearing makes one fully adult.

According to available literature, the birth of a son relative to a daughter increases both the quality and stability of the parents' relationship (Lundberg, 2005;Graham,1998). Child gender effects on marriage and divorce imply that girls are less likely to live with their fathers, this gap in father contact is exacerbated by substantial differences in post-divorce custody arrangements for boys and girls. Male children increase parents' subjective reports of individual wellbeing and marital satisfaction. Several studies (Barnett and Baruch, 2006, Katzev et al 1996) have found that both partners in marriage with sons report higher levels of marital satisfaction than do husbands and wives in marriages who have only daughters. Boys also reduce their mothers' perceptions of the likelihood of divorce (Heaton and Albrecht, 1995; Katzev et al, 1996). A recent study of subjective reports of well being among a sample of Danish twins, by Kohler et al, (2004) found that the birth of a first child increases reported happiness, and that men enjoy an almost 75 percent larger happiness gain from a first born son than from a first born daughter.

In the 1980s, several studies by sociologists, reported that, in the United States, having a son relative to a daughter increases the likelihood that a marriage will remain intact. Spanier and Glick (2001) found that divorce is more likely if all children are girls, especially if the mother has relative little education. Morgan, Lye and Condran (2008) found that sons reduce the risk of marital disruption by a percent more than do daughters and Mott (1994) says that girls are less likely than boys to live in a household with a father present.

There are however, several studies that have found no significant child gender effect on divorce, (Devine and Forehand, 2006; Bracher et al; 2003;

Diekmann and Schmidheiny, 2004). Morgan and Pollard (2003) replicated the results of Morgan et al (2003) to confirm a negative effect of sons on divorce rates for the 1960-1979 period, but report that this effect is attenuated sharply in later periods. The absence of significant child gender effects on divorce rates in these latest studies appears to be due both to a real decrease in the differential impact of sons on marital stability and to the use of data sources with relatively small sample sizes. However census based analysis show significant child gender effects on divorce that increase with family size and decline over time. Berdard and Deschene (2005) and Ananat and Michaels (2004) find significant effects of sons on divorce probabilities using the 1980 U.S. Census. The two studies found comparable positive effects of a first born daughter on the probability that her mother's first marriage may end in divorce.

Thus if a son increases the stability of marital unions, it seems likely that the birth of a boy will improve the quality of non marital unions as well. Lundberg and Rose (2003) estimate the effect of child gender on the probability of marriage for women in the panel study of income Dynamics who had non marital births. Mothers of sons were more likely to marry, and marry more quickly than mothers of daughters.

Why might marriages with sons be more stable than marriages with daughters? Sociological studies of child gender effects on marriage and divorce emphasize the social norms that dictate a more active role for fathers in the parenting of son than daughters, and postulate a positive causal relationship between paternal involvement and marital stability. In economic terms, father involvement in parenting can be related to marital stability in two distinct ways.

First, if fathers are more involved in parenting sons than daughters, perhaps because they play a special role in the emotional and social development of boys,

then having a son increases marital surplus, or the value of marriage relative to single parenthood. Secondly, fathers may simply place a higher value on marriage and family if they have a son. This preference may be due to gender bias on the part of fathers or to the bonding that occurs when fathers spend more time with the child and are more involved with family activities. In either case, the greater family involvement of fathers of boys appears to be associated with increased marital satisfaction for mothers and fathers of boys and a reduced propensity to divorce.

Thus if the birth of a son increases the value of marriage more than the birth of a daughter and consequently leads to a more stable union then we might expect that fertility will be higher for those marriages than for the unstable ones. In a 1962 study of the Bekwari of the Cameroon, Ardener found a positive correlation between high fertility and marital stability. This should however be expected because in the rural setting, children born outside marriage are not regarded much in their society and in cross River State marriage is much as important as having a male child. Young girls look forward to the day they would be married while most widows always want to remarry. Studies have confirmed that a woman who has never been divorced would have more children than a woman who has been divorced, given that they are fertile and do not use any birth control devices. This is because divorce brings about a break in the marital life of the union and thus leads to a reduction in the number of children the couple will ultimately have even if they were to re-unite.

2.4 Sex Preference and Family Size Preferences

Although family units take different forms, the two widely known types are the nuclear and extended families. Some attempts have been made to determine the effect of each of these arrangements on sex preference and fertility behavior. Joint or extended families have higher preference for male children and consequently higher

fertility rates than nuclear families, because the nuclear family system requires that the man be able to support his family with land or housing of his own prior to marriage (Ademola, 2002; Akpan, 2001). Such economic independence is not necessary with the extended family arrangements, since the young couple can live with the parents, (Nam and Gustavus 1996). This makes youthful marriages possible. Besides promoting marriage at an earlier age, child care is easier no matter the number within the extended families and this encourages parents to produce more children. Kotkar (1998) reports that, the extended family system reduces the house wife's burden of rearing children. Therefore, the greater the number of members of the extended family living in the house hold, the greater will be its fertility. This factor is relevant to Cross River State, because it is predominantly rural and it is characterized by the extended family system.

Societies in Nigeria as in other developing nations consider higher fertility a blessing. The man with many children, particularly male children seem to command much prestige while the man with few children is a man of minor influence, (Benedict 2006). Mcsweeney (1993) notes that in many countries people feel that life is not complete without a son to carry on the family name. She further observed that a more serious problem is that the traditional legal system does not allow females to inherit property in most cultures, and that, although the husband and wife may be quite contented with girls, most often relatives persistently make life difficult for the husband unless he marries another wife to continue the search for a male child. Because of this attitude, the number of children a couple wants, considers ideal, expects and desires becomes relatively high with the result that fertility is geared to match the desired or preferred family size.

Most studies (Ottong, 1997; Arikpo, 1999; Ogbuagu, 2000; Etukudo, 2001 and Akpan, 2001) show that most Nigerians still prefer a family of between six and seven

children. These may vary due to the knowledge, acceptability and practice of family planning. Also, from the World Fertility Survey (WFS) data reported in Okojie, (1996) most sub-Saharan African countries portray a pro-natalist culture with desired family size ranging between six and eight children (Okogie, 1996). Kane and Ruzicka (1996) had noted that family size preferences are associated with the education of both women and their husbands.

The knowledge and accessibility of family planning methods and services as well as the influence of strong cultural and traditional beliefs are factors that determine the use of these methods. These cultural factors such as sex preference can help to explain reasons for the low acceptability and accessibility of family planning methods and services. In most rural areas in Nigeria, knowledge is lacking, and the acceptance rate is very low. In the African Demographic and Health Survey Chart book (1992), a publication of the United Nations, it is noted that contraceptive use is lower in Africa than in any other region of the world.

According to Kim (1996) and Ottong (1997), living in rural areas could affect family planning in four ways; the first is that people in rural areas could desire more children; secondly, willingness to exceed the desired number of children as a result of the desire for a particular sex could be greater in rural than in urban areas; thirdly, rural residents could know but approve less of family planning, and fourthly, family planning services could be less available in rural areas. In a survey on controlling family size, Ekanem (2008) had observed that apart from traditional methods of abstinence, rhythm and withdrawal, the use of other modern methods is very low. Etukudo (2007) observed that in most rural areas information on contraceptive and contraception methods is lacking among the people, thus the low incidence of use.

Secombe (1993) posits that increased female autonomy and a growing sense of individuality are relevant for fertility control, since women, rather than men, may initially develop the motivation to limit family size. Freedman (1995) noted that Bangladesh is the best example of a country with a strong family planning effort which has brought about a significant fertility decline, even when social and economic development is at a low level and not improving much. He argued that the speed with which reproductive behaviour changed in Bangladesh especially in the absence of much parallel change in social and economic development in the country strengthens the argument that family planning programme has a considerable influence on fertility decline.

It is universally agreed that age at marriage is one of the most important determinants of ultimate completed family size. Admittedly, a late age at marriage can be more than compensated for by a shortened spacing between births, leading to a large family size. However, on average, a group of people who marry later will probably have fewer children and will not so much be concerned with the issue of sex preference, especially the women. It is important to note here that only a woman/couple who entered in to marital unions early are likely going to be bothered about the sex of children. Caldwell (2001), in a paper presented during a proceeding of the Expert Group Meeting on fertility and mortality, supported the crucial role of age factor at marriage. He said that much of the fertility decline in the contemporary Third World can be attributed to delayed female marriage; the proper time to marry rather than any desire to control ultimate family size. Female age at marriage is rising in most areas in Nigeria due to longer years spent in acquiring education and women's involvement in paid/formal occupations, including Cross River State.

Age at first marriage affects fertility. It is generally true that a woman who marries before the age of 20 would bear more children and would generally be concerned about the sex of children than the one who marries at say 35 years and above, all other conditions being equal. As indicated in the Nigerian fertility survey, the age at marriage in Nigeria is low. It further noted that majority of women, particularly girls in the Northern part of the country marry at the age of 15 or even lower (NPC, 2007).

Marriage type is significant to levels of fertility. An E.C.A. report (1998) asserts that Fertility for women in monogamous marriages was significantly higher than the fertility of women in polygamous unions. This contention is supported by studies from Eastern Nigeria, although studies in Mali showed higher fertility among polygamous marriages. However, Mott, et al. (2005) contributing to this debate pointed out that available evidence on the relationship between marriage type and fertility level produces ambiguous results. Data for monogamous marriages indicate a greater completed family size in some instances, and in others, the opposite result. In Lucas (1994) study of people of South Eastern Nigeria monogamous wives had a total fertility rate of 8.5 children ever born compared to 5.7 children for all polygamous wives. But Mott (1995) in his study of the Igbo's found fewer children ever born among monogamously married wives.

There are various reasons why men and women, even educated persons prefer to enter polygamous marriage. For a man, these may include, sterility of the previous wife, lack of a male child by a previous wife, cultural, economic or social. (Marries, 1986, Brown 1995, Mott and Mott, 2005). A woman may also decide to enter a polygamous marriage for some anticipated economic and security reasons, (Oyeka, 2002). It is observed by Oyeka (2002) that Polygamy is more frequently

observed among the rural, less educated and Moslem population than among their urban, more educated and Christian counterpart.

Gupta (1997) revealed in her study that strong preference for sons was reflected in women's statement regarding the number of children of each sex that they would like to have. On average younger women preferred to have more sons and fewer daughters than their older, more educated counterpart who prefer fewer sons and daughters. Thus it is important to note that desired numbers of additional children of each sex falls as the age of the woman rises, presumably because women tailor their aspirations to what they have already achieved and their reduced future time for reproduction. That is to say that a 28 year old woman with no sons and two daughters may settle for one son although she might ideally have preferred to have two. In this context it is notable that the desire for additional children falls much more sharply with age at marriage than the desire for sons. This is especially marked in the case of educated women who by the age of 35-40 want virtually no daughters, even if they have no living daughters,(Gupta,1997).

According to the Nigerian National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS 2008), the median age at first marriage in Nigeria is 17 years, with variations occasioned by religion, culture and level of educational attainment. Again, result of multivariate analysis of age at first marriage carried out by Babalola (2002) revealed that women in the rural areas marry much earlier than their counterparts in the urban areas. According to him the average age at first marriage is 22.8 percent for urban dwellers and 19.8 for rural dwellers.

Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS 2003) report states that three fifth of women age 30-39 at the time of survey married at age 18, while eight in ten women were married at the age of 22. The median age at first marriage among women in the rural areas was lower than the urban areas (NDHS, 2003).

High fertility and early marriage is not peculiar to Nigeria only. Wright (1998) writing about fertility and age at marriage in Sri Lanka estimated that almost the entire decline in fertility up to 1963 was due to a rise in the female marriage age. Fernando (1992), similarly attributed four fifths of fertility decline between 1963 and 1969 in Sri Lanka to the rising female age at marriage. According to Brodie (1994), rising age at marriage might precede or even stimulate a greater acceptance of family Planning. Bailey and Serow (1991), also observed that whatever changes in fertility that did occur in Sierra Leone were largely the result of later marriage.

Obono (1995), in his study of Ugep community in Cross River State of Nigeria found the age at first marriage to be very low in Nigeria particularly in the rural areas. He recorded an average age at first marriage to be 16 years. According to Benedict (2002), due to high rates of mortality and short life span, early marriage was a kind of insurance to promote survival. It is also the view of Thomlinson (1989), that the age of marriage and the age when sexual intercourse begins have a considerable effect on completed fertility, or actual number of children a woman has. Kanagarathan (1995), writing about the fertility situation in Singapore noted that many factors such as literacy, age at first marriage affect fertility and population growth. Belan (2006) summed it up thus: "we have argued in favour of paying closer attention to marriage customs, in particular to those elements favouring female autonomy, because of their relevance for fertility decline. Increase in female age at marriage is associated with an extension of spinsterhood, the acceptance of courtship and a decline in parental influence over the selection of marriage partners. These are processes promoting both nuclearization and an increase in the bargaining power of women within the nuclear family, conditions favourable to the emergence of favourable attitudes towards birth control". (pp231)

It is also noted that the educational level of brides is associated with their average age at first marriage (UN 1983). The United Nation Demographic year Book (1992) states that women in most parts of the world are staying longer than their mothers did before getting married. Delayed age at marriage directly affects completed fertility by reducing the median years available for child bearing. World Health Survey Report (1998) states that delayed marriage and first birth mean fewer years spent in child bearing and often result in lower total fertility, depending on the number of children they bear, particularly sons.

2.5 Sex Preference and Sex Roles Performance

In most rural areas women are seen as property purchased by men. They are expected to obey their husbands, get pregnant when they want them to, and in most occasions any disobedience may earn them a divorce .The more a woman sees herself as tied to the apron of the husband, the more children she bears,(Ottong,1997). This cultural construct attributed to women and the roles they play seems to be the major reason why women and indeed couples desire sons than daughters. The traditional African society is rooted in patriarchy where women cannot hold traditional titles and headship; couples tend to desire more male children who will take over from them when they are no more and from where descent and ancestry will be perpetuated.

There is a convergence of interests at several levels to put a premium on sons and discriminate against daughters. Son preference is in the interest of the lineage, whose continuity depends on sons alone. It is also in the interest of the household, for whom daughters are transitory members. For every individual, brothers and sons are more valuable than sisters and daughters. This does not mean that sisters and daughters may not be loved as much as brothers and sons. However,

a girl values her brother more than her sister because the former will do much for her throughout life, while the later will effectively disappear after marriage, (Gupta,1997). Similarly, a woman values her sons more than her daughters because the former will be her major source of support. Indeed, a woman's position in her husband's home is not consolidated unless she produces at least one son, (Gupta, 1997).

Economic factors go a long way towards explaining son preference in Asia, but not necessarily in the way put forward by Bardhan and Miller, (2008). These authors relate the care allocated to people to their value to the economy. People's positions in society, however, are determined not only by the contributions they make to the economic process, but also by their rights of ownership and decision-making. According to them, the structure of rights over asset ownership and decision-making favours males very heavily and has an over-whelming influence on the position of the sexes. These social-structural factors generate son preference by making people depend heavily on sons or other male kins for necessary economic support.

The evidence suggests that Jats in India have a preference for removing unwanted daughters as early as possible by such means as infanticide, neglect at early ages, and most recently, feticide (Das Gupta, 1997). Once girls are past early childhood, the extent of discrimination is reduced. This is evident in the consumption data. It is very difficult to explain this concentration of discrimination at early ages, but perhaps the explanation lies partly in the fact that very young children are especially vulnerable to the consequences of neglect, and also are not regarded as full members of society

2.6 Socio-Cultural Factors and Sex Preference

It has long been recognized that socioeconomic improvements do directly or indirectly affect fertility. According to Population Reports (1984), it is noted that *the extent to which socio-economic improvement will indirectly affect fertility may depend on how accessible those socioeconomic improvements are to women (pp126)*. Caldwell (1996) notes that marital fertility has fallen because there has been little pressure from relatives on couples to have children, and because their cost has been rising in comparison to their perceived benefits. The comparatively egalitarian nature of the family means that parents gain less materially from having children, than in more hierarchical societies. He noted further that a major contribution to Sri Lanka's fertility decline has been made by changes in age at marriage. Changes in the socio-economic system which have reduced the importance of individual attributes have favoured a later age at marriage.

Heer and Turner (1995) noted that *an increase in the level of economic development leads to an increase in the birth rate as married couples become more optimistic concerning their future economic status,* (pp98). On the other hand, the increase sets in motion other forces such as increased knowledge and use of family planning methods and increase in net economic cost of children which tends to reduce the birth rate. In the long run birth rate reducing forces tend to exceed birth rate increasing forces unless the increases in income per head continue at a higher rate. Schram (1994) had observed that, an increase in the level of economic well being of a society increases fertility, but that various indirect effects of an increase in economic well–being have such adverse consequences for fertility that taking into account both direct and indirect effects, an increase in economic level decreases fertility.

Standard of living is the oldest and most widely treated variable in analyzing socioeconomic determinants of human reproduction. Nevertheless, efforts thus far to understand the role that socioeconomic forces play in family-size determination have not been well served by reference to an income- fertility relation. Undoubtedly the connection between the fertility of a people and its real income level is an important one. But interpreting fertility as directly dependent upon real income conceals many fundamental characteristics of parental environment that are only crudely described by this single indicator of family circumstance. It is not surprising therefore, that economic theory offers strong analytical support for the existence of either a strong positive or negative relationship between fertility and current income.

On the premise that parental preferences to have and raise children exert some effect on observed family size, an understanding of the rationale of population dynamics- and the consequent ability to accurately predict population growth rates- requires analysis at the individual household level. The microeconomic theory of fertility associated with the work of Becker, (2004) and Stacey (2003) is essentially an elaboration of the concept of human capital and the substance of micro theory to deal with allocation of time. A model arises in which the fundamental reasons for having children and the substance parent- child relationship are expressed in terms of their associated costs and benefits.

For more than 2,000 years, the traditional society in Nigeria has been strictly patriarchal. It was believed that the family line was carried on solely by descendants on the male side. Only the male offspring belonged to the clan community. The traditional customs of marriage and the family constituted the foundation for male supremacy. The advent of Christianity, education and modernity have tried to

introduce acceptable ideology by changing marriage and divorce laws and by mobilizing women into production in the liberated areas.

Since after 1960, Nigeria has repeatedly reiterated its commitment to sexual equality, and it has made substantial efforts to undermine the social, economic, and Psychological bases of male supremacy. China for example has attempted to reduce the importance of the patrilocal kinship system; the law stipulates that a husband may become a member of the wife's family. Daughters as well as sons are made responsible for supporting their parents in old age. Other articles of the law stipulate that both spouses are allowed to use their own family names and that children may use the family name of either parents (Stacey, 2003).

Job opportunities for women have helped improve their economic status since independence. Since 1960 more and more women in both rural and urban areas have become economically self-supporting. On the whole, the earnings of the husband are higher than those of the wife; however, the wife's earnings are frequently an important part of the family's income, partly because wives are developing increasingly on the basis of equality, mutual respect, and affection.

There are still substantial gaps between males and females, however. According to Mason, (2004), in China, political efforts to help women hold up the sky have blunted some of the effects of Confucian tradition, but aspects of that tradition are still being reproduced by millions of parents. Sons are favoured over daughters in the allocation of house hold tasks; duration of academic career, access to private tutors; demands for remittances; and distribution of family property.

In view of the lower educational attainment of women, it is not surprising that women are underrepresented in many relatively desirable jobs. The available data do not permit an assessment of the degree to which this underrepresentation is based on the lack of educational qualifications alone and how much is attributable to

other factors. It is clear, however, that job opportunities are more limited for women than for men. Men substantially outnumbered women in leadership positions. According to the 2006 population census, 75 percent of heads of government agencies and 95 percent of heads of party and people's organizations are males, as 98 percent of leaders of rural communities (Taylor, 2007). The dominance of men in leadership positions is even more pronounced in rural areas, where 98 percent of agricultural production leaders are males. In summary, the position of women has improved significantly over time, but there is still a long way to go. As long as differentials exist in educational and employment opportunities, the preference of couples for sons over daughters is likely to continue.

Occupation of women is reported by many researchers to affect fertility preferences. According to Tickamyer (1999) professionals, managers and clerical workers have fewer children and would bother less about the sex of the children than farmers and laborers, though may prefer to have a balance of the sexes. It has also been observed that women labour force participation is usually associated with a negative effect on fertility. Women who work longer have fewer children than women of the same age and marital duration, with shorter work experience (Freedman and Coombs 1996; Presser 2001; Mason, 2004). Sweet (2003), in his study noticed this pattern between occupation and fertility and posited that fertility among women gets lower as labour force participation is greater. Women who are aware are more interested in carrier, economic rewards or in other benefits of working rather than child bearing and rearing. In most rural areas, very few women participate in the formal sector and this helps in increasing the desire and preference for male children and consequently the fertility level. This may not be the case in most places as more and more rural women are becoming aware of the need for smaller family sizes.

On the other hand, Areola (1996) reported an inverse relationship between occupation and fertility He found that the unemployed women in Ibadan and those in home related services at almost every age group have lower number of children, but those in gainful employment have higher fertility. This could probably be based on the fact of their being able to care, cater and provide adequately for the children no matter how many and whatever the sex. However it is hoped that the study will be able to establish which direction the relationship goes with respect to the study area.

The nature of the income – fertility relationship is complicated by the cost and allocation of parental time. Enhanced employment opportunities for women increase forgone earnings during pregnancy and child rearing. Thus, other things being equal, female labour force participation is anticipated to act as a deterrent to increase preference for sex of child and high fertility through the higher opportunity costs associated with working women bearing and rearing children relative to women not employed outside the home. In Rio de Janeiro and Caracas, relatively more foreign than native women work outside the home, this lends support to the point raised by Ademola (1996) that women who work have more motivation to limit their family size than women who do not work outside the home.

Fertility generally is believed to be higher in rural than in urban areas. It is the view of Lorimer (1994) that apathetic acceptance of circumstances tends to promote a higher level of fertility. He observed that such fatalistic acceptance of events is a characteristic of the rural people than urban dwellers and of lower socio-economic groups in contrast with occupants of higher social positions. In his study of Ibadan, Arowolo (1997) found that Ibadan born women who were at the moment unemployed showed a consistently lower average number of children ever-born (CEB), at virtually every age group than employed women of rural background.

Goldberg (2006) noted that one factor that has been associated with lower fertility is increased urbanization. Compared with their rural counterparts, urban women are often better educated, in higher socio-economic statuses, and within reach of better medical and health facilities, all factors that have often been found to be inversely associated with fertility (Harrington, 2001; Dow, 2007). Male children are also a greater economic asset in the rural than in the urban areas in terms of their expected early contribution to farm work, (Marris, 2005, Mott and Mott, 2005), and family up keep.

In his study, Oyeka (2002) found that total marital fertility was higher in the rural areas. The results are similar in pattern to the earlier findings by Ekanem for the former Eastern Nigerian region (Ekanem, 2005). Another socio-economic variable that emerges from the literature as an important influence on fertility behaviour is place of residence. Fertility levels are expected to be lower in urban areas than in rural areas. In Nigeria for example, it is clear that fertility is higher in rural than urban areas. With a total fertility rate of 5.4, rural women are bearing almost one child more on average than urban women who have a total fertility rate (TFR) of 4.5 (NPC, 2000).

Again the process of urbanization and the increasing influences of Western cultural concepts on many population groups, but especially the young, are seen to be responsible for the breakdown of traditional customs. In this sense, increase in premarital sexuality is seen by many authors as a consequence of the introduction of Western Values and ways of conduct which expand more easily in the urban areas through the available media organs (Villarreal, 1998). According to Linchwe (2002), urbanization and detribalization have helped to loosen those social, cultural and traditional practices that hitherto hindered fertility regulation.

It is a general consensus among researchers that westernization has had an important influence in the disappearance of certain taboos and practices like initiation ceremonies, and in the transformation of the family structure, generalizing the nuclear family. In the process of urbanization, education and the changes in the traditional systems of social controls are especially relevant in the changes in sexual practices and outcomes.

Per-capita income is normally taken as an economic development index. Birdsall (2000), reports that there is a strong correlation between income per person and the desire for children as well as the level of fertility. In a publication of the United Nations (2002) showing selected demographic and socioeconomic indicators for the world by more and less developed regions, the data show that the Gross National Product (GNP) for the world was 2,340 United States dollars (US$) for more developed countries, 7,260 US. Dollars for less developed countries, 710 US dollars and for Africa it stood at 620 US dollars. The more developed countries have a higher GNP but lower fertility rate while the less developed counties have very low GNP but very high fertility rate. Although the GNP may not provide a perfect picture of a country's standard of living, nevertheless it gives an interesting picture of current economic conditions in the country.

The level of income can affect fertility in two opposite ways. On the one hand, income can act as a constraint on the number of children and other goods and services that a household can afford to consume, which translates into a positive effect on fertility. On the other hand, an increase in income can give rise to a negative substitution effect as a higher income level may induce more consumption of goods and services competitive with bearing and rearing children. The nature of the net income- fertility relationship depends on which of these two forces is more powerful than the other.

Traditionally, people believe mostly in this area that child bearing should be left to providence. Therefore religious affiliation is one of the important characteristics defining groups in Nigeria. It has social, economic and political significance and has therefore been found to have considerable theoretical bearing on fertility. It is true that a couples religious statuses are associated with a system of values which can influence fertility directly or indirectly.

Chamie, (2007) posits that explanations of religious differences in fertility have generally been based on four hypotheses. These are characteristics, the particularized theology, minority group status and the interaction hypotheses. The proponents of the characteristic hypothesis contend that differences in fertility pattern associated with religious affiliation are reflections of differences in socio-demographic and economic attributes of members of the religious groups.

They argue that increasing modernization, the growth of cities and urban based activities will lead to a crystallization of social classes and give rise to development of secularization which tends to attenuate the effect of religion and cultural differences. In that circumstance they stated further, that the exclusive impact of religion on procreation is not significant. Hence what is generally interpreted as religious effect might reflect the fact that members of any denomination are centered in a few places in the social structure as defined by occupation, education, income and other Indices of social classes (Paterson, 1998).

The advocates of the particularized hypothesis claim that fertility differentials among religious groups are attributable to the differences in their respective doctrines. It follows that religious groups, with pro-natalist belief systems will tend to have greater fertility than the groups whose doctrines favour birth control measures. Additionally, characteristics and particularized theology hypotheses are not mutually exclusive. Goldscheider (2003) argues that if two

religious groups do not have specific religious ideologies about birth control and ideal family size, fertility differences among religious groups would largely result from a matrix of social, demographic and economic characteristics. If, however, fertility differences among religions groups persist after controlling these latter variables, explanations of residual fertility differentials would be attributed to particularized religious ideology on birth control and family size.

According to Coward, (2001), while religion is a major factor influencing variations in ideal family size, it is also of interest to examine whether variations in the intensity of religious feeling are also associated with differing ideals towards family size. In his study of Northern Ireland, he found that in addition to their religious denomination, family size ideals increased with religiosity. For example, those persons who felt that religion was important to them have an ideal of 3.8 contrasting with 3.1 amongst those who felt that religion was not important to them. However, these differences become considerably smaller when analyzed by main religious group, suggesting that overall religious norm rather than religiosity seem to affect family size ideals.

Minority group status hypothesis views religions fertility differentials within the larger context of fertility and social organization. It claims that, the insecurities of minority group membership operate to depress fertility below majority level when

1. Acculturation of minority groups has occurred in conjunction with desire for acculturation.

2. Equalization of social and economic characteristics occurs and/or social and economic mobility is desired.

3. No pro-natalist ideology is associated with the minority group and no norm discourages the use of efficient contraceptives Goldscheider, 2003).

The interaction hypothesis provides that religions differential in fertility hangs on two broad premises

1. The doctrines and the local orientations of the religions concerned and

2. The socio-economic levels of the religions groups (Chamie 2007).

Ideational and cultural theories of marital fertility decline often focus on the importance of the processes of secularization and individualization. One definition of secularization is the declining centrality of religion that engages in institutional regulation of conduct through assertion of norms that restrict individual behaviour (Lesthaeghe and Surkyn 2008). These ideational changes are in turn related to growing acceptability of fertility control within marriage (Cleland and Wilson 2007). The secularization of norms and the decline in religion parallel the rise of individual decision making and the emphases on individual responsibility (Friedlander and Okum 2005).

Islam and Christianity are the two main religious groups in Nigeria, the third being the indigenous traditional religion which comprises a number of traditional beliefs and practices. The influence of religious dogma on fertility is well recognized and it is true that religious beliefs affect fertility levels in societies. According to Nam and Gustavus (1996), the Roman Catholic Church looks with disfavour on the use of artificial family planning methods. Also certain protestant denominations, while not prohibiting family planning methods are quite liberal in their interpretation of the biblical dictum “Be fruitful and multiply”.

Among the Moslem, the level of fertility is equally high. Kirk (1997) had noted that among the Moslems, belief in male dominance, the belief that sexual relation is a God- given pleasure to be enjoyed, early marriage for the young girls, and encouragement of early re-marriages for the widowed and divorced combine to produce a very high fertility level. These religious factors in relation to fertility are not to be ignored because they play a vital role in influencing the fertility behaviour of a people.

In most demographic and sociology literature, one finding seems consistent; that is a strong correlation between the level of women's education and sex/fertility preference. Educating women is seen as an indicator of socio-economic development and this is also negatively correlated with infant mortality, thus reducing the overall demand for children (Gupta and Leite, 1999) Accordingly countries in Africa like Kenya, Zimbabwe, Botswana, where there has been observable transition in fertility, it has been attributed to increased rate of female literacy. In fact several survey findings in African countries and elsewhere especially Asia indicate a negative relationship between female education and sex preference (Blake and Del Pinel, 1998; Cochrane, 2000; Ekanem 2003; Caldwell, Orubuloye and Caldwell, 2004; Godswill 2010).

An analysis of the contextual effects of education on sex preference in Africa provides a more detailed picture. In analysis of World Fertility survey data from African countries, Lestheaghe (2001) showed that the effects of an individual educational level on sex preferences and marital fertility are dependent on the average level of schooling in a given area. Here the focus is shifted from education per se to educational norms in an area. For example in Kenya, the fertility increasing effect of primary education diminishes with the average level of school, so that in urban areas where the average level of education is highest, the effect becomes

negative. It is suggested that education at the individual level tends to disrupt traditional practices which lengthens birth intervals and the desire for male children, but that subsequently, higher average levels of education produce social conditions conducive to the adoption of contraception.

Education in Nigeria as in elsewhere is a major socio-economic variable identified as the determinant of fertility and contraceptive use. Ekanem, (2003); Caldwell and Caldwell, (1997); Godswill, (1998); NPC (1999), all show that women with higher education and socio-economic status are innovators regarding modern size of family as well as family planning. National Population Commission (2000), reports that women with no education bear children at a rate of more than six children in their lifetime, while women with primary education have a child less on average. There is a difference of more than one child between women with secondary education and those with no education, while the difference between women with higher education and those with primary education is more than three children.

Education has been proven to have the undisputed effect of delaying the age at first marriage (Obono, 1996). Schramm (1994) is of the view that an increase in economic level usually results in an increase in educational level which in turn has two consequences inimical to sex preference and high fertility. The most important of the consequences is an increased flow of communication of all types. His argument is that with increased economic development, more women will become educated and this will increase their knowledge of birth control and acceptance of the fact that every child no matter the sex can do or become whatever they desire with proper training and education. Therefore, the greater the number of women who are educated and have knowledge of family planning practices and procedures, the more widespread will be the practice of family planning and the lower will be

the fertility. His second argument is that an increase in the level of education will usually mean an increase in the adults attending school. This will probably mean a rise in the average age at marriage, which in turn will probably lead to a reduction in fertility.

Caldwell (1997) sees women's education as capable of producing profound changes in family structures and relationships which in turn may influence both fertility and mortality. Female education has emerged as the single most important variable affecting both contraceptives use and fertility regulation. In fact, the powerful effect of education on fertility behaviour is undisputed. Data from the world fertility surveys and the Demographic and Health surveys confirm a strong positive effect of education on reproductive behaviour (Schultz 1994). Barro and Sala-I-Martin (1995) also found that female and male years of primary and secondary schooling were statistically significant variables in explaining the level of demand for children and the total fertility rate across countries. Other authors in seeking explanation for fertility decline have identified high female literacy; the custom of matrilineal inheritance, political leadership committed to social welfare, a settlement pattern that promotes individualism, communication, poverty, and greater use of social services (Krisham, 2001; Nag, 2003; Nair 2004). Education broadens the channels of communication so that women are presumably more likely to find out about family planning methods and services. Education is equally seen as increasing the cost of children by increasing aspiration for the children's education, nutrition, or some other quantitative characteristics that cost money, or other family resources such as time (Freedman and Coombs, 2006; Mueller, 2002).

According to Arnold (1995) education bears a spurious relationship to birth planning because it is related to social and economic background factors that are the real causes of lower fertility. Other writers have found that the change in women's

attitudes and behaviour from a traditional to a modern state is generally considered the basis of their status enhancement and an essential pre-requisite to the reduction of fertility (Stycos, 1996; Nag, 2003; Kasarda, Billy and West 2006; Indiradevi, 2007). It is believed that women's education is a crucial factor in this transition which requires a discarding of older values and belief, increased involvement of women within the household and the community, greater autonomy of women to shape their biological and social destinies (Freedman, 1996, Inkeles, 1994; Dixon, 1995; Caldwell, 1998; 2000; Kasarda et al. 2006).

Another possible avenue through which schooling and literacy acquired in childhood may affect later behaviour is through change in the way people see themselves, and how they are perceived by others (Caldwell and Caldwell, 1997). The first generation of mothers with education whose parents made the revolutionary decision to send them to school may be in the whole vanguard of a wider and more complex process in the transformation of the attitudes of whole communities.

There is another aspect of the effect of education on fertility, the effect of a Childs opportunity to go to school on the parental assessment of the value of children. In his theory of fertility decline Caldwell (1998) developed a concept of intergenerational wealth flows which, inter alia, considers this aspect of the educational impact on fertility; the increasing costs of childbearing and reduced availability of children's labour to supplement family income (Cleland and Wilson 2007). Caldwell (1998) argued that with mass education, the family economy changes and affects the direction of the wealth flow between generations and ultimately results in low fertility.

One direct influence of mass schooling on sex preference and fertility behaviour is that children cost more as parents spend more on schooling and

because, as the children spend long hours in school, their contribution to the family income declines. The work contribution and cost of children and the net value of children as a component of fertility decisions have been well established (Hoffman and Hoffman, 1993; Hull, 1995; Mueller, 2002; Nag, 1998; Bulatao 2001).

Variation between income and education usually goes hand in hand (Becker, 2004). The level of education also has been associated with knowledge and adoption of family planning and fertility behavior(Stycos, 1996). More education presumably not only enhances knowledge about the availability of contraception but also may increase awareness and valuation of the benefits derived from controlling fertility. Thus, more education is expected to be associated with more use of family planning and lower fertility.

2.7 Theoretical Review

Several theories of fertility have been propounded in an attempt to explain factors determining fertility behavior as well as accounting for differentials that exist amongst individuals and societies. Some of these theories were reviewed in this study and are discussed below. The theories include Easterlin's fertility decision theory; Max Weber's social action theory, the voluntary social action theory by Talcott Parsons as well as Caldwell's theory of inter-generational wealth flow. Although the first two theories are relevant to the study, they are however not adequate in explaining sex preference because of their limitations in not specifically addressing the issue of sex preference.

2.8 Easterlin's Fertility Decision Theory

In view of the fact that, fertility decisions are a function of the kind of motivation one gets, the fertility decision theory propounded by Easterlin is applied in this study. This application borrows significantly from the work of Zick and Xiang

(1994) who applied this theory in explaining the correlates of desired fertility. In its original formulation by Easterlin, the theory postulates that demand for children is affected by three proximate factors: price, income and tastes. The price of children is composed of the direct expenditure on children and the opportunity cost of time spent bearing and rearing children. The underlying assumption is that the higher the price, the lower the demand for children, given the household income and tastes. Household income is also hypothesized to affect demand for children. An increase in income is expected to lead to an increase in demand for children. The third component of Easterlins theory is taste for children. Taste refers to the subjective preference for children compared to general goods. The greater this preference, the greater the demand for children.

All three factors are measured in relation to other goods. In other words, children are assumed to be affected by market forces just as other goods are. But one major advantage of the Easterlin model over other economic theories of fertility is that he integrates the economic and sociological factors in explaining fertility behaviour. (Becker, 2004; Zick and Xiang, 1994). Although the model has been criticized for not specifying factors which are important in different contexts, the integration of economic and sociological factors makes the theory appropriate in settings such as Nigeria where market forces are conditioned by socio-cultural factors.

Opportunity cost is measured using information on whether women work and earn income (Zick and Xiang 1994). The assumption is that those who work and earn income are likely to have a higher opportunity cost than those who do not work or those who work but earn no income and as such will be more likely to desire fewer children. Another dimension of the opportunity cost used in this study is the psychological dimension. Zick and Xiang measured this dimension by using data on

the type of households in which women live. They hypothesized that the pressure to raise larger number of children is likely to be greater for women who live in extended family environments than for women who live in nucleated family environments. This logic is applied in this study.

However, place of residence is used as a proxy for the psychological cost dimension. It is hypothesized that women residing in rural areas are more likely to live with other family members than those located in the urban areas and as such, the desire for a large number of children is likely to be higher in the rural than in the urban areas. In addition, the influence of normative values supporting high fertility are likely to be higher in the rural than in the urban areas because of the constellation of factors that help support high fertility.

Therefore, the psychological cost of living in extended family environment in the rural areas is likely to be much higher than the psychological cost of living in extended family environments in the urban areas. Those cultural norms and rules of behaviour are likely to have been altered by the forces of modernization in the urban place. Therefore it is expected that women living in urban areas will have lower desired fertility than those in the rural areas.

Taste for children is measured using indicators of traditional pro-natalist values. These are types of marriage and religion. Persons who are polygynously married are likely to be more pro-natalist and, as such to have a higher fertility preference than persons who are monogamously married. Religion also measures attachment to cultural practices that are supportive of large family sizes.

Women educational attainment and household wealth are two very important indicators of income used by Zick and Xiang, (1994). Education is used as a measure of human capital. It is also highly correlated with income. Zick and Xiang, (1994) explained that the relationship between income and demand for children is

not necessarily linear. That is, an increase in income may not necessarily lead to an increase in demand for children because individuals may choose to invest in the quality of surviving children rather than have more children.

2.9 Social Action Theory

Max Weber in his work Economy and Society published in the 1920s noted that sociology is a science concerning itself with the interpretative understanding of social action with a causal explanation of its causes and consequences (Ritzer, 1996). This forms the basis of understanding his social action theory. It suggests a scientific verification of action and reaction among individuals rather than collectives, at a subjective level of meaning and adapting to a subjective method of understanding-verstehen. In other words, Weber proposed the use of subjective methods as a means of understanding causal relationship between action and reaction. According to him, it is only when the subjective meaning behind an action is understood that an action could be regarded as a social action. This is based on the fact that the human subject is a free being who projects meanings and seeks ends. Such ends or goals of a social action are defined by the values of the society, while the means to achieve them are prescribed by the norms. Hence, central to the understanding of human behavior is an understanding of the motives that lie in the social and behavioral circumstances of individuals. Weber's clear intent in this theory is to focus on individuals and patterns and regularities of action and not on the collective. Accordingly, action in the sense of subjectively understandable orientation of behavior exists only as the behavior of one or more individual human beings. In other words, he is concerned with how individual patterns and regularities of actions define and influence social structures and not vice versa. Human beings act to achieve goals in situations, to solve problems that confront them. Therefore in order to understand the social and behavioral contexts of groups and individual

actions, it is important to analyze and understand the collective meaning behind their actions, be it overt or covert, often oriented towards a group of people or to a particular system in the society.

Weber's type of social action is useful in understanding the action and reaction that take place in situations or societies where male child preference and high fertility are valued. It is important to note that child bearing, sex preference, sexuality, pregnancy, marital stability, contraception are reproductive behaviors or actions embedded in the socio-cultural belief systems which influence perception and attitude towards them. These elements act in collaboration with cultural factors to influence the sexual and reproductive decisions that couples make.

In Nigeria, the social and economic costs of not bearing or having a male child can be enormous particularly for those who are married and have mostly female children. The husband may take an additional wife or threaten a divorce and the wife without a child may suffer from negative social stigmatization (Ademola, 2002). In addition, where women face limited social, educational and economic opportunities, desire for male children, increase in family size and childbearing may not be viewed as an opportunity cost but rather, as a means of obtaining necessary resources, or insurance for the future or as a mark of social and personal achievement (Trevitt, 1994; Geronimus, 1992; Zabin, 1994).

The foregoing underscores the need to understand the motive underlying individuals' actions and reactions. Isiugo-Abanihe (1993) has observed that social actions within the society are undertaken in accordance with shared values and normative dictates. Therefore sex preference is a function of shared values operating within a particular social structure. Weber's theory of social action tends however to suggest that most human action can be explained as a self-directed and purposive human action determined through established social pattern. But in

reality, actions are not at all times purposively planned and directed to achieve definite motives, for example ultimate completed family size. Similarly, in certain situations the original motive of initiating an action may be lost, such as having a happy marital life/union or the total breakdown in marriage and marital values as a result of the lack of a male child, which does not also show the major influence of societal factors in influencing actions.

The major limitation of the social action perspective is its assumption that individuals and members of the society are straight jacket conformists that adhere strictly to established norms and values which shape their perceptions, attitudes and behaviors. This however, may not necessarily be the case as individuals may engage in activities that may be contrary to established norms and values of their communities. Nevertheless, the social action framework has provided explanation for the perceptions, attitudes and behavior among members of the society towards sex preference and fertility decisions, since sex preference and fertility behavior are socio-contextual phenomena's largely influenced by varying socio-cultural factors. Therefore any meaningful understanding and explanation of fertility in sub-Saharan Africa, can only take place at the level of its socio-cultural construction.

2.10 Theoretical Framework

This study adopts a framework that is built on Talcott Parsons voluntary social action theory and Caldwell's intergenerational wealth flow theory. These theories provide adequate understanding of the issue of sex preference, thus a necessary background and an adequate frame of reference for this study. According to Parson's (1937) voluntary social action theory, the society influences the ends, which the actor seeks and the means towards attaining them. Therefore, the society for him plays an important role in affecting an individual's goals and the means of achieving them. Essentially, the cultural environment predetermines the ends which

an individual pursues by providing the cultural structure upon which an individual/couple can express their desire. Thus, one can say that the Nigerian cultural environment exerts very strong influence on a couple's sex preferences as well as their fertility behaviors, through the transmission of concepts about acceptable norms, values and sex role behavior for men and women, desire for male children tends to increase.

Similarly, cultural attitudes towards sex preference may also have direct impact on fertility behavior as well as the stability of marriage. Thus the insistence of some couples on having at least a male child to carry on the family name. Therefore, it is observed that the perception, attitudes and actions of individuals in relation to fertility are largely determined within the context of the socio-cultural norms and values of the society. The society provides the platform within which attitudes and behavior towards sex preferences and fertility are shaped. Wallace (1988)**,** summarizes this carefully, when he noted that the available opportunities, the role models, the reinforcement, contingencies that further shape behaviors, the social norms, the perceptions, the beliefs, attitude and values of an individual are mostly influenced by his social environment, which affects his behaviour.

In addition, Caldwell's theory of intergenerational wealth flow emphasizes the fact that the desire for sons increases as a result of a person's desire for an heir who will carry on the lineage and through whom the family's wealth will be transferred. In most societies, particularly African societies, one of the noble roles of the family is the replacement of its members through reproduction, so the advent of children in the family is not only an expected occurrence but an approved societal role. To an average African, Nigerians inclusive, child bearing and child rearing are about the first and most important reasons for marriage. According to Johnson (1994), the Nigerian society places so much value on male child bearing, so much so

that marriage becomes meaningless if at least one male child is not produced in the marital union. This is why couples will do anything within their power to ensure they get at least a son, including marrying more wives.

The fact remains that children are wanted not just for social, cultural or economic reasons, but for what Roam and Railey (1990) calls dynastic imperative. This implies the desire to pass on the family name and to be remembered. It is true that one will be remembered by friends and colleagues but the surest and most obvious way of proving ones existence for posterity is to produce children particularly sons who will carry on the family name. Moreover the society expects children to be a sort of economic assert to aged parents, and an avenue through which the family's wealth can be transferred and sustained, thus children especially sons are desired in the family as a sort of economic security and a form of insurance against the unexpected.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Location of the Study

This study was carried out in Cross River State, South-South Nigeria. The State is located within the tropical rain forest belt of Nigeria and lies between latitude 4^0 28^0 and 6^0 55' north of the equator and longitude 7^0 50^0 and 9^0 $28'$ east of the Greenwich meridian. It shares common boundaries with the republic of Cameroon in the east, Benue state in the north, Ebonyi and Abia states in the West, Akwa Ibom State in the south west and the Atlantic Ocean in the south. It has a total landmass of about 23,000sqm. Arising from the location, the state enjoys a tropical climate with the Obudu plateau at an altitude of 1.595.75 meters above sea level enjoying a temperate climate. The state also records heavy rainfall during the wet season (April – November). The population of the state in 2006 stood at 2,526,542, giving a population density of 110 persons per sq km. The gender distribution of the population is 1,263,915 (or 50.03 percent) males and 1,262,627 (or 49.97 percent) female (NPC 2007). The current estimated population of 2004 is 3.0 million, based on an average annual growth rate of 2.9, (NPC 2007).

With Calabar as its capital, Cross River state is often regarded as a miniature Nigeria because of its diversity in ethnic composition as well as its natural heritage. Cross River State is mainly an agricultural state with about 75% of its people engaged in subsistence agriculture, which probably accounts for the people's desire for male children. In spite of the fact that the state is in the oil producing area of the Niger Delta, income levels are exceedingly low and poverty is endemic with over 70 percent of the population living below the international poverty line of one U.S dollar a day.

Culturally, Cross River State is a very traditional and patriarchal society, where high fertility is valued and norms and values governing fertility and fertility behavior are held in high esteem. Descent is traced through the male, inheritance is also through the male. Residence is patrilocal, though there are pockets of matrilineal kins and matrilocal residential patterns especially among the Yakurr people of the state.

Literacy level in the state is almost at a 50-50 level with the males having 50.02% and the females having 49.08% (CR-SEEDS Document 2007). Maternal mortality is believed to be between 1,500 – 2,000 per 150,000 live births and perhaps the highest in the south – south zone. Access to, and the utilization of reproductive/family planning services is still very low (20-30%). The average life expecting is estimated to be 54 for CRS as against the 52 years, which is the national average (NPC 2006).

3.2 Target Population

The population of study is ever married persons (males and females) that is, whether currently married, widowed, separated, or divorced between the ages of 15 and 60, who reside in both the rural and urban areas of the state.

3.3 Types and Sources of Data

The data that were collected were basically primary in nature. The primary sources of data were the individuals/respondents who provided information through the questionnaires, in depth interviews and focus group discussions. This allowed for the collection of first hand information from the respondents as it relates to the issues in the research (sex preference, fertility behavior and marital stability).

3.4 Techniques of Data Collection: Data for the study was generated through quantitative and qualitative techniques.

3.4.1 Quantitative Data

3.4.2 Sampling Techniques

A sample is a portion or a group of units selected out of the entire population under study. Sampling on the other hand refers to the process of selecting a small part of a given population in order to determine the popular opinion of the people targeted for the research, (Oyeonoru cited in Balogun et al, 1994).

A combination of multi-stage cluster sampling method, the systematic sampling method and the simple random sampling method was used in this research. The sample for the research was drawn from the 18 local government areas of Cross River State. Politically, the State is divided into three senatorial zones; these are the Southern senatorial zone; the Central senatorial zone and the Northern senatorial zone. Thus a total of six Local Government Areas, two from each of the senatorial zones were drawn to make up the study sample. To select the local government areas and the respondents, a combination of the simple random sampling techniques with the multi stage cluster sampling technique was used. First to select the 6 LGAs from the 18 LGAs, the simple random sampling method was used, where all the 18 LGAs were given numerical numbers. These numbers representing the LGAs were written in papers of equal sizes. The papers were then folded and placed inside a bag. This was done separately for each senatorial zone, two pieces of papers then were picked. These two pieces of papers when unfolded, the LGAs that corresponded to the numbers in the papers were then picked to constitute the sampled LGA. This was done for the three Senatorial zones respectively until the six LGAs were selected. The LGA's selected include, Calabar municipal and Akamkpa LGA from the Southern Senatorial Zone; Etung and Obubra LGA's from the Central Senatorial Zone; Ogoja and Obanliku LGA's from the Northern Senatorial Zone. The same technique was applied in the selection of the

wards and villages. From the six LGA's twelve wards were selected in all, that is two wards from each LGA and four from each senatorial zone. These are; Ward3, Ward12, Oban ward, Akamkpa ward, Bendeghe Ekiem, Agbokim, Adun, Apiapum, Mbube, Central ward, Busi ward, and Bisu ward. The streets and villages selected comprised of Big qua road, Akim road, Marian road, Etagbor road, Oban, Ekong, Uyanga, Akamkpa, Bendeghe Ekiem, Nsofang, Njimaya, Ajassor, Adun1, Adun11, Apiapum, Ofodua, Ijom Mbube, Ekumntak, Ishibori and Ogboja Busi1, Busi11, Bukemanya and Bishiri villages. Making a total of twenty four villages and streets. From the twenty four villages and streets selected, fifty households each were selected beginning from the village heads compound. Subsequently one compound was omitted for the next. The same principle was applicable in the selection of households from the streets, except that in this case selection was done using already existing street numbers. Thus selection started from the first house on the street with the second house always omitted for the next.

The selection of the respondents was done using the systematic sampling method. A combination of both the simple random sampling and the systematic sampling method was employed in some occasions. Such occasion arose if in a compound we had more than one household living there. In such cases, the simple random sampling method was used to select the persons to be included in the sample. The lottery method was used to select the respondents. This was done separately for the men and the women. As noted earlier, the compounds were selected using the systematic method. The systematic method selects its sample using a fixed factor. Now the problem with the systematic method is always how to select the starting point before the fixed factor could be applied. That is where the simple random sampling method was brought in. In our selection for this research one compound was always omitted for the next. In other not to create a big problem,

the village heads compound served as the starting point, since all the villages have village heads. For the urban areas the serial numbering of the houses was used as all selections began from the first house on the street till the end.

A total of 1200 ever married persons were sampled. The questionnaire covered the respondents' socio-demographic, economic, educational, religious and cultural characteristics amongst others. Equal numbers of questionnaires were assigned to the Local Government Areas within the senatorial zone that is four hundred questionnaires per zone and two hundred per Local Government Area making a total of one thousand two hundred questionnaires. Another method that was used in gathering data was the focus group discussions (FGDs). Group discussions were held in all the sampled areas with persons who fall within the prescribed sample (ever married persons). Again in-depth interviews were held with twelve couples who have children of the sex, those who have a combination of both sexes as well as those who were childless. They were selected purposively because of their experience in marriage, their fertility preferences and the issue under discourse.

3.4.3 The Research Instrument

The survey which is a quantitative technique made use of the questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was structured, contained both closed and open ended questions. The schedule contained questions on respondents socio-demographic background; fertility; marriage history; systems of inheritance; influence of tradition; religion; education; sex preferences, use of contraception and a host of other related questions. The schedule was framed in English but interpreted in the local dialects for the respondents who could neither read nor write.

To ensure some form of flexibility of the instrument, the questionnaire was both structured, that is pre-coded with fixed alternatives or close ended options as well as open-ended questions that allowed the respondents the freedom to express their true intentions, beliefs and attitudes. Moreover, the structured questionnaire elicited information about the respondent's socio-economic background, marital status, fertility preference/behaviour and sex preferences.

3.4.4 Administration of the Research Instrument

The actual field work was undertaken personally with assistance provided by the trained field assistants. The instruments were administered personally as well as by the assistants to respondents in their respective homes. This was done to minimize instances of non response or incomplete responses. In some instances where the respondents were not literate, the questionnaire was read to the respondent and the answer filled in accordingly by the assistants as indicated by the respondent.

3.4.5 Reliability Checks

Reliability of a measure is its capacity to yield the same results in repeated applications to the same sample of respondents or events. Thus if a questionnaire indicates the same attitude score of an individual each time he is administered the questionnaire, it is reliable. If on the other hand, it gives different scores each time, it is unreliable. Tripathi (1987) had listed three most used methods of testing reliability. They are the test-retest; the split-half and the multiple, parallel or alternative form. For this work however the multiple, parallel or alternative form was used to test the reliability of the instrument. Another important property which a measure must possess is validity. This means that it should be free from consistent or systematic errors so that it is able to measure what it purports to measure. In order to test the validity and reliability of the instrument, it was pre tested in one

village (Neghe) outside the ones selected for the study to make sure that it was consistent and free from errors.

3.4.6 Pretesting the Instrument

To pre-test the instruments, one village (Neghe) outside the ones selected for the research was used. This exercise was used to assess the assistants that were used for the research as well as to check for mistakes, ambiguity and other associated errors before the actual field work. The pilot study started from the village heads compound using the multi-stage cluster sampling method. To select the compounds the systematic sampling method was adopted. However the respondents were selected using the simple random sampling method, especially where there was more than one couple in the compound. This gave the assistants the needed experience for the actual exercise. Difficulties that were noticed were discussed and amended before the take off of the actual exercise

3.5 Qualitative Data

3.5.1 Focus Group Discussion

Focus group discussion is primarily a qualitative method involving the administration of open ended questions to a carefully chosen target group. The objective is to make the subject an active participant. Thus 12 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) sessions were held with the participants (males and females) who make up the sampled population. The goals of the FGDs were to collect information on the perceptions and views of the participants as to how they perceive sex preference in marriage and how it affects fertility behavior as well as marital stability. It was also to increase the understanding of the socio-cultural, environmental, religious, and to ascertain the prospects of a change in behavior based on their responses. The FGD was used in this study because of its unique ability to provide insights into complex patterns of behavior, attitudes, perceptions

and motivations, and because they are in-depth exchanges in which groups participants talk about topics relevant to a particular set of research objectives.

In this study twelve FGD sessions were held in the six selected LGAs, that is two sessions each for the six LGAs, that is six sessions for men and six sessions for women. Three of the six sessions for men were held with groups of younger men who are still bearing children, while three of the sessions were held with groups of older men who have completed child bearing and, three sessions were held with groups of older women who have completed child bearing. Also, three sessions were held with groups of younger women who are still within child bearing age. The participants for the FGD were homogenous in characteristics; in terms age, marital status, educational attainment and residence. Each FGD session comprised between six to ten discussants. Participants were chosen in a non-probabilistic fashion from various neighbourhoods, to ensure a broad range of experiences within each group. Male field assistants were specially trained to conduct the session for male participants, while the sessions for the female participants were conducted by the researcher with the support of trained indigenous female research assistants. A discussion guide with proposed questions was prepared by the researcher for the focus group facilitators. It was translated into the local language of the area or Pidgin English for some groups, especially those in the rural areas who felt more comfortable discussing these issues in their local language. The discussions were tape recorded, transcribed and translated. For accuracy of translations they were checked by a second person.

3.5.2 In-depth interview

Also, in depth interviews were conducted with twelve (12) couples. That is couples who have children of the same sex (all males or all females), those who have a combination of males and females, and those who do not have at all, who were

selected purposively to gather information for the study base on their experience in marriage especially on the issue of sex preference and how it has affected their fertility behavior, (that is in terms of the actual family size) the stability of their marriages, spousal relationship, affection and support from family members. This enabled the researcher to elicit such vital information that assisted in the final outcome of the work.

3.5.3 Variables

The variable that is capable of causing any change in the value of the other variable is the independent variable. Similarly the variable whose value is dependent upon the other but which cannot in itself affect the other is known as the dependent variable. Thus the variables that were studied are the dependent and independent variable. The independent variables that were examined are sex preference in marriages, other independent variables include; marriage types and family systems; religion; culture and sex roles; women's occupation and duration of employment; educational attainment; mortality factors; occupational level and knowledge and use of family planning methods and services. The dependent variables are fertility behavior; marital stability; family size and attitude towards children.

3.6 Techniques for Data Analysis

3.6.1 Quantitative Data Analysis: The data collected through the quantitative technique were processed and analyzed by means of an electronic computer through the use of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). The SPSS was used to analyze and generate data into frequency tables and cross tabulations to show the major trends that would help us to draw some conclusions. Three types of analytical techniques were employed in the analysis of the quantitative data in order to

achieve the stated objectives of the research, these are, the Univariate, Bivariate and the Multivariate analyses.

The univariate analysis involved the use of descriptive statistics to examine the background characteristics of the respondents, the distribution of their perception towards fertility behaviour issues as well as their sex and family size preferences. These were described using frequency distribution tables, and percentages.

The bivariate analysis was done using cross tabulation and the use of chi-square (X^2) statistical test of significant relationship. Chi-square test is a non-parametric statistical method that deals with differences between frequencies observed in the sample and expected frequencies obtained from the distribution.

Given that the chi-square is the most common test for significance of the relationship, it was therefore used in this study to verify the relationship between socio-cultural factors, and sex preference as it relates to fertility behavior and marital stability.

Multivariate analysis involved the use of multiple regression models using maximum likelihood estimation. This is a non linear model, which estimate probability of an event occurring using an interactive algorithm. The technique is appropriate when the dependent variable is dichotomous and the independent variables are both categorical and continuous (Hosmer and Lameshow 1989).

The regression coefficient was interpreted as the difference in the predicted log odds of the outcome between those in a given category of a variable relative to the reference category. Exponentiation of the predicted log odds provided the estimate of the relative odds associated with a particular characteristic. The odds ratio, therefore, provided a substantially meaningful way of interpreting the relationship between the predictors and the dependent variables when all other

variables are held constant. An odds ratio that is greater than one indicates an increase in the independent variables (i.e. sex preference in marriage) while an odds ratio, less than one, indicates a decrease. Computations for this study were done using the SPSS multiple regression procedure.

3.6.2 Analysis of Qualitative Data: Analysis of qualitative data was done using thematic narratives and direct quotation of participants and key informants' views and opinions as expressed during the discussions and interview sessions, after a thorough translation and transcription of all the information gathered from the focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews (IDIs). The results and information gathered from the interviews and focus group discussions were used to create a synergy between the three techniques adopted and to buttress and add strength to the results of the quantitative data analyzed.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the presentation, interpretation and discussion of the data collected during the field work. The chapter is divided into sections which cover data on respondents' socio-demographic characteristics, sex preference and fertility behavior, sex preference and marital stability, sex preference and family size, sex role performance and sex preference and socio- cultural factors affecting sex preference as highlighted in the research objectives. This chapter also presents the test of hypotheses in line with the objectives of the study. Of the one thousand two hundred (1200) questionnaires that were administered, a total of 1150 were retrieved. This was due to the fact that some respondents failed to return their questionnaires and also because some were filled wrongly and thus were rejected during the period of sorting.

4.2: Socio- Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 4.2.1: Age distribution by sex

Age	Males		Females		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
15 – 19	19	3.6	20	3.2	39	3.4
20 – 24	45	8.6	73	11.6	118	10.3
25 – 29	80	15.4	90	14.3	170	14.8
30 – 34	100	19.2	103	16.4	203	17.7
35 – 39	80	15.4	106	16.9	186	16.2
40 – 44	58	11.1	100	15.9	158	13.7
45 – 49	53	10.1	47	7.4	82	8.7
50 – 54	42	8.1	34	5.4	76	6.6
55 – 59	28	5.3	32	5.1	60	5.2
60	16	3.2	24	3.8	40	3.4
Total	521	100.0	629	100.0	1150	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2010

Table 4.2.1 presents data of respondents according to age and sex. Age and sex distribution are very useful demographic parameters and have very significant

implications on the overall outcome of any study. In this study the minimum age used was 15 while the maximum was 60. This was so because this is the age bracket that is considered in demographic studies to be reproductive and sexually active and particularly because the unit of analysis comprised of ever married persons, and more importantly because in this society cases of under aged marriages are rare, though cases of teenage pregnancies abound. Data therefore shows that majority of the respondents fall within the 20- 44 age groups.

Table 4.2.2: Marital status by sex

Marital Status	**Males**		**Females**		**Total**	
	Frequency -	Percentage	Frequency -	Percentage	Frequency -	Percentage
Married	339	65.1	414	65.8	753	65.5
Separated	60	11.5	76	12.2	136	11.8
Divorced	56	10.7	59	9.4	115	10.0
Widowed	66	12.7	80	12.7	146	12.7
Total	521	100.0	629	100.0	1150	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2010

In Cross River State as in many other societies in Nigeria and Africa, marriage provides the platform for which biological and reproductive events such as child bearing takes place. As a result of the universality of marriage it is considered as a proximate determinant of fertility. For this study, a total of 1150 ever married persons were used as respondents, that is, whether currently married, separated, divorced, or widowed. Table 4.2.2 shows the distribution of respondents according to marital status by sex. The data show that 65.5 percent of the respondents were currently married, 10.0 percent were divorced while 11.8 percent were separated and 12.7 percent of the respondents were widowed. The result also shows that there were more married females in the population than males. This is because females in

this society were more likely to enter into marital unions earlier than their male counterparts. Given this general observation, the median age at first marriage in Cross River State as judged from the 2008 NDHS report is 20 – 24, which also suggest that the median age at first marriage for the state is rising.

Table 4.2.3: Educational attainment by sex

Educational level	Males		Females		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
No formal schooling	60	11.5	111	17.6	171	14.9
Primary school	129	24.8	173	27.5	302	26.3
Secondary school/TTC	206	39.5	196	31.2	402	34.9
Tertiary	126	24.2	149	23.7	275	23.9
Total	521	100.0	629	100.0	1150	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2010

Table 4.2.3 shows the distribution of respondents according to educational attainment by sex. From the table it can be observed that 41.2 percent of the respondents have at least attained a primary school education. When looked at by sex 36.3percent of the males have primary or no formal education compared with 45.1 percent of the females. Another interesting observation that is of note is the sex differential in the population that advance beyond primary school education. From the data, more males were likely to proceed beyond primary education than their female counterpart, even though the picture was initially different as shown in the data. The trend is not too surprising since parents are more likely to send the male children to school much more than the female children. That is why there are more males from the data who have attained higher education than their female counterpart. Overall, males had a higher literacy level than the females and are more likely to have attained higher education, which is a reflection of the persistence of

traditional values of sex preference and discrimination even in the training of children as well in the care and allocation of resources in the family.

Table 4.2.4 Occupational level by sex

Occupation	Males		Females		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Housewives/ unemployed	104	20.0	172	27.3	276	24.0
Business / Petty Trading	192	36.9	207	32.9	399	34.7
Farmers	88	16.9	140	22.3	228	19.8
Civil / Public servants	80	15.3	76	12.1	156	13.6
Artisan.	57	10.9	34	5.4	91	7.9
Total	521	100.0	629	100.0	1150	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2010

One of the most widely used indices of socio-economic status in demographic analysis is occupational level, especially when it comes to assessing its impact on the fertility behavior of the people. In this research attempts have been made to determine how occupation influences the number and sex of children one desires. Overall, about 34.7 percent of the respondents were engaged in some form of small businesses/petty trading. More than half (76.0%) of the respondents were doing something to generate income as can be observed. About 80.00 percent males and 72.7 percent females were engaged in one economic activity or another, mostly in the small businesses and petty trading. Only 13.6 percent of the respondents most of whom were males were engaged in formal employment. On the whole 24.0 percent of the sampled population most of whom were females were housewives or people seeking employment and doing nothing to generate any income. It should be noted here that the predominance of the informal sector employment is not unusual and is invariably tied to the level of education which according to the data on Table 4.2.3 shows clearly that only about 23.9 percent of the respondents have completed tertiary education.

Table 4.2.5: Income per month by sex.

Income (Naira)	Males		Females		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Below 20000	76	14.6	111	17.6	187	16.3
20000 – 40000	77	14.8	117	18.6	194	16.7
40001 – 60000	80	15.4	108	17.2	188	16.3
60001 – 80000	101	19.4	101	16.1	202	17.6
80001 – 100000	85	16.3	95	15.1	180	15.7
Above 100000	102	19.6	97	15.4	199	17.4
Total	521	100.0	629	100.0	1150	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2010

Income like every other socio-demographic variable plays a vital role in fertility decisions; its impact on the number and sex of children desired or preferred can be enormous. Table 4.2.5 shows that 14.8 percent males and18.6 percent females earn an income of between 20001-40000. This basically can be attributed to the fact that most respondents (86.4%) in Cross River State are mostly engaged in one form of informal employment/family business or another as well as one form of subsistence agricultural practice or another.

Table 4.2.6: Religious affiliation by sex

Religious affiliation	Males		Females		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Christianity:						
Catholics	309	59.3	315	50.1	624	54.3
Protestants	160	30.7	281	44.7	441	38.3
Islam	21	4.0	16	2.5	37	3.2
Traditionalist	31	6.0	17	2.7	48	4.2
Total	521	100.0	629	100.0	1150	100.0

Source: field survey 2010

Religion plays a vital role in fertility decisions. Many fertility decisions are taken against the backdrop of religious beliefs and practices. Three different religious groups were identified in the study population. These are Christians, who

are divided into Catholics and Protestants, Muslims and traditionalist. From the data, Muslims were very few in number, followed by the traditionalists. The largest group of respondents were the Christians. Of the number, Catholics consisted 54.3 percent; while 38.3 percent were protestants. The dominance of Christianity and indeed Catholics is not unexpected as the survey drew respondents from both urban and rural settlements in the state which are almost exclusively Christians. Because religion is widely accepted as an important predictor of demographic behaviour in every society, it influences social and cultural beliefs of the people, it serves as a significant medium through which traditional cultural beliefs are modified. Through religion, foreign attitudes and values are learnt and some biases acquired, (Godswill 2010).

Table 4.2.7: Place of residence by sex

Residence	Male		Females		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Urban	368	70.6	286	45.5	654	56.9
Rural	153	29.4	343	54.5	496	43.1
Total	521	100.0	629	100.0	1150	100.0

Source: Field survey 2010

Place of residence like other socio-demographic variables discussed earlier, is probably one of the most widely accepted change-inducing indices in demographic studies, especially when it comes to assessing its impact on fertility and mortality behaviours. As shown in the table more males than females respondents reside in the urban areas while more females than male respondents live in the rural areas. On the whole, the urban areas contributed a higher percentage of respondents in the study than the rural areas.

4.3: Sex Preference and Fertility Behavior

This section takes a look at the impact of sex preference on the fertility behaviour of the people of Cross River State. In the survey instrument, questions relating to respondent's sex preferences and number of children desired, preferred or ever born were asked to enable the researcher elicit information on the actual number and sex of children each respondent has, desires or prefers. Table 4.3.1 presents data on respondents responses to questions relating to the sex of child preferred with the one child option.

Table 4.3.1: Sex preference with one child option

Sex Preferred	Male respondents		Female Respondents		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Male	323	61.9	440	70.0	763	66.3
Female	198	38.1	189	30.0	387	33.7
Total	521	100.0	629	100.0	1150	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2010

In the survey questionnaire the respondents were asked questions on the sex of children preferred; such as 'suppose you were to have only one child in your life time what sex would you prefer?' Table 4.2.1 shows that 61.9 percent of the male respondents and 70.0 percent of the female respondents said they would prefer a male child while 38.1 percent of the male respondents and 30.0percent of the female respondents said they would prefer a female child. What is interesting about this result is that it was the women who showed more preference for male children than their male counterpart. This situation is understandable especially in a patriarchal society such as the one under study and where the security of the marriage is built

on the number of surviving sons one gives birth to. The picture became clearer when in one of the focus group discussions with a group of young women who are still with the child bearing age, a middle age currently married female discussant exclaimed in Pidgin English:

> *If you want make dem throw you comot for house, make you no born boy, na so your husband and him people go just they give you trouble like say na you de create pikin, like say na your fault say you no born boy.*

This scenario played out in almost all the group discussions held and during the interview sessions with key informants which led to a follow up question, 'how many daughters would you have before you stop child bearing, assuming you were to have just one son?' The analysis revealed that most of the couples sampled, 55.0percent (634) said they will keep trying until they have between 7 – 8 daughters. That is to say that they can only stop at seven or eight if more sons did not come, while 20.0percent (229) said 4 – 5 daughters, which means, they would actually try to get more daughters to compensate for the sons they do not have, but again some (25.0%) chose very few daughters which according to one of them 'was just enough because they were not trying to build a convent', thus expressing out rightly their displeasure for many daughters.

Table 4.3.2: Respondents views on reasons why they prefer a male child.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
To keep the family line	431	56.6
For prestige and recognition	77	10.0
To take care of or inherit property	87	11.5
To take care of parent at old age	46	6.0
Other reasons	122	15.9
Total	763	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2010

Table 4.3.2 shows respondents reasons for wanting or preferring a male child. As indicated above most of the respondents (51.1%) wanted male children to keep the family line, 8.4 percent of them wanted male children who could inherit

and take care of their property when they are no more, 7.6 percent wanted children for prestige and recognition while others gave several other reasons that were not included in the checklist and they consist 28.0 percent. This includes the issue of the security of marriage, which was raised basically by the female respondents who believe that without a male child in the marriage, the marriage is at the risk of breaking.

The implication of this is that respondents agree that sex preference for a child affects the fertility behavior of the people of Cross River State. This position has been further confirmed by various other studies carried out in the same area (Isiugo-Abanihe, 2005; Akpan,1998; Ottong,1989). Also drawing from Caldwells theory of inter generational wealth flow, a male child in wanted for reasons relating to the continuity of family/lineage as has been revealed by the data presented.

To further buttress this point, a widow (who however was separated from her husband before his death) in one of the interview sessions said:

> *In trying to get a male child, I now have six daughters. In fact, it was until the doctor said if I don't stop I could die that was how I now stopped but even at the risk of losing my life my husband did not care; what was his problem was just getting a male child. It even got to a point he was calling our home a convent and that was why he was not going to return to the house until I leave with my prostitute daughters.*

Another twist was also revealed during another interview session and focus group discussions with couples from the southern senatorial zone of the state. This zone comprises mostly the Efik speaking people of the state and it is predominantly urban. Interestingly, almost every couple interviewed or who took part in the discussion session said they would prefer to have more female children than male children. When questioned further, one discussant gave such reasons as:

> *Daughters bring peace to the home because they are quiet and not as troublesome as the boys. They can keep the family together, take*

care of their parents when they are old as well as their younger siblings and generally just keep the home together.

Buttressing this position another male discussant said:

I prefer to have a daughter as a first child because they are always able to take care of the home and their younger sibling. My "Adiaha" (meaning first daughter) is more than a wife to me, she knows me much more than her mother and there is nothing I do or have that she does not know, and so if I die today, I will die in peace knowing that my properties and in fact all my other children are in safe hands because I know that she is very capable of taking care of everything I entrust into her care much more than her brothers who are much older than her.

Almost all the discussants in this axis seem to agree with what was said by the above discussant, probably that is why it can be observed that among the Efiks of southern Cross River State, women are allowed to inherit properties from their fathers, and daughters who have problems in their marriages most times return to their fathers' house without any opposition. This situation as observed might make for an interesting area for further research

Also confirmed is the fact that most respondents during the focus group discussion agreed that the search/preference for a particular sex of child can lead to increase in the number of children that the person eventually has, as put by this male participant:

When we got married we had agreed that we were going to have just three children, that is two boys and one girl, but when the children started coming the first three were girls and so we didn't have any option but to continue trying to see if we could get a boy and before we know it, we have had six children it is only this last one that is a boy. So you see that it is not our fault, but what God gave us.

This position was further corroborated by a female participant who happened to be a mother of five girls, all in the attempt to have a male child. Incidentally she lost her marriage and now lives alone with her five daughters. She had this to say:

I now have five daughters, instead of just three children as I had earlier desired even before I got married. It happened that, the children that were coming were just girls and so we kept trying, hoping and praying that at least one would be a boy because already my husband had started making trouble and was accusing me of not giving him a son and so I kept on and on until now that I have five girls and he decided to take in another woman and sent me away. But what can I do, I love my girls and they bring me so much joy after all it is not in my power to create children otherwise I would have done so, but all the same I thank God because only Him knows what is best for us.

The position of these two respondents is not peculiar to them alone as it is a reflection of the general situation in the area of study and even the country at large where the search for a male heir can become a do-or-die affair. People tend to increase the number of their children because they are searching for a particular sex. Another interesting situation was observed were there was conflict of desires/preferences between the husband and the wife. In most cases there was a situation where the husband had his preferences for more males than females while the wife wanted more females than males and vice versa. This type of situation would probably not have arisen if the couple had discussed their desires and preferences and reconciled them before contracting the marriage, so as not to create unnecessary tensions in the home. Analysis of qualitative data revealed that where there is conflict in terms of spouses' desires and preferences the husbands' preferences always supersedes, though not in all cases. For example, a couple that was interviewed during one of the interview sessions confirmed that they both came into the marriage with various desires and preferences as to the number and sex of children they individually desired, to the point that, it became very difficult to reconcile their desires. In fact, it took the intervention of some family members for them to be able to reconcile the issue. While the wife wanted and loved a large family of between 5 and 7children, with more males than female children, the husband wanted a much smaller family of 2 to 4 children, with a balance between

the sexes. However it was observed that where couples are disposed to discussions on the number and sex of children preferred, problems of preferences were minimal.

Notwithstanding this situation, some respondents expressed that they do not have any issues with having children of the same sex, because for them whether males or females, children can only be what you make out of them as expressed by this male key informant who has all female children but does not seem to be bothered about the situation.

> *I wanted three children and I have got three children so whether they are females I don't care, what is important to me right now is making them who I want them to be.*

For this informant and indeed many other people from Cross River State a balance of the sexes would have been good but with what they have, they are just okay and so it is with those who are trying to keep to their initial plans of having a particular number of children irrespective of their sex.

Table 4.3.3: Disposition to discussions on the sex of child preferred.

Responses	**Male responses**		**Female responses**		**Total**	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	309	59.3	384	61.1	693	60.3
No	107	20.5	129	20.5	236	20.5
Don't know	105	20.2	116	18.4	221	19.2
Total	521	100.0	629	100.0	1150	100.0

Source: Field survey 2010.

According to the data 59.3percent of the male respondents and 61.1 percent of the female respondents subscribe to the idea of discussing the number and sex of children desired, even before the actual activity of child bearing. This result is not so surprising as it has been acknowledged that when it comes to child bearing the women are at the centre of it all, although the decision to bear or not to bear and

what sex it should be may not entirely be theirs, since they do not have the power to take independent reproductive decisions. This situation however varies according to respondents' level of education, occupation, religion, and place of residence as will be noticed in the subsequent tables.

Table 4.3.4: Number of living children

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
1-2	184	16.0
3-4	225	19.6
5-6	286	24.9
7 & above	455	39.5
Total	1150	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2010

The survey instrument included questions on the number of living children the respondents had in order to ascertain whether the number of persons' living children could affect the decision to desire more children or prefer a particular sex. It was revealed by most participants in the group discussions that the number of a persons living children does not really affect the desire of some people who desire a particular sex of child especially where children are seen as an insurance for the future as well as for old age support. Data from table 4.3.6 show that most of the respondents (64.4%) had 5 children and above alive while the remaining had between 1 and 4.

Table 4.3.5: Responses on willingness to continue child bearing without a male child

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	751	65.3
No	324	28.2
Others	75	6.5
Total	1150	100.0

Source: field survey, 2010

Data on table 4.4.2 reveals that majority of the respondents (65.3%) agree that couples should continue child bearing if they do not have male child, irrespective of the number of children they already have. This is indicative of the fact that preference for sex, particularly male child preference has a strong impact on the peoples fertility behaviour. That is to say that the stronger the preference for a male child, the higher or stronger the willingness (fertility behavior) to continue child bearing.

Table 4.3.6: Distribution of female respondents according to the mean number of children ever born.

Age	Number of female respondents		Total number of children ever born	Mean number of children ever born
	Frequency	Percentage		
15 – 19	20	3.2	122	1.9
20 – 24	73	11.6	212	3.4
25 – 29	90	14.3	286	4.4
30 – 34	103	16.4	397	6.3
35 – 39	106	16.9	488	7.6
40 – 44	100	15.9	489	7.8
45 – 49	47	7.4	310	4.9
50 – 54	34	5.4	373	5.9
55 – 59	32	5.1	354	5.6
60	24	3.8	327	5.2
	629	100	3358	5.3

Source: Field Survey 2010

Table 4.3.7 shows the percent distribution of the mean number of children ever born. From the table above it can be observed that most of the female respondents have up to two children and above with the mean number of children

ever born being 5.3. This shows that fertility in the area is high and reflects the general fertility situation in the country which has a total fertility rate of 5.7.

4. 4: Sex preference and marital stability.

In this section questions relating to sex preference and marital stability were asked in order to elicit information on issues relating to how the respondents perceived marriage and the idea of taking a second wife or more in trying to get a male child or the sex of child preferred.

Table 4.4.1: Responses on marital instability as a result of the absence of a male child.

Responses	Male responses		Female responses		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	309	59.3	384	61.1	693	60.3
No	107	20.5	129	20.5	236	20.5
Don't know	105	20.2	116	18.4	221	19.2
Total	521	100	629	100	1150	100

Source: Field survey 2010.

From the data on the table, 60.3 percent of the respondents agree that marriages can be unstable as a result of the absence of a male child. About 20.5 percent said 'no',while the remaining gave an 'I don't know' answer. This however indicates that respondents agree that marriages can be unstable in the absence of a male child.

4.4.2: Distribution of responses on commonest types of instability experienced by couples as a result of sex preference.

Type of Instability	Males		Females		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Sexual deprivation	102	19.4	117	18.6	219	19.0
Malice	101	19.3	101	16.1	202	17.5
Financial	85	16.3	111	17.6	196	17.4
deprivation	80	15.4	108	17.2	188	16.3
Abandonment	77	14.9	97	15.4	174	15.1
Separation	76	14.7	95	15.1	171	14.7
Divorce						
Total	**521**	**100**	**629**	**100**	**1150**	**100**

Source: Field Survey 2010.

Table4.3.3 shows that sexual deprivation is the commonest type (19.0%) of instability experienced in marriages as expressed in the data on the table followed by malice (17.5%). Next in the order is abandonment (17.4%), while separation and divorce have 15.1 percent and 14.7 percent respectively. However it is important to note here that while some respondents have been thrown out of marriage, others are still within the marriage but are experiencing varying degrees of instability in their marriages as expressed by this female discussant:

> *For the past two years or so my husband and I have been living under the same roof without sleeping together, we barely manage to talk to each other, he goes out and comes back when he likes and does not even bother about what happens around the home. If I try confronting him it will always end in a fight and he will be telling me to give him a son so he can have someone to play with when he comes home. It's really been difficult but what can I do.*

This position was corroborated by another young female participant who said:

> *It is no longer news here to hear or see most women fending for themselves and their children. Our husbands are quick to abandon us and refuse to provide for their children, even to pay their fees. Since my husband decided to stop giving us money, I have been*

doing everything alone because he says he cannot spend his money to train prostitutes who would sooner or later leave his house and go to bear someone else's name.

The interview sessions also revealed a similar pattern of sex preference among the key informants. The female respondents were more likely than their male counterparts to express a lack of preference except for the issue of the security of their marriage. Some participant said that male children were more productive, helpful, supportive and caring than the female children, while others disagreed and cited examples from their locality to buttress their claims as quoted from one middle aged female interviewee.

For us in my family the sex of the children does not matter at all, my husband loves our three daughters very much. In fact he dots on them and cannot do without them. We believe in my family that whether male or female anybody can become anything in life with proper upbringing and adequate training. So for us we are putting in all our best to make sure that our children become their best in life. As much as I know my husband has not showed me any sign of displeasure.

Much of the problems associated with marital instability were highlighted during the focus group discussion and indepth interviews with a clear division between those who think that marriages should break as a result of no male children and those who think otherwise, but the most striking discovery came from a male participant who said:

Why should I divorce my wife or even think of marring another one, in fact I won't mind if I have all female children in my house, they are a blessing. If you have daughters you don't suffer at old age, they (girls) are always there for you, while the male will get married and forget their families, all their attention will be shifted to their wives and children. In fact in my family the women do better than the men and they are the ones holding and keeping the family together.

Table 4.4.3: Male Responses on whether they would marry another wife if their wife does not give birth to a male child

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	303	58.2
No	189	36.2
Don't Know	29	5.6
Total	521	100

Source: Field Survey, 2010

Table 4.4.1 shows responses by the male respondents as to whether they would marry another wife if their wife fails to give birth to a male child. This question was directed at the male respondents only and data revealed that 58.2 percent of the respondents said 'yes' they would marry another wife, 36.2 percent said 'no' they would not marry another wife, while 5.6 percent of the respondents said they do not know.

Interestingly in spite of the respondent's level of education or their general socio-economic standing, they still expressed their preference for male children. A clearer picture was observed during one of the focus group discussion sessions with a group of younger men in the northern part of the state. Though some discussants were not really bothered about whether they have all males or all females, a situation arose during that session where an argument almost ensued, a young, not so educated participant busted out saying:

> *I don't care whether my wife has hundred girls if she does not give me a boy, I will marry another one, abi no bi Africa we dey. Who will answer your name, all these girls in the house within a short time they will all get married and begin to answer another person's name and your own name will be lost. When they (girls) marry and go who will take care of your property and even you because some of them their husbands will not allow them to do anything for their family again, so why won't I marry another wife? Why won't I look for a male child?*

A similar question was directed at the female respondents only, in order to assess their perception of the impact of sex preference on marital stability. In order to

discover this, the question do you think your husband would marry another wife if you have no male child was asked.

Table 4.4.4: Female Responses on whether their husbands would marry another wife if they do not give birth to a male child

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	348	55.3
No	235	37.4
Don't Know	46	7.3
Total	629	100

Source: Field Survey, 2010

As shown in table 4.4.2 about 55.3 percent of the respondents said 'yes' that is their husband would marry another wife if they have no male and 37.4 percent said 'no' indicating that their husbands would not divorce them, while 7.3 percent gave an 'I don't know answer. This situation is to be expected especially in a patrilineal society like Cross River State in which the perpetuation of family line is strongly emphasized and having biological children is seen as a factor in this achievement. Indeed this pronatalist view of people leaves women who are unable to give birth to children of preferred sex exposed to the risk of marital instability/ insecurity, as summed up by two discussants during a session of the focus group discussions with group older women who have completed child bearing:

> *In this part of the world marriage is just for you to give birth to children and failure to do that can lead to your losing your marriage, especially if you do not have the sex of children your husband wants. I have seen a woman who was thrown out by her husband because she did not have a son and according to her husband's people, their brother is an only son, he must have a son who will carry on the family name and take care of his property.*

In addition another female participant reiterated:

> *I was thrown out of my own home because I could not give my husband a son even though it was not my fault, but nobody, not even my husband would listen or even understand, he kept blaming me for not bearing a son and anytime I said, did or asked for anything, he will just tell me, give me a son and I will do anything for you. He was so obsessed with this situation that he just started misbehaving until I was thrown out.*

However, middle age female key informant, who had all female children but had no problems in her marriage also expressed her feelings thus:

> *I don't see anything wrong in having all female children afterall, it is the man who determines the sex of the child. So I don't think that my husband will now say I should park out or he is going to marry another wife when he knows that he has not given me a male child to bear for him*

In spite of this feeling, the need for balance between sons and daughters was emphasized and the desire of having at least a son was stressed in all the groups. There was a greater agreement that both males and female children are important in their own right given the different roles they perform and the fact that children are a gift from God. There was also a general consensus that with proper socialization and training both sexes could be useful to parents and family. Obviously therefore, it could be said that there exists a strong preference for males than female children among the respondents who expressed a preference. Thus whatever the size of the family, it seems most respondents would prefer more males than female children. This implies that respondents' sex preferences have significant effect on marital stability.

4.5: Sex preference and family size

Family size is the total fertility experience of an individual woman, even though men and women could have idea of what family size they prefer. Given the significant role that sex preference plays in the ultimate completed family size and its eventual impact on the overall population growth rate, the determination of the respondents' family size preference will give an insight into the fertility situation in the society.

According to the NDHS report of 2005 and the NPC and ICF macro report of 2004, interpretation of data on sex preference and family size preferences may generally be surrounded with controversies because of the feelings that such responses could be misleading since they reflect uninformed views which are held with weak intensity and little conviction. Moreover, they do not take into account the effect of social pressures on reproductive decisions. However, while those objections may be correct to some extent, it is noteworthy to say that greater interpretative weight can be attached to the findings on family size preference data, because Nigeria is a society in which contraceptive use is officially approved, encouraged and promoted, hence one can use appropriate contraceptive methods to enhance one's fertility intensions.

In an attempt to find out respondent's family size preferences, that is, the total numbers of children wanted in their life time, respondents were asked what size of family they preferred. For this study a family size of 4 children and less was considered a small family size, while a family of 5 children and above was considered a large family size. On the respondents' family size preferences, that is, the total number of children wanted in their life time, respondents were asked how

many children they want or desired in their life time. Typically, responses to such questions can be taken as indicative of the fertility expectation of the respondents.

Table 4.5.1: **Desired/preferred family size**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
1 – 4	294	25.6
5 - 8	666	57.9
Others	190	16.5
Total	**1150**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey 2010

Table 4.5.1 shows distribution of respondents according to desired number of children. From the data, 25.6 percent of the respondents desired four children and less, while majority 57.9 percent respondents desired five children or more. The implication is that the respondents were more likely to desire a large family size of five children or more. The mean number of children respondents desired in their life time for this study is 5.3 which clearly shows a 0.4 births less than Nigeria's total fertility rate of 5.7 (NPC 2008). This however suggests that the desire for many children and large family size is common in Cross River State.

An Important observation from the study is that a significant proportion of the respondents gave non-numerical responses to the questions, that is, responses such as "small", "large", as God gives and "don't know". This kind of responses are indicative of the fatalistic and providentialist views of the people in this area especially those in the rural areas to childbearing and the rather lack of control attitude over their reproductive behaviours. When taken together, data from the study showed that the ultimate completed family size can be affected by sex preference. In depth interviews conducted as well as focus group discussions also

revealed a similar pattern of family size preferences among participants and key informants. A vast majority of the participants especially those from the rural areas were undecided on the number of children they desire in their lifetime, so they gave largely responses, such as 'as many as God gives', 'as God wills'. The respondents were also asked to indicate which type of family they strongly desired by sex.

Table 4.5.2: Distribution of respondents according to type of family size strongly desired

Type of family desired	**Males** Frequency - Percentage		**Females** Frequency Percentage		**Total** Frequency Percentage	
Many males and few females	152	29.3	207	33.0	359	31.2
Many females and few males	30	5.6	140	22.2	170	14.8
Equal number of males and females	195	37.4	172	27.3	367	31.9
Only males or only females	84	16.2	76	12.1	160	13.9
Others	60	11.5	34	5.4	94	8.2
Total	**521**	**100.0**	**629**	**100.0**	**1150**	**100.0**

Source: field survey 2010

Table 4.5.2 presents the distribution of respondents according to type of family strongly desired by sex. According to the data, female respondents were more likely to desire strongly a family with many males and few females. It is important to observe here that most women who desired strongly more males than females did so because of the issues of marital security/stability and the desire for the insurance of their future and subsequent old age support. On the whole the most strongly desired family type among both males and female respondents was a family of equal number of both sexes. Only a small percentage of males (16.2%) and females (12.1%) strongly desired a family of only sons or only daughters.

Analysis of qualitative data also confirmed the relationship between sex preference and actual family size, that is to say that the preference for sex of child can affect the actual size of family a person eventually has. In the interviews with some couples who had children of the same sex it was discovered that most of them actually had between 30-60% more children than they had desired before they started child bearing, thus a reflection of the difference between the actual and the preferred which is an indication of the various pressures and influences that exist in the society under study.

4.6: Sex Role performance and sex preferences.

This section takes a look at respondents' sex preferences as determined by the roles performed by either sex. Sex roles here refer to role that are peculiar to particular sexes, which are often learnt and influenced by the kind of socialization one is exposed to, as well as existing cultural and social norms prevalent in the area.

Table 4.6.1: Responses on sex role performance influencing sex preference

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	748	65.0
No	402	35.0
Total	1150	100

Source: Field Survey, 2010

Table 4.6.1 above shows the distribution of respondents' responses to the question 'do you think the different roles performed by males and females affects your preference for a particular sex'? Data show that most of the respondents said their desire for a particular sex was determined by the particular roles performed by one sex over the other. For instance 65 percent of the respondents said 'yes' to the question, while 35 percent said no.

Table 4.6.2: Reasons for preference of male children

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
To continue the lineage	431	56.6
For prestige and recognition	77	10.0
To inherit property/title	87	11.5
To take care of parent at old age	46	6.0
Security/Economic reasons	122	15.9
Total	**763**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2010

Table 4.6.2 above shows the percent distribution of responses to the question on why respondents' prefer male children. Out of the total population of 1150, 763 persons said they prefer male children. Of this number, 56.6percent of the said they prefer male children in order to keep the family line as well for the continuity of the lineage. This probably is the most important reason why people desire male children, which is indicative of the partriachal nature of the society under study, where descent is traced only to the male patriarch, in spite of the fact that among the Efiks, men prefer female children to male children and women are allowed to inherit property. Other reasons such as to take care of and inherit property when I die (11.5%); for prestige and recognition (10.0%) were also given. Similarly data also revealed that 15.9 percent of the respondents wanted male children for security and economic reasons. For a country with no functional social security system, it can be understood, particularly where parents are hoping to rely on their sons for old age support.

Table 4.6.3: Responses on why they prefer female children

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
To collect bride price when they marry	162	41.9
To take care of siblings	62	16.0
To take care of or inherit property	70	18.1
Old age support/security	93	24.0
Total	387	100

Source: Field Survey, 2010

Table 4.6.3 shows the percent distribution of responses to the question on why respondents' prefer female children. Out of the total population of 1150, only 387 persons said they prefer female children. Of this number 167(42%) said they prefer female children for reasons relating to the collection of bride price when they are given out in marriage. Some said, to take care of siblings, while others said they preferred female children for old age support and security. Of the number only 18.1 percent said they wanted female children for reasons relating to inheritance and care for family property. This is understood because, apart from the Efiks of southern Cross River State, as found in the study, no part of the state allows women to inherit property.

This was further stressed by some discussants during a group discussion session with a group of older males in central zone of the state. They maintained that because of the kind of socialization given to them, there are certain roles that can only be performed by a particular sex. In fact quoted directly from a one male participant in a group discussion with older males:

> *In our society we know that there are some roles that men can perform and women cannot perform. For example, women are trained to be mothers and homemakers and not to perform roles that require strength and power, they are usually not allowed to hold positions in the traditional society, inherit properties, carry on the family name/title, women cannot do them, it is only the men that can do those*

things, that is why people will want to have at least one male child who will perform those roles considered to be the exclusive preserve of men.

In the same vein, a female discussant in another session with a group of older women confirmed:

Something happened in my family that made my mother say that no matter what it takes, all of her daughters must do everything in their power to make sure that they have a male child. This is because her husband left her and got married to another woman who now gave birth to two male children and whenever there was trouble in the house, my father and his other wife and the two boys will join together to beat my mother. This made my mother to be very sad. In fact even when all of us grew up and became something in life, she never stops talking about what had happened to her and will always say to us even if it means giving up your life, make sure you give birth to sons so that people will not trample on you or insult you because if you have boys, you have strength.

Because we live in a society that places high premium on male children and the role they perform in society, people go through so much to make sure they can have at least one male child. However a currently married female interviewee brought a new twist to the whole discussion.

As far as I am concern there is nothing a man can do that a woman cannot do, it depends on the kind of training that they get, after all we have seen women taking care of families and taking up bread winner roles, so whether male or female it does not matter because it is God who gives children

4.7: Socio-cultural factors affecting sex preference and fertility behavior

The issue of sex preference is one of those decisions influenced primarily by where a person comes from. In Nigeria as in many countries in Africa and Asia, high fertility is considered a blessing and a man with many children particularly sons seems to command much respect and prestige (Benedict,1998). Also noted by Mcsweeny (1993) is the fact that, in many cultures people feel that life is incomplete without a son to carry on the family name. She further stressed that a more serious problem is the traditional legal system that does not allow females to inherit

property in most cultures and that although the husband and wife may be quite contented with girls most times the relatives persistently make life unbearable for the husband until he marries another wife to continue the search for a male child.

Table 4.7.1: Distribution of responses on culture influencing the attitude towards the sex of children.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	702	61.0
No	448	39.0
Total	1150	100

Source: Field Survey, 2010

The question that was asked was, 'does the culture of the people influence the people's attitude towards the sex of child they prefer'? From the data presented on the table 4.7.1, 61.0 percent of the respondents said 'yes' though with no further explanation because it was not provided for in the checklist while 39 percent of the respondents said 'no'. Obviously, this response pattern assumes this dimension because all the respondents come from a background where there is a strong influence of culture on virtually every aspect of their lives, and in whatever decision one takes. For example among the Igbo's of south eastern Nigeria and even in some parts of the northern senatorial zone of Cross River State, the search for a male child can become a-do-or-die affair, except for a few educated, urban dwellers, well placed respondents, culture is a big issue.

During an interview with a couple in the northern part of the State, the husband had this to say:

> *In any place, having a male child is a thing of pride. If you don't have one you can't stand or talk where your friends are talking because you will be feeling inadequate and incomplete. A son is your strength, your power, your future, your joy. It is him that will carry your family name on, so in our culture not having a male child makes you feel like a no body and even like an outcast, they might even deny you some rights*

and privileges that you are supposed to enjoy. So you see why people will do everything to make sure they have at least one male child.

The fact still remains that society expects children to be a sort of economic assets to aged parents. Thus, children are desired in the family not just as a fulfillment of their reproductive duties but as a sort of economic asset as well as social and traditional security and insurance against the unexpected and for what Roam and Railey (1980) called the 'dynastic imperative'. Analysis of quantitative data also revealed that the overall response from the data indicates the influence of culture and tradition and the will of God. While not ruling out the ability to cater for the children as well as family pressure. This implies that the major socio-cultural factors that enhance sex preference are the culture and tradition prevalent in the area, the will of God.

Findings from the group discussions also revealed that most respondents in the urban areas said their major influence in determining the number and sex of children desired was their ability to cater for them and their level of income; this according to them is because of the present economic situation in the country. According to one participant:

The cost of everything in this country is very high, education, health, housing, feeding in fact everything, so why have plenty children that you cannot take care of, if you want to give your children the best in life you have to consider all of this, that is why for me i just want three children, in fact, children that I can give the best in life, so whether they are all boys or all girls I don't really care.

However, for the predominantly rural respondent, the will of God was what most of their responses were. For them, no man has any power to decide the number of children that he/she wants after all it is God who gives children. The revelation was most fascinating during a particular group discussion with some female respondents who were generally young and still within the child bearing age of 15-49 and of little education. According to one of them:

It is not in our place to decide how many children we want to have, it is the husbands that will tell you when they marry you, that he wants so and so number of children or how many should be boys or girls. You don't have any power whatsoever, sometimes even after he has said he wants four or five boys or girls as the case may be, God can decide otherwise, so it is God that decides the number of children that He wants to give to you.

This situation goes to confirm an earlier assertion made by Ayorinde (1996), Isiugo-Abanihe (2005) and Caldwell (1987) that women in most parts of Africa and indeed Nigeria cannot take independent reproductive decisions by virtue of their subordinate nature and the patriarchal nature of our society.

Table 4.7.2: Knowledge, approval and use of family planning methods by sex.

Variables/ Responses	**Male responses**		**Female responses**	
	Frequency	percentage	Frequency	percentage
Ever heard of methods of family planning				
Yes	371	71.2	470	74.7
No	150	28.8	159	25.3
TOTAL	**521**	**100**	**629**	**100**
Approval of family planning use				
Approve	156	29.9	236	37.5
Disapprove	365	70.1	393	62.5
TOTAL	**521**	**100.0**	**629**	**100.0**
Ever used method of family planning				
Yes	117	22.5	225	35.8
No	404	77.5	404	64.2
TOTAL	**521**	**100.0**	**629**	**100.0**
Currently using methods of family planning				
Yes	115	22.1	220	34.9
No	406	77.9	409	65.1
TOTAL	**521**	**100.0**	**629**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey 2010

The data on the table shows that about 74.7 percent of female and 71.2 percent of male respondents have ever heard of methods of family planning, indicating that most of the respondents have some knowledge of family planning methods. The 2008 NDHS report confirms this high rate of knowledge and awareness of family planning methods in Nigeria. According to the report, 79.5

percent of women age 15 – 49 know at least one method of family planning (NPC 2008).

It is however worthy to note that the proportion of female respondents who approve of family planning was higher (37.5%) than their male counterpart (29.9%). The proportion of both male and female who disapproved was clearly higher than those who approved the use of any family planning method apart from the natural methods. A little less than one third of both male and female respondents had ever used, while about one forth are currently using methods of family planning, suggesting that a large proportion of people in Cross River State had never used and are not currently using any methods of family planning.

The gender imbalance in the level of awareness of methods of family planning among the respondents may not be unconnected with the poor access to reproductive health information, low level of female education especially in the rural areas and most importantly the non involvement of men in issues of reproductive health and family planning in particular. Generally in Nigeria, sexuality education and reproductive health issues and training are targeted at the female population to the exclusion of the males, which may account for the picture on the table above. Majority of the participants during the group discussions agreed that the use of any contraceptive method for whatever reason was not a common practice in their communities, though most of the urban based participants said they have ever heard of family planning methods and have used some of them, mostly the pill and the condoms.

In all the group discussions and interviews, strong views were expressed either in support or in condemnation of family planning use, while some discussants and key informants condemned it in its entirety, others approved of it not only for those who are married but also for the single women in order to prevent unwanted

pregnancies. The disapprovals were largely based on grounds of religion, morals and health concerns. On the whole, while some male and female participants in all the group discussions expressed disapproval, the strongest and most vocal condemnation came from the males.

It was also found from the discussions and interviews held that formal employees like the civil and public servants are more likely to desire a small family size of between 4 children and less. This however was attributed to their involvement in paid employment, that leaves them with little or no time to cater for the children they have and therefore they may not desire large families as against their counterparts who are housewives, unemployed or engaged in farming and other small businesses, which affords them enough time to procreate and nurture their children, thus their desire for large family sizes.

Again the relationship between religion and approval of family planning use revealed a similar pattern in which participants and key informants who are Christians tend to favour and support the use of family planning methods, with exception from those who are Catholics. They only support and approve the natural methods of family planning as it is against their faith to use artificial methods of family planning and birth control. For instance majority of the discussants who are Christians approve of family planning use as compared to those of the Islamic faith and the traditional religion. This implies that a large proportion of respondents of the Islamic faith and traditional religion express disapproval of family planning use.

Also result of the interviews analyzed revealed that those who reside in the urban areas were more likely to give a higher level of approval of family planning use while majority of those who reside in the rural areas were more likely to

disapprove of the use of family planning methods due to such reasons as cost, accessibility, non-availability, religious beliefs and associated side effects.

4.8: Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis one: There is a significant relationship between sex preference and fertility behaviour of the people of Cross River State.

In testing hypothesis one, the chi-square test of significant relationship was used. In this case the study sought to find out the relationship between sex preference and the fertility behaviour of the people. To calculate this, responses to the questions relating to sex preference and the willingness to continue child bearing which was used as a measure for fertility behaviour were used.

Table 4.8.1a: Observed frequencies/cross tabulation for sex preference and fertility behavior

Responses		Fertility behaviour			
		Yes	No	Others	Total
Sex preference	Male	457	250	56	763
	Female	294	74	19	387
	Total	751	324	75	1150

Table 4.8.1b: Expected frequencies

Responses		Fertility behaviour			
		Yes	No	NR	Total
Sex preference	Male	498.3	214.9	49.8	763
	Female	252.7	109.1	25.2	387
	Total	751	324	75	1150

$$Expected\ value\ (eij) = \frac{row\,total\ x\ column\,total}{grand\ total}$$

Chi-Square formula is given as;

$$\chi^2_{cal} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{r}\sum_{j=1}^{c}\left(o_{ij} - e_{ij}\right)^2}{eij}$$

Table 4.8.1c: Chi-Square results

S/N	(Oij) Observed Frequencies	(eij) Expected frequencies	(Oij – eij)	(Oij – eij) ^{2}	$\frac{(Oij-eij)^2}{eij}$
1.	457	498.3	-41.3	1705.69	3.42
2.	250	214.9	35.1	1232.01	5.73
3.	56	49.8	6.2	38.44	0.77
4.	294	252.7	41.3	1705.69	6.75
5.	74	109.1	-35.1	1232.01	11.29
6.	19	25.2	-6.2	38.44	1.53
					$\chi^2 = 29.49$

$$\chi^2_{cal} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{r}\sum_{j=1}^{c}(o_{ij} - e_{ij})^2}{eij} = 29.49$$

Decision rule: Since $\chi^2_{cal} = 29.49 > \chi^2_{2,0.05} = 5.991$ that is the calculated chi-square is greater than the chi-square from the statistical table. The hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Interpretation of result: Table 4.8.1c shows the Pearson chi-square likelihood ratio of 29.49 at a degree of freedom of 2, which indicates that since the calculated x^2 = 29.49 is greater than the critical chi-square from the table, the hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Moreover, the analyses of qualitative data based on information obtained from the FGD sessions and key informants during the interview also confirmed the relationship as indicated from the analysis. The hypothesis is therefore accepted and concluded that, there is a significant relationship between sex preference and the fertility behaviour of the people of Cross River State.

Hypothesis two: There is a significant relationship between sex preference and marital stability in Cross River State.

In testing hypothesis two, the chi-square test of significant relationship was used. Again the study sought to find out the relationship between sex preference and marital stability in Cross River State. To calculate this, responses to the questions relating to sex preference and marital stability were used.

Table 4.8.2a Observed frequencies/cross tabulation for sex preference and marital stability

Responses		Marital instability			
		Yes	No	NR	Total
Sex preference	Male	450	156	154	763
	Female	243	77	67	387
	Total	693	236	221	1150

Table 4.8.2b: Expected frequencies

Responses		Marital stability			
		Yes	No	others	Total
Sex preference	Male	559.8	91.6	111.6	763
	Female	133.2	144.4	109.4	387
	Total	693	236	221	1150

$$Expected\ value\ (eij) = \frac{row\,total\ x\,column\,total}{grand\ total}$$

Chi-Square formula is given as;

$$\chi^2_{cal} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{r}\sum_{j=1}^{c}(o_{ij} - e_{ij})^2}{eij}$$

Table 4.8.2c: Chi-Square results

S/N	(Oij) Observed Frequencies	(eij) Expected frequencies	(Oij – eij)	(Oij – eij) ^{2}	$\frac{(Oij-eij)^2}{eij}$
1.	450	559.8	-109.8	12056.04	21.5
2.	159	91.6	67.4	4542.76	49.59
3.	154	111.6	42.4	1797.76	16.10
4.	243	133.2	109.8	12056.04	49.6
5.	77	144.4	-67.4	4542.76	31.46
6.	67	109.4	-42.4	1797.76	16.43
					$\chi^2 = 184.68$

$$\chi^2_{cal} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{r}\sum_{j=1}^{c}(o_{ij} - e_{ij})^2}{eij} = 184.68$$

Decision rule: Since $\chi^2_{cal} = 184.68 > \chi^2_{2,0.05} = 5.991$ and p – value = 0.00 < 0.05 that is calculated chi-square is greater than the chi-square from the statistical table. The hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Interpretation of result: The hypothesis is therefore accepted and concluded that there is a significant relationship between sex preference and marital stability in Cross River State.

Hypothesis three: There is a significant relationship between sex preference for a child and actual family size.

This hypothesis was tested using responses to the questions that relate to family size and sex preference. This hypothesis was tested using chi – square test of significant relationship.

Table 4.8.3a: Observed frequencies/cross tabulation sex preference and actual family size

Responses		Desired family size			
		1 – 4	5 – 8	others	Total
Sex preference	Male	206	467	90	763
	Female	88	244	55	387
	Total	294	711	145	1150

Table 4.8.3b: Expected frequencies

Responses		Desired family size			
		1 – 4	5 – 8	others	Total
Sex preference	Male	165.1	542.7	55.2	763
	Female	128.9	168.3	89.8	387
	Total	294	711	145	1150

$$Expected\ value\ (eij) = \frac{row\ total\ x\ column\ total}{grand\ total}$$

Chi-Square formula is given as;

$$\chi^2_{cal} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{r}\sum_{j=1}^{c}\left(o_{ij} - e_{ij}\right)^2}{eij}$$

Table 4.8.3c: Chi-Square results

S/N	(Oij) Observed Frequencies	(eij) Expected frequencies	(Oij – eij)	$(Oij - eij)^2$	$\frac{(Oij - eij)^2}{eij}$
1.	206	165.1	40.9	1672.81	10.13
2.	467	542.7	-75.7	5730.49	10.56
3.	90	55.2	34.8	1211.04	21.93
4.	88	128.9	-40.9	1672.81	12.98
5.	244	168.3	75.7	5730.49	34.05
6.	55	89.8	-34.8	1211.04	13.49
					$\chi^2 = 103.14$

$$\chi^2_{cal} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{r}\sum_{j=1}^{c}\left(o_{ij} - e_{ij}\right)^2}{eij} = 103.14$$

Decision rule: Since 103.14 > $\chi^2_{2,0.05} = 5.991$ and p – value = 0.00 < 0.05 that is the calculated chi-square is greater than the chi-square from the statistical table, the hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Interpretation of result: The hypothesis is therefore being accepted and concluded that there is a significant relationship between sex preference and actual family size in Cross River State.

Hypothesis four: The desire for sons is strongly related to the differential roles performed by males and those performed by females in the society.

This hypothesis was tested using responses to questions that relate to sex preference and sex roles performance. Chi-square test of significant relationship was used.

Table 4.8.4a: Observed frequencies/cross tabulation sex preference and sex role performance

Responses		Sex role performance		
		Yes	No	Total
Sex preference	Male	748	15	763
	Female	0	387	387
	Total	748	402	1150

Table 4.8.4b: Expected frequencies

Responses		Sex role performance		
		Yes	No	Total
Sex preference	Male	496.3	266.7	763
	Female	251.7	135.3	387
	Total	748	402	1150

$$Expected\ value\ (eij) = \frac{row\ total\ x\ column\ total}{grand\ total}$$

Chi-Square formula is given as;

$$\chi^2_{cal} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{r}\sum_{j=1}^{c}(o_{ij} - e_{ij})^2}{eij}$$

Table 4.8.4c: Chi-Square results

S/N	(Oij) Observed Frequencies	(eij) Expected frequencies	(Oij – eij)	(Oij – eij) ^{2}	$\frac{(Oij-eij)^2}{eij}$
1.	748	496.3	251.7	63352.89	127.65
2.	15	266.7	-251.7	63352.89	237.54
3.	0	251.7	-251.7	63352.89	251.70
4.	387	135.3	251.7	63352.89	468.24
					$\chi^2 = 1085.13$

$$\chi^2_{cal} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{r}\sum_{j=1}^{c}(o_{ij} - e_{ij})^2}{eij} = 1085.13$$

Decision rule: Since $\chi^2_{cal} = 1085.13 > \chi^2_{1,0.05} = 3.841$ and p – value = 0.00 < 0.05 that is calculated chi-square is greater than the chi-square from the statistical table.

Interpretation of result: The hypothesis is therefore accepted and concluded that there is a significant relationship between sex preference and sex role performance in Cross River State.

Hypothesis five:

There is a significant relationship between socio-cultural norms/values prevalent in Cross River State and the preference for sex of a child.

This hypothesis was tested using responses to the questions that relate to culture and the preference for sex of child. This hypothesis was tested using Chi-Square test of significant relationship.

Table 4.8.5a: Sex preference and Socio-cultural norms and value Observed frequencies/cross tabulation

Responses	Socio-cultural norms/values			
		Yes	No	Total
Sex preference	Male	461	302	763
	Female	241	146	387
	Total	702	448	1150

Table 4.8.5b: Expected frequencies

Responses	Socio-cultural norms/values			
		Yes	No	Total
Sex preference	Male	565.8	197.2	763
	Female	136.2	250.8	387
	Total	702	448	1150

$$Expected\ value\ (eij) = \frac{row\ total\ x\ column\ total}{grand\ total}$$

Chi-Square formula is given as;

$$\chi^2_{cal} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{r}\sum_{j=1}^{c}(o_{ij} - e_{ij})^2}{eij}$$

Table 4.8.5c: Chi-Square results

S/N	(Oij) Observed Frequencies	(eij) Expected frequencies	(Oij – eij)	$(Oij - eij)^2$	$\frac{(Oij - eij)^2}{eij}$
1.	461	565.8	-104.8	10983.04	19.41
2.	302	197.2	104.8	10983.04	55.69
3.	241	136.2	104.8	10983.04	80.64
4.	146	250.8	-104.8	10983.04	43.79
					$\chi^2 = 199.53$

$$\chi^2_{cal} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{r}\sum_{j=1}^{c}(o_{ij} - e_{ij})^2}{eij} = 199.53$$

Decision rule: Since $\chi^2_{cal} = 199.53 > \chi^2_{1,0.05} = 3.841$ and p – value = 0.000 < 0.05 that is calculated chi-square is greater than the chi-square from the statistical table.

Interpretation of result: The hypothesis is therefore accepted and concluded that there is a significant relationship between sex preference and socio-cultural norms/values prevalent in Cross River State.

4.9 REGRESSION ANALYSIS

This section deals basically with the test for the strength and extent of the impact of sex preference, actual family size, sex role performance and cultural norms on fertility behaviour. It also seeks to find out the extent of the impact of sex preference, actual family size, sex role performance and cultural norms on marital stability. This relationship was tested with the multiple regression analysis. A test used to measure the level or extent of a relationship between one variable and other variables (i.e. a dependent variable and independent variables).

4.9.1 MULTIPLE REGRESSION MODELS OF FERTILITY BEHAVIOUR AND OTHER FACTORS

The regression model showing the relationship between fertility behaviour and sex preference, actual family size, sex role performance and cultural norms is given as;

$Y = B_0 + B_1X_1 + B_2X_2 + B_3X_3 + B_4X_4 + B_5X_5$

Where;

B_0 = Fertility behaviour (Dependent variable)

B_1 = Sex preference

B_2 = Actual family size

B_3 = Sex role performance

B_4 = Social-Cultural norms

The model is given as;

Y = Fertility behaviour + Sex preferenceX_1 + Actual family sizeX_2 + sex role performanceX_3 + Social-Cultural norms X_4

Table 4.9.1: Regression coefficients of fertility behaviour and other independent variables

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.617	.066		54.881	.000
Sex preference	1.292	.106	.701	-12.216	.000
Desired number of children	.017	.020	.012	-.848	.397
Sex role performance	.351	.105	.192	-3.344	.001
Influence of culture and attitude	.029	.025	.016	-1.139	.255

a. Dependent Variable: Fertility behaviour

Table 4.9.2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.888[a]	.788	.787	.40203

a. Predictors: (Constant), Influence of culture and attitude, Sex preference, Desired number of children, Sex role performance

Result Interpretation

From the regression coefficient table presented above, we can see that the multiple regression models are given as;

$Y = 3.617 + 1.292X_1 + 0.017X_2 + 0.351X_3 + 0.029X_4$

Where;

The coefficient for sex preference = 1.292

The coefficient for desired family size = 0.017

The coefficient for sex role performance = 0.351

The coefficient for social-cultural norms = 0.029

The coefficient results show that sex preference, desired family size, sex role performance and social-cultural norms all have significant impact on fertility behaviour, but the variable which has the strongest impact on fertility behaviour is sex preference for a child as indicated by the regression weight (1.292).

The correlation coefficient presented in table 4.9.1 also indicated that r = 0.89, which indicates that sex preference has a strong impact on fertility behaviour.

4.9.2 **Multiple Regression Models of Marital Stability and other independent Variables**

The regression model showing the relationship between marriage stability and sex preference, actual family size, sex role performance and cultural norms is given as;

$Y = B_0 + B_1X_1 + B_2X_2 + B_3X_3 + B_4X_4 + B_5X_5$

Where;

B_0 = Marital stability (Dependent variable)

B_1 = Sex preference

B_2 = Actual family size

B_3 = Sex role performance

B_4 = Social-Cultural norms

The model is given as;

Y = marital stability + sex preferenceX_1 + desired family sizeX_2 + sex role performanceX_3 + social-cultural norms X_4

Table 4.9.3: Regression coefficients of marital stability and other independent variables

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.549	.078		-7.016	.000
	Sex preference	.645	.126	.385	-5.130	.000
	Desired number of children	.038	.024	.029	-1.589	.112
	Sex role performance	.611	.125	.368	4.909	.000
	Influence of cultural norms	1.301	.030	.802	43.404	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Marital Stability

Table 4.9.4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.799[a]	.638	.636	.47738

a. Predictors: (Constant), Influence of culture and attitude, Sex preference, Desired number of children, Sex role performance

Result Interpretation

From the regression coefficient table presented above, the multiple regression models are given as follows;

Y = 0.549 + 0.645X_1 + 0.038X_2 + 0.611X_3 + 1.301X_4

Where;

The coefficient for sex preference = 0.645

The coefficient for actual family size = 0.038

The coefficient for sex role performance = 0.611

The coefficient for social-cultural norms = 1.301

The coefficient results show that sex preference, actual family size, sex role performance and social-cultural norms prevalent in the state are significantly related to marital stability

This indicates that where there is a strong influence of social as well as cultural norms that favour sex preference as indicated by the regression coefficient(1.301) marriages are likely to be unstable. So, much more than just a preference for a particular sex of child (0.645), lies culture and traditions that give strong support to sex preference in the society under study.

The correlation coefficient presented in table 4.9.3 also indicated that r = 0.799 which means that each of the variables; sex preference, desired family size, sex role performance and social-cultural norms all have impacts on marital stability, but the strongest impact as indicated comes from socio-cultural norms prevalent in the state.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This study was conducted with the major aim of collecting and analyzing data on the sociological implication of sex preference and its associated impact on fertility behavior and marital stability among the people of Cross River State. Sex preference here refers to the tendency to desire a particular sex over the other, especially the preference for male children. This study set for itself the task of determining whether sex preference affects the fertility behavior of the people as well as the level of marital stability. The indices that generally affect sex preference and fertility behavior were identified and reviewed; they include socio-cultural, socio-economic, family size preferences, family planning and mortality factors among others.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The major findings of this study are summarized below in line with the objectives of the study.

On Sex Preference on Fertility Behaviour

Sex preference is a major factor in fertility behavior, thus the major findings of this study reveal that desiring more males than female children affects the fertility behavior of the people of Cross River State which ultimately raises the total number of children in the family, and brings about an increase in the family size. From the study more females desire and prefer more male children than their male

counterpart. This preference is closely linked to the stability and security of their marriage, as well as the prevailing traditional or cultural norms.

Also preference for sex of child as well as large or small family size reflects various levels of influences such as, the prevalence of traditional cultural norms, socio-economic status, parental/family pressures, individual needs and desires as well as the general feeling that children are a source of wealth/ economic satisfaction. Culture was found to have significant effect on sex preference and fertility behavior as the desire for sex of child was closely related to the cultural norms and values prevalent in the state. The mean number of children ever born was 6.8, which is 1.1 more births than Nigeria's total fertility rate of 5.7.

On Sex Preference and Marital Stability

Another important factor that is affected by sex preference is the stability of the marriage. The study found that desiring or preferring, a particular sex over the other usually males, creates unnecessary tension in the marriage and can lead to marital dissolution. Marriages with no male children were more likely to be unstable and may end in a divorce or separation. The study also found that males with no male children were more likely to marry more wives. Women with no male children were on the whole unhappy as it affected the stability of their marriage. Female respondents were more likely to desire more males than female children while the male respondents were more likely to desire a family of equal number of males and female children. On the whole, most respondents (males and females) desired a family of equal number of males and female children. Marriages with more male children and few female children were on the whole more stable than marriages with more female than male children.

On Sex Preference and Family Size

In the study, family size was measured by the number of living children. The findings indicated that both the number of living children as well as desired family size were sensitive to the sex of children preferred. This was indicated by the variation, noticeable in the desired family size and number of living children.

The female respondents were more likely to prefer a fairly small family size of four children and less than their male counterpart who were more likely to prefer a fairly large family size of five children or more children. The study also found that there is a positive relationship between sex preference and actual family size. The level of educational attainment was found to have an inverse relationship with large family size preference as respondents with higher levels of educational attainment were more likely to desire a small family size of 4 children or less. Respondents with no formal education were three times more likely to desire large family sizes, while those with primary education were two times more likely and those with secondary were one time more likely to desire large family sizes. On a general basis people are getting more and more sensitized and thus they are accepting the fact that fertility outcomes are personal affairs/decisions, and dependent on ones choices and decisions rather than a matter of biology or the will of God.

On Sex Roles Performance and Sex Preference

The desire for sons was strongly related to the different roles performed by males and those performed by females. Male respondents were more likely to desire male children because of the need for the continuity of the lineage than their female counterpart. Female respondents were more likely to prefer more male children than their male counterpart because of the security and stability of their

marriage. Respondents who preferred female children did so for reasons relating to collecting bride price when they get married.

On Socio-Cultural Factors and Sex Preferences

The study found that there is a strong relationship between cultural norms prevalent in the State and the preference for sex of a child. The preference for male children was strongly related to the prevalence of traditional cultural norms that places much importance on the male child particularly and generally to the position of the male in the society.

Level of income was found to have a strong relation with the number of children desired and sex of child preferred. Respondents with higher income level were more likely than their counterpart with lower income levels to desire fewer children and exhibit little or no sex preference. The issue of family planning also came up for analysis and it was found that, though the level of awareness was high, the level of usage was very low. This affects fertility positively, since a society where there is a high prevalence of approval and use of family planning will equally be matched with a low level of fertility. On the whole preference for sex of child was strongly related to the knowledge, approval and use of family planning methods and services. Respondents' who preferred more male children were on the whole more likely to disapprove family planning methods than respondents who did not express any preference.

5.3 Discussion

This section discusses the major findings of this study which are based on the specific objectives of the study. Analysis of data on sex preference and fertility behaviour shows a high preference for sons over daughters, especially by the female

respondents. This was however not expected as one would have thought that preference for sons would have been expressed more by the male respondents than their female counterparts. But when the reasons tendered were considered such as the security/stability of the marriage, it became more meaningful especially in a culture where the security of the marriage is built on the number of surviving sons (Ottong, 1997).

Moreover a high male preference was expected among the male respondents given the social security expectations of parents in Nigeria. In a system with no social welfare/security system for the aged, sociologists and indeed demographers have often argued that it is because parents look up to their children, especially sons for old age support, that is why there is a strong parental preference for sex (Caldwell 1997) . This attitude is also strengthened by the need for the continuity of the lineage going by Olusanya (1989) 'martyr syndrome', that the last survivor in the lineage is cursed which has also been stated and expantiated by Akpan (2001) and Ekanem (2005) that sex preference is determined by the interplay of a couples perception of the children in terms of the quality and quantity and considerations that cultural factors not only affect the sex but also their choice of family size.

This is in view of the recognition that changes in family size as well as sex preference is often preceded by an increasing ability of spouses to discuss fertility matters or even to speculate on the effect of the number and sex of children that they have or desire(Fulton and zimmer,1980). Until very recently traditional teachings and socio-cultural practices including segregation based on sex regarding certain activities made it a taboo for people to discuss sex or issues relating to sex freely. This has been attributed to the predominance of people with low level of education, poor exposure and access to information and generally the influence of

the kind of background that they come from, which basically has to do with the culture that does not encourage discussions between spouses. Thus, desire for children is seen basically as providential or an act of God. However the increasing influence of urbanization and education has brought some form of liberality to those social practices that existed and hence, the disappearance of certain traditional cultural practices.

On further enquiry on the issue of the one child most male respondents who wanted a male child gave their reasons as to keep the family line and the continuity of the lineage, for recognition and prestige, to inherit their properties when they die and take care of them when they are old. This goes to confirm the position of the wealth flow theory as put forward by Caldwell, (1997) and Isiugo- Abanihe (2003) where they observed that in Nigeria, men place a high premium on children because of the tangible or emotional benefits derived from them; children (especially sons) bring a high sense of satisfaction or success to a man, even if he is materially poor, they provide help around the home and on the farm, as well as the family's petty business. And in the absence of social welfare and security programs they give support and care at old age. Children constitute an important source of parental old age support, which includes giving them a befitting burial when they die.

Children, especially sons are agents of continuity for the family name, a characteristic that encourages both polygamy and prolific child bearing, to ensure that sons survive to perpetuate the lineage. In spite of his wealth, fame or accomplishments, a man without a son is of all men the most pitied, since the branch of his family tree ends with his death (Godswill, 2010). Thus female fertility attitudes and behaviours are mostly dictated by masculine and patrilineal traditions. Thus men's reproductive motivation to a large extent affects the fertility behaviour of their wives. Given this web of pervasive gender-based fertility traditional values

and attitudes in Nigerian society, it is understandable when people exhibit a strong preference for male children and large families. Indeed, Caldwell and Caldwell (1997) have argued that the persistence of high fertility in sub-Saharan Africa as a whole can be explained neither by the absence of socio-economic development nor by the ineffectiveness of family planning programs but by the persistence of socio-cultural and traditional practices that hamper the implementation of programs geared towards fertility reduction.

Another important area that the study sought to provide answers to was in the area of sex preferences and marital stability. Perhaps, it is pertinent to state here that, although there is literature on both the determinants of marital dissolution and sex preference for children, no study in Nigeria has ever examined the effect of the sex composition of children in the family as a factor in marital dissolution. In this study therefore it was hypothesized that there is a significant relationship between sex preference and marital instability. This hypothesis was confirmed following a set of questions that were raised for the males and female respondents. It was discovered that couples with at least one male had a lower chance of marital dissolution than couples with one female, that is to say that the presence of at least one male child in the family in the first three years of marriage decreases the likelihood of marital instability. This goes to confirm what Merrill and Constaline (1998) found out in countries like Bangladesh, Indonesia, Colombia, Venezuela and Ghana. Marriage, as it has been found, provides a measure of the reality in assessing the cost and benefit of children relative to a couples short and long term goals. Indeed, among many groups, marriage is not the final transition to adulthood but childbearing and child rearing that makes one fully adult. Thus according to Lundberg and Rose (2003), the birth of a son relative to a daughter increases both the quality and stability of the marriage. Having at least a male child reduces the

mothers' perception of the likelihood of a divorce. Several studies (Katzev et al,1996; Heaton and Albrecht,1995;Barnett and Baruch,2006) have also confirmed that both partners in marriage with sons have a higher level of marital satisfaction than do husbands and wives with only daughters. Also confirmed is the fact that Kohler et al, (2004) agree that the birth of a first child increases reported happiness, and that men enjoy an almost 75 percent more happiness from the birth a first born son than a first born daughter. This situation is however understood in this context, in the light of the traditional, cultural and religious perceptions, attitudes and behaviours relating to fertility and child bearing in Nigeria

Again, preference for a large family size of between five children and above was generally observed among the male and female respondents particularly in the rural areas. This is driven by strong socio-cultural and economic motivation, the feeling that many children are a source of fulfillment and joy, for more support in their farm and petty businesses, more helping hands around the home and guaranteed old age support. Most importantly that many children especially sons mean more income/wealth for the parents. However, where there is observable desire to limit family size it is largely driven by the prevailing economic condition in the country and medical/health consideration. This brings to the fore the possibility that if the economic situation in the country improves, the fertility preference of those with small families now can be reviewed in favour of large families ,(Zick Xiang,1994).

When asked how many children they would prefer to have in their life time, some respondents gave non-numeric responses preferring to indicate "as many as God gives' or 'as God wishes'. This is because in the traditional African society, people are always very reluctant to give the exact number of children they desire because they feel they do not have any control over it as well as the fatalistic and

providentialist nature of their world view. The analysis indicates that respondents who gave non-numeric responses are more likely to be rural residents, non literate and within the low income bracket. According to Isiugo-Abanihe (1997) family size does not matter especially with respect to whether a person gives an "up to God" answer or not, because in the Nigerian culture it is not only family size that is up to God but also other essentials of life such as wealth, ability to purchase a car, own a home or even see the next day are equally up to God. Moreover motivation for large/small family sizes as well as sex preference reflects various levels of influences as noted in this study which include social and cultural norms and values, socio-economic status, individual needs and aspirations as well as parental and family pressures.

The traditional African society is rooted mostly in patriarchy where women cannot hold traditional titles and headship; couples tend to desire more male children who will take over from them when they are no more and from where descent and ancestry will be perpetuated (Caldwell and Caldwell 1997). According to Ottong (1997), in most rural areas women are seen as properties purchased by men. They are expected to obey their husbands, get pregnant when they want them to, and in most occasions any disobedience may earn them a separation or divorce. Thus the more a woman sees herself as tied to the apron of the husband, the more children she bears. This cultural position attributed to women and the roles they play seem to be the major reason why women and indeed couples prefer male to female children. This why Tickamyer (2001) maintains that sex role attitudes related to being either male or female measured directly, may have an effect on the sex of children desired and ultimately on fertility, acting as mediator between social back ground variables and the dependent variable.

According to Gupta, (1997) male preference is always in the interest of the lineage, whose continuity depends on males alone. It is also in the interest of the household, for whom daughters are transitory members. For every individual, brothers and sons are more valuable than sisters and daughters. This does not mean that sisters and daughters may not be loved as much as brothers and sons. However, in the traditional setting people tend to value their brothers more than their sisters because the former will do much for her throughout life, while the later will effectively disappear after marriage. Similarly, a woman values her sons more than her daughters because the former will be her major source of support. Indeed, a woman's position in her husband's home is not consolidated unless she produces at least one son, (Gupta,1997).

Economic factors go a long way toward explaining son preference especially in Africa, Bardhan and Miller, (2008). These authors have related the care allocated to people to their value to the economy. People's positions in society, however, are determined not only by the contributions they make to the economic process, but also by their rights of ownership and decision-making. According to them, the structure of rights over asset ownership and decision-making favours males very heavily and has an over-whelming influence on the position of the sexes. These social-structural factors generate male preference by making people depend heavily on males for necessary economic support.

Bivariate analysis shows that there is a positive relationship between level of education, place of residence and respondents attitude to number and sex of children. This suggests that education and the forces of modernization have some meaningful impact on respondents' sex preferences and fertility, which also explains the low preference for males over females by some highly educated, urban based males as well as female respondents. Education has been acknowledged as one of

the most important factors that affect fertility (Caldwell, 1998). Caldwell therefore argued that with mass education, the family's economy changes and affects the direction of the wealth flow between generations and ultimately results in low fertility. From the data in the study, the desire for children as well as fertility decreases as the educational attainment increases. At the lower level of education, most of the respondents have 5 children or more. This is expected because people with no formal education are likely to have very little or no knowledge of the existence of family planning methods and services. It is however pertinent to note that, in spite of the fact that education is a strong force in fertility reduction, it was observed from the analysis that some educated males still have or desire 5 children or more. This, most of them attribute to the fact that, they had the children before acquiring higher education and with their current economic situation they can support a large family.

Occupation and fertility followed almost the same pattern as educational attainment and sex preference. In almost all the cases, it is always the higher the educational attainment, the higher the income level. Apart from people who are engaged in trading and large businesses, the high income people which equate higher education have fewer numbers of children. However, there are people with low level of education but higher income and large number of children. It was equally observed that there are those with better jobs who have attained some level of education that have more children (actual family size) than they anticipated at the beginning of their reproductive lives. This in fact is attributed most of the time to the social and cultural forces operating in the area. For instance a culture where having a male child is equated with life, or the security of marriage, people will do anything within their power to make sure they have at least one son even at the expense of their lives.

Interestingly, it was discovered that knowledge of family planning was high but knowledge alone seems not to be enough motivation for use as evidenced in the fact that majority of the respondents reported that they never used any method apart from the natural method, though they did not see anything morally wrong with using them. Evidently, it might be right to conclude that low and non use of family planning methods and services is not attributable to ignorance given the level of awareness. The low level of usage to a great extent might be a function of the people's perception of family planning and attitude towards children as further influenced by the social and cultural environments, which not only affect their use or non use but also their choice of family size on the one hand and the sex preference on the other.

Contrary to wide spread assumptions, the findings of this study suggest that cultural and attitudinal factors such as sex preference, desire for more children, concerns about the health effects of family planning methods are as important as cost and access. In this study, most respondents cited religious injunctions as well as attitudinal factors as reasons for not subscribing to family planning methods.

Thus it is imperative to note that the findings of this study revealed that the behaviours, attitudes and actions of individuals in relation to sex preference and fertility behaviour are largely determined by the socio-cultural norms and values prevalent in the society as well as the desire for an heir who will carry on the lineage. In other words, the society provides the context within which attitudes and behaviours towards sex preferences and fertility are shaped. This is based on the fact that the human subject is a free being who projects meanings and seeks ends, such ends or goals of a social action are defined by the values of the society, while the means to achieve them are prescribed by the norms operating in the same society (Weber, 1956). Sex preference therefore is a function of the interaction of

socio-cultural and environmental factors that exist in any area. Socio-cultural values and norms relating to marriage, fertility and family size abound in this society and these variables interact with the pro-natalist nature of the society to influence attitudes and behavioural responses towards marriage, preference for sex of children and family size.

5.4 Conclusion

While population is natural resource, if its growth rate is not properly managed it could be one of the constraints to development, improved quality of live and standards of living for the people of Nigeria. The consequences and implications of rapid population growth occasioned by socio-cultural factors such as sex preference and high fertility will need to be considered in the national effort to achieve sustainable development. High fertility and consequent large family size places pressures on families, households, environment and general development. A large family size makes it difficult for families especially those in the rural areas to provide adequate nutrition, education, health care, shelter and support for all the family members. In the urban areas, high fertility contributes to overcrowding and poor living conditions.

Sex preference has implications for the status of women. The status of women in Nigeria is lower than that of men due to prevailing cultural norms that place superior emphasis on the male child in all aspects of the socio-cultural life. The female child is not given the same opportunities in the family, education and even in growth and development, particularly in the rural areas and among couples of lower socio-economic status which has continued to make the desire for male children stronger and pervasive.

The findings of this study therefore reveal that contrary to findings from studies in the same area, that women were on the whole more likely to prefer more

male children than their male counterpart due such reasons as the security and stability of their marriage and not necessarily the prevailing cultural norms which place so much emphasis on the male child for the continuity of the family. Again, in spite of the fact that Cross River State is a patriarchal society, where descent is traced through the male and inheritance is also through the male, the Efiks of the southern part of the state prefer strongly female to male children. This is strongly related to property inheritance as it is believed that the female children are more careful and can take care of the properties better than their male counterpart.

It is important to emphasize that sex preference is a strong factor in determining the people's fertility behavior as well as the stability of marital unions. It was also revealed from the study that, the number of children increases (family size) due to increasing desire for male children and that marital unions can be unstable in the absence of a male child.

However, there is a lot of awareness about people desiring smaller family sizes but such desires are yet to be backed by practices which could reflect in actual reproductive behavior. It would take some time for the awareness to weaken the roots of cultural beliefs and practices, because fertility change is seen as an aspect of traditional and cultural change. This change would come only when there is a substantial change in the cultural values and norms that affect sex preference and fertility. It is therefore concluded that what is needed is development that can bring about cultural change. Once the cultural norms/values that favour male child preference are changed, the much needed fertility reduction would follow and marital unions would be strengthened.

5.5 Recommendations

The preference for a particular sex of child and its attendant effect on fertility behavior and marital stability cannot be overemphasized. The task here therefore is to recommend possible ways by which these effects could be curbed. The expectation is that if the recommendations are implemented, it will help government in its attainment of the policy objective of the National Population Policy.

The problems associated with population are recognized the world over particularly as they affect developing countries of Africa, an organized world effort is therefore needed to change the attitude of people towards sex and fertility preferences, family size, marital stability and other fertility related issues. Base on the factors that enhance sex preference, fertility behaviour as well as marital stability already identified. The following recommendations are therefore made.

1. Men are currently inadequately targeted in all reproductive health programmes. This situation needs to be addressed as it is believed that the sexual behavior of men has implications for the health and well being of the family. Also the men play a dominant role in decision making about reproduction and sexual matters in the family, thus, it is pertinent to involve them in all reproductive health programmes both for their own benefits and that of other family members.
2. It is also pertinent to design and promote behavioural change communication programmes to increase reproduction, sexual health knowledge, awareness and behavioural change among Nigerians
3. Population education should be encouraged and promoted. Government should draw up and include in the curriculum of primary and post primary education issues of population. It is believed that if young people become acquainted with

population issues early enough, it will help in no small measure to reduce the fertility rate.

4. Improvement in the status of women is very crucial in the task of reducing population growth rate. In empowering the women, they could assume and perform most of the roles performed by men in the society, which includes title inheritance, and carrying on the lineage. To improve the status of women will require the government and non-governmental organization (NGOs) to increase alternatives to marriage, such as education and employment which not only lead to delayed age at marriage but also provides them with choices as well as the confidence that they can achieve anything whether they are male or female.
5. 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. Rural based programs geared toward improving the lot of the rural women should be vigorously pursued. This is sure to affect the social and economic forces which would further help to change the character of marriage and fertility behaviour in Nigeria
6. Given the findings of the study that sex preference and its associated impact on fertility varies according to levels of education, occupation, income, places of residence as well on the socio-cultural and religious environment of the people, it is recommended that subsequent studies on fertility should be sensitive to the difference that normally exist between groups that live under the same environment. This is bound to be of much demographic significance rather than treating them as though everybody possessed uniform demographic patterns.
7. The fact that the rate of mortality could have an effect on the fertility rate calls for health measures in line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) that will aim at a drastic reduction in infant mortality rate. The present government

emphasis on a comprehensive health care system aimed at the reduction of infant and child mortality should be enhanced. Since this has the potential of reducing infant deaths, couples can be more certain about the survival of the number of children they wish to have.

8. Alongside the emphasis and attention by government and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) on family planning campaign, there is an equally urgent need to pursue those policies that will lead to the upliftment of the people's socio-economic conditions where it is hoped that this will lead to the appreciation of small family sizes at the individual level. If therefore, government ever aims at changing the demographic culture especially in the rural areas, then rural development programs and efforts must assume an aggressive dimension. It is in fact in the opening of the rural areas that family planning and population regulation programs and campaigns can be more easily and positively enhanced.
9. The call for more development of the rural areas will help to reduce the norms and values that lay emphasis on the male children and a society that places so much importance on the position of the male in the society.
10. Given the desire for male children by most couples in Cross River State, it will be almost impossible to reduce the number of children a couple desires without adequate intervention by government. Therefore incentives should be given to those who adhere to the policy goals.
11. Much importance is placed on the male child in Nigeria and indeed in cross River state. The position of the male is generally important in the society due to the patriarchal and patrilineal system of kinship and inheritance, the male child becomes very essential to any couple. The female child should be adequately empowered educationally, economically, socially, culturally and otherwise to

assume most roles traditionally preformed by the males. By so doing, parents would be assured of their security at old age and the continuity of the lineage.

5.6 Areas for Further Research

The above discussion provides some clues about profitable ways to address the impact of sex preference on fertility behavior and marital stability in cross River state, such that we can better address the issue of prospects for fertility declines. Without pretending that the following is exhaustive in scope, these represent useful areas to consider for future research.

1. Of great importance is the fact that the incorporation of men in the analysis of fertility and related behaviour in Nigeria should become the norm. Further work should explore the importance of introducing parties who hold significance for fertility decisions e.g in-laws of the male spouse particularly mothers in-laws. Couple analysis can also clarify the nature and extent of gender inequality in Nigeria.
2. The interest in determinants of fertility behavior should continue. Of particular importance is the need to clarify the role or impact of spousal discussion or communication on number and sex of child preferred as well as family planning use. Fast becoming a policy tool that is presumed to enhance the uptake of family planning, recent findings suggest that spousal discussions may actually not have the expected causal impact on fertility behavior, (Dodoo et al 2001)but understanding how valid or robust this relationship is, is important in a situation of depreciating resources and funding.
3. Progress can be made by understanding areas of differentials in male and female behavior by including specific questions that address individual needs particularly in surveys, with the soul aim of developing a comprehensive

understanding of the various influences and motivation that affect fertility preferences which could include social, cultural, physiological and environmental.

4. Given the fact that most fertility studies are centered on couples in marital unions/relationships, there is a need to develop fully and extensively studies to include those in cohabiting and transient relationships within the various cultural and social environments in Nigeria.
5. Greater advancement can be made in providing a scientific framework for understanding motivation to fertility preferences among males and females in areas considered to be culturally weak, urbanized and highly literate.

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APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE SCHEDULE

Department of Sociology,
Faculty of Social Sciences,
Ahmadu Bello University,
Zaria.

I am a PhD student of the above named department carrying out a research on the **Sociological Implication of Sex Preference for Fertility and Marital Stability in Cross River State**. The research is strictly academic and will be used entirely for that purpose; you are assured of anonymity as your responses will be handled with strict confidence.

Thank you.

SECTION A: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

1) Sex: Male [ ] Female [ ]
2) Age: 15-19 [ ] 20-24 [ ] 25-29 [ ] 30-34 [ ] 35-39 [ ] 40-44 [ ] 45-49 [ ] 50-54 [ ] 55-59 [ ] 60 [ ]
3) Marital status: Married [ ] separated [ ] divorced [ ] widowed [ ]
4) Educational level: No formal education [ ] Primary education [ ] Secondary education [ ] Tertiary [ ]
5) Occupation: Civil/Public servant [ ] Farmers [ ] Business/ Petty Trading [ ] Housewife/unemployed [ ] Artisan [ ]
6) Income level per month in Naira: Below 20000 [ ]21000-40000 [ ] 41000-60000 [ ] 61000-80000 [ ] 81000-100000 [ ] above 100000 [ ]
7) Religion: Christianity: Catholic[ ] Protestant [ ] Islam [ ] Traditional religion [ ]
8) Place of residence: Urban [ ] Rural [ ]

SECTION B: SEX PREFERENCE AND FERTILITY BEHAVIOUR

9) How many children do you have? 1 – 2 [ ] 3 – 4 [ ] 5 – 6 [ ] 7 and above [ ]
10) How many males? 1 – 2 [ ] 3 – 4 [ ] 5 – 6 [ ] 7 and above [ ]

11) How many females? 1 – 2 [ ] 3 – 4 [ ] 5 – 6 [ ] 7 and above

12) How many live births have you ever had? 1 – 2 [ ] 3 – 4 [ ] 5 – 6 [ ] 7 and above [

13) Do you support the idea of discussing the number and sex of children you desire with your spouse? Yes [ ] No [ ]

14) If you have only one male child, how many daughters would you want to add to them?.....

15) If you have no child, how many daughters will you have before you stop having children?.....

16) Suppose you are to have just one child in your life time what sex would you prefer? Male [ ] female [ ]

17) If male why? To keep the family line [ ] To take care and inherit property [ ] For prestige and recognition [ ] For old age support and security.

18) If females why? For old age support and security [ ] Take care of siblings [ ] To collect pride price when they are married [ ] To inherit and take care of property [ ]

19) Do you think that a couple who have no male child should continue child bearing until they have one? Yes [ ] No. [ ]

SECTION C: SEX PREFERENCE AND MARITAL STABILITY

20) Do you think marriages can be unstable as a result of the absence of a male child? Yes [ ] No [ ]

21) Do you think marriages can be unstable in the absence of a female child? Yes [ ] No[ ]

22) What do you think are the commonest types of instability experienced in marriages? Malice[ ] Sexual deprivation[ ] Abandonment[ ] Separation[ ] Divorce[ ]

23) (Men only) would you marry another wife if your wife does not give birth to a male child? Yes [ ] No [ ]

24) (Women only) Would your husband marry another wife you if you do not give birth to a male child? Yes [ ] No [ ]

SECTION D: SEX PREFERENCE AND FAMILY SIZE

25) What size of family do you desire/prefer? 1-4[ ] 5-8 [ ] others[ ]

26) What size of family do you strongly desire prefer? More males and few females [ ] few males and more females [ ] equal number of males and females [ ] only males /only females[ ] others[ ]

27) What do you think is the greatest source of influence in determining the number of children you desire? Parents/relations [ ] Family pressure [ ] The will of God [ ] Personal decision [ ] Ability to cater for then [ ] The rate of mortality [ ] Biological capability [ ]

SECTION E: SEX ROLE PERFORMANCE AND SEX PREFERENCE

28) Do you think the different roles performed by males and females affect your preference for a particular sex? Yes [ ] No [ ]

29) What is the greatest influence in deciding the sex of child preferred? The roles they perform [ ] the rate of mortality [ ] security of marriage.

30) Why do you prefer male children to female children? To keep the family line [ ] To take care and inherit property [ ] For prestige and recognition [ ] For old age support [ ]

31) Why do you prefer female children to male children? For old age support and security [ ] Take care of siblings [ ] To collect pride price when they are married [ ] To inherit and take care of/ inherit property [ ]

SECTION F: SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS AND SEX PREFERENCE

32) Does the culture of the people influence the people's attitude towards the sex of child they prefer? Yes [ ] No [ ]

33) Does your income affect the number and sex of children you prefer? Yes [ ] No [ ]

34) Have you ever heard anything about family planning methods? Yes [ ] No [ ]

35) Do you approve of family planning use? Approve [ ] Disapprove [ ]

36) Have you ever used any method(s) of family planning? Yes [ ] No [ ]

37) Are you currently using any method of family planning? Yes [ ] No [ ]

38) What do you consider as the strongest reason for acceptance and use of family planning method(s) Availability [ ] Educational attainment [ ] Income level [ ] Access to information [ ] Religion

39) What do you consider as the strongest reason for the non-approval and use of family planning methods? Religious beliefs [ ] Associated side effect [ ] Cost [ ] Non availability [ ] Accessibility [ ].

In-depth interview/FGD Guide

1. **General characteristic of the informants.**

   Age

   Sex

   Marital status

   Religion

   Educational level

   Occupation

   Income level (per annum in Naira)

2. **Sex Preference and Fertility Behavior**

Probe for- number of children ever born

- Number of children alive
- Number of males children
- Number of females children
- Sex of child preferred and reasons for preference
- Determining factor for preference

3. **Sex Preference and Marital Stability**

Probe for:-

- Years of marriage
- Number of children since married

- Number of males and females in the union(sex composition).
- Who is the strongest determinant of the sex preferred in union.
- Impact of sex preference on marriage and family stability.
- Strongest determinant of marital stability.

4. Sex Preference and Desired Family Size

Probe for

- Desired/preferred family size
- Ideal family size
- Determinants of preferred family size
- Strongest size of family desired in terms of number of males and females.

5. Sex Role Performance and Sex Preference

Probe for

- Sex preference in relation to role performance
- Reasons for male preference
- Reasons for female preference
- Strongest influence in deciding sex of child preferred.

6. Socio- Cultural Factor and Sex Preference

Probe for

- Influence of cultural norms and values on child sex preference
- Influence of income level on sex preference
- Influence of level of education on sex preference
- The main source of influence in determining preference
- Influence of sex preference on acceptance and use of family planning methods and services.