

Sensing The Birth Preferences Among Spouses In Kano Metropolis, Kano State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper explores the long lingering attitude of people in term of preferences of children (number, composition and sex) among families in the metropolis of Kano state. The magnitude, trend and pattern of the habit are x-rayed between spouses and across families. Critical social sciences methodology is adopted. Problems of pressure mounting on wives with only daughters and the sense of prestige attached to certain sex over another are critically examined. The study involves both quantitative and qualitative data that is the family size; income and age are quantitative while the preferences of sexes are held qualitative. Kano municipal LGA, is considered the core of the metropolis with higher population, hosting cultural heart of the area i.e. the Emir's palace and so on. Questionnaires and interviews are employed in collecting the data for the study. Descriptive statistics like measure of Central Tendencies were used. The finding shows high birth preference. Male children are preferred most by all parents. In the study area traditional title holders, business men and lower salary earners begets more children than the educated elites, low income earners especially traders, primary teachers and wealthy individuals abhor more children with preference to sons than daughters. Some of the reasons attached include assistance at home, market and source of security at old age as well as heirs of family continuity. Many families tend to give birth to large number of children in the quest of getting a son(s) especially if the early children are females. Similarly if the co-wives have many males hence competition often arises each trying to have modal set. Socio-economic and socio-cultural status show some variation in the trend where couples with high level of education have less children and with lesser corresponding sex preferences than uneducated spouses. Preferences of sex and many children are more common to polygamous couples than in monogamous family.

KEYWORDS: Preferences, marginalization, gender, security, competition, elites and masses

INTRODUCTION

Culture dictates the strong sense of individual identity in every society irrespective of its state of development. Whether it is concern with preferences, choices or decision, family affairs are too complex due to distinctive attributes and goals. To candid Nature have personalities that are fully formed and individuated. Moreover, the differences among individuals express the individual values which consequently transform to societal values. There were many effort made to study birth preferences especially by Sociologists and other disciplines that area having interest in demographic study. Parental preference for sons or daughters has been documented in many societies. Preference for at a least a modest number of sons or daughters are also noted in many parts of the world due to the influence of culture. Many studies show a

strong preference for sons than daughters for instance Musa (2008) conducted study on sex preferences in Rano LGA. Sizeable number of respondents opined that couples with daughters sustain child bearing quite longer than those with male offspring. Studies on the relationship between sex preference and number of children in a given household shows parity progression ratios or transitional probabilities as a function of the existing sex composition of the family. The basic argument is that if sex preference influences family decisions, then at any parity, those couples with undesirable sex compositions should be more likely to have another child than those who already have achieved their desired sex composition Musa (2008). Children and sex preference relates to the number of children in many instances because of the fact that if the actual sex set is not in line with the preferred sex set of a couple, the couple may continue to reproduce, until the desired sex set is achieved, leading to an increase in the number of children of a couple.

Culture (especially the religion) is an important variable which regulates human behavior, including marriage and reproduction. Sometimes, some cultures favour having a particular sex of children over the other. There may be a conflict between a strong sex preference and preference for a small family, and in this case the problem of which will dominate arises, this is because if couple did not achieve their preference they may continue to have birth beyond their desired number. This type of conflict in many cases leads to adoption of polygamy when the couple cannot settle at a point amiably. The existence of sex preference leads naturally to the question of to what degree such preference influence people to either marry another wife, or divorce wife who could not deliver the preferred sex. The treatment given to a wife who always produces a son may be different from that of the other wives because of the number of sons produced certain wife. Similarly a wife who could not bear a son may face serious pressure to the extent that she would keep trying to have another birth with the hope of achieving the preferred gender. Many women face intimidation and harassment from husband's relatives simply because she couldn't deliver a male offspring.

The normative values of people help in understanding the male family role, which sometimes imposes pressure on women to continue to reproduce until when she attend birth security. Whenever the family or husband's preference is not met, the wife or her marriage may suffer a lot of crises. For instance some studies revealed that a male child is important in the stability of marriages else the husbands marry another wife in order to have a male child. Most people when asked about the choice of sex of their children, often and usually reply with, "is up to God" a statement that originate from tongues while the minds have its choice

The social roles and behavior of males and females have differed in all known human societies. Research on tribal societies indicates that men have tended to be the warriors, hunters, and processors of hard raw materials used for weaponry and tools, whereas women have tended to do the cooking and preparation of vegetable foods (Sunday, 1981) as quoted by Musa (2008). As a result of this gender differentiation in the division of labor and the social inequality between sexes, men have been in a better position to acquire and control the valuable resources of their societies. Resources, position of power, privilege, and status have seldom, if at all been shared across males and females on equality basis. Males and females are shape under socialization process into different sex/gender specific roles by the environment. Most of the biological behaviours of males and females supplement the social role of men and women through social interaction within the society. These socialization processes have created the basis upon which males and females are ranked, and because males are held superior to females by culture (precisely religion), members of society preferred a son.

Variation among Nigerian social groups exist where there are wide differences on sex preference based on values attached to each sex and its roles.

THE STUDY AREA

The history of Kano as a state capital started in 1967 when it was formally established in 1968. Its real genesis as per history remain a controversial issues but as a base line, Kano's existence started from 999 AD when Bagauda the grandson of Bayajidda founder of the Hausa dynasty became its first king. Kano State falls within the Sudan vegetation zone, the total land area of the State is 20,760 square kilometer. The minimum and maximum temperature ranges from 15 to 33 degrees Celsius. The predominant ethnic groups in Kano are Hausa and Fulani otherwise referred to as Hausa-Fulani. This reference is due to the indistinguishable features they bear arising from intermarriage. Other ethnic groups found in the State are Yoruba, Igbo, Nupe, etc. Hausa are however, the indigenous population.

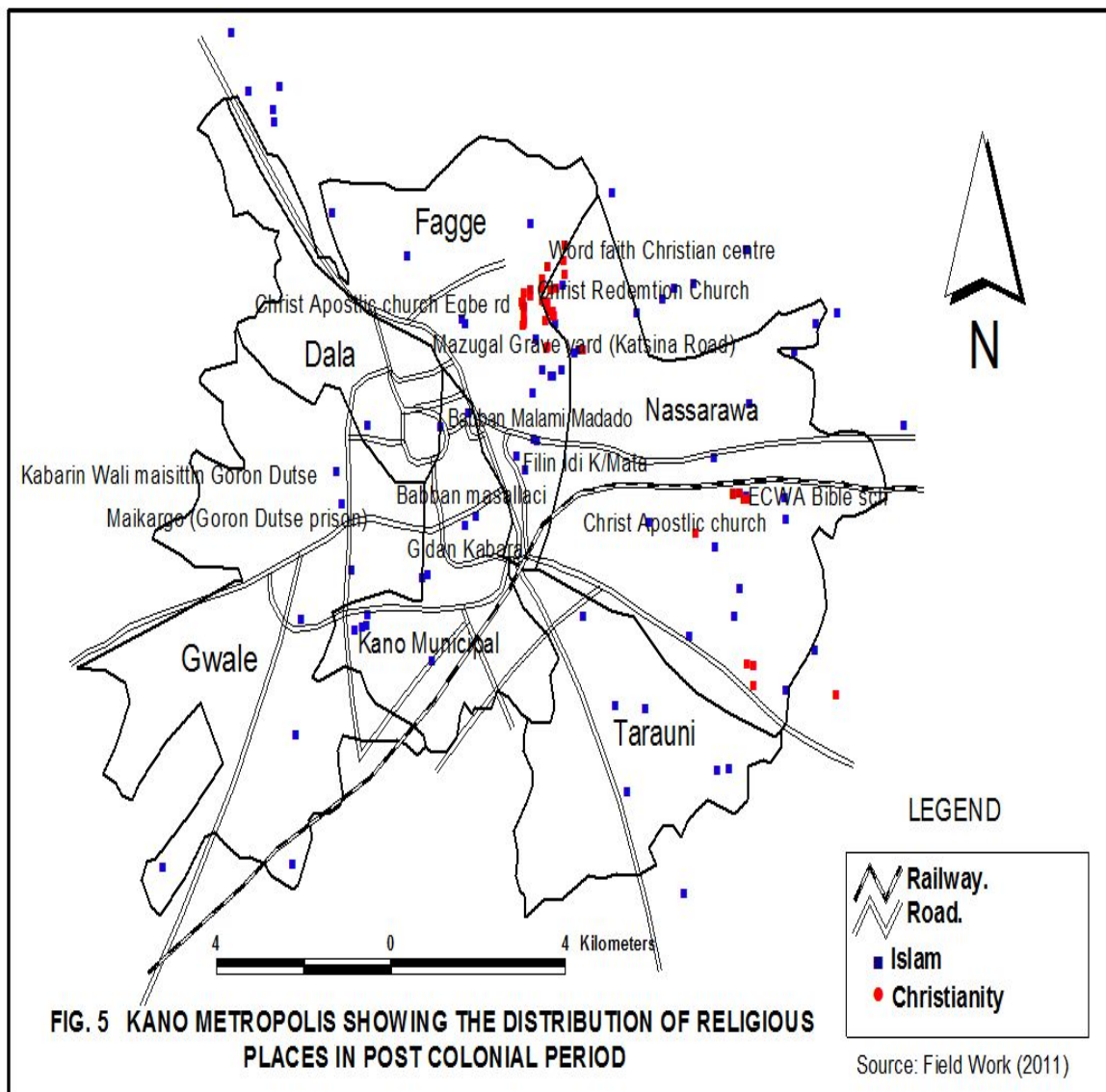
The city of Kano experiences changes and transformations over time. It is a cosmopolitan and heterogeneous society as a result of its extensive and numerous commercial and industrial activities. Kano has many occupations and means of livelihood but was famous for its weaving, gold and blacksmith, dyeing and other handicraft activities. As a result of these, Kano has attracted people from far and wide. Kano State is made up of 44 local government areas, with a total population of 5,810,340 million by 1991 census figures. The indigenous population is homogenous in terms of culture, language, religion etc. This homogeneity is apparent especially in the rural areas.

The metropolis recent lost its dominant occupation that is agriculture with about 75 percent of the population directly or indirectly involved in agriculture or agro-related activities in the past due to massive urbanization that swallowed the farm lands from within the walled city to as far as 5km at all direction. Currently, civil service, trade and commerce are the major activities. In fact Kano the capital city of the State has been known far and wide as an ancient and important center of commerce and trade. Kano was a major entry port in the Trans-Saharan trade. It is popular and known in the whole of West Africa, Maghreb and as far as Europe as a commercial center trading with Africa and Europe in local and manufactured goods, crafts and other items. This position is facilitated by the existence of modern communications (road network and rail line) which make Kano accessible.

POPULATION OF THE STUDY AREA

Kano is one of the most populated and urbanized states in northern Nigeria, as well as a dominant center of economic activity since the fourteenth century (Fika 1978). Consequently, commerce and industry in the urban areas and agricultural activities in the rural areas characterize the state.

The communities in this part of the country have been exposed to vigorous family planning programs, with the establishment of many government sponsored family planning clinics in Kano State. However, there is a difference in terms of exposure to service between rural and urban inhabitants, with many of the clinics located in the urban areas. These clinics provide contraceptives and counseling services.



MATERIALS AND METHODS

This section tries to explain the types of data, the sources of data, data collection such as sampling and data analysis. The data in this study includes quantitative indices like number of children, age, and status etc. while the qualitative data in this study are the preferences, choices and decision on sex, composition and adoption of family planning.

The main instruments of the study are the questionnaire and interviews. The questionnaires are to collect quantitative information while the interviews are meant to measure the qualitative data. The two instruments can supplement one another and can serve as check and balance where errors and mistakes can be corrected

SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING METHODS

The population of interest to this study consists of males and females who are married and fall within children bearing years. This is because the study is interested in assessing the preference of one sex over another and how the attitude affects the subsequent decision toward the number of children in the households. The study concerns the Hausa people, a

dominant ethnic group in northern Nigeria. The choice of this ethnic group was largely predicated on the traditional character of this patriarchal group and its high fertility within extended family set up. The Hausa people constitute a significant proportion of the population in Nigeria, the largest country in Africa. The Hausa people are undergoing rapid socioeconomic changes manifesting various transformations especially in expansion of education and urbanization. Some samples of one thousand one hundred and sixty (1,160) respondents were drawn from both rural and urban areas. The sample size was considered adequate due to the homogeneous nature of the population. In order to draw the samples combination of sampling methods was employed appropriate to the sampling units. A multistage selection process was adopted involving cluster, simple random and systematic sampling methods. Selection of local government areas for the research was the first stage of the sampling process. Six local government areas have been selected which include Kano Municipal, Dala, Gwale, Tarauni, Fagge and Nassarawa LGAs.

Two urban study locations were selected from the dominant urban center, (Kano, which is also the capital city of the state) and the areas are Gwale and Municipal. Census enumeration areas in the respective settlements were considered as clusters and two enumeration areas were sampled in each of the places randomly. The enumeration areas on the average consist of two hundred households each. The enumeration areas in the urban areas may be slightly larger than in the rural areas, and in order to ensure representation a larger sample was drawn from the urban areas. In the third stage of selection, households were sampled with systematic sampling techniques using household listing obtained from the National Population Commission 2006.

DATA COLLECTION

Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered for this study. Retrospective and prospective data were gathered from the respondents regarding their fertility and contraception use. Respondents were asked about number of children ever born, desire for more children, last use of contraceptives, current use, and future use where applicable. Likert scale was used to measure attitudes of respondents using a combination of negative and positive statements pertaining to practices related to family planning. Respondents indicated their responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree on a four-interval scale.

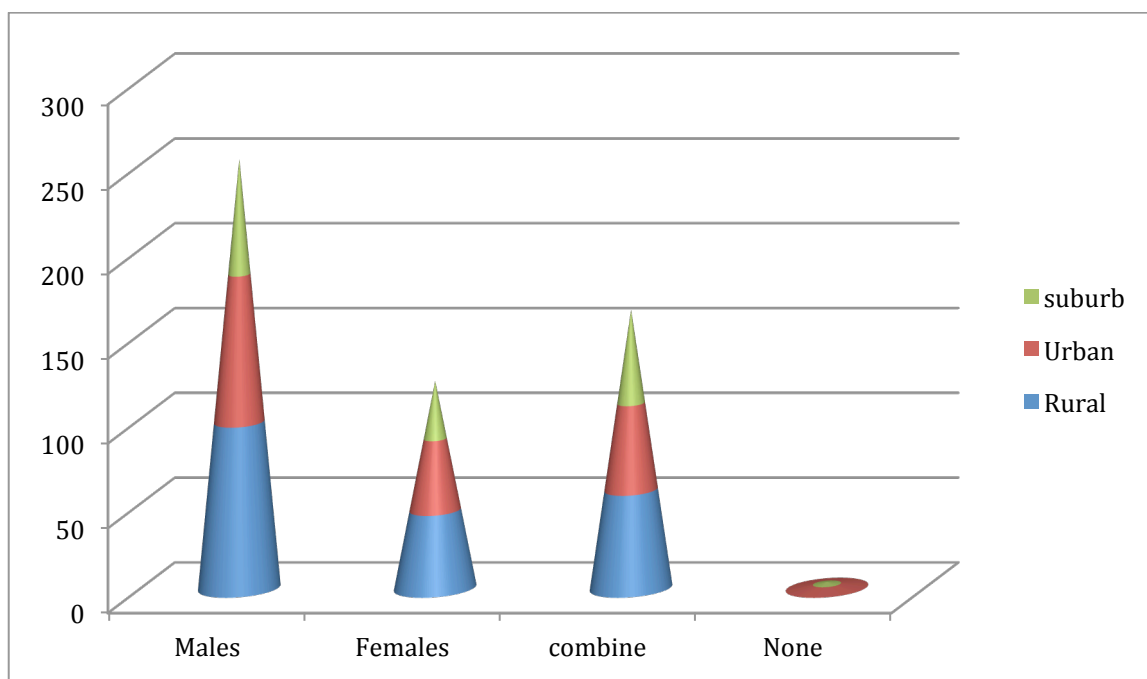
The main instrument for the data collection was a questionnaire administered in a form of interview conducted in the Hausa language. The research assistants were indigenous Hausa people, familiar with the norms and values of the respondents. The research assistants were trained in order to make them effective communicators and solicitors of information. The instrument was pre-tested to ensure its validity and reliability. Data were collected on important variables, which include: attitudes, contraceptive use, education, age, income, time or duration of marriage, religion and residence. Other variables are age at marriage, wife's breastfeeding, abstinence, children ever born, ideas about family planning, and contraceptive decision making.

MAJOR RESULTS AND FINDING OF THE STUDY

The findings of this research suggest that the cultural set up of the people exercise greater influence on preference of children. As part of Islamic culture, males are the head of Household irrespective of age and economic status. This accentuates the need for son(s) than daughter(s). The issue pertaining security at old age among people is a definite reason for son preference. Preservation for family name is also a reason for son preference among the people. Among the

respondents the research found that there is presence of sex preference among the respondents irrespective of sex and economic status.

The rivalry and jealousy in polygamous family accentuate need for wives to have control of their marital home through having more children in essence this intensify the preference for son among the female respondents; Mai Babban-Daki is the name given to a woman with higher prestige (i.e. richest, noble or number of male children among co-wives), while Dauki-Bisu is referred to as woman who does not have a son. Though this research suggest that men are more likely to express strong sex preference than female, the research found that females express stronger preference than the males.



Another major findings is that of the income and sex preference, though the hypothesis suggest that higher income and higher education are likely to reduce strong preference, the research found that income and education does not directly reduce preference because those with medium income among the respondents express stronger preference than those with low income, but those with low income expresses higher preference than those with higher income, this has somehow produce a different finding which has not validated or invalidated the hypothesis. The main reason for this is that even among those with medium and higher income, there is the need to have a son who can continue the family name, and even inherit his family income and assets, because there is the general belief that a girl can transfer her inheritance to another family.

The other hypothesis which suggests that boys are likely to be preferred to girls was validated showing a definite preference for sons than for daughters. Most elites are restive if their wife or wives didn't issue male children because their belongings may he inherited by other relatives if only females are his offspring.

Status	Males preferred	Female preferred	Combine (Male/female)
Educated elites	57.5%	12.5%	30%
Business class	59%	10%	21%
Masses	78%	05%	17%

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that there is the presence of sex preference, with preference for sons taking higher lead, then preference for a boy and a girl followed, preference for daughters is subordinated to that of a son

That data also reveals that preservation of family name and security in old age is a factor for sex preference, there is also a definite preference among all the respondents, with variations based on income, sex, education, and number of the sex of children present. The main reasons for sex preference are security in old age and preservation of family name, and there is high preference for sons than for daughters.

There is the need for policy intervention to reorient people through enlightenment that the sex preference if left unchecked, it will affect the future sex balance within the society. Many may abort their conception if tested female and hence the tendency to have more male than females in the society.

Culture is very important in all societies, people cannot exist without culture, but some cultures have failed to address some problems affecting the society. One of such is the way and manner people attach a particular meaning and values to a particular sex at the expense of the other sex. As the scenario has no geographical limitation (i.e. rural or urban), the whole society need to appreciate sex role and consider each as component of system and partner in progress without which life of is incomplete and meaningless without the other.

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