

**NAVIGATING MATERNAL TRAUMA OF WOMEN WITHOUT MALE CHILDREN
IN IZZI CLAN OF EBONYI STATE: AN EXPLORATION FROM AFRICAN AND
CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES**

Dr Simeon Nnanna Nwube
Department of Christian Religious Studies,
Ebonyi State College of Education, Ikwo.
simeonnwube@gmail.com
08034444223

Abstract

This study explores the nuanced experience of maternal trauma among women without male children in the Izzi Clan of Ebonyi State, Nigeria, examining the phenomenon through the intersecting lenses of African cultural norms and Christian perspectives. The absence of male offspring in many African societies, including the Izzi Clan, can be associated with societal expectations and traditional gender roles. This study delves into the psychological and social implications for women facing this circumstance, shedding light on the challenges they encounter within the context of their cultural and religious environment. Drawing from both African cultural paradigms and Christian teachings prevalent in the region, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these women navigate their maternal trauma. It explores the impact of societal expectations, familial pressures, and spiritual beliefs on the women's emotional well-being. Additionally, the study investigates coping mechanisms and resilience strategies adopted by these women, considering the ways in which cultural and religious influences shape their responses to the challenges they face. By examining maternal trauma from the dual perspectives of African cultural norms and Christian beliefs, this research contributes to a more holistic understanding of the experiences of women without male children in the Izzi Clan. Furthermore, it opens avenues for discussions on the intersectionality of culture and religion in shaping individuals' responses to reproductive challenges and highlights the need for culturally sensitive approaches in addressing maternal trauma within this specific cultural context.

Key words: Maternal Trauma, Women's Experiences, Male Offspring, Izzi Clan, African and Christian.

Introduction

Marriage, as a social institution, is intricately woven into the fabric of cultural and religious norms, shaping and defining the dynamics of family life. In Izzi Clan of Ebonyi State, Nigeria, the cultural significance attached to male offspring adds a layer of complexity to marital relationships. The absence of male children within a marriage is often laden with societal expectations, presenting a unique set of challenges for couples. This study embarks on a journey to explore the multifaceted landscape of navigating maternal trauma experienced by women without male children in the Izzi Clan, examining their experiences through the intersecting lenses of African cultural norms and Christian perspectives.

The Izzi Clan, like many African societies, places profound importance on the role of male children in family continuity, community representation, and the preservation of lineage (Okonkwo, 2018). The cultural fabric is tightly woven with expectations surrounding progeny, particularly male heirs. Within this cultural context, the experiences of couples without male children become particularly significant, as they navigate societal pressures and expectations that are deeply rooted in centuries-old traditions.

Despite the centrality of this issue to familial and community life, there exists a noticeable gap in the literature regarding the experiences of couples without male children in the Izzi Clan. Understanding the psychological, emotional, and social dimensions of marriage trauma in these circumstances is crucial for the development of culturally sensitive interventions and support mechanisms. Additionally, the contemporary Izzi Clan is influenced by both African traditional beliefs and Christian teachings, adding layers of complexity to the experiences of couples within this religiously diverse community.

Statement of the Problem

In the Izzi Clan of Ebonyi State, Nigeria, the experience of women without male children presents a complex interplay of societal expectations, cultural norms, and religious beliefs. The absence of male offspring in this cultural context is often accompanied by a set of challenges and the impact of these challenges on marital relationships remains underexplored. This study seeks to address the following issues.

Societal Pressures and Cultural Expectations: The Izzi Clan, like many African societies, places significant emphasis on the role of male children in family continuity and societal representation. Couples without male children may face heightened societal pressures and cultural expectations, impacting their marital dynamics. Understanding the extent and nature of these pressures is crucial for developing targeted interventions.

Psychological and Emotional Impact: The absence of male children within the family structure can potentially lead to psychological and emotional distress for couples. The study aims to investigate the specific psychological challenges faced by couples without male children, exploring feelings of inadequacy, social stigma, and the emotional toll on the individuals involved.

Religious Perspectives and Coping Mechanisms: The Izzi Clan is influenced by both African traditional beliefs and Christian teachings. Exploring how these religious perspectives shape the coping mechanisms adopted by couples without male children is essential. Understanding whether religious beliefs serve as sources of resilience or contribute to additional stressors will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of these couples.

Impact on Marital Satisfaction and Stability: The overarching problem involves assessing how the absence of male children influences marital satisfaction and stability. This includes examining communication patterns, support systems, and potential strain on the marital relationship. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing strategies to strengthen marriages within this cultural and religious context.

By addressing these issues, the study aims to contribute valuable insights into the multifaceted experiences of couples without male children in the Izzi Clan, offering a foundation for culturally sensitive interventions and fostering a deeper understanding of the intersectionality of African cultural norms and Christian perspectives in the context of marriage trauma.

Objectives of the Study

1: To examine the Societal and Cultural Pressures Faced by women without Male Children:

Investigate the specific societal expectations and cultural norms in the Izzi Clan regarding the role of male children in family structures.

Explore the extent of societal pressures faced by couples without male children, including potential stigmatization and the impact on their social standing within the community.

Analyze how cultural expectations contribute to the perception of marital success and fulfillment, focusing on the role of male offspring in these cultural ideals.

2: To evaluate the Influence of African and Christian Perspectives on Coping Mechanisms:

Explore the religious teachings and cultural beliefs surrounding the absence of male children within the Izzi Clan, considering both African traditional beliefs and Christian perspectives.

Examine how religious beliefs influence the coping mechanisms adopted by couples without male children, including prayer, rituals, and reliance on community and church support systems.

Assess whether religious perspectives serve as sources of resilience, providing emotional and spiritual support, or contribute to additional stressors and guilt within the marital relationship.

These objectives collectively aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of couples without male children in the Izzi Clan, shedding light on the intricate interplay between societal expectations, cultural norms, and religious influences. The findings from these objectives will contribute to the development of targeted interventions and culturally sensitive approaches to support couples facing marriage trauma in this unique cultural and religious context.

Research Questions

Is there any influence of education on gender preference among Izzi people in Ebonyi state?

Is there relevance of socio-cultural determinants of male preference in Izzi people in Ebonyi state?

Is there any the trauma facing women without male child in Izzi clan in Ebonyi state?

what is the African perspective on women traumatized as a result of absence of male child in Izzi clan in Ebonyi state?

Significance of the Study

Cultural Sensitivity and Interventions: Understanding the experiences of women without male children in the Izzi Clan provides a foundation for developing culturally sensitive interventions. This significance lies in the potential to design support mechanisms and counseling strategies that resonate with the cultural nuances of the community, fostering more effective assistance for couples facing marriage trauma.

Community Awareness and Understanding: The study contributes to raising awareness within the Izzi Clan about the challenges faced by women without male children. By shedding light on the psychological and emotional aspects of marriage trauma, the research fosters a better understanding among community members, potentially reducing stigma and promoting empathy within the community.

Informing Policy and Support Programs: Insights gained from the research can inform the development of policies and support programs tailored to the specific needs of couples without male children in the region. This significance extends to the potential enhancement of existing community programs and initiatives aimed at strengthening family structures and promoting mental health.

Academic Contribution to African Studies: The exploration of marriage trauma from African and Christian perspectives adds to the academic discourse on African cultural norms and religious influences. The study contributes valuable insights to the broader field of African studies, offering a nuanced understanding of the intersectionality between culture and religion in shaping marital experiences.

Promoting Gender Equality Discussions: Examining the societal expectations linked to male children in the Izzi Clan provides an opportunity to engage in discussions about gender equality. By exploring the impact of these expectations on both men and women within marriages, the

research contributes to conversations aimed at challenging and reshaping traditional gender roles, fostering more equitable dynamics within the family unit.

Scope of the Study

Geographic Scope:

The study focuses specifically on the Izzi Clan in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The geographic scope is confined to this cultural setting to capture the unique cultural and religious dynamics prevalent in the region.

Demographic Focus:

The primary demographic focus is on married women within the Izzi Clan who do not have male children. The study considers the experiences of both spouses, encompassing their perspectives, challenges, and coping mechanisms related to marriage trauma.

Time Frame:

The research encompasses a contemporary time frame to capture current cultural, societal, and religious dynamics within the Izzi Clan. The study does not delve into historical perspectives but rather concentrates on the present-day experiences of women without male children.

Cultural and Religious Perspectives:

The exploration involves a dual lens, examining the topic from both African cultural perspectives, including traditional practices within the Izzi Clan, and Christian perspectives prevalent in the region. The study seeks to understand how these two intersecting influences shape the experiences of couples facing marriage trauma.

Qualitative Methodology:

The research primarily adopts a qualitative approach, utilizing in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and narrative analysis to gather rich and context-specific data. Qualitative methods

are chosen to allow for a nuanced exploration of the cultural and religious dimensions of marriage trauma.

Themes Explored:

The study delves into several key themes, including societal expectations, cultural norms, psychological and emotional challenges, coping mechanisms, religious influences, social stigma, and the impact on marital satisfaction and stability. These themes collectively contribute to a holistic understanding of the experiences of couples without male children in the Izzi Clan.

Limitations:

The study acknowledges certain limitations, such as the potential for participant bias, the subjective nature of qualitative data, and the exclusivity to the Izzi Clan, limiting the generalizability of findings to other cultural contexts. Additionally, the study does not address historical aspects but concentrates on the contemporary landscape of marriage trauma within the specified community.

Research Methodology

Research design

The researcher used descriptive research survey design in building up this study. The choice of this research design was considered appropriate because of its advantages of identifying attributes of a large population from a group of individuals.

Study Area

History of Izzi People:

Origins and Migration

The origins of the Izzi people trace back to the ancient migration patterns in the southeastern region of Nigeria. According to oral traditions and historical accounts, the Izzi people are believed to be descendants of the Igbo ethnic group, and their migration is associated with the larger Igbo migrations that occurred over centuries (Ezeocha, 2015). The precise timeline and

reasons for their migration remain embedded in oral histories, emphasizing the importance of preserving their cultural narratives.

Settlement and Growth:

Upon settling in the present-day Ebonyi State, the Izzi people established a network of communities, each with its own unique characteristics and cultural practices. The establishment of these communities contributed to the social and political organization of the Izzi people, fostering a sense of unity and communal identity (Okonkwo, 2017). Over time, the Izzi Clan emerged as a cohesive unit, preserving its cultural heritage while adapting to the challenges and opportunities presented by its environment.

Cultural Practices and Traditions:

The cultural identity of the Izzi people is deeply rooted in their traditions, which encompass language, dance, music, and religious practices. The Izzi language, a variant of the Igbo language, serves as a linguistic marker of their distinct identity (Nwabara, 2016). Cultural festivals and ceremonies play a pivotal role in preserving and transmitting the cultural heritage of the Izzi people, reflecting their values, beliefs, and social norms (Ukoha, 2018).

Colonial and Post-Colonial Influences:

The colonial era left an indelible mark on the history of the Izzi people, as it did for many ethnic groups in Nigeria. The impact of colonial policies, administrative changes, and economic transformations influenced the socio-economic landscape of the Izzi Clan. Post-colonial Nigeria witnessed further socio-political changes, and the Izzi people navigated these shifts while striving to maintain their cultural distinctiveness (Ogbonnaya, 2019).

Agriculture and Livelihood:

Historically, the Izzi people have been primarily agrarian, relying on subsistence farming as a central aspect of their livelihood (Onu, 2016). The fertile lands of Ebonyi State have played a crucial role in sustaining agricultural practices, shaping the economic activities and dietary habits of the Izzi people.

Challenges and Resilience:

Throughout their history, the Izzi people have faced various challenges, including socio-political changes, economic shifts, and environmental issues. Yet, their resilience is evident in their ability to adapt to changing circumstances while preserving core elements of their cultural identity (Okafor, 2018).

Sources of data collection

Data were collected from two main sources namely:

Primary source and

Secondary source

Primary source:

These are materials of statistical investigation which were collected by the research for a particular purpose. They can be obtained through a survey, observation questionnaire or as experiment; the researcher has adopted the questionnaire method for this study.

Secondary source:

These are data from textbook Journal handset etc. they arise as byproducts of the same other purposes. Example administration, various other unpublished works and write ups were also used.

Population of the study

Two hundred (200) residents from Izzi LGA, Ebonyi LGA and Abakaliki LGA in Ebonyi was selected randomly by the researcher as the population of the study.

Sample and sampling procedure

Sample is the set people or items which constitute part of a given population sampling. Due to large size of the target population, the researcher used the Taro Yamani formula to arrive at the sample population of the study.

$$\frac{1}{1+N} n = N$$

$$1+N(e)^2$$

$$\frac{1}{1+200(0.05)^2} n = 200$$

$$1+200(0.05)^2$$

$$\frac{1}{1+200(0.0025)} = 200$$

$$1+200(0.0025)$$

$$\frac{1}{1+0.5} = 200 \quad 200$$

$$1+0.5 = 1.5 = 133.$$

Instrument for data collection

The major research instrument used is the questionnaires. This was appropriately moderated. The respondents were administered with the questionnaires to complete, with or without disclosing their identities. The questionnaire was designed to obtain sufficient and relevant information from the respondents. The primary data contained information extracted from the questionnaires in which the respondents were required to give specific answer to a question by ticking in front of an appropriate answer and administered the same on staff of the two organizations: The questionnaires contained structured questions which were divided into sections A and B.

Validation of the research instrument

The questionnaire used as the research instrument was subjected to face its validation. This research instrument (questionnaire) adopted was adequately checked and validated by the supervisor his contributions and corrections were included into the final draft of the research instrument used.

Method of data analysis

The data collected was not an end in itself but it served as a means to an end. The end being the use of the required data to understand the various situations it is with a view to making valuable recommendations and contributions. To this end, the data collected has to be analysis for any meaningful interpretation to come out with some results. It is for this reason that the following methods were adopted in the research project for the analysis of the data collected.

For a comprehensive analysis of data collected, emphasis was laid on the use of absolute numbers frequencies of responses and percentages. Answers to the research questions were provided through the comparison of the percentage of workers response to each statement in the questionnaire related to any specified question being considered.

Frequency in this study refers to the arrangement of responses in order of magnitude or occurrence while percentage refers to the arrangements of the responses in order of their proportion. The simple percentage method is believed to be straight forward easy to interpret and understand method.

The researcher therefore chooses the simple percentage as the method to use.

The formula for percentage is shown as.

$$\% = f/N \times 100/1$$

Where f = frequency of respondent's response

N = Total Number of responses of the sample

100 = Consistency in the percentage of respondents for each item

Analysis and Presentation of Data

One hundred and sixty (160) questionnaires were distributed and one hundred and forty (133) were returned. This figure was the sample size. Out of the one hundred and thirty-three, only one hundred and twenty (120) were properly responded to. As a result, the researcher used one

hundred and twenty for this study when more than 50% of the respondents agree to the questions, the answer is taken as valid for the purpose of this study. In analyzing the data, the approach that will be adopted is to find out the percentage and positive and negative answers to the question posed.

Table 1

Position	Number of questionnaires administered	Number of questionnaires returned
Village heads	40	35
Elders of the council	40	30
Married men	40	30
Married women	40	25
Total	160	120

Source: Field Survey, 2024

In table 1, 160 questionnaires were administered, but only 120 were returned fully responded to this were used for the researcher.

Table II: Is there any influence of education on gender preference among Izzi people in Ebonyi state?

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Poor	80	66.7%
Average	40	33.3
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

In table II above 66.7% representing 80 respondents asserted that there is influence of education on gender preference among Izzi people in Ebonyi state while 33.3% representing 40 respondents said that the influence of education on gender preference among Izzi people in the area is average.

Table III: Is there relevance of socio-cultural determinants of male preference in Izzi people in Ebonyi state?

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
True	85	70.8
False	35	29.2
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

In table III above, 70.8% representing 85 respondents agreed that there is relevance of socio-cultural determinants of male preference in Izzi people in Ebonyi state while 29.2% representing 35 respondents disagreed.

Table IV: Is there any the trauma facing women without male child in Izzi clan in Ebonyi state?

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	85	70.8
False	35	29.2
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

70.8% believe that it is true that there is trauma facing women without male child in Izzi clan in Ebonyi state while 29.2% say it is false that there is trauma facing women without male child in Izzi clan.

Table V: what is the African perspective on women traumatized as a result of absence of male child in Izzi clan in Ebonyi state?

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
True	80	66.6

False	40	33.4
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

33.4% of 100% responded negatively to the above question which indicates that Izzi people value male child because they are the rightful people to carryout traditional rite and culture not female, while 66.6% out of 100% responded positively.

Table VI: What is Christian perspective on women traumatized as a result of absence of male child in Izzi clan in Ebonyi state?

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
True	60	50
False	60	50
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The response given above shows that 60% of respondents affirm that Izzi Christians believed that it is God who give children male or female that their women have no trauma over male child issue. However, equal number of respondent disagreed.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

Summary

This study was on trauma facing women without a male child in Izzi clan in Ebonyi State. Five objectives were raised which included: To investigate the influence of education on gender preference among Izzi people in Ebonyi state, to explore the current relevance of socio-cultural determinants of male preference in Izzi people in Ebonyi state, to find out the trauma facing women without male child in Izzi clan in Ebonyi state, to examine the African perspective on women trauma without male child in Izzi clan in Ebonyi state and to find out Christian

perspective on women trauma without male child in Izzi clan in Ebonyi state. In line with these objectives, five research questions were formulated and answered. The total population for the study was 200 residents in Izzi clan Ebonyi state. The researcher used questionnaires as the instrument for the data collection. Descriptive Survey research design was adopted for this study.

Conclusion

Conclusively, it is our belief that preference for a particular child or sex should be at the whims and caprices of the individuals. Everyone is at liberty to prefer one sex to another. Even within the same sex there are preferences. But what may not be palatable and plausible is when such actions are guided by the custom and tradition of the land so that they perpetually and consistently become our reference points. It is on this note I want to end this study with an excerpt from Mabeiam (2012) “ Every child is a gift from God and when we scorn His gift we stand condemned. People are just people irrespective of gender and our God given abilities are not distributed based on gender. But the emphasis of male children over the females has led to complacency by most male children when compared to female children. We must remember that life is not a huge running battle between both sexes. We co-exist because one cannot do without the other

Recommendation

A holistic reorientation of custodians of the customs and tradition of the study population. This reorientation should be targeted at critical stakeholders like the traditional rulers, priests, chiefs, community leaders, women opinion leaders.

The education of the minds and empowerment of the girl child is a paramount factor toward changing the perception of the female children.

Relevant legislation of laws to re-examine the culture of patriarchy so that those laws which adversely affect fundamental human rights should be abrogated. Such laws should not be left to die on arrival but they must be enforced.

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