



Gender Preference and Educational Investment in Male and Female Children among Parents in Sasa Community, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study focused on parental attitudes toward children's education, patterns of financial and material educational investment, parental expectations and aspirations, and the influence of community norms and traditional beliefs on educational decision-making. This study examined gender preference and educational investment in male and female children among parents in Sasa Community, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Using a descriptive survey research design, data were collected from parents through a structured questionnaire. Data were analyzed, using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages and charts. The study is anchored on Gender Role Theory, which states that societal expectations and cultural norms shape beliefs about appropriate roles for males and females. The findings revealed that while most respondents personally endorsed the equal value of educating sons and daughters and expressed high aspirations for girls' educational attainment, actual educational investments such as school choice, payment of school fees, and provision of learning materials continued to favor male children, particularly in resource-constrained situations. The study also found a noticeable gap between individual beliefs and community-level practices, as a substantial proportion of respondents reported that cultural norms and traditional expectations still influenced preferential treatment of sons in educational investment. The test of hypothesis found that cultural and social perception significantly influenced the general attitudes of parents towards child education ($F = 19.809$, $p < 0.05$) while, parental expectation did not have significant influence on the general attitudes of parents ($F = 1.131$, $p > 0.05$). Overall, the results suggest that the study area is experiencing a transitional shift toward gender equality in educational attitudes, although entrenched socio-cultural and economic factors continue to shape household decisions. The study concludes that positive parental attitudes alone are insufficient to guarantee gender equality in educational investment without supportive socio-economic and cultural structures. It, therefore, recommends community-based sensitization, gender-responsive educational policies, and targeted financial support for girls' education to bridge the gap between attitudes and practice and promote equitable educational opportunities for both male and female children.

Keywords: Parents, Gender Preference, Educational Investment, Gender Equality, Sasa Community in Ibadan

Introduction

Education is power. It equips citizens with the knowledge of their rights and their importance to the overall existence of humanity, serving as a fundamental tool for empowerment and the realization of human rights (United Nations, 2025). Investment in children's education has been widely regarded as a core responsibility of ideal parents, as parental investment is linked to children's future academic success and socioeconomic development (Begum, Grossman & Islam, 2022). Parents who understand the importance of education may invest considerable resources to educate their children by sending them to schools and providing them with solid educational foundations (Begum et al., 2022). However, it has been observed that embedded within many cultures is a preferential treatment given to male children over female children in terms of educational opportunities and resource allocation (Begum et al., 2022; Sualihu, Zakaria & Bediako, 2024). This gender bias in intrahousehold resource allocation often leads to higher enrollment and spending on boys' education compared with girls' education, reflecting broader sociocultural norms that disadvantage female children (Begum et al., 2022; Sualihu et al., 2024).

Gender preference refers to the inclination of parents to favour one gender of child typically male or female over the other, consciously or unconsciously, in the allocation of family resources, affection, and opportunities (Asadullah, Mansoor, Randazzo & Wahhaj, 2021). In many societies, these preferences significantly influence the extent and quality of educational investment in children. Education investment encompasses the financial, emotional, and time resources parents commit to their children's schooling, which plays a crucial role in shaping future economic and social mobility (Deming, 2022).

In patriarchal cultures, where male children are often viewed as future breadwinners or carriers of family lineage, boys tend to receive a disproportionate share of educational resources compared to girls (Jayachandran, 2015). Conversely, in societies advancing toward gender equality, education investment is becoming more balanced, although subtle biases persist in subject choices and post-secondary opportunities (Li, 2021). The preference for sons or daughters not only affects intra-household decision-making but also reflects broader socio-cultural norms and economic rationales embedded in traditional gender roles (Le, & Nguyen, 2022).

Understanding gender preferences in relation to education investment is crucial for addressing gender disparities in human capital formation, particularly in developing countries where cultural norms and economic constraints intertwine. Addressing these biases through gender-sensitive policies in local settings like Sasa community in Ibadan, Oyo State, can enhance equitable access to education and foster inclusive socio-economic development. The aim of this study is to find out the prevalence of gender preference in Sasa community, Ibadan, Oyo State.

The research questions that this study addressed are:

- i. What is the parental attitude in terms of financial and material investment of children in Sasa community, Ibadan, Oyo State?
- ii. What are the parental perceptions on children's academic future in Sasa community, Ibadan, Oyo State?

These hypotheses were tested:

H₀1: Cultural and Social Perception of Parents will not have significant influence on their attitudes



H₀2: Parental Expectation will not have a significant Influence on their attitudes

Literature Review

Gender preference has been widely identified as a critical determinant of educational investment in male and female children, particularly in developing societies. Educational investment refers to the allocation of financial, material, and emotional resources toward children's schooling, including school fees, learning materials, and access to quality institutions. Giannola (2024) household economics theory posits that families allocate limited resources to children perceived to yield higher economic returns. In many African contexts, male children are often viewed as future breadwinners, leading parents to prioritize their education over that of female children (Naab & Laube, 2025). Empirical studies in Nigeria confirm that boys are more likely to receive sustained educational support, while girls' education is often viewed as secondary, especially when household resources are constrained (Odejide, 2016; Ogunyemi, 2018).

Despite persistent inequalities in investment, the literature on gender equality in education suggests a gradual shift in parental attitudes toward recognizing the importance of educating both boys and girls. Gender equality in education emphasizes equal access, participation, and outcomes irrespective of sex. Bergstrom & Özler (2023) argues that educating girls yields substantial social and economic benefits, including improved family health and national development. In Nigeria, Aina (2012) observes that increased awareness campaigns and policy interventions have improved parental perceptions of girls' education. However, Ben Haman, (2025) noted that positive attitudes alone do not automatically translate into equal educational investment, as cultural norms and economic realities continue to shape actual practices within households.

Socioeconomic factors are among the most influential determinants of educational investment and gender disparity. Household income, parental occupation, and level of education significantly affect whether children, especially girls are enrolled, retained, and supported through higher levels of education. Studies indicate that poorer households are more likely to favor sons' education when faced with competing demands (Ahmed, 2022). In Nigeria, poverty has been shown to intensify gender bias, with girls more likely to be withdrawn from school to engage in domestic labor or income-generating activities (Eze, Alabi, & Aderinto, 2020). These findings suggest that economic vulnerability reinforces parental gender preference in educational decision-making.

Cultural and traditional norms also play a significant role in shaping parental educational investment. Gender role theory explains that socially constructed expectations assign domestic roles to females and economic roles to males, influencing parental priorities (Barth & Masters, 2024). In many Yoruba communities, including parts of Ibadan, sons are traditionally regarded as carriers of family lineage and inheritors of property, while daughters are expected to marry into other families. Such beliefs reduce the perceived long-term returns of investing in girls' education (Ogunjuyigbe, Ojofeitimi, & Liasu, 2005). Early marriage, household responsibilities, and societal expectations further limit girls' educational opportunities despite parental acknowledgment of education's importance.



A substantial body of empirical literature finds that son preference leads to unequal allocation of schooling resources. Using household-level data from Bangladesh, Begum et al. (2022) found that parents exhibiting son preference were significantly more likely to enroll boys in school and allocate greater educational and health expenditures to them compared to girls. The study demonstrates that parental attitudes beyond income constraints shape investment behavior.

More so, it was found that parental expectations regarding economic returns strongly influence schooling decisions. In Ghana, parents who expected higher economic returns from sons were more likely to invest in boys' secondary education (Ahiakpor & Swaray, 2019). When anticipated labor market benefits differ by gender, educational investment disparities tend to widen. Furthermore, some hypothetical study test the Trivers–Willard hypothesis, which predicts that parents in better socio-economic conditions will favor sons if sons are expected to yield higher reproductive or economic returns. A cross-national African study by Borgstede, & Scheunpflug, (2023) found partial support for this theory: wealthier households were more likely to invest in sons, while poorer households sometimes showed equal or greater investment in daughters.

Parental characteristics especially maternal education can moderate gender bias. Fei and Li (2024) found in China that higher levels of maternal education were associated with weaker son preference and more equitable educational investment. Educated mothers were more likely to support daughters' schooling, indicating that parental human capital can reduce traditional gender norms. This aligns with broader assumptions that modernization and female empowerment can weaken discriminatory investment patterns.

Educational disparities are also shaped by birth order alongside gender. Zozoungbo (2024), using data from Benin, showed that gender and birth order jointly explain within-family educational inequalities. Later-born girls were particularly disadvantaged in low-income households, demonstrating that gender bias can be compounded by sibling hierarchy. These intra-household dynamics highlight that gender preferences do not operate in isolation but interact with family structure.

More so, studies have established the facts that institutional and community-level influences shape how gender preferences are expressed in educational investment. Social norms theory suggests that individuals may support gender equality privately but conform to prevailing community expectations in practice (Binmore, 2022). Studies in Nigeria showed that extended family members, religious leaders, and community traditions often influence schooling decisions, sometimes discouraging continued investment in girls' education (Unterhalter et al., 2014).

UNESCO (2015) emphasizes that achieving genuine gender equality in education requires addressing these broader social structures alongside household-level attitudes. Thus, parental gender preference in communities like Sasa, Ibadan, is best understood as the outcome of interacting economic, cultural, and institutional factors rather than individual choice alone.

Theoretical Framework

Gender Role Theory, as advanced by Eagly (1987), is also relevant to this study. Gender Role Theory emphasizes that societal expectations and cultural norms shape beliefs about appropriate

roles for males and females. In many traditional societies, males are socialized to assume economic and leadership roles, while females are expected to focus on domestic responsibilities. These socially constructed roles influence parental attitudes, expectations, and investment decisions regarding children's education.

Within this framework, gender preference is not merely an economic decision but a reflection of deeply embedded cultural values. Even when parents recognize the importance of educating girls, societal pressure and traditional expectations may still influence them to favor sons. This theory, therefore helps to explain the gap identified in this study between positive attitudes toward gender equality and actual unequal educational investment practices.

Gender Role Theory accounts for the cultural and social influences shaping parental decisions.

Methodology

The study employed a simple random sampling technique to ensure that every parent in the target population had an equal chance of selection. The sampling frame comprised a list of households with at least one school-aged child in Sasa Community, Ibadan, obtained through [community records. From this frame, 150 parents were selected using a lottery method/random number generator. Inclusion criteria required that respondents be parents or guardians of at least one male or female child of school age, while individuals without children or not resident in the community were excluded. The sample size of 150 was considered adequate for a descriptive survey of this nature, as it exceeds the minimum recommended for social science research and allows for reasonable generalization within the study area (Creswell, 2014). Out of the 150 questionnaires administered, 139 were properly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 92.7%, which is sufficiently high to reduce non-response bias and enhance the reliability of the findings. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher based on existing literature on gender preference and educational investment. The instrument consisted of four sections: Section A captured respondents' demographic characteristics; Section B assessed parental attitudes toward gender and education; Section C examined educational aspirations for male and female children; and Section D measured actual educational investment practices. terms were primarily measured using Yes or No scale. The descriptive survey research design was adopted. The data gathered was analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package of Social Sciences) software. Descriptive statistics was used to present the data making use of charts, percentages and simple frequencies.

Analysis, Interpretation and Discussion of Findings

Demographic Analysis

Table 1.1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 139)

Variables	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Males	66	47.5
	Females	73	52.5

	Total	139	100.0
Occupation	Civil servants	38	27.3
	Traders	46	33.1
	Artisans	31	22.3
	Others	24	17.3
	Total	139	100.0
Educational Status	No formal education	26	18.7
	Primary education	33	23.7
	Secondary education	47	33.8
	Tertiary education	33	23.7
	Total	139	100.0

Source: Researcher's Construct, 2025

The demographic distribution in the Table 1.1 above indicates that female respondents slightly outnumbered males. Traders constituted the largest occupational group, reflecting the commercial nature of the studied area, while respondents with secondary education formed the highest proportion, suggesting a moderately educated population capable of providing informed responses on issues related to children's education.

General Attitude Towards Children's Education

General Attitude Towards Children's Education

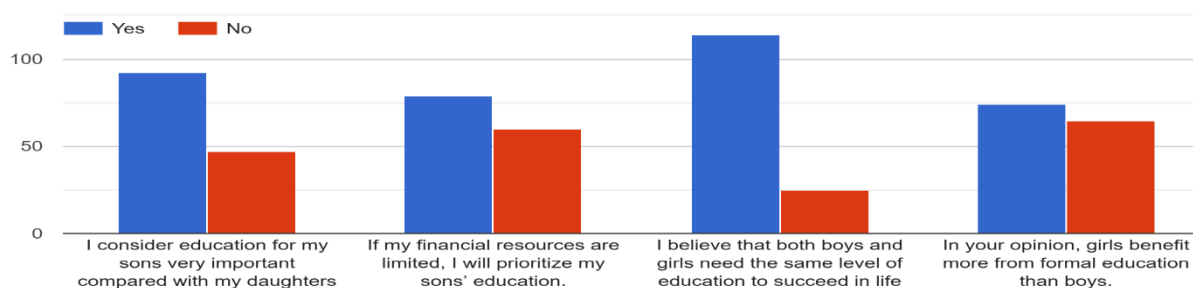


Figure 1. General Attitude Towards Children's Education

Source: Researcher's Construct, 2025

This chart presents respondents' general attitude towards the education of sons and daughters, measured, using Yes and No response options across four statements.

The responses show that a substantial majority of respondents answered “Yes” to the statement that they consider education for their sons very important compared to their daughters. This indicates a prevailing perception that sons’ education holds greater priority within households. Similarly, a high proportion of respondents agreed that when financial resources are limited, they would prioritize their sons’ education, further reinforcing the existence of gender-based preference in educational investment decisions. However, a contrasting pattern emerges in responses to the statement that both boys and girls need the same level of education to succeed in life, where an overwhelming majority selected “Yes.” This suggests that while respondents intellectually acknowledge the importance of equal education for both genders, this belief does not always translate into practical decision-making. Additionally, responses to the statement that girls benefit more from formal education than boys show a more divided opinion, with a notable proportion of respondents selecting “No,” indicating skepticism about the relative benefits of educating girls.

Overall, the chart reveals a paradoxical attitude: respondents largely endorse gender equality in principle but still demonstrates a practical preference for sons’ education, particularly under financial constraints.

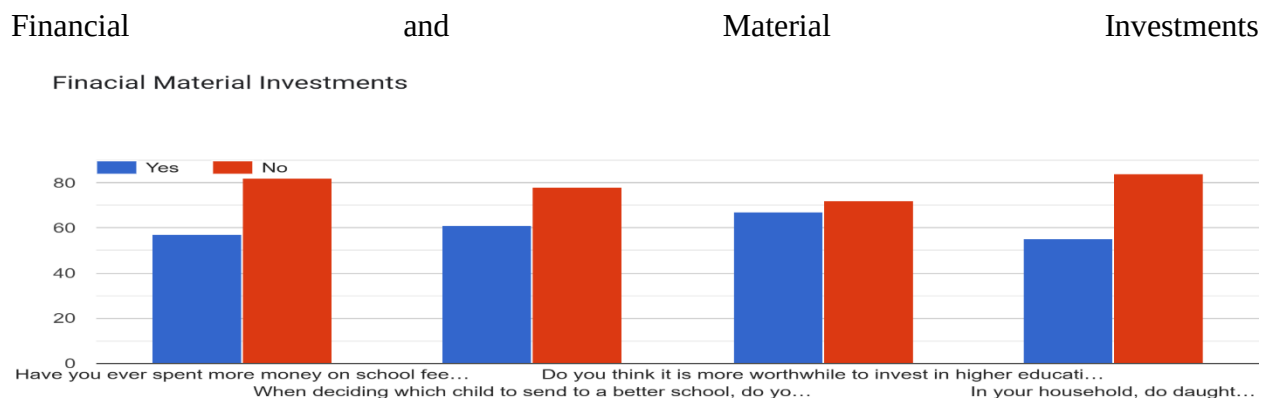


Figure 2. Financial and Material Investments

Source: Researcher’s Construct, 2025

The chart above examines respondents’ financial commitment to children’s education, focusing on actual spending behavior and decision-making priorities, using Yes/No response options. The findings indicate that a greater proportion of respondents answered “No” to having spent more on school fees for daughters than for sons, suggesting that sons generally receive greater financial investment. Similarly, when asked whether it is more worthwhile to invest in higher education for daughters, the majority of respondents selected “No,” reflecting a lower perceived return on investment in girls' education. In decisions concerning which child to send to a better school, responses again lean toward “No” in favour of daughters, implying that sons are more often prioritised for quality educational opportunities. Furthermore, responses regarding whether daughters receive the same educational materials as sons show that a significant number of respondents answered “No,” highlighting inequalities in access to learning resources within households.

The table demonstrates clear gender disparities in financial and material educational investments, with sons receiving greater support than daughters across multiple indicators.

Expectations and Aspirations of Parents

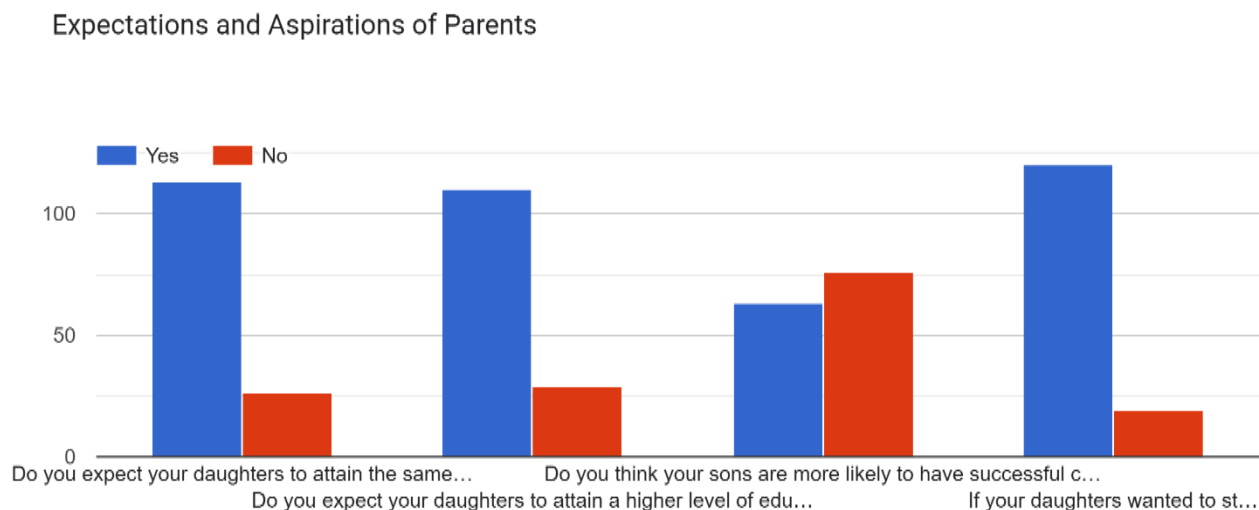


Fig. 3. Expectations and Aspirations of Parents

Source: Researcher's Construct, 2025

The chart above explores parental expectations and aspirations regarding the educational attainment and future success of sons and daughters, using Yes/No responses.

The results indicate that a large majority of respondents answered “Yes” to expecting their daughters to attain the same or even higher levels of education as their sons. This suggests that parents hold high educational aspirations for their daughters in principle. Likewise, many respondents disagreed with the notion that sons are more likely to have successful careers, as reflected in the higher “No” responses to that statement. Additionally, a strong majority of respondents answered “Yes” to supporting their daughters’ pursuit of further studies if they desired to do so. This reflects a positive attitudinal shift toward female education and empowerment, particularly in terms of long-term aspirations.

The chart indicates progressive parental aspirations for daughters, with strong support for their educational advancement, even though these aspirations may not always be matched by actual financial investment.

Cultural and Social Perceptions towards child's education

Culture and Social Perceptaions

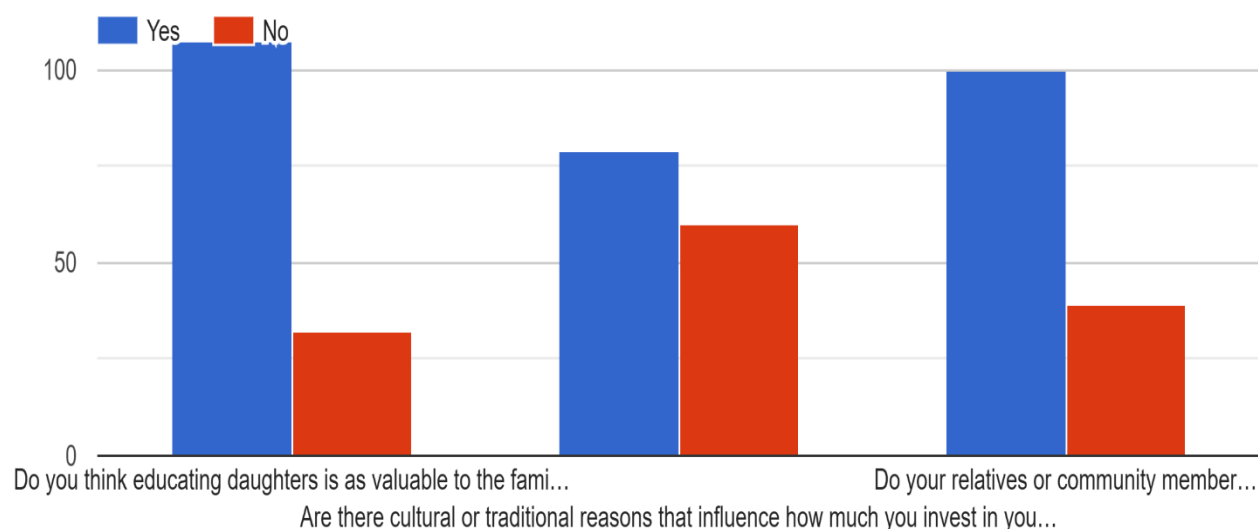


Fig. 4. Cultural and Social Perceptions

Source: Researcher's Construct, 2025

The bar chart above reveals that while the personal beliefs of most respondents strongly support equal value for daughters' education, the picture becomes more mixed when people report what they observe or experience from relatives, community, or tradition. A clear majority still perceives supportive attitudes from their social environment, but a meaningful portion about one-third to 40% of the sample feels cultural or traditional expectations create a gender gap in educational investment or priority.

This suggests a transitional social environment: personal views have largely shifted toward gender equality in education, but some lingering community-level or traditional pressures still influence actual decisions and behaviors for a sizable group.

Test of Null Hypothesis

Cultural and Social Perception of Parents will not have significant influence on their attitudes

Table 1.2. Influence of Cultural and Social Perceptions of Parents on their Attitudes towards Child's Education

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.431	1	1.431	19.809	.000 ^b
	Residual	9.896	137	.072		
	Total	11.327	138			
a. Dependent Variable: General Attitudes of Parents						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Cultural and Social Perception						

The table examined whether Cultural and Social Perception significantly influences the General Attitudes of Parents. The ANOVA result showed that the regression model was statistically significant with an F-value of 19.809 and a significance level (p-value) of .000, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that Cultural and Social Perception has a significant influence on the attitudes of parents.

The regression sum of squares was 1.431, while the residual sum of squares was 9.896, giving a total sum of squares of 11.327. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis stating that Cultural and Social Perception of Parents will not have significant influence on their attitudes is rejected. Therefore, cultural and social perceptions significantly shape parents' attitudes.

Null Hypothesis 2: Parental Expectation will not have a significant Influence on their attitudes

Table 1.3. Influence of Parental Expectation on their Attitudes towards children's education

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.093	1	.093	1.131	.289 ^b
	Residual	11.235	137	.082		
	Total	11.327	138			
a. Dependent Variable: General Attitudes of Parents						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Parental Expectation						

The table assessed whether Parental Expectation significantly influences the General Attitudes of Parents. The ANOVA result revealed an F-value of 1.131 with a significance level (p-value) of .289, which is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. This means that Parental Expectation does not significantly influence the attitudes of parents. The regression sum of squares was .093, while the residual sum of squares was 11.235, with a total sum of squares of 11.327. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis stating that Parental Expectation will not have a significant influence on their attitudes is accepted. Therefore, parental expectation does not significantly predict or influence parents' general attitudes in this study.

Discussion of findings

The findings of this study revealed that although many parents acknowledge, in principle, that both boys and girls require equal levels of education to succeed in life, a significant proportion still



prioritize sons' education, especially under financial constraints. This contradiction between belief and practice has been widely documented in gender and education literature. According to De Bruijn & Antonides (2022) Scarcity Theory posits that families tend to allocate scarce resources to children perceived to yield higher economic returns. In many patriarchal societies, sons are often viewed as future breadwinners, while daughters are expected to marry and join another household, thereby reducing the perceived long-term benefits of investing in their education ((Naab & Laube, 2025; Gineityte, 2023). Similarly, studies in sub-Saharan Africa show that parents may express support for gender equality in education at the attitudinal level, yet still favor boys when concrete decisions must be made (UNESCO, 2015). This supports the present finding that high agreement with equal educational needs does not necessarily translate into equal educational opportunities for girls.

The study further shows clear gender disparities in financial and material investments, with sons receiving more educational resources, better schooling opportunities, and higher financial commitment. This aligns with earlier findings by Ahmed, (2022), who found that households in resource-constrained settings tend to invest more in boys' education due to expectations of higher labor market returns. Similarly, Zulaika, et al (2022) reported that girls are more likely to be withdrawn from school or denied access to quality educational materials during periods of financial hardship. In the Nigerian context, cultural norms and gender-role socialization significantly influence parental investment patterns. Studies by Odejide (2016) and Ogunyemi (2018) indicate that sons are more likely to be sent to better schools and supported through higher education, while daughters' education is often interrupted by early marriage or domestic responsibilities. The present findings therefore reinforce the persistence of structural gender inequality in educational financing despite growing awareness of the importance of educating girls.

Interestingly, the findings indicate relatively high parental aspirations for daughters' educational attainment and future success. Many parents expressed expectations that their daughters could attain the same or higher levels of education as their sons and supported their pursuit of further studies. This reflects a gradual shift in societal attitudes toward girls' education, consistent with modernisation and human capital theories (Awain et al, 2024), which emphasise the broader social and economic benefits of educating women.

Empirical evidence supports this trend. For instance, Unterhalter et al. (2014) found that increased advocacy, policy interventions, and exposure to education-related awareness campaigns have improved parental aspirations for girls across developing countries. In Nigeria, studies by Aina (2012) and Eze et al. (2020) similarly report growing parental recognition of the role of female education in poverty reduction, improved family health, and national development.

However, as Ben Haman (2025) also notes, high aspirations alone are insufficient without equitable resource allocation. The discrepancy observed in this study between aspirations and actual financial support suggests that deeply rooted socio-cultural and economic constraints continue to limit the realization of educational equality for girls.

The findings indicate that while most respondents personally support the equal value of daughters' education, perceptions of community norms and traditional expectations present a more mixed



reality. This divergence reflects a transitional social context in which individual attitudes have shifted faster than collective practices. Social norms theory explains this pattern, suggesting that individuals may privately endorse gender equality but continue to conform to prevailing cultural expectations due to social pressure and fear of sanctions (Bicchieri, 2006). Similar studies across sub-Saharan Africa report that despite growing awareness of the benefits of educating girls, patriarchal traditions and gender-role expectations continue to influence household decisions, particularly in contexts where sons are viewed as future economic providers (Ben Haman, 2025; UNESCO, 2015).

Furthermore, the persistence of community-level pressures aligns with gender role and household decision-making theories, which emphasize that educational choices are shaped not only by parents but also by extended family structures and collective norms (Eagly, 1987; Becker, 1991). Empirical evidence from Nigeria and other developing contexts shows that parental aspirations for daughters' education are increasing, yet cultural practices such as preferential treatment for sons, early marriage, and domestic role expectations still constrain actual investment in girls' education (Aina, 2012; Eze et al., 2020). Overall, the findings suggest that while progress toward gender equality in education is evident at the attitudinal level, sustained change requires interventions that address community beliefs and traditional structures alongside individual attitudes.

From theoretical stand points, the findings can be interpreted through the lens of Gender Role Theory, Human Capital Theory, and Social Norms Theory to explain the observed gap between egalitarian attitudes and gendered educational practices. Gender Role Theory posits that socially constructed expectations about appropriate roles for males and females continue to shape behavior, even when individuals consciously endorse equality; thus, parents may still prioritize boys' education because of entrenched beliefs about men as future breadwinners and women as caregivers (Eagly, 1987). Complementing this, Human Capital Theory suggests that families allocate scarce resources in ways they perceive will yield the highest economic returns; in contexts where labor markets and societal structures offer greater opportunities for men, investing more heavily in sons may be viewed as a rational, albeit unequal, decision (Becker, 1993).

At the same time, Social Norms Theory highlights the powerful influence of perceived community expectations and cultural traditions in sustaining gender bias, as individuals often conform to prevailing norms to gain social approval or avoid sanctions, even when their private beliefs have shifted toward gender equality (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). Together, these frameworks illuminate a transitional social reality in which changing personal attitudes toward girls' education are constrained by enduring gender roles, economic rationalizations, and normative pressures, thereby perpetuating disparities between belief, intention, and actual educational investment.

Moreover, the finding revealed that Cultural and Social Perception significantly influenced the general attitudes of parents ($F = 19.809$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that societal beliefs, cultural values, traditions, and social expectations strongly shape parental attitudes and behaviours. The finding supports the Theory of Scarcity developed by De Bruijn and Antonides, which explains that individuals' perceptions and decisions are influenced by limited social and economic resources within their environment (De Bruijn & Antonides, 2022). In many societies, parents' attitudes are shaped by the cultural need to protect scarce family opportunities, status, and



resources. The finding is also consistent with the Social Norm Theory propounded by Bicchieri, which posits that people's attitudes and behaviours are regulated by socially accepted norms and expectations within their communities (Bicchieri, 2006). Furthermore, the result aligns with the Decision-Making Theory of Eagly and Becker, which emphasizes that social conditions and environmental influences affect how individuals make decisions and form attitudes (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Becker, 1993). In the same vein, the finding supports Gender Role Theory, which explains that cultural expectations about gender responsibilities influence parental perceptions and attitudes within society (Wood & Eagly, 2012).

The finding showed that Parental Expectation did not significantly influence the general attitudes of parents ($F = 1.131$, $p > 0.05$). This indicates that although parents may have aspirations and expectations concerning their children, such expectations may not necessarily determine their overall attitudes. This finding partially contradicts the Decision-Making Theory of Eagly and Becker, which suggests that expectations and perceived benefits often guide individuals' decisions and attitudes (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Becker, 1993).

However, the result may imply that parents' attitudes are influenced more by external cultural and social realities than by personal expectations alone. The finding can also be linked to Human Capital Theory advanced by Becker, which assumes that parents invest in behaviours and decisions that will improve future outcomes for their children (Becker, 1993). The non-significant finding suggests that such expectations or investments may not automatically translate into observable parental attitudes. Additionally, Gender Role Theory may explain the finding, as societal and cultural role expectations may overshadow personal parental expectations in shaping attitudes and behaviours (Wood & Eagly, 2012).

Summary of Findings.

Overall, the study reveals a consistent pattern in which positive attitudes and aspirations toward girls' education coexist with persistent gender disparities in actual educational investment and practice. While most respondents personally believe in the equal importance of educating sons and daughters and express high expectations for their daughters' educational attainment and future success, financial decisions and material investments still tend to favor sons, particularly under conditions of limited resources. In addition, although individual beliefs have largely shifted toward gender equality, a substantial proportion of respondents perceive that cultural norm, family traditions, and community expectations continue to reinforce gender bias in educational prioritization. Taken together, these findings depict a transitional social context where progressive personal attitudes and aspirations for girls' education are increasingly evident, but deeply rooted socio-cultural and economic constraints continue to influence household decisions, resulting in a gap between belief, intention, and actual practice.

Conclusion

This study concludes that although there is a growing recognition of the equal value of educating sons and daughters, gender inequality in educational investment persists in practice. The findings show that while most parents and caregivers hold positive personal beliefs and high aspirations for girls' education, these attitudes do not always translate into equal financial, material, and institutional support. Sons continue to be prioritized, particularly when resources are limited,



reflecting the influence of entrenched socio-cultural norms, traditional gender roles, and community expectations. The coexistence of progressive attitudes and discriminatory practices indicates that the study context is undergoing a gradual transition toward gender equality in education, but structural, economic, and cultural barriers continue to limit the full realization of equal educational opportunities for girls.

More so, the findings simultaneously support, extend, and challenge the explanatory power of Gender Role Theory, Human Capital Theory, and Social Norms Theory. They support Gender Role Theory by demonstrating that entrenched societal expectations about male and female roles continue to shape actual investment behavior despite expressed egalitarian beliefs (Eagly, 1987), and align with Human Capital Theory in showing that households, when faced with limited resources, prioritize sons based on perceived higher economic returns (Becker, 1993). The results also affirm Social Norms Theory, as respondents' perceptions of persistent cultural expectations and community pressures help explain why discriminatory practices endure even when private attitudes have shifted (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). However, the findings extend these theories by revealing a transitional context in which individuals increasingly internalize gender-equal aspirations for girls' education, suggesting a gradual decoupling of personal beliefs from traditional norms. At the same time, the results challenge the theories by exposing their limitations in fully accounting for the observed attitude–behavior gap: Gender Role Theory and Social Norms Theory may overemphasize normative conformity without sufficiently explaining emerging attitudinal change, while Human Capital Theory's assumption of purely rational economic decision-making is complicated by evidence that parents value girls' education highly yet still act contrary to these preferences due to structural and cultural constraints. Together, the findings point to a more dynamic interplay between beliefs, norms, and economic realities than each theory alone might predict.

Recommendations

1. Governments, educational institutions, and non-governmental organizations should intensify community-level awareness campaigns aimed at challenging traditional beliefs that prioritize sons' education over daughters'. Engaging community leaders, religious leaders, and elders can help reshape collective norms and promote equitable educational values.
2. Targeted scholarships, conditional cash transfers, and educational subsidies for girls should be expanded to reduce the financial constraints that often lead families to prioritize sons' education. Such interventions can help translate positive attitudes into actual investment in girls' schooling.
3. Education policies promoting gender equality should be strengthened and effectively implemented, with monitoring mechanisms to ensure that girls have equal access to quality schools, learning materials, and opportunities for higher education.
4. Programs that educate parents and extended family members on the long-term social and economic benefits of educating girls should be promoted, emphasizing the role of girls' education in household well-being, national development, and intergenerational progress.



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