

Igbo Anthroponyms and the Challenges of the Girl-Child: A Sociolinguistic Study

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Abstract

Naming practices are significant communicative acts. Names convey aspects of identity, social circumstances, cultural conditioning, parental expectations, birth circumstances, lineage and gender qualities. Igbo names are symbolic and have the power of inspiring and motivating individuals hence, names given to the girl-child prepares her for motherhood, wifehood, cook, housekeeper and above all, projects her femininity. These responsibilities begin at an early age to challenge the girl-child to get acquainted with the traditional roles expected of her. Additionally, names express the position of the girl – child in the society as one who is weak, gentle, precious and gracious. Data was collected using students' score sheet in the Faculty of Arts, Anambra State University, Uli. Findings reveal that most names were given to the girl-child inspire and motivate her to become a child-bearer, wife, and mother who take care of household chores, nurses the children and her husband. Based on the findings, few recommendations were made.

Keywords: Girl-child, Anthroponyms, Sociolinguistics, Culture, names, Igbo.

1. Introduction

Linguistically, Igbo is one of the three major languages are spoken in Nigeria. The Igbo people are found within the South Eastern part of Nigeria. Five states make up the Igbo speaking states such as Enugu, Abia, Imo, Anambra, Ebonyi and some parts of Rivers and Delta states (Nwoye, 1989).¹ According to Okafor et al (2008)² and Ifeka

¹ Nwoye, O 'Linguistic Politeness in Igbo' in *Multilingua- Journal of Cross Cultural and Interlanguage Communication*, Piller, Ingrid (ed). 1989 , p. 259.

² Okafor R.C, Emeka L.N, Inyiam T.A., *Igbo Personal & Title Names*, Enugu: New Generation Books, 2008, p.3.

(2003)³, there are many theories and myths about the origin of the Igbo people. The first attempt at understanding where the Igbo people migrated from started in 1789 by Olaudah Equiano, an Igbo ex-slave, who claimed that Igbos are the lost tribe of Israel, hence the cultural similarities between the two are circumcision, (*Ibe Ugwu*) and naming (Igu aha). Other theories were got from scholars, anthropologists, explorers and European traders such as Leith Ross (1939)⁴, Forde and Jones (1950)⁵. Naming is an important part of people's social identity and often bears personal significance. Anthroponyms is the study of personal names by which someone is known or referred to, (Crystal, 1997)⁶. Ubahakwe (1982:27)⁷ is of the view that Nigerian indigenous names, like most African names, have high culture content. By this statement, he meant that personal names are not simply labels used for mere identification purposes; on the contrary, an indigenous African name, on the whole, personifies the individual, tells a story about the parents or family of the bearer and in a more general sense points to the values of the society into which the individual is born. These claims could be confirmed for some tribes in Kenya, and the Akan in Ghana. Evidence from Choge (2006)⁸ shows that the culture of naming in Kenya reflects the past life of Nandi people which revolved mainly around cattle rearing and hunter-gathering such as *Kiplimo* "the boy of when the cows are going for morning grazing" *Kopot Tendencies* "mother of a lean bullock". Similarly, Ogechi et al (2002:71)⁹ observe that some Abagusii and Nandi of Kenya personal names are based on disability such as *Kerewa* (Abagusii name meaning "one who is physically impaired"), *Kipseisei* (Nandi name meaning "one who is dumb"). Disability names in this sense do not necessarily mean physical disability, but rather, the inability of a person to live up to the social expectations such as procreation, working in an agricultural field, fending for oneself, thereby highlighting the fact that these names show cultural beliefs concerning the relationship between man, nature and the universe. Likewise, in Ghana, Agyekum

³ See; Ifeka, O. R., *Womanhood in Igbo Culture: A Case Study of Works of Onyekaonwu, G.O and Maduekwe J.C. Unpublished M.A Thesis. Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, 2003.*

⁴ Leith-Ross. *S African Women: A Study of the Ibo Nigeria*, London: Faber and Faber, 1939 p. 3.

⁵ Forde D, Jones GI, *The Ibo and Ibibio Speaking Peoples of South Eastern Nigeria*, London: International African Institute, 1950, p. 10.

⁶ . Crystal, D., *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*, Cambridge: University Press, 1997, P.114

⁷ Ubahakwe, E., ' Culture Content of Igbo Personal Names' in *Igbo language and culture*, F.C Ogbalu and E.N Emenanjo (eds) Ibadan: University Press Ltd, 1982, p. 34.

⁸ Choge, S., 'Towards Understanding Language Death: The case of dead and Non-used Nandi Anthroponyms' A paper presented at *5th World Congress of African Linguistics Held at the African Union Secretariat, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 20006*. P. 1

⁹ Ogechi, N, Ruto, S., 'Portrayal of Disability through Names and Proverbs' in *Stichproben. Wiener Zeitschrift fur Kritische Afrikastudien*, 2000, p.71

(2006:206)¹⁰ opines that Akan names of Ghana are based on cultural attributes of the people which capture the rich socio-cultural heritage of the people, their religion, language and thought, and such names are *Nyamekye* “God’s gift”, *Dappa* “sacred Tuesday”. Igbo names relate to emotional events, circumstances, attitudes, gratitude to the gods or to socio-cultural events, in general, such as *Nnenna* “mother of my father”, *Chikeluo* “God’s perfect creation”, *Obiechina* “may my lineage never be extinct”, *Ahamefuna* “may my name never be lost”, *Igwebuike* “the multitude/majority is power”, *Udezue*¹¹ “my fame is complete”, *Ndubisi* “life first”, *Adamma* “beautiful daughter” (Kammelu 2008:208¹², Onuoha 2008)¹³. In Igbo traditional society, names are given by the child’s father or grandfather and rarely by the mother or grandmother (Offodile, 1998).¹⁴ Women are not allowed to give personal names to a child unless they are pet names (Okafor, Emeka, and Inyama (2008). This is because women in Igbo culture are considered to be inferior to men as observed by Okemgbo et al (2002)¹⁵ who claim that in Igbo land women are not allowed to hold the traditional title, cannot take any major decisions at home, have no influence and control over economic resources. Similarly, Ifeka (2003) posits that the traditional Igbo woman is considered to be emotionally immature, irresponsible and lacking in sound judgment; thus, she is blamed for every ugly circumstance because the society does not give her the opportunity to defend herself in the assembly of kinsmen since she is seen as being less important and cannot stand before men. Gender inequality has continued to account for men’s dominance over women in the scheme of things. Women are subjugated and oppressed particularly in the family. Mbabuike (1996)¹⁶ asserts that Nigeria practices a patriarchal society in which men take the first place forcing women to be socialized, indoctrinated and coerced into cooperating with the patriarchal system. When a first –born child is a girl, parents are usually disappointed worse, and still if all children are female, the father looks outside for

¹⁰ Agyekum Kofi, ‘The Sociolinguistic of Akan Personal names’, *Normadic Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 15. No. 2. 2006, P.235

¹² Kammelu, Nkiru . ‘Reconstruction of Igbo personal names: The phono – semantic implications’. In I. Ikwubuzo, C. Ohiri Aniche and C. Nnabuihe (eds), *Udezuluigbo A Festschrift in Honour of Sam Uzochukwu*, 2008. pp 208-223

¹³ Onuoha, Ogonna, ‘Language change: Some emerging evidence from Igbo proper names’. Ikwubuzo, C. Ohiri Aniche and C. Nnabuihe (eds) *Udezuluigbo A Festschrift in Honour of Sam Uzochukwu*, 2008, pp.224 - 299

¹⁴ Offodile, E.P.O. *A pedigree of Awka and its people*, Awka: Kucena – Damian Nigeria Limited, 1998, p.20.

¹⁵ Okemgbo CN, Okemgbo AK and Odimegwu C.O ‘Prevalence Patterns and Correlates of Domestic Violence in Selected Igbo Communities in Imo State Nigeria’, *African Journal of Reproductive Health*, 2002, Vol 6, No.2, P.101

¹⁶ Mbabuike M.C, ‘Cosmology of Igbo Anthroponyms; Life Continuum and Liturgy of Culture’ *Dialectal Anthropology*, Vol 21, No. 1, 1998, p.47.

male successors. Again, Mbabuike (1996) observes that a family in Igbo land without a male child is heading for extinction. This is well summed up by Isiugo-Abanibe (1993)¹⁷ who noted that;

1. a man who died without a son lived a worthless life; he is inherited by his brothers and is soon forgotten since his branch of the family tree has ended. Also, in traditional Igbo society, the status of a man is partly assessed by the number of his sons, a man with many sons is viewed as a wealthy man.

The reason given for wanting a male child is that the male child will propagate the family's name and this¹⁸ preference of male children over female affect the education of the girl-child and leads to low girl-enrolment in schools. At home, chicken gizzards, liver, tongue, heart, and lungs are consumed only by men being especially the heads of family, (Iwu, 1986:134)¹⁹. Igbo culture devalues women, considers them as fickle and untrustworthy. These views that denigrate women are brilliantly captured in Igbo proverbs, and one of such examples is "Ajo nwa na-aza aha nne ya" meaning "A bad child answers his or her mother's name". In the same way, Obiefuna (2010:180)²⁰ posits that women have been held responsible for failures of men and at times for the breach of relation between men and gods, and a typical example of him is the myth of *Deus Otiosos* (the withdrawn God) among the Igbo which is blamed on a woman pounding yam in the night and hitting the legs of God who came out in the coolness of the night to have some rest. Despite revolutionary efforts championed by various feminists' movements, human right groups, International organizations and social crusaders such as UNICEF, The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (CEDAW), Standing against Global Exploitation (SAGE) channeled towards putting a stop to oppression and suppression of the feminine gender in various issues and aspects of life, one notes with utmost dismay that little or no attention has been directed at the issue of gender equality as it affects names. Names embody deep expressions of attitude, sentiments, aspirations, commentaries on life experiences and most importantly an

¹⁷ Isiugo Abanibe, Ebigbola J.A, Adewuyi, 'Urban Nuptiality Patterns and Marital Fertility in Nigeria', *Journal of Biosocial Science* , Vol 25, No.4, 1993 P. 483

¹⁹ Iwu Maurice, 'Empirical Investigation of Dietary Plants used in Igbo Ethnomedicine', in *Plants in Indenous Medicine and Diet:Biobehavioral Approaches*, Nina Etkin (ed), 1986, P. 134

²⁰ Obiefuna B.A, 'Envisioning a More Gender Inclusive World for Humanity: Challenges and Prospects' in *Celebration of Academic Excellence: Festschrift in Honour of Professor L.N Muoghalu*, Jo Eyisi, Ernest Obienusi and Eric Omazu (eds), Enugu: El 'Demak Publishers, 2010, p.180

instrument of social change which represents who we are, (Mbubuike, 1996). Orji (1972:76)²¹ admits that a person's name can make a certain auspicious prediction on the person's future. Furthermore, names may identify and describe us in relation to others; therefore, they are rich with meaning and deserve examination as a symbolic artifact. Abel (2010)²² observed that names do in fact influence important life outcomes. He observed that people whose names begin with 'la' such as Laura are more likely to become lawyers while individuals whose names begin with 'Geo' are more likely to become geologists. The name given to the girl-child begins at an early age to remind, motivate and influence her career choice. This study will, therefore, be beneficial to parents, the girl-child, scholars of sociology and anthropology and custodians of culture in general in encouraging and guiding the girl-child so that she will overcome the cultural challenges placed on her through her name like a becoming mother, wife, cook, and housekeeper. Additionally, the study will help in choosing names for newly born girls.

1.2 Anthroponyms

Anthroponym according to Eruchalu (2009)²³ is a set of personal names, and the study of such names is called Anthroponomastics. Personal names include first name, second name, surname and even sobriquets or pseudonyms. Udoye (2009)²⁴ suggests that names can express a wide range of social values like the beliefs about religion, social order and expectations of the parents from the child. As a result, names have a spirituality that is a powerful means of establishing and maintaining perceptions of individuals. Kaplan and Bernays (1997)²⁵ are of the view that names embed information in gender, era of birth and ethnicity. Thus, names reflect the value of male children over female children and how members of the society regard the world of male and female children.

²¹ Orji, Ogonna Chuks *Names from Africa: Their Origin, Meaning and Pronunciation*, Chicago:Johnson Pub. Co, 1972, P. 76

²² Abel E., 'Influence of Names on Career Choices in Medicine' *Name: Journal of Onomastics*, Vol.58, No. 2, 1 June 2010, p.65.

²³ Eruchalu N.M 'Language and Social Identity: The Significance of Sobriquets of Married Igbo Women' , in *The Humanities and Nigeria's Democratic experience* , A.B.C Chiegboka, C.E Nwadiwe, and E.C Umezina (eds), Nimo: Rex Charles, 2009, p. 416.

²⁴ Udoye Ifeoma 'A Semantic Classification of Awka Anthroponyms' Unpublished Masters Thesis Submitted to the Department of Linguistics, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, 2009, P.10

²⁵ Kaplan Justin and Bernays Anne , *The Language of Names: What We Call Ourselves* New York : Simon Press, 1997, p.1

Names are not mere tags of appellations but serve as deep expressions of hopes, family lineage, values, attitudes, aspirations and commentaries on life experience (Okafor et al 2008). Again, Okafor et al (2008) found that names are endowed with special meaning and ultimately have the ability to influence the behaviors, attitudes and emotions of the bearer. Accordingly, names persuade the girl-child to be gentle, weak and gracious. Therefore, names are a vital communicative resource and are the most important component of an individual's self-identity which represents status, occupation²⁶ and social identity.

1.3 Gender

According to Eitzen and Maxine (2000)²⁷, gender denotes a social category which refers to differences in female and male roles and the interlocking systems in which these roles are embedded. In line with the definition of the concept, it is apparent that gender influences the economic, social, political and cultural attributes associated with being a male or female. However, there is an erroneous view that gender only promotes women, but in reality, gender focuses on women and on the relationship between men and women, their roles, access to and control over resources, a division of labor, and needs. Therefore, gender is a social construct which is central in organizing principle of societies (FAO, 1997)²⁸.

Gender is applied to naming. Gender naming influences individuals to internalize and personalize cultural constructions which motivate the individual to construct an identity that is consistent with the name. According to Onukawa (2000)²⁹, Igbo names are classified under masculine, feminine and gender-neutral names. However, gender-specific names constitute more than 90 percent of Igbo names such as:

Table 1: Male names

Male Names	Meanings
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²⁷ Eitzen Stanley and Maxine Bacazinn *Social Problems*, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000, pp 247

²⁸ FAO 'Gender :Gender the Key to Sustainability and Food Security SD Dimensions, 1997, www.FAO.org/gender/gende.htm (accessed 12 August 2015)

²⁹ . Onukawa M.C., 'The Chi Concept in Igbo Gender Naming' *Africa*, Vol.70. No.1 2000 p.107.

Ugochukwu	God's special gift
Jidefor	Stand with the truth
Ugonna	Father's pride
Iloabuchi	Your enemy is not God
Madueke	Humans don't create except God

Table 2: Female names

Female Names	Meanings
Akwaugo	Precious daughter
Uzoamaka	The journey is good
Isioma	Good luck
Fumnanya	Love me
Ifeoma	Good thing

Table 3: Gender neutral names (also known as Unique names)

Gender Neutral Names	Meanings
Munachimso	I am with my God
Chisom	God is with me
Golibe	Rejoice
Yobachukwu	Ask God
Sochima	Only God knows

Onukawa (2000)³⁰ further illustrated that male names are associated with issues such as deities e.g. *Ala* (earth), *Anyanwu* (sun deity) *Eze* (king), concepts of greatness such as *Duru* (a great man of utility) and other mysterious phenomena like *Onwu* (death). While female names are associated with dainty issues like *Mmasinachi* (beauty is from God), *Ujunwa* (a child who has come in time of plenty or wealth), *Anuli* (happiness), Achebe

³⁰ Onukawa M.C., 'The Chi...' pp.107, 108

(1975) as cited by Onukawa (2000) who posits that if you want to know how life has treated an Igbo man, a good place to look at is in the names his children bear.

1.4 Sociological Influence on Naming

All over the world, people give names to their children. There is no human being without a name; however, in the traditional society Igbo, names occupy an important position. Mbabuike (1998:48)³¹ opines that:

2. Names are actual persons rendered in words and sounds. To exist without a name for the Igbo people is to be faceless, to be socially inconsequential, and to be without any social status. Personal names among the Igbos are identificatory, classificatory and declaratory.

A child is a rare and precious gift from God. Children are the pride of their parents. Consequently, great affection is given to them. A man with many children is seen as a rich and blessed person. Therefore, childbirth is regarded as a blessing and honor from God. That is why most Igbo families do not traditionally resort to either abortion or artificial family planning methods, (Nwaoga , 2013:706 -707)³². The premium placed on the child partly accounts for the high birth rate among the Igbo people. They believe also that money cannot buy children, as cited by Isiugo –Abanihe (1994)³³. Every child is given a name at birth. It assigns a personal identity to the bearer and marks him off as a separate entity in the family (Udeolisa, 2010:116)³⁴. Sociologically, names tell a lot about the organization of a society among various members of the family in relation to their immediate environment. Some names are a reflection of the societal circumstances and cultural situations (Mbabuike, 1996)³⁵.

1.5 Naming Ceremony

Naming is a very important aspect of Igbo culture. Child naming varies from culture to culture. When a child is born, there are many ceremonies which take place such as burial of umbilical cord, circumcision, first hair/nail cutting, teeth – cutting, etc., but

³¹ Mbabuike M.C, 'Cosmology of Igbo...' pp, 48

³² . Nwaoga, C.T, 'Socio-Religious Implications of Child Adoption in IgbolandSouth Eastern Nigeria' *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol 4, No.13, 2013,p.706

³³ Isiugo Abanihe, Ebigbola J.A, Adewuyi, 'Urban...' pp,484

³⁴ . Udeolisa U.E 'The Impact of Christian Baptism on Traditional Igbo Naming Ceremony' *Knowledge Review*, Vol.21, No 1 2010 p.115

³⁵ . Mbabuike M.C, 'Cosmology of Igbo...' pp, 48

the greatest one is naming ceremony (Offordile, 1998)³⁶. The naming ceremony is the most elaborate of all, and it has religious significance. The naming ceremony takes place on the twenty – eight day (7 native weeks) after birth. It is an important day in the life of the baby because the baby will be distinguished by the name (Uchegbue, 2010:160)³⁷.

Name giving is an exclusive right of the baby's father and grandfather which takes place at the obu (compound) of the child's father. The eldest member presides over the ceremony, and the child is lifted into the air. Water may be poured on the child to show that blessings will flow like water and the baby will be prayed for, then the father is asked to name the child. Presents are usually given to the child, and those present are feasted with palm wine, pounded yam meal and meat, (Offordile, 1998)

However, the elaborateness of celebration on the birth of a boy cannot be compared with that of a girl-child because of the place of the girl-child in our society, Ozumba, 2005)³⁸. She is seen as one who brings sadness rather than a joy to the family. Achufusi (1994)³⁹ admits that social traditions and deep-rooted religious and cultural beliefs make it unacceptable for the girl-child to express her opinion on social, family and personal issues.

According to Offordile (1996)⁴⁰, Igbo names always have a meaning, and fathers determine the name that is given to a child considering the four market days: Eke, Oye, Afo and Nkwo. Examples of names relating to the market days are Nweke, Nwafor, Nwankwo, Udoye. Some names also denote the preference for boys. Examples are *Nwanyimeole* "what can a woman do?", *Nwokedinma* "a male child is valuable", *Nwokediuko* "A male child is scarce", *Nnabuchi* "Father is the god", *Nnabugwu* "Father is honour", *Nnabuiife* "Father is my light", *Nnama* "Father knows", *Nnamefuna* "May my father live", *Nnanwenwa* "Father owns the child". Names are given in gratitude to God, the spirits and ancestors like *Chianu* "God hears", *Chkwudalu* "Thanks to God", *Chukwudiogo* "God is generous", *Chukwudum* "God leads me", *Chukwuka* "God is

³⁶ Offordile, E.P.O. *A pedigree...* pp, 30

³⁷ Uchegbue C.O, 'Infancy Rites among Igbo of Nigeria', *Research Journal of International Studies*, Vol 17, 2010, p.160.

³⁸ Ozumba Goddy 'Gender Sensitivity in Igbo Culture: A Philosophical Re-appraisal in *Quodlibet Journal*, Vol.7 No.2, 2005

³⁹ Achufusi, G. I. "Female Individuality and Assertiveness in the Novels of Ifeoma Okoye" in *Feminism in African Literature* (ed.) Helen Chukwuma, Enugu, New Generation Books, 1994, 159

⁴⁰ Offordile, E.P.O. *A pedigree...* pp, 40

mighty”, *Chukwunonso* “God is ever near”. They may be used to express certain basic ethical values or to convey some moral lessons. For example, *Ndubisi* “Life is supreme” and *Ndukaku* “life is greater than wealth”.

The purpose of the study is to examine the influence of names on the girl-child.

1.6 Methodology

1.6.1 Research design

The research design adopted in this study was a descriptive survey as a method of obtaining information from various persons to ascertain their views, opinions and perceptions regarding a situation, mainly through a questionnaire or personal interview (www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/43589-8.pdf)⁴¹. By using the design, the researcher was able to collect information from students in Anambra State University with a view of eliciting meanings from the names they are bearing.

1.6.2 Instrumentation

Simple interview score sheets were used by the researcher to gather data for the study. In the first instance, the researcher requested all the year one 2011/2012 students in the Faculty of Arts to write down their Igbo names with its meaning. With a question: ‘Which among the following factors influences the naming of a child?’. The criteria on which the selection was based are parental expectations, gender qualities and others such as kinship, material assets, toughness, strength, power, and greatness. The score sheet responses were based on the above question.

1.6.3 Respondents

The population consists of all the 2011/2012 year one students who attended Linguistics lectures.

1.6.4 Data analysis

Data were analyzed using frequencies.

1.6.5 Result and discussion

⁴¹ . Research Design and Data pp, 160 in www.sagepub.com/sitesdefaultfiles/upm-binaries/43589-8pdf. (accessed 12 August, 2015)

1.6.6 Table 4: Description of Factors that Influence Naming

S/N	Factors that Influence Naming	Frequency (Number)	Percentage (%)
1a	Parental expectations	95	47.5
1b	Gender qualities	75	37.5
1c	Others (toughness, strength, power, greatness)	30	15.0
	Total	200	100%

Table I above shows that out of the 3 categories, parental expectations 95 (47.5%) capture an overwhelming majority of influence in naming. Followed by gender qualities (37.5%), the others (kinship, material assets, strength) had 30 (15%) and showed low significance.

1.7 Discussion

1.7.1 Naming According to Parental Expectations

The result in table 4 indicates that parental aspiration of the child is potent enough to make the girl-child aspire to become a mother who is conscious of her femininity. This was established by the large responses as observed in Table 4a (47.5%).

Examples are:

Table 5 Names that reflect Motherhood

Names	Meanings
Nnebugo	Mother is an adornment

Nnebuihe	Mother is important
Nnebuogo	Mother is a gift
Nnedinma	Being a mother is good
Nnediugwu	Motherhood is the source of prestige
Nnediuto	Being a mother is pleasant
Nnejinma	Mother holds beauty
Nnemeka	Ever caring mother
Nnemelie	Motherhood has triumphed
Nnenne	Mother of my mother
Nnenwkele	Thanks are due to mothers
Nneohe	A mother is a nanny
Nneoma	A loving mother
Nnebuchi	Mother is god-given
Nnebuisi	Nothing is more important than motherhood
Nwanyisonde	Mother is not the head of a family
Nwanyibuno	The woman is the home

Table 6 Names that reflect the importance of a husband

Names	Meanings
Dibugwu	The husband is the wife's prestige
Dibuihe	Husband is important
Dibumma	It is the husband that makes a woman beautiful
Dibugo	A woman's glory lies in her husband
Dibuikem	My husband is my strength

Didiuto	Having a husband is sweet
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From the tables above, it is obvious that marriage and procreation have a pride of place in the Igbo land. This is in line with Ifeka (2003) who earlier pointed out that the traditional role of women is to bear children and take care of the domestic front. This simple research lends great evidence to the influence of naming. No wonder Ifeka (2003)⁴² emphasized that girls are cultured early for eventual marriage, because marriage, as far as Igbo culture is concerned, is a protective **amour** against disrespect and unwholesome remarks against her person, so every girl's desire is to get married. Similarly, Nwoye (2011)⁴³ states that marriage in Igbo society is strictly for producing heirs and for the purpose of inheritance. Marriage, according to Nwoye (2011), has no age limit; therefore, a marriage agreement could be conducted when the girl child is born to ensure friendship among families involved and prevent bride price from any future suitor. This may be the reason why the girl child is given names which project the importance of marriage and husband to remind her of her gender roles and responsibilities. Again, the importance attached to marriage can be exemplified using Onyeka Onwenu's (a popular musician in Nigeria from Igbo land) brief stint with politics as a Chairmanship aspirant. She lamented that the decision to maintain her maiden name created a lot of confusion for her to the extent that even her marital status was questioned just because she retained her maiden name (Nwogu, 2004)⁴⁴. In the same way, Okemgbo et al (2002)⁴⁵ observe that women's economic status are seen as a by-product of the achievement of their husbands since men control, dominate and distribute resources according to their fancies. Therefore, bearing such names above, women tend to have less imagination, less ambition, and a greater apprehension that they will not succeed without their husbands (Obiefuna, 2010)⁴⁶. Names thus influence the life of a girl-child because names determine the behavior of the bearer, (Ayekum, 2006:20). This is well summed up

⁴² Ifeka, O. R., 'Womanhood...' pp.12

⁴³ Nwoye Chinwe 'Igbo Cultural and religious Worldview: An Insiders Perspective, *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, Vol.3, No 9 September 2011 p.310

⁴⁴ Nwogu V., 'Chief Onyeka Onwenu' in *Women, Marginalization and Politics in Nigeria*. J.Ibrahim and A. Salihu (eds), 2004, p.245

⁴⁵ Okemgbo Christain, Adekunbi Omideyi and Clifford Odimegwu 'Prevalence, Patterns and Correlates of Domestic Violence in Selected Igbo Communities of Imo State Nigeria' *African Journal of Reproductive Health*, Vol.6 No.2 2002 pp101

⁴⁶ Obiefuna B.A., 'Envisioning...' pp, 182

by Cleverland (1968:48) as cited in Oluikpe (2004:385)⁴⁷ who reported a dialogue between Alexander the Great and one of his erring soldiers who is his namesake. Alexander the Great warned the erring soldier that he should either change his name or change his ways. This implies that those called Alexander are serious minded and industrious people. Therefore, names spur on the bearers to deserve their name. Pelham et al (2002) as cited by Abel (2010)⁴⁸ maintain that names do in fact influence important life outcomes, including career choice. Names influence not only the decision to become a doctor but also the medical specialty doctors decide to practice. The Opinion of Abel (2010) is in agreement with the observation made by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, as claimed Abuja (2004)⁴⁹ who stated that names influence an individual greatly. Correspondingly, Mbonu (2010:70)⁵⁰ observes that certain female names remain connected to structures that perpetuate women's subordination in the Igbo society, unlike the names were given to men which show them as being superior (Ezeanya, 1976:106)⁵¹. Examples of such names are:

Table 7: Names that reflect the perception of the male child in the Igbo society

Names	Meanings
Nnabuike	My father is my strength
Nnachim	My father protects me
Nnadinopulu	Father deserves respect
Nnaku	Wealthy father
Nnamala	Father knows the traditions of the people
Nnannedu	Father leads
Nnanwenwa	Father owns the children
Nnanyelude	Father gives fame
Nnaezumako	Father has taught me wisdom

⁴⁷ . Oluikpe, B 'Igbo Personal Names: A Generalized, Pragmatic Interpretation' in Kola Owolabi and Ademola Dasylva (eds) *Forms and Functions of English, and Indigenous Language*, Ibadan, Group Publishers, 2004, pp. 385

⁴⁸ Abel E., 'Influence ...' pp, 65

⁴⁹ . Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, 2009 Abuja, p.150.

⁵⁰ Mbonu, Caroline N. *Handmaid: The Power of Names in Theology and Society* Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2010, pp. 70.

⁵¹ Ezeanya S.N 'Dignity of Man in the Traditional Religion of Africa' , *Unpublished Article*. University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 1976, pp.106

From Table 6 names above, it is obvious that the male child is seen as the one who is knowledgeable and deserves respect through the names he bears. These perceptions are captured in Achufusi (1994:159)⁵² who posits that boys are made to see themselves as superior, stronger, more important and indispensable. Unlike the names were given to girls which make them see their sex-oriented functions which are marriage, childbearing and rearing because it is the only avenue for them to earn prestige and respect, (Okemgbo et al, 2002)⁵³.

1.7.2 Naming according to Gender Qualities

Cao (2010)⁵⁴ observes that gendered naming contributes to the gender identities and gender roles as observed in Table 4. Female identity is coupled with her physical appearance and gentle disposition. Even though the response was low, it was observed that gender qualities are important in understanding the traditional belief of Igbo. One of such gender roles is instilling beauty consciousness in the girl-child by applying eye-pencil on her eyelids, plaiting her hair, applying all kinds of creams to make her tender and attractive. This is supported by these examples:

Table 8: Names that reflect gender qualities

Names	Meanings
Nwamma	A beautiful girl child
Adabuaku	Daughter is wealth
Adoma	A good girl
Ifeoma	Beautiful thing
Nwanyiudo	A woman of peace
Nwaola	A beautiful girl-child
Obiamaka	A gentle and good natured girl-child
Obioma	A girl child that has a good heart
Ochomma	A girl is a beauty seeker

⁵² Achufusi, G. I. "Female..." 159

⁵³ Okemgbo Christain, Adekunbi Omideyi and Clifford Odimegwu 'Prevalence,...' pp 182

⁵⁴ Cao, G, 'Shall I Name her "Wisdom" or "Elegance"? Naming in China' *Name: Journal of Onomastics*, Vol. 59, No.2 1 September 2011, p.164.

Ogo	Kind girl
Agbomma	A strikingly beautiful female child
Agwabummanwany	Good character is the beauty of a woman
Ahumma	Beautiful body
Adabuaku	A daughter brings wealth

From Table 8 above, it is obvious that the girl child is given names which will project the feminine feature which is beauty and also portray her as a source of wealth to the family through the paying of bride-price now known as bride-wealth during the marriage (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1995:151)⁵⁵. This is contrary to the names were given to the male child. The male child is given names which extol manliness and braveness. Such names are:

Table 9: names showing the gender attributes of the males child

Names	Meanings
Odum	A brave man
Odogwu	A warrior
Odumegwu	A feared person
Offor	A sacred tree with spiritual authority
Okosisi	A mighty tree that provides a shade

The names in Tables 8 & 9 above depict the position of men and women in the Igbo society. Names associated with the male child shows him to be a brave and fearless individual while the female is portrayed as being beauty consciousness and cool-headed. This is in line with Onukawa (2000)⁵⁶ who earlier stated that male names are associated with greatness while female names are associated with dainty issues which make them

⁵⁵ . Isiugo Abanibe, Ebigbola J.A, Adewuyi, 'Urban...' pp 485

⁵⁶ Onukawa M.C., 'The Chi...' pp,107, 108

seen as the enjoyer of wealth which is why women are called *Oriaku* ‘a woman who enjoys the wealth of her husband’ (Ozumba, 2005)⁵⁷. Similarly, Ashley (1996) earlier stated that personal names disclose social values and expectations of the parents from the child. This fact gives credence to Choge (2006)⁵⁸ who asserts that culture has great influence on naming in Africa. Above all, the names given to male children show the place of the male child in the Igbo society as the head of the home.

1.7.3 Naming according to Strength, Power, Greatness, Toughness

Surprisingly, it was observed that a low percentage response identifying strength, power, and toughness was recorded in Table 4c above. Such virtues are accorded to men and rarely to women. This is well summed up by Okonji (1975) as cited by Ifeka (2003:23)⁵⁹ that women are “a deprived group, incapable of giving focus and direction to cultural development, of low status, economically dependent on men, with few legal rights and no political responsibilities”. An example of names given to women in respect to the belief is *Nwanyimeole* “what can a woman do?” and *Agunwanyi* “a strong woman”. However, names depicting strength, power, greatness and toughness are abundant for the male child and extremely few for the girl child. Such as:

Table 10: Names that reflect strength, power, greatness and toughness for the male child

Names	Meanings
Agu	Strong fighter
Agubuzo	The lion that leads the way
Agudiegwu	A courageous man
Agueze	A brave son of a king
Akaogu	War leader
Akpu	A powerful man
Aguiyi	A brave man
Agujiobi	Lion hearted

⁵⁷ Ozumba Goddy ‘Gender ...

⁵⁸ Choge, S, ‘Towards...’ pp.1

⁵⁹ Ifeka, O. R , ‘Womanhood...’ pp.12

From the names above, it is obvious that the girl child is considered to be fickle and weak, therefore, cannot bear such names which may be the cause of subjugation of the Igbo woman. Abel (2010)⁶⁰ earlier stated that names influence the behavior, attitude, and emotion of the bearer. No wonder the male child assume the first place in everything because of the name he bears. But for the girl child, she bears names that portray her as weak and immature which is why she is being subjected to all manner of violence by the men.

1.8 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Seminars and workshops should be organized to sensitize the girl-child on the need to overcome parental aspirations of becoming a beautiful housewife. They should agitate to be empowered educationally, socially, and economically.
2. Names communicate wishes and dreams of the name given; therefore, parents should begin at an early age to counsel the girl-child on the need to model her life towards some successful women academic like Prof. Aku Anagbogu, Prof. Alice Ndu, and Prof. Alele William
3. Names reflect the attitude and belief of a culture. Certain cultural practices like male preference and early marriage need to be improved upon to enable the girl-child to become empowered.
4. Future research needs to continue in this line of inquiry to investigate further in other areas of naming which may hinder the girl-child from enhancement and empowerment.

It is, therefore, crucial that campaign on re-orientation of gender issues be embarked upon to counter negative perception of names by the girl-child for the attainment of gender equality in areas of education, health, agriculture, and commerce.

1.9 Conclusion

⁶⁰ Abel ,E 'Influence of ...' pp, 65

The study investigated Igbo anthroponyms and the challenges of the girl-child. Based on the findings, the following conclusion is drawn. Igbo personal names demonstrate and capture the culture and philosophy of the people. From the names studied, it is evident that names give information about the people, their belief, history and their universe. Igbo names express the aspirations of the parents for their children, and it is made known through the names they give. Igbo names express joy, sorrow, cultural factors, and wealth which control an individual's destiny.

Traditional names are important in the modern Igbo society because of the gradual loss of the culture through Christianity and modernization. In some parts of Igboland, Christianity and modernization have taken the better part of such communities. People do not want to be associated with any form of traditional names, some have converted to Christianity and so have given up their names. Those called *Nwanyioma* 'a good-natured woman', *Nwanyiudo* 'a woman of peace', *Nwamma* 'a child of beauty' have taken up Christian names like *Chioma* "God is good", *Chukwubudo* "God bring peace" and *Chukwubumma* "God is beauty itself" a name.

Lack of communication with the outside world by the communities influences gender exclusion in Igbo homes. This implies that the higher level of lack of communication in those communities, the lower the level of gender inclusion. Positive communication exposes to sharing ideas, feelings and opinions. Men will begin to see the positive side of the names the girl child bears and appreciate her as the one who is capable of undertaking difficult tasks just to the men. Women will now be allowed to participate in decision-making at home and at the community level. Communication is fundamental for unity and gender inclusiveness. It means that men and women can interact honestly, express their feelings and be patient enough to listen to each other. This will breed unity, confidence in marriage and improve the overall performance of the female gender in the society.

Additionally, when people give up their traditional name, some important values are lost. Parents who give their children names associated with husband and motherhood do so in order to instill the need for their girl child to get married and stay married. In Igboland, it is believed that when a girl child is bestowed with such a name, divorce will never cross such a child's mind. This may be the reason why the divorce rate is low in the

traditional Igbo society. A girl who is named *Dibugwu* ‘the husband is the wife’s prestige’ cannot afford to divorce her husband because of an Igbo adage that says *afo a gulu onye na-achoje ya* [one’s name plays an important role in one’s destiny].

Also, when a girl child is named *Nwanyiudo* ‘woman of peace’, the community expect her to grow up and become a peacemaker in the family. If such a girl is troublesome, people tend to mock the individual who bears such a name.

Low self-esteem influences the girl-child to believe that she is only an object of beauty because of the name she bears. Girls who perceive themselves as such could have performance problems in academic activities. They could have difficulty concentrating on their academic work as a result of their obsession with beauty. This obsession could impact academic performance such as poor result which could lead to expulsion from school. When this happens, the family of the girl will easily marry the girl off since they believe that a beautiful girl has no brains for academic work. She is only good at domestic work. It is necessary to sensitize the girl-child through counseling on the need to make efforts on other aspects of life so that she will have a positive life outcome.