

Legality and Acceptability of Child Adoption in Relation to Childlessness among Christian Couples in Nigeria: A Case Study of Warri Diocese of Anglican Communion in Delta State

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the legality and acceptability of child adoption in relation to childlessness among Christian couples in Nigeria using Warri Diocese of Anglican Communion in Delta State as a case study. This study becomes imperative considering the various attempts Christian couples with the challenge of childlessness have made to cushion the traumatic effect they go through to have their biological children. It uses both the quantitative and qualitative approaches to obtain data. The population comprises all childless Christian couples in Warri Diocese of Anglican Communion. A sample of one hundred and twenty respondents is purposively selected for the study. The instruments used for data collection are structured questionnaire and interview schedule. Out of the 120 copies of questionnaire administered on the respondents, only 100 copies were successfully retrieved and used for the study. The data are presented in tables and analysed using simple percentage and frequency counts. Although the idea of child adoption is considered oblivious by some, this study enthrones the legality and acceptability of the concept on a prominence making it a viable option for Christian couples with the challenge of childlessness.

Keywords: *Child adoption, childlessness, Christian couples, infertility, Warri Diocese of Anglican Communion, adoption law*

INTRODUCTION

Child adoption is the legal process whereby a person obtains judicial or administrative authorization to take the child of another person as his own and parental rights and obligations are permanently transferred from the child's natural parents to the adopter¹. Under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child 1989, adoption is

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¹ Ufeli E. (2015). *Important Facts about Child Adoption in Nigeria: Part 1*. Available online at: <https://connectnigeria.com/articles/2015/08/important-facts-about-child-adoption-in-nigeria-part-1/>

recognized as one of the forms of alternative care for children who have been temporarily or permanently deprived of their family environment, and for children who are unable to remain in their family environment.² Adoption touches upon the adopted child's status; hence it affects his legal rights, welfare and obligations.³ Thus, adoption confers on the child all the rights of the adoptive parent(s) as if the child had been born to them in lawful wedlock as well as imposes on the adoptive parents, parental responsibility equivalent to that of the natural parents of the child. The Child's Right Act (2003) passed into law in the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja) defines a child as person who has not attained the age of eighteen (18) years. However, according to Section II of the Children and Young Person Act enacted in Eastern, Western and Northern regions, "child" means a person under the age of fourteen years, while "young person" means a person who has attained the age of fourteen years and is under the age of seventeen years⁴. Obviously, Christian couple is the union of a man and a woman who are Christians and had their marriage solemnized according to the ordinance of the church. Christian marriage is characterized and governed by Christian principles. The major aim of this study was to examine the legality and acceptability of child adoption in relation to childlessness among Christian couples in Nigeria. Restrictively, Warri Diocese of Anglican Communion in Delta State was adopted for empirical examination.

Child Adoption in Nigeria

The first written law of child adoption in Nigeria was the Adoption law (1965) of the defunct Eastern Region of Nigeria⁵ which followed the controversial Adoption Edict (1958) by Eastern House of Assembly which was rejected by the house. Prior to this, individual families, organizations and various missionary societies sponsored the maintenance, education and general welfare of orphans and destitutes. The extended family system in Nigeria also participated in taking care of juveniles and orphans. Adoption in Nigeria is a statutory creation as well as matter under the State legislative list. Therefore, until recently there was no Federal law on

² See Art. 20 (1) & (2). Other alternative child-care devices include fostering, kafalah (both recognized by Art. 20(3) of the Convention), guardianship and custodianship.

³ E. I. Nwogugu, *Family Law in Nigeria*, (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1990), p.312.

⁴ The Children and Young Persons Act was initially enacted as an Ordinance in 1943. It has been subsequently amended through several legislation (i.e. Ordinances 44 of 1945; 27 of 1947; 16 of 1950 as well as the Laws of Nigeria 131 of 1954; 47 of 1955.) and Order in Council 22 of 1946). Intended as a national law (Cap 32 laws of the Federation of Nigeria and Lagos 1958), provisions were made for their adoption as Regional laws and subsequently as state laws.

⁵ Herein after referred to as "Adoption Law Eastern States" which was inherited by all the States that were later created out of Eastern Region namely: Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Anambra, Cross-River, Ebonyi, Enugu and Rivers State.

adoption in Nigeria. The 1965 Adoption law passed by the Old Eastern Region applied to the old Anambra, Imo and Rivers States⁶. In 1979, Anambra State re-enacted the Eastern Nigeria Law⁷ which now applies to Anambra and Enugu States. Presently, almost all the States of the Southern part of Nigeria have adoption statute, considering its immense benefits which include providing a solution to the age long problem of childlessness that is plaguing mankind. Child adoption, therefore, from all indication appears to be the only remedy at the disposal of childless couples who either have infertility as a challenge or have passed child bearing age. The adopted children take care of them in old age and also inherit their death. The fear of the adopted children returning to their original parents after many years of adoption has been completely eliminated by the Adoption law. However, due to noticeable difference, none of the State in northern part of Nigeria has any legislation or law on adoption. There is no legislation on adoption in northern States because the States are mostly inhabited and controlled by Muslim, whose religious belief do not accept or allow adoption⁸.

Conversely, there was a ray of hope in 2003 when the National Assembly enacts Child's Right Act. The Act aims at providing comprehensive and uniform legislation on the rights and welfare of children throughout the country and declaring that its provisions supersede any other statutory provisions on the same subject matter. However, such an objective as noble as it may be cannot be directly achieved by the instrumentality of the Act. As observed early, the Act is only enforceable in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, but not in the component States of the Federation⁹. As it may be, most of the States of the federation have already put in action the machinery for the re-enactment and implementation of the provisions of the Act in their respective unit. The adoption process can be intrusive and cumbersome to couples who want to adopt. Such couples are advised to seek information from child adoption agency or services. Kigbu, Salome Konkat¹⁰ giving an insight on Nature and Procedure of Child Adoption under Nigerian Law states that in Nigeria, adoption may be effected either under

⁶ *Nigeria Weekly Law Report 2002*) 12 NWLR, pt 782 p. 652.

⁷ *These State have been further broken down into Anambra, Enugu, Imo, Abia, Rivers and Bayelsa States*

⁸ *See the Holy Koran, Sura Ahzab XXXIII vs. 4-5. Cf. the Holy Bible, Genesis 15 vs. 3-4. Islam has developed its own concept known as kafalah under which a child who cannot be cared for by his biological parents may be taken by another family to live with them permanently but the child is not entitled to adopt the family name nor to inherit from the family*

⁹ *Especially the Northern part of the country who in my opinioin have more reason for adoption due to uncontrollable birth rate.*

¹⁰ *Kigbu, Salome Konkat , Child Adoption: Nature and Procedure under Nigerian Law. University of Jos: Faculty of Law, Vol. 2.*

statutory law or customary law. However, as with all adoption procedures, rules differ from State to State. For example, adoptive parents must foster their children for at least three months in Lagos, but must foster for at least one year in Akwa Ibom. Abuja allows adoption if one of the parent is a Nigerian. The institution of adoption is wholly a statutory creation; common law does not provide for nor recognize adoption¹¹. Further, the social welfare office of the State where the child is located is considered the adoption authority. The application for adoption originates from the social welfare office of the State where the child is located. The Government office responsible for adoptions in Nigeria is the magistrate court of the State where the child is located. In most Nigerian States, the adoption process begins when an application for an adoption order is made in accordance with local requirements and submitted to the registrar of the competent court. There are no standard fees charged apart from small filing fees to the court.

Role of the Court in Child Adoption Procedure

The court has no little role to play in the adoption process of a child within and outside the shores of the country. First, an application for an adoption order must be made in the prescribed form and submitted to the registrar of the competent court. On the receipt of the application, the court will appoint a guardian for the juvenile, to represent him in the adoption proceedings. The person to be appointed the guardian is the chief welfare officer or the welfare officer in charge of the area where the juvenile resides. It could also be a probation officer or some other person suitably qualified in the opinion of the court for the assignment. A parent or person having parental rights will not be appointed guardian.

It is the function of a guardian to investigate the circumstances relevant to the proposed adoption and to report confidentially in writing to the court. The applicant for an adoption order must inform the Chief Welfare Officer of his intention to adopt the juvenile at least three months before the order is made. Moreover, for at least three consecutive months immediately preceding an adoption order, the juvenile must have been continuously in the care and possession of the applicant. This is intended to give both the applicant and the juvenile an opportunity of being familiar with each other. After their three months' stay together, the applicant will be able to decide if he is sufficiently interested in the particular juvenile to adopt him or her. On the other hand, where the juvenile has attained the age of discretion he will be in a position, after staying with the applicant, to express his approval or disapproval of the proposed

¹¹ Kigbu, Salome Konkat , *Child Adoption: Nature and Procedure under Nigerian Law*. University of Jos: Faculty of Law, Vol. 2

adoption arrangement. An adoption order may be made upon the application of two spouses authorizing them jointly to adopt a juvenile; but in no other case shall an adoption order authorize more than one person to adopt a juvenile. Any child above the age of one year may be voluntarily given out or through application by this parents.

Restriction on the making of Adoption orders

An order shall not be made in respect of a juvenile unless-

- i. The applicant, or in the case of joint applicants, one of them is not less than twenty-five years old and is at least twenty-one years older than the juvenile
- ii. The applicant and the juvenile are resident in the State;
- iii. The juvenile had been in the care of the applicant for a period of at least three consecutive months immediately proceeding the date on which the order is made;
- iv. The applicant has at least three months before the making of the order informed the probation Officer of his intention to adopt the juvenile.

An adoption order shall not be made in respect of a female juvenile where the sole applicant is a male unless there are exceptional circumstances which the court thinks justify the making of such an order. An abandoned child shall not be taken into custody by any person or any institution without reference to the Police and the Social Development Department charged with the responsibility of the treatment of such children. The social officer has the duty to arrange for formal adoption or placement of any abandoned child in the State. The Adoption Law stipulates that any person who fails, to comply with the requirement of this subsection shall be liable to a fine of one thousand naira (N1,000.00). In the case of an individual, the fine is five thousand naira (N5,000. 00) while in the case of an organization, six months imprisonment or both. However, this section of the requirements has become obsolete and ineffective. It lacks the substance to serve as deterrent to anybody.

Consents to Adoption

Where a married man or woman is the sole applicant for an adoption order, the court may if it thinks fit, refuse to make the order unless the consent of the wife or husband, as the case may be, to be the making of the order is first obtained. Where it appears to the court that any person other than the father or mother or relative of a juvenile has any rights or obligations in respect of the juvenile under any order of a court or any agreement or under customary law the court may, if it thinks fit, refuse to make the adoption order unless the consent of that person is first obtained. It shall be the duty of the Probation Officer on an application for an adoption order in respect of a juvenile to

prepare a report to assist the court in determining whether any person who is not a parent or relative of the juvenile has any rights or obligations in respect of that juvenile and whether the consent of any such person ought first to be obtained. Any consent under this section may be given either-unconditionally; or subject to conditions with respect to the religious persuasion in which the juvenile is to be brought up. Without knowing the identity of the applicant for the adoption order, and where consent so given by anyone is subsequently withdrawn on the grounds that he does not know the identity of the applicant, the consent shall be dated for the purposes of this section as having been unreasonably withheld.

Functions of the Court in Child Adoption

Before making an adoption order the court shall be satisfied that every consents required by section 4 of the Adoption Law which has not been dispensed with has been obtained, and that every person who has given his consent understands the nature and effect of the adoption order for which the application is made. The order, if made, will be for the welfare of the juvenile, due consideration for this purpose being given to the wishes of the juvenile having regard to his age and understanding; and the applicant has not received or agreed to receive, and no person has made or agrees to make or give to the applicant any payment or other reward in consideration of the adoption other than what the court may approve. The court in an adoption order may impose such terms and conditions as the court may think fit, and in particular, may require the adopter by bond or otherwise to make for the juvenile such provision (if any) as, in the opinion of the court, is just and expedient.

Subject to the provisions of section 4 of Adoption Law, the court may, upon any application for an adoption order, postpone the determination of the application and make an interim order giving the custody of the juvenile to the applicant for a period not exceeding two years by way of a probationary period upon such terms as the court thinks fit as regard provision for the maintenance, education and supervision of the welfare of the juvenile and otherwise. The court shall impose as conditions under subsection (1) of this section that the juvenile shall be under the supervision of such welfare officer as the Commissioner may appoint; and that the juvenile shall not be taken out of the state without the consent of the court. The consents to the making of an adoption order which are required by section 4 of this law shall be required to be making of an interim order and the power of the court to dispense with any such consent shall apply in the case of an interim order as it applies in the case of an adoption order. An interim order shall not be made in any case where the making of an adoption order would be unlawful under section 3 of this Law. An interim order shall not be deemed to be an adoption order within the meaning of this Law.

Children Who May Be Adopted

In consonant with the definition of “child” in section 277 of the Act, any child to be adopted must be under the age of eighteen years. It also provides for two categories of children under the age of eighteen years, children who may be adopted. In the first category are children whose parent had abandoned them or where there are no surviving parents, the guardians; consent is sought for their adoption. Where a child’s parents are ill-equipped economically, socially, psychologically or other wise to take care of the child, they may voluntarily give up the child for adoption¹². For example, a teenager probably a female who becomes a single parent while in school or learning a trade and cannot at the same time cope with the responsibilities of child-rearing may give up the child for adoption¹³. One must not, however, lose sight of the risks inherent in separating a less-than-one-year-old child outright from his biological mother. For this reason, it is suggested that there should be a provision to the effect that, unless exceptional circumstances are shown, a child must be at least one year old before the parent(s) can voluntarily offer him for adoption. The second category is a child who is abandoned, neglected or persistently abused or ill-treated and there are compelling reasons in the interest of the child why he should be adopted. Adoption of a child under this category does not require parental consent.

Persons Who May Adopt

Child adoption is not open to anybody who feels like adopting, there are provisions spelt out in section 129 of the Act for those who may want to apply for an adoption order. They are:

- i. Married couples where each of them has attained the age of twenty-five years and there is an order authorizing them jointly to adopt a child; or
- ii. A married person, if he has obtained the consent of his spouse or
- iii. A single person, if he has attained the age of thirty-five years provided
- iv. That the adopter or joint adopters shall be person(s) found to be suitable to adopt the child by the appropriate investigating officers¹⁴.

A sole female applicant can adopt a male child¹⁵ happily enough; the Act has redressed the imbalance by extending the prohibition to both male and female applicants alike¹⁶.

¹² Ufeli E. (2015). *Important Facts about Child Adoption in Nigeria: Part 1*. Available online at: <https://connectnigeria.com/articles/2015/08/important-facts-about-child-adoption-in-nigeria-part-1/>

¹³ *Ibid*

¹⁴ Section 129 (d) *Child’s Right Act, 2003*.

¹⁵ Section 3 (2) *Adoption Law Lagos State; s 4 (2) Adoption Law Eastern States*

¹⁶ *Adoption of Children under the Child’s Right Act, P. 10*

The provisions of the Act pertaining to the age of the applicant(s) for adoption are rather incoherent. Whilst section 129(a)(1) states that where married couples are joint applicants for adoption each of them must have attained the age of twenty-five years Section 131(1) (a) requires only one of them to have attained that age who, in addition, must be at least twenty-one years older than the child. As an illustration; H (aged twenty-five) and W (aged twenty-three) jointly apply for the adoption of C (aged two). Going by section 129 of the Child's Right Act, 2003 the couples are not eligible to adopt jointly, as W has not attained the age of twenty-five, but by virtue of section 131, they can adopt, as one of them (H) has attained the requisite age. Besides, a strict interpretation of the provisions of section 129 will result in absurdity in the sense that H and W cannot adopt jointly under section 129(a) because W is under-aged; H alone can adopt with the consent of W by virtue of section 129(b). Similarly, whilst section 129(c) provides that a single person applying for adoption must have attained the age of thirty-five years, by section 131(1)(a) such an applicant merely needs to attain the age of twenty-five years, provided he is twenty-one years older than the child to be adopted. In as much as it seems to us that the word "thirty-five" contained in section 131(1)(a) must have a mistake; the law is well settled that where a word used in statute is clear and unambiguous, it should be given its natural meaning¹⁷.

Residence and Nationality Required For Adoption

There are certain guidelines to follow as regards the residence and nationality required for child adoption. For instance, both the child and the applicant must be resident in the State where the application is made and the applicant must have been so resident for at least five years¹⁸. Before an adoption order will be made or honoured. Furthermore, Nigerian law requires that a parent-child relationship be established before the court decision can be considered final. Each State determines the length of time it takes to establish the parent-child relationship¹⁹. However, in the case of joint applicants, there is confusion in that whilst paragraph(a) of section 131(1) prescribes that "both or, at least, one of them" must be resident in the same state where the child resides, paragraph (b) requires "both of them" to have been so resident for a period of at least five years²⁰. In England, it has been held that, *prima facie*, residence involves some degree of permanence²¹. In Nigeria, it happens most often that a citizen leaves his

¹⁷ *Adoption of Children under the Child's Right, Act P. 9*

¹⁸ *Section 131 (1)(b) and (c) Child's Right Act, 2003*

¹⁹ <http://adopt.com/nigeria/index.html>

²⁰ *Section 131 (1)(b) and (c) Child's Right Act, 2003 p13*

²¹ *Brokelmann V Barr. (1971) 2 Q.B 602, 611-612; Re-Adoption Application No. 52 of 1951 (1952) ch. 16. contrast. Matalon V Matalon (1952) 1 ALL ER 1025 P. 233.*

State of origin and moves to another State like the Igbo clergy in the Diocese of Warri where they take up employment or their wives practise a profession or trade²². It is obvious that they reside most of the time in the Delta State where they earn their living, they occasionally visit their country home and after some time they return to the place of their work. However, they pay tax rate, commission, development levies, church dues and tithes in both States registers and participates in general elections and discharges other civic responsibilities in either State in this scenario. It is submitted that such a Nigerian resident in two States may therefore apply for an adoption order either in his state of origin or in the State where he resides and works²³.

As regard nationality, an adoption order shall not be made in respect of a child unless the applicants are citizens or, in the case of a joint application, both applicants are citizens of Nigeria²⁴. These processes should not in any way discourage prospective adoptive parents, considering the benefits and the joy the presence of the child will bring to the family given the fact that long-term inability to conceive a child can evoke significant feelings of loss.

Child Adoption in Delta State

Delta State is not an exception to the practice of child adoption. The laws of the State give recognition to the 2003 Child's Right Act, part XII that makes abundant provisions for the regulation of adoption in Nigeria enacted by the National Assembly. Recently, the State Government through the Ministry for Women Affairs in Delta State released 35 children for adoption in January and December 2011 period. The Commissioner, Betty Efekodha, says the ministry received 110 applications for adoption during the period. According to him, "scouting letters" had been issued to the prospective adoptive parents²⁵. The commissioner said a Modern Children's Home for abandoned and lost children would soon be inaugurated by the State government. "Efforts are also being made towards re-uniting the lost and abandoned children with their families; there are currently 10 of such children in the home," she added. In 2007, the ministry released 28 children for adoption and another set of 18 children in 2008.

Adoption Provisions of the Child's Right Act 2003

It is imperative to note that the recent increased desire by Nigeria childless couples

²² *Principles of Family Law P. 890*

²³ *Section 7 Lagos Edict*

²⁴ *Section 131 (1) (d). Child's Right Act 2003.*

²⁵ *dailytimes.com.ng/article/Delta-state-releases-35-children-adoption accessed 4-6-12*

or single parents to resort to adoption as a last remedy has made the need to appraise the adequacy of adoption provisions under the recently enacted Child's Act 2003 necessary. It is worthy of mention that, many people from different quarters in the past had been clamoring for review of our adoption laws. In response to the call for reviewing of our various state Adoption laws, the Federal Government in 2003 enacted the Child's Act, which made elaborate provisions for adoption of children. The adoption provisions of the Child's Right Act 2003 began with the establishment of the adoption services of a kind that is novel in the history of adoption legislation in Nigeria. Specifically, the Act²⁶ provides that the State Government and the Federal Government Shall, for the purpose of adoption, establish and maintain each State and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja respectively, a service designed to meet the needs of a child who has been or may be adopted; Parents and guardians of such child; and persons who have adopted or who may adopt a child. Further, the Act provides under section 126 that a prospective adopter shall apply to the court in such form as may be prescribed and shall be accompanied with:-

Where the applicants are married couples, their marriage certificate or a sworn declaration of the marriage. The birth certificate or sworn declaration of age of each applicant two passport photographs of each applicant, a medical certificate of the fitness of the applicant from a government hospital and such other requirement and information as the court may require for the purpose of the adoption.

Subsection (2) further provides that on receipt of an application under subsection (1) of this section, the court shall order an investigation to be conducted by a child development officer or a supervisor officer and such other persons as the court may determine to enable the court to assess the suitability of the applicants as an adopter and of the child to be adopted. These stringent provisions of the Act concerning the assessment of the suitability of the applicant is very praiseworthy, as the need to thoroughly scrutinize the personality of the would-be adopter cannot be over emphasized, the adoption order once granted has far reaching legal effects. Again, the Child's Right Act of 2003, apparently, borrows a leaf from Hurst committee observations in England, which provides under section 126 (3), "that the court shall in reaching a decision relating to the adoption of a child have regard to all the circumstances the consideration being given to, including the need to safeguard and promote the welfare and the best interest of the child throughout the childhood of the child; and ascertaining as far

²⁶ Act 151 Section 125 (1) of Child's Right Act, 2003, CAP C50 Law of Federation of Nigeria 2003

as practicable, the wishes and feelings of the child regarding the decision and giving consideration to those wishes and feelings having regard to the age and understanding of the child". It is submitted that if the above section of the Act is well implemented by the government authorities involved in adoption of children, it will no doubt go a long way to guarantee the security and interest of the child to be adopted. Section 126 of the Act like the various previous State enactment on adoption, equally made the consent of the parents of the child to be adopted mandatory, in the absence of the parents, the consent of the guardian is necessary. The reason for parental consent is not farfetched, this prevents the parent of the child or guardian from wanting to retrieve the child from the adopter in future.

Secondly, under the Act, a married person who obtained the consent of his or her spouse may also apply for adoption order. Thirdly, a single person who has attained the age of thirty-five years may be granted adoption order provided the child is of the same sex as the person who has applied for adoption. The Act further provides in section 129(d) that in all the above specified paragraphs, the adopter or adopters shall be persons found to be suitable to adopt the child in question by the appropriate investigating officer.

Fourthly, section S131(1) (b) (c) provides that the applicant or in the case of joint application both or at least, one of them and the child must be resident in the same State. The applicant must have been so resident for at least a period of 5 years. The Act equally makes it mandatory that the applicants must be citizens of Nigeria and the child must also have been in the care of the applicant for a period of at least three consecutive months immediately preceding the date on which the order was made. This provision is aimed at making sure that the adopter and the child have had the opportunity of getting acquainted with each other.

Rights of the Adopted Child under Law

In some countries, adopted children acquire the same rights as birth children, including the right to inheritance. Adopted children sever all legal ties with their birth parents. In other countries, the termination of natural ties between birth parents and children is viewed as culturally unacceptable. The adopted child is treated by law as if he or she had been born to the adopting parents upon the entry of the final adoption decree. The adopted child, therefore, gains the right to inherit from the adoptive parents and adoptive parents' relatives whether or not the parent has written a will. Adoptive parents and other adoptive relatives also gain the right to inherit from the adopted child. Intestate law often applies to adopted children who are not specifically named in the will of the

adopted parent. Usually, this occurs when they are adopted after the will was made and it was never amended. For example, if a Will stipulates that all children of the deceased parent are entitled to an equal share, the adopted person is included whether or not he or she is specifically named²⁷.

Legal Perspective of Child Adoption

The purpose of adoption has evolved over time. Historically, adoption occurred primarily to preserve and transmit family lines or inheritance, to gain political power or to forge alliances between families²⁸. Adopted persons were usually adolescents or adults who could guarantee the continuation of the family line. The notion that adoption was a means for promoting children's welfare did not take hold until the mid-nineteenth century. Today, the principle of ensuring that the best interests of the child are served by adoption is the paramount consideration enshrined in most adoption laws. The practice of adoption was phased out by the middle Ages, when being related by blood meant more than emotional and symbolic connections. Adoption during the middle Ages contradicted medieval inheritance laws. This is the time when the Church's role in adoption and caring for abandoned children began to rise. While not all of these children could serve the church, many began to live in institutions, orphanages, become apprentices. Apprenticeship roles evolved into informal adoptive families of the modern times.

Childlessness among Christian Couples in Warri Diocese

Childlessness, though not peculiar to Warri people only, is apparently a challenge among Christian couples in Warri. This is well informed by the emphasis on child adoption as contained in the five years vision plan of the Diocese of Warri (Anglican Communion). This became imperative because some childless women within the Diocese have been subjected to ridicule; branded witches and some went as far as consulting spirit avenues, witch-doctors and faith healers in a bid to have a child. Some others under this category were compelled to drink fetish and unhealthy herbs as palliative to cushion the effect of their predicament. Consequently, most women got their cases complicated after taking concoctions of unknown ingredients, both bitter and sweet all in an effort to treat and clean blocked fallopian tubes so as to bear a child.

Adoption Practices by Affected Couples

Among the three tribes in Warri Diocese, there is a prevailing culture of adopting a child to serve as succour to childless couples. However, it has some socio-cultural and legal challenges to contend with. This is because the three major tribes in Warri Diocese

²⁷ https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/statutes/inheritance.cfm

²⁸ <http://family.jrank.org/pages/40/Adoption-History-Purpose.html>

value legitimacy as evidence to paternal lineage which shows through generation to generation. The typical *Urhobo*, *Ijaw* and *Isekiri* families are patrilineal. The implication of this is that the supreme authority that empowers entitlement to resources flows from the 'father figure' which is hereditary but restricted to only legitimate and truly biological sons of the father of the family. The bottom line is that in Warri Diocese, most people do not have regard for any child adopted by any family, and such adopted child is often regarded as 'bastard' and as such will not have right of inheritance. Adopted child has no say in serious family matters and this is contrasting the freedom of expression.

Effects of Child Adoption in Warri Diocese

There are huge financial and emotional costs in child adoption. The effects are hardly noticeable with some, but this is not the same with others. All adoptees have effects from their adoption experience. The degree of the effects and symptomatic behaviours vary a great deal. One of the chief effects of child adoption borders on the adjustment of the couples on the arrival of the child. Adoptive parents may worry that they do not "feel" like parents, even after the adoption is complete. They wonder whether they are really entitled to parent their child. Or, after years of keeping their parenting desires in check, either as foster parents or because of an uncertain legal outcome, they are reluctant to fully embrace parenthood or to believe they are truly parents like other people are. Parents may even question why they don't immediately love their new child or wonder if they love their child enough. For these new parents, parenting may seem like a tentative status at best. Furthermore, the lack of role models for adoptive parents may give them a sense of isolation.

Identifying as a parent or as a parent of a particular child may be a more gradual process for some parents. If the parents have adopted from foster care, they may have had visits with the child, or the child may have actually lived with them before the adoption. Even so, the finalization creates a permanent family situation and both parents and child may take some time to develop a bond and evolve into their new identity, just as couples adjust to marriage after dating for a long time²⁹. Marital adjustment refers to the ability of individuals to become satisfied, happy and achieve success in a number of specific tasks in marriage. Clayton refers to such adjustment as including agreement on tasks and priorities of each task relative to others. It also includes agreement on flexibility each spouse is allowed in playing his/her role as regards socio-economic background, emotional stability in marriage, sexual adjustment, changes in value system and communication³⁰.

²⁹ www.childwelfare.gov *Impact of Adoption on Adoptive Parents*

³⁰ R. Clayton, *The Family, Marriage and Social change*. (Toronto: Heath and Co., 1978). Available online at <http://www.allforchildren.org/domestic.html>. Accessed 11/10/11

Couples with adopted children might experience problems of adjustment with the arrival of the child as is the case when new babies are born into families. In as much as children bring joy to the home, they may also be a cause of conflict between husband and wife especially when one of the parties is not living up to his/her responsibility. In his research, Denga finds that there was a higher level of marital adjustment among women with children in Northern Nigeria³¹. Parents are saddled with the responsibility of ensuring that their adopted child is not deprived of any right and benefit that will accrue to a biological child. Raynal observes that a holistic care for the adopted child involves the physical care of the child to enable the child experience the happiness of a stable family life³². Thus, marital adjustment is attributed to a range of factors including role expectations of spouses, level of work commitment, job satisfaction, spouse values, socio-economic status, and emotional instability among others³³.

Further, Laura Hamilton in regards to the effects of child adoption is of the view that parents who adopt invest more time in their children than other parents and concludes, that adoptive parents enrich their children's lives to compensate for the lack of biological ties and the extra challenges of adoption³⁴. Another recent study by Gibson (2009) reveals that adoptive families invested more heavily in their adopted children in area of education and financial support. Noting that adoptees seemed to be more likely to experience problems such as drug addiction, the study speculated that adoptive parents might invest more in adoptees not because they favour them, but because they are more likely than genetic children to need the help³⁵. Major issues triggered by adoption are loss, rejection, guilt and grief. Effects of international adoption include chances of malpractices such as child trafficking and sale of children. Also, there may be no intimacy in the new relationship as it can be difficult for both parents and the child to break the cultural barriers between them. There is a feeling of loss of

³¹ D. I. Denga, pp799-802

³² F. Raynal, "Fostering and sponsorship, support while growing up," *Quarterly Magazine of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs* (October 2002), pp 26- 27.

³³ D. I. Denga, "Marital adjustment and value orientations of selected Nigerian couples. *The Counsellor*, Vol. 6(2), (1986) pp 1-6.

³⁴ Laura Hamilton, "Adoptive Parents, Evaluating the Importance of Biological Ties for Parental Investment" *American Sociological Review*. (pdf). *American Sociological Review*. *American Sociological Review*. Archived from [the original](#) on February 21, 2007 <http://web.archive.org/web/20070221194844/http://www.asanet.org/galleries/default-file/Feb07ASRAAdoption.pdf>. accessed 11/10/11

³⁵ K. Gibson, "Differential parental investment in families with both adopted and genetic children," *Evolution and Human Behavior*, (2009). <http://web.archive.org/web/20070221194844/http://www.asanet.org/galleries/default-file/Feb07ASRAAdoption.pdf>. Accessed 11/10/11

control in children being adopted as they have no role in choosing who they would live with for the rest of their lives. It is not easy to accept the fact that someone has 'chosen' you to be their children. Identity crisis is commonly observed in the adoptees. Many issues intrinsic to the adoption experience come together when the adoptee reaches adolescence. At this time there is an acute awareness of being adopted. There is a drive towards liberation accompanied by the determination to develop one's own identity. Living with the fact that you are an adopted child becomes difficult.

Another effect of adoption is the loss of one's identity due to separation from his or her birth family. For the birth parents, it is the loss of their child. The feeling of rejection worsens the feeling of loss. Adoptive parents feel rejected. Both adoptive parents and birth parents experience role confusion. The sense of rejection leads to a feeling of shame. The sorrow about not having children suffocates the adoptive parents. Sorrow is obvious in parents who lose their child to adoption. Feelings of confused identity lead to identity crisis. Neither the natural parents of the child nor the child feels in control of the situation or the adoption process. Effects of adoption are seen in the adopted children, their adoptive parents and their biological parents. Adoption affects adoptive parents at two different levels, emotional and financial.

When a child is put up for adoption, both the birth mother and adoptive parents may struggle with feelings of bonding with and attachment to the child. A child may have delayed bonding issues; this may be because babies are programmed to bond almost immediately with their birth mothers. A baby who is given up for adoption does not get to have the same bonding experiences, and may take longer to become settled and bonded to her adoptive mother³⁶. Adopted children become vulnerable, emotionally. They know they were not involved in the decision of adoption and thus realize that they had no control over loss of their birth family and the choice of their adoptive family. During their teenage years, adoptees start feeling lonely. They long for their birth parents and feel an intense need to search for who they were and why they put them up for adoption. It is hard for a child to feel anything more than rejection upon learning of his or her adoption, he or she may feel as though him or her birth parents did not want him or her, or that she was not good enough for them. Even if her feelings could not be any further from the truth, she carries the feelings of rejection with her throughout her life, and may even project it on to other relationships. For instance, she may constantly fear that the people she loves will abandon and reject her³⁷. This is worst in a situation where the adopted parents are not showing the required care to such child.

³⁶ *Effects of child adoption* <http://www.livestrong.com/article/96410->

³⁷ *Bryan Post* <http://www.livestrong.com/article/96410-effects-adoption-child>

Adopted children feel insecure because they are questioned about their identity. They lose one identity and borrow another from the family which adopts them. They realize that their biological parents are not parenting them, and that they are being looked after by strangers. It is difficult for adopted children to accept their adoptive family as their own. This leads to identity crisis. Separation from their real parents affects the adoptees deeply. Adoptive parents are made to face the bitter truth of not being able to become parents. Many go for adoption after a failed pregnancy or the death of their child. The adoptive parents have a sense of dejection and defeat³⁸. Others adopt because of infertility challenge. Parents who adopt because of infertility have already experienced loss and disappointment because of the inability to have a biological child. In addition, they may have dealt with repeated miscarriages or intrusive fertility treatments. It is only natural for adults to respond with grief to these losses, and they may also experience feelings of inadequacy³⁹. An adoptee, who is constantly questioning, creates a feeling of rejection in the adoptive parents.

Even in small actions of their adopted child, they start seeing rejection. They are unable to feel close to their adopted child. Adoptive parents may grow sadder as the child grows up, since the adoptee may not be able to meet the expectations of his adoptive parents. This may lead the adoptive parents to feel that they were never meant to be parents. They worry that the knowledge of being adopted may affect the child negatively. Adoptive parents feel depressed with the thought of them not being the real parents of their child. In some cases, this makes the adoptive parents overprotective about their child, while in some cases, they become careless. Child adoption affects the adoptive parents at a financial level too. Having a new member in the family increases a family's expenses. The process of adoption does not end at bringing a child home. Adopting a child involves planning for his educational and other needs and giving him/her a secure future. However, it often surfaces as the key to their inability to cope⁴⁰.

When it comes to a child and his birth parents, there is biology, there is genetics, and there is a blood relation which cannot be broken so easily, rather it can never be. Putting up their baby for adoption is not easy for the biological parents of the child. It is circumstances that lead them to do so. It is emotionally taxing for a parent to lose his/her child to adoption and have someone else take care of him. Birth parents hate themselves for being incapable of raising their child, and so does society. They might never know who the adoptive parents of their child are. And even if they know who, they may never know how they are and what rapport they share with their child. There

³⁸ Manali Oak *The effects of adoption.* www.buzzle.com

³⁹ *Administration for children and families.* www.childwelfare.gov

⁴⁰ *Statistics on the Effects of Adoption* www.adoptionhealing.com

is always an uncertainty about what the adoptive parents must have told the adoptee about his/her family. Birth parents feel abandoned. It is observed that birth mothers, who know they would be putting up their baby for adoption, have long conversations with the fetus during pregnancy. In some cases, mothers are pressurized to surrender their babies to adoption and they do so against their will. They hate themselves for their helplessness. They feel anxious about the welfare of their child. Perhaps, the most difficult thing for these parents is to live with a guilty conscience of not having raised their own children.

Adoption is indeed a life-altering event, an event that changes the identity of the parties involved. Sometimes, adoptive parents are slow to adjust to their new identity, or they wonder what expectations accompany the new identity⁴¹. From the perspective of the adoptees, adoption gives the parents, a family, and a home. An adoptee becomes the child of parents, for whom parenthood has not come easy. Adoption gives the adoptive parents a child who can be called their own. The adopted child gives them a reason to live. Couples deprived of parenthood by nature, get an opportunity to play this noble role of being parents. Childless couples adopt a child and their life change for the better. People who never knew one another become parents and child, and a beautiful bond is born. Even the biological parents of the adopted child have a reason to be happy, as their child gets a family, a new life and a secure future, only because someone chose to adopt⁴². Adesman (2004); Adamec and Pierce⁴³ (2000) also assess that beyond the foundational issues, the unique questions posed for adoptive parents are varied. They include how to respond to stereotypes, answering questions about heritage, and how best to maintain connections with biological kin when in an open adoption⁴⁴.

Another effect is concern with adopting older children. Adopting older children presents other parenting issues. Some children from foster care have histories of maltreatment, such as physical and psychological neglect, physical abuse, and sexual abuse. Such children are at risk of developing a disorganized attachment⁴⁵. Studies by Cicchetti found that 80% of abused and maltreated infants in their sample exhibited

⁴¹ www.childwelfare.gov *Impact of Adoption on Adoptive Parents*

⁴² Manali Oak *The effects of adoption* www.buzzle.com

⁴³ Adamec, C., and W. Pierce *The Encyclopedia of Adoption, 2nd ed.* New York: Facts on File, 2000

⁴⁴ Andrew Adesman et al (eds.), *Parenting Your Adopted Child: A Positive Approach to Building a Strong Family.* (Benicia, CA: Bay City Books, 2004).

⁴⁵ Lyons-Ruth K. and D. Jacobvitz, "Attachment disorganization: unresolved loss, relational violence and lapses in behavioral and attentional strategies". In J. Cassidy and P. Shaver (eds.), *Handbook of Attachment.* (New York: Guilford Press, 1999) pp. 520-554

disorganized attachment styles⁴⁶. Disorganized attachment is associated with a number of developmental problems, including dissociative symptoms,⁴⁷ as well as depressive, anxiety, and acting-out symptoms⁴⁸.

METHOD

This study adopts survey and case study research designs. The major aim was to examine the legality and acceptability of child adoption in relation to childlessness among Christian couples in Nigeria. Hence, Warri Diocese of Anglican Communion in Delta State became the case study. This study made use of both the quantitative and qualitative approaches to obtain data. The population of the study comprises all childless Christian couples in the Warri Diocese of Anglican Communion. A sample of one hundred and twenty respondents was purposively selected for the study. The instruments used for data collection were structured questionnaire and interview schedule. The questionnaire consists of twelve questions ranging from knowledge of child adoption, adoption law, challenges arising from infertility in the matrimonial homes and the types of adoption. Out of the 120 copies of questionnaire administered on the respondents, only 100 copies were successfully filled and used for the study. All research assistants were trained prior to data collection and verbally informed consent was obtained from individual respondent before the interview was conducted. The questionnaire was verified and validated by two experts in the Department of Religious and Cultural Studies of the University of Port Harcourt, before they were administered on the respondents. Data gathered for the study were presented in tables and analysed using simple percentage and frequency counts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To ascertain the number of years each of the respondents has spent together as husband and wife (table 1), 50% of the respondents claim to have been together for 3-5 years

⁴⁶ V. Carlson, "Finding order in disorganization: Lessons from research on maltreated infants' attachments to their caregivers," In D. Cicchetti and V. Carlson (Eds), *Child Maltreatment: Theory and research on the causes and consequences of child abuse and neglect* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995) pp. 135-157.

⁴⁷ E. A. Carlson, "A prospective longitudinal study of disorganized/disoriented attachment," *Child Development*, Vol. 69, (1988) pp 1107-1128

⁴⁸ K. Lyons-Ruth, "Attachment relationships among children with aggressive behavior problems: The role of disorganized early attachment patterns," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* Vol. 64, (1996) pp 64-73

which is the highest among the respondents. The reason for this high number of those in this category may be likely to the fact that they are still young in the relationship and there may be no need to take any drastic action which also suggests that they may have less pressure from family member and friends. Those categories of couples whose marriages have lasted between 5 and 10 years are 25% of the total response from the respondents. It is obvious from this percentage that they fall into the category of couples who have faced several castigations and intimidations from family members and friends which has climaxed in divorce of many marriages hence the low percentage in this category. The categories of those who have spent 10-15 years fall into 20% because according to respondent, it is difficult to have marriages still functioning with the challenge of childlessness at this level. A respondent who preferred anonymity said the best way to go about this challenge of childlessness from 10-15 years in marriage, is to try one's luck with another woman which he said he has already began to do and very soon the woman will be made to understand this new approach. Thus the acceptability of this new approach will determine if she will remain in the marriage or not said the respondent. Finally under this question of length of years in a relationship, only 5% of the respondents have been in marriage for 15 years and above. The above analyses describe various categories in regards to their years of relationship as husband and wife. From the above analysis it is obvious that the fewer the years of relationship, the more percentage of surviving marriages you have.

Table 2 presents the responses as regards the question, whether the couples have any issue (child). Under the category of those who responded plain 'No', we have 20%. The reason for this, some further explained is that, they do not know of any reason they should not have a child, this is under the category of 'Plain no'; others who responded 'No with reservation', fall into 15% of the total respondents. The emphasis on reservations borders on the fact that either of them has always opposed any move to know the cause of their infertility. A woman interviewed confirms that her husband is very hostile to any move to find the cause of their infertility. The third category of those who responded 'No with hope' is 25%. The hope emphasized in this category, is the fact that the women under this category has undergone series of test that confirms to them that with time they will become pregnant hence they fall into the category of 'No with hope'. Finally, 40% of the respondents fall into the category of 'Hopeful No'. The 'Hopeless' under this category emphasizes the fact that all attempt made to solve the challenge of childlessness as it concerns couples under this category were abortive. One of the couples under this category attests to the fact that they have resorted to holy prayers and their last hope is God. From the above analysis it is obvious that each of their answers which fall into 'No' generally has different categories of 'No'. However, the emphasis is that they are all couples who are still contending with the issues of

childlessness in marriage and that child adoption will make better alternative for this challenge.

As regards the question on effort made to solve the problems of infertility (table 3), 80% of the respondents claim to have made several attempts to solve this problem, 20% say they are not interested in making attempts yet. The analysis above suggests category of persons in favour of “yes” which amounts to 80% is in relation with a combination of category 1 and 3 of the question whether the couples have any issue (child). However, the researcher is of the view that the 20% under “no” in this category are likely to succumb to pressure in due course. The question asked to determine whether the various spouses still love themselves has 90% respond in favour and 10% say they are not sure but at least they know that the love is not as it used to be (table 4).

To further confirm whether their love is fading as the problems of infertility persist in their marriage, 90% said ‘No’, 10% are not sure because according to them they are already faced with pressure to divorce their spouses and none of them agree categorically that the love will fade away (table 5). As regards their disposition about child adoption, 30% of the respondents see it as a foreign concept. They stressed that it is the practice of the White; 40% consider it a good idea stressing that it would reduce lots of tension and bring joy to the family and will help them to hang on to the Lord as they wait for their biological child, while another 30% are of the opinion that they should be given time to study the concept (table 6). On the question, whether they have seen child adoption as a viable option for the challenge of childlessness, 40% of the respondents agree and this is in relation to those who considered the concept as a good idea in table 6. As 30% do not see it as a viable option to the challenge of infertility another 30% are not sure if it could be a viable option (table 7).

To ascertain whether child adoption is a distraction to the faith of a believer, 70% apparently disagree that child adoption is a distraction to their faith in trusting the God for a miracle baby. However, 10% believe their fervency in their prayer life will drop. They claim that because of the level of acceptability for the child adopted, their passion to pray will drop drastically. The implication, however, is that considering this level of acceptability of the adopted child is an outstanding virtue and offshoot to promote child adoption. Nevertheless, 20% of the respondents under this category say they are not sure if child adoption could serve as a distraction to their faith and hope for a miracle baby (table 8). Table 9 gives a clear picture of the various types of adoption practice of the childless couples in Warri Diocese. From the table, 10% of the respondents practise domestic adoption. This is apparent because of the understanding that ensues between the parents of the adoptee and the adopted parents of the child. Under foster-care adoption, 65% of the respondents see it as the major

practice of the people. It is common for couples with the challenge of infertility to adopt the child of a relation to create joy in the home. Another type of adoption practised by the couples with infertility challenge is the open adoption system. The respondents who accept open adoption system are 20%. This kind of adoption is considered a little complex to the foster care adoption by the people but they also cherish its practice. Table 9 further shows that 5% of the respondents uphold the practice of close adoption which they see as being more complex. The few respondents under this category are apparent because of the cost implication which makes it difficult for the poor to access it.

Table 10 shows the responses to the question on knowledge about child adoption. It reveals that considerable number of the respondents within the Diocese is aware of child adoption. This knowledge therefore provides adequate reasons as good footing for subsequent findings. It is obvious from the findings that child adoption reduces matrimonial tension arising from the absence of a child in the Home. In addition, childless couples experience lower self-image with a diminished sense of femininity and masculinity reducing body image and self-esteem. Thus, couples who are unable to bear a child for a long time would experience feelings of loss, distress and disappointment. This emotional crisis can be averted, if a legally adopted child is in the home. The joy derived from the presence of a child in the home is not only attributed to biological children but to children generally; especially that the welfare and care anticipated during old age cannot be narrowed down to any class of children whether adopted or biological. An aged woman interviewed as regards this subject matter, attest to this fact that although she has her own biological children, she tends to be more confident on children she adopted for her upkeep. This is because according to her the adopted children respond promptly to her needs more often than her biological children.

Another outstanding benefit of child adoption is that it reduces the fear of the future envisaged by childless couples. This has to do with activities like burial after their demise. Couples who do not have children may experience a wide spectrum of feelings – jealousy, despair, envy, isolation, and bitterness. They may feel singled out for an ordeal few others seem to experience, and they might find it difficult to fit into social circles where everyone else has children. Women often experience profound grief and sadness. They tend to cry a lot and to reduce their anxiety by talking about what they are experiencing. Men, on the other hand, express fewer anguished feelings and seem to be less affected by being childless. They generally do not feel as free to talk about their feelings and tend to have less opportunity to discuss them with friends. Many couples suffer with depressions which in turn lead them to withdraw themselves from friends and family members. Going to a party or family gathering where children are present can cause the pain of childlessness to surface. As a result, couples avoid

these type of situations. When couples place procreation as the focus of their intimacy for an extended period of time, sexual intercourse becomes solely a way to create children; it no longer has the element of love, affection and spontaneity.

Child adoption, as a viable option for couples with the challenge of infertility will reduce the rate of divorce among Christian couples in Warri Diocese of Anglican Communion. It is interesting to know that during the course of interview with a family who admitted that their marriage was at the verge of opting for divorce because of the challenges of infertility that they have managed for 15 years; they found solace in the option of adopting a child. In their own case, they decided to adopt a boy and a girl, following the due legal procedures of child adoption. This action result in a spontaneous joy and harmony in the family as witnessed by the researchers at the time of interview.

However, there is a sharp contrast as regards the account of another family with the same challenge. In this case, the man had to send the wife packing and opted for divorce because of the crisis of infertility, this is the case of several other marriages that has packed up because of similar challenges that could have been solved with adopting at least a child. The Urhobo's and the neighboring tribes in the Diocese of Warri, have a customary practice of handling this issue to save the marriage while they prayerfully hope for their children to arrive. The customary practice referred to above is concerned with an informal adoption of a child of a relation who then becomes a member of the adoptive parents but still retains the statutes of his or her biological parents. This, they believe pave way for the arrival of their biological children. The researcher is of the view that the practice could serve as a basis to create awareness and enlightenment for the relevance and benefits of child adoption.

Furthermore, adopting a child gives hope to the hopeless. There are so many children out there suffering, uncared for, abandoned, homeless, rejected and living in deplorable life conditions; these children need to put a smile on their dull faces, they need a home, parental care, security. Child adoption will facilitate a sense of belonging among Christian couples with the challenge of infertility. As couples without children are despised due to their state of childlessness, children without parents (homes) are being mocked, scourged and even rejected in the community they lived. Thus, it removes stigmatization one would have suffered from the society, which has no value for married couples who have no child to act as representatives of extended family after the demise of their parents. In some families, a childless wife is not reckoned with as a normal woman, when she is passing by, most woman and girls will be gesticulating at her. She dare not quarrel with any member of the family, the issue of her childlessness will be used to abuse her and the husband, but with the adoption of a child they will be saved from such embarrassment.

Table 1: How long is your Relationship?

No of years	No of Respondent	% Response	Remark
3 – 5	50	50	High
5 – 10	25	25	Good
10 – 15	20	20	Low
15 and above	5	5	Very low
Total	100	100	

Source: Survey, 2015

Table 2: Do you have any issue yet?

Response	No of Respondent	% Response
Plain No	20	20
No with reservation	15	15
No with hope	25	25
Hopeless No	40	40
Total	100	100

Source: Survey, 2015

Table 3: Have you made any effort to solve this problem?

Response	Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Agree	80	80
Disagree	20	20
Total	100	100

Source: Survey, 2015

Table 4: Do you still love your spouse?

Response	Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Agree	90	90
Disagree	0	0
Not sure	10	10
Total	100	100

Source: Survey, 2015

Table 5: Do you think your love is fading as the problems of infertility persist?

Response	Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Disagree	90	90
Agree	0	0
Not sure	10	10
Total	100	100

Source: Survey, 2015

Table 6: What is your disposition about child adoption?

Response	Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Foreign Concept	30	30
Good Idea	40	40
Vague	30	30
Total	100	100

Source: Survey, 2015

Table 7: Do you see it as a viable option to the challenge of infertility?

Response	Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Agree	40	40
Disagree	30	30
Not sure	30	30
Total	100	100

Source: Survey, 2015

Table 8: Do you see child adoption as a distraction to your faith and trust in God for a miracle baby?

Responses	Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
No	70	70
Yes	10	10
Not sure	20	20
Total	100	100

Source: Survey, 2015

Table 9: Do you have an adopted child, if yes, please tick the type as appropriate

Types of Adoption	Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Domestic	10	10
Foster care	65	65
Open	20	20
Close	5	5
No	0	0
Total	100	100

Source: Survey, 2015

Table 10: Knowledge of Child Adoption

Option	No of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Yes	67	67
No	23	23
Indifference	10	10
Total	100	100

Source: Survey, 2015

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study examines the legality and acceptability of child adoption in relation to infertility among Christian couples in Nigeria. Adoption as an act of leaving one's natural family and entering into the privileges and responsibilities of another has a unique historical background. The prowess to engage in other alternatives like adopting at least a child becomes imperative in this regard. Those who experience it suffer both physically and emotionally. Often, couples do not know where to turn to for answers when dealing with this agonizing problem. Based on the findings, it is concluded that child adoption is a viable alternative for childlessness among Christian couples in Nigeria. Hence, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Couples with the challenge of unwanted pregnancy should be sensitized to consider placing their children for adoption as a variable option to abortion.
- ii. Adoptees should also ensure that an adopted child automatically and legally becomes their own child, they should take proper care of the child the same way they will take care of their biological child.
- iii. Government should give strict modalities and monitor any adopted child to make sure that the adopted parents are taking good care of the children in their custody.
- iv. A child who is not wanted by the parents should be taken to the motherless babies' home so that those who are in need of children can adopt them and give them a home. If eventually the biological parents come for it later, government legislative law should be used against them.
- v. Adopted children should be accorded all the benefits like; inheritance, title or every right meant for a free born.