



AMBIVALENCE OF CULTURE AND RELIGION TO CHILD ADOPTION AMONG INFERTILE PENTECOSTAL CHRISTIAN COUPLES IN THE SOUTH EAST OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *Among the Igbo people of South East Nigeria, the problem of infertility and childlessness is endemic and as Africans, the culture of the people provides that polygyny that enhances consanguinity must guide any remedial action poised towards solving childlessness or the lack of a particular gender of child. But they have imbibed the culture and religion of the colonizers which is Christianity that recommended child adoption for solving infertility and childlessness, among other options. This accounted for a confused infertile Igbo Christian who cannot adopt because his culture insists that a child that is not related by blood is a bastard and still, he cannot remarry another wife as recommended by his culture because Christianity does not approve of polygyny. The study tried to find out to what extent culture and religion can affect a childless Christian couple's decision to adopt a child. The ABC-X family stress theory which holds that major family events like childlessness are stressors and disrupt family equilibrium but with the resources available to it, efforts are made to avert crisis. The study used the mixed method design which was both quantitative and qualitative. It was discovered that religion and culture were significant, indicating that they determine a couple's decision on whether to adopt a child at the face of infertility and childlessness or not. The study recommended what Madu (2004) called traditionalization of Christian doctrines which entails the recognition of the right of others to hold views that are dear to them, their identity and self-reliance. By this, the Christianity preached among the Igbo will be liberal to allow those who wish to pursue African traditional means of solving infertility and childlessness through polygyny to do so without branding them sinners while those who wish to adopt perhaps because of their peculiar circumstance like physiological incapacitation, to freely do so and those whose faith can carry them can still exercise it for the realization of a birth child.*

KEYWORDS; Child, Adoption, Infertility, Adopter, Adoptee, Culture, Religion, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

In the South East of Nigeria, there have been growing awareness and sincere desire to adopt children, by infertile Christian couples and couples with birth children. However, it has been observed that sometimes, the tedious, complex, very long and heavy financial involvement discourages some couples from adopting. The cumbersome process of adopting, which vary in some South East States is not explicitly known by many couples. These factors compel infertile couples to seek help "behind the door," to obtain a child at baby factories (Alichie, 2015). Antithetically, the activities going on in the baby factories have implicated local and international crimes like trafficking in persons, forced impregnation, ritual killing and modern



slavery, thereby attracting the arm of the law against operators and associates in the trade who include the childless Christian couples thereby discourage them some from adopting. To some childless couples, as reiterated by Madu (2003) “it becomes a very nasty moral question when the teenage girls consciously engage in this act for the sake of business” (p29).

People in the South East of Nigeria, are predominantly Christians. Childless Christian couples are often encouraged to trust and wait on God for their own biological children like Abraham did and was blessed. Adoption therefore amounts to disbelief and lack of faith in God’s ability to bless them with their own child, to such Christians. This waiting process encroaches on the legal demands of adoption, which by adoption act of 1994 stipulates that the maximum age for first time adopters is 45 years and 50 years for couples who already have some children and between 30-40 years for women wishing to adopt new born babies (Agbo 2014, Chukwu 2012). This amounts to a conflict between faith otherwise called religion and child adoption.

Statement of Problem

Igbo traditional religion was on ground before the coming of Christianity and formed the basis of the Igbo people’s worldview. After embracing Christianity with its allies such as globalization, western medicine, secularism, Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) and child adoption, they still uphold their worldview, convictions and the ethos of unified view of reality (Anyanwu, 1999).

Blood relationship counts so much that its lack, forms the basis of denial of inheritance among the South East Igbo even as Christians. However, some, not all communities in Igboland deny such and this denial does not apply to inheritance transferred by an adopter to an adoptee but rather sharing of communal land. Igbo societies are predominantly patrilineal. Even in few societies that are matrilineal, transfer of inheritance still demands consanguineous relationship. This plays down on the importance of an adopted child to a family, especially where the adoption is known to family members.

The Igbo are autochthonous and consequently attach great importance to their paternity, as a source of identity, nativity and inheritance. They therefore dread being referred to as bastard which is an offensive word used to describe a person whose origin or identity is not known (Ekwunife, 2016). Paradoxically, in the words of Agbo (2014), “*osu* is better than an adopted child because an “*osu*” knows his ancestor but an adopted child knows not his or her origin and so is not acceptable” (p88). However, Okodo, I. (personal communication, 3rd August, 2018) argues that whereas an “*osu*” is intolerable because he is tied to a deity either by his personal commitment or his parental background, he cannot be compared with an adopted child because the latter is spiritually clean. Although the adopted child suffers social stigma, yet he freely relates with members of the society unlike the “*osu*”

A mystical understanding of the essence of blood relationship, for the continuity of the family, originates from the belief in pre-existence of souls. The soul or individual that pre-existed, in the family is born, carries on the cyclic existence of life in the family by becoming an ancestor at death and yet being reborn. A cut in the cycle means an end of the family, which only consanguineous procreation supports. Adoption therefore does not fit into the cyclic conception of existence or life as held by the Igbo. Consequently, no Igbo want to see his ‘*Ama*’ closed or end. *Ama* to the Igbo literarily refers to the gate or entrance of a compound. Figuratively, it refers to the existence, life or perpetuation of a family. Mind bugging questions that are begging for answers from the foregoing are;



Why should traditional religious values like “*Osu*”, bastard syndrome, and blood relationship still count so much for Christians? If the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of mankind that uphold the tenet of equality of all before God mean anything for Christians. How influential is the culture of the people, when with these cultural inhibitions some people still adopt while others abstain on the basis of culture.

The study therefore aims at identifying how psycho-social particularly; religious and cultural factors play a part in the decision to adopt as clarity of the facts surrounding adoption will instill confidence in childless Christian couples to sway either in favor or against the choice for adoption, fostering sound and informed opinion. The study will incite cultural reorientation aimed at changing the negative perception of South East Igbo Christians and indeed Nigerians towards an adopted child and the practice of adopting children.

The study will save the society the revenge of the unadopted child who turn to social miscreants such as armed robbers, prostitutes, assassins and so on when such children are not adopted into homes.

Methodology

The work is of mixed method strategy which refers to the combination of qualitative and quantitative method. The design of the work is of a descriptive, cross sectional type, that is retrospective in nature. Data was gathered by survey from a cross section of male and female South East Nigerian Christians also known as Igbo, who are experiencing infertility. According to Ojelabi *et al.*, (2015), Agbo (2014), and Nwaoga (2013), the major precursors to child Adoption is infertility. Therefore, infertility is the major criteria for assessing the need and decision to adopt. This is the basis of this research to be conducted in the hospital environment where infertile persons attend fertility clinics with hope of solution. The questionnaire instrument was preferred over oral interview because infertility is a subject which most respondents suffering the situation would not like to openly associate themselves with. Data was gathered from the Obstetrics and Gynaecology unit of the Federal teaching hospital Abakaliki after receiving Ethical approval from the hospital for the work after a pre-test had been conducted at the Smile Specialist Hospital. Incidents of personal communication and secondary sources were also deployed in the work. Araoye’s (2003) research conducted in the South East of Nigeria placed the prevalence rate of infertility at 30.3%. Ojelabi *et al.*’s (2015) work in Nigeria put the prevalence rate of infertility between 20% - 40% authenticating Araoye’s (2003) result. These results determined the size of our sample to be 163 with additional 33 as attrition, totalling 196. Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 20 and chi-square statistical test were used to analyse the work.

Theoretical Framework

According to Omeire (2016) marriages can be fractious owing to lack of biological children. Hence, childlessness in Igbo society is a major reason for stress in family. Family stress theory” also referred to as Psychological theory, propounded by Reuben Hills, also called Hill’s ABC-X model in Rosino (2016), hold that major stressful events disrupt family equilibrium such as economy, hardship, divorce, infertility and childlessness. Like any organism, the family seeks to re-establish itself, by using coping mechanism to handle the stress. Stressors are those life events or changes that are so serious or drastic and require changes in the family system. The interaction between ‘A’ stressors, ‘B’ family resources; material, human emotional and



psychological, and “C” perception of events as stressors by the society, culture, religion, race, or state; is what defines a crisis for any family. In practical terms, the interaction between the need for a child “A” with the family resources of the man, woman finance, educational background, age and so on, that form “B” and “C”, the perception of childlessness by the society, the culture and religion define the crisis. (Patterson 2002).

The “X” factor at the end of Hill’s theoretical model, refers to family crisis. If the family does not adapt to childlessness and cope adequately with it either through child adoption, Alternative Reproductive Technology, (ART), remarriage and so on, it may end up in crisis which is capable of frustrating the goal of the family. This is demonstrative in acts of divorce, family disharmony like fights and worse still, the termination of the family lineage, where there is no heir to succeed the members of the family. This is dreaded among the Igbo and prayed against through names they bear like “*Amaechina*”, “may my gates not be closed.” Adoption, though regarded as an inferior means of getting children or achieving parenthood, can be used to avert family crisis. A partners’ rejection of adoption on account of religion or culture is capable of frustrating the other partners effort to remedy childlessness thereby engendering crisis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Adoption has its root from the Greek work “*huiothesia*”, meaning, to place as a son (Stibbe, 2005). It stems from the Latin word “*adoptare*” meaning to take by choice, choose for oneself, select. According to the Muslim Women’s Shura Council (2011), legally, Adoption is a legal creation of a parent-child relationship, with all the responsibilities and privileges thereof, between a child and adult who is not his or her biological child.

Child adoption incorporates an adoptee into a biologically “strange” family, with the rights and privileges of a natural child. To Stibbe (2005), adoption is also a social construct, aimed at meeting the needs of two distressed group of persons mutually. The adoptee is deemed to be distressed, when the biological parents do not wish or are incapacitated in retaining the child in the family. Similarly, the adopter is also distressed with infertility and childlessness. It is therefore perceived as a veritable means of mopping up children who are deemed “unwanted” in the society and placing them in homes where they are highly sought after, thereby saving the society the menace of “unwanted” children (Ojelabi *et al*, 2015).

Couples, who have lived for some years, fully exercising their sexuality without result of pregnancy and a birth child, are referred to as infertile couple. Infertility is of the primary type when the couple a couple who have been in a sexual relationship, without applying contraceptive over a space of five years cannot achieve a live birth. Secondary infertility occurs when a couple that is desirous of a child without using contraceptives, five years after the last live birth cannot achieve their desires (Abamara *et al*, 2018). It does not tolerate patience, where the age of the woman is deemed to have advanced. Such couples sometimes, go through “baby factories” and overnight become parents. Baby factory otherwise called “baby farm or baby harvesting” in Alichie (2015), “refers to acts involved in the transfer, sale or receipt of babies within and across national borders through stealing, fraud, false adoption or deceit for the purpose of satisfying social, material or ritual purposes” (p44). Huntley in Alichie (2015) described it as “forced impregnations, sales of babies and illegal adoption” (p44).



Scholars and researchers on the subject of child adoption seem to unanimously agree that stigmatization is a major factor militating against adoption in the South East of Nigeria. An adopted child in Nwaoga (2013) and Agbo's (2014) opinion, is a stigma. Teenage pregnancy out of wedlock is stigmatized as much as infertility. Stigmatization therefore bears negatively on the psyche of the adopted child, the adopting parents and teenage birth mother of the adoptee, who gave birth in a baby factory; the adoption triad.

Types of Child Adoption

The decision of an infertile or childless couple to adopt is determined by various factors such as cost, secrecy of the source of adoption aimed at averting a possibility of truncating the whole effort later in life, legality, availability and so on. Knowledge of types of child adoption that a couple wishes to embark upon will also guide them on how to resolve any of these issues.

- (i) **Open Adoption:** This type of adoption provides for free flow of information like names, addresses and contact numbers between the biological parent of the adoptee and the adoptive parents. This type of adoption is not often popular because Igbo insistence on autochthony means that where the adopted child can be reached by his or her biological parents, there is room for reclamation.
- (ii) **Close Adoption:** This type prevents all forms of communication, information or identifying marks between the adoptive parents and the biological parents of the adoptee. The adoptive parent, however, does all necessary legal documentations according to the law, to give legal backing to the adoption (Nwaoga, 2013). These types resolve the scare of losing the adopted child back to the biological parents.
- (iii) **Domestic Adoption:** Nwaoga (2013) described it as adoption of a child that lives within the vicinity or country of the adoptive parent. It can be interstate adoption where the adoptive parents reside or hail from a different state from that of the biological parents of the adoptee. It can also be intrastate where both of them reside within the same state (Agbo, 2014).
- (iv) **International or Inter-Country Adoption:** This is where the birth mother of the adoptee and the adoptive parents live or hail from different countries. It is termed trans-racial adoption or interracial adoption, where both biological and adoptive parents are of different races (Zhang, 2006).
- (v) **Foster Care Adoption:** This is adoption of children in state care, for their safety against possible harm from their biological mothers. These include, abandoned children who are kept in foster homes, in anticipation of prospective adoptive parent. Ojelabi *et al* (2015) noticed that in this, legal procedures are not followed as children from such homes are given out to persons often regarded as foster parents or guardians.
- (vi) **Posthumous Adoption:** It is a situation in which a son is assigned or adopted usually for a sonless deceased person (Zhang, 2006). This type of adoption tends to salvage the name of a childless deceased person in the notion of "*Afamefula*" (may my name not be lost) as valued by the traditional Igbo.



- (vii) **Kinship Adoption:** It is informal but mutually agreed placement of children in homes of relatives, by extended family members where the parents are dead.. Kinship adoption is relatively similar with fostering. It is not illegal (Ojelabi *et al*, 2015).
- (viii) **Private Adoption:** This is adoption arranged through an individual, like a physician, clergy, an attorney or even a referral service. This type has recently been abused and exploited for financial gain as is evident in “baby factory” structure. It is easy to be arranged thereby making the process less cumbersome and rigorous but costly.
- (ix) **Agency Adoption:** This is adoption that is arranged through an agency which is either owned by the state, thereby making it public or an agency that is independent but duly recognized by the state, hence making it private Adoption Agency.
- (x) **Legal Adoption:** This is adoption that is carried out according to the dictates of the law, either as promulgated by the National assembly or the State house of assembly in Nigeria. It is done in collaboration with the court registrar, and the National population commission according to laid down rules.

Igbo World View and the Dilemma Experience

Man’s centeredness in the traditional Igbo cosmic structure extols the value of human life (Nwoye, 2011). Human life is believed to be the highest value (*Summum Bonum*) and in Madu’s (2004) words “every other thing is expected to serve its realization” (p23). Life is *Ndu*, derived from the root word ‘*di*’ meaning ‘being’ (Orjiekwe, 2014). It is existence itself which could take various forms either materially, spiritually or pure spirit (Madu, 2004). Life belongs to God and hence, it is a mystery and everything must be done to preserve and promote it (Orjiekwe, 2014). Even at death which is diminution of the dynamic quality of material and human existence, life continues in another sphere as a spirit. It is therefore a continuum as a good death affords the dead the status of an ancestor and through reincarnation, the cycle of life continues in the physical world as the birth of a new born baby (Madu, 1997).

Reincarnation starts with the birth of a new child who is born. Hence names like “*Nnanna*” - grandfather, “*Nnamdi*” or *Nnadi* – father lives on, as names given to new born children suggest reincarnated father. To Madu (1999) “thus childlessness is abhorred and must be guarded against. Childlessness implies extinction of a lineage, which must be resisted by marrying a second wife (p7). The cycle of life must not be broken due to childlessness. Life and time, is cyclic and the order must be maintained (Mbiti, 1969).

The arrival of Christianity to Igbo land, met with people whom Mbiti (1969) described as truly religious people who eat religiously, dress religiously and sin religiously. Religion of these natives is their existence and existence is their religion. Their religious values like the need for children even at the face of infertility still hold sway and must be redressed with polygyny according to the dictates of their tradition and culture, ‘*omenani*’.

Christianity which was alien to the people easily found converts among disillusioned and socially deprived Igbo like the social outcasts (Dike, 2009). According to Ekwunife (2016), the missionaries unleashed “operation sweep aimed at injecting the poison of hatred in the minds of their various converts in the name of Christ” (34), resulting according to Ekwunife (2016) to confusion, individualism, selfishness, bitterness and so on. Polygyny that was Africans’ means of redressing childlessness and infertility in marriage suffered the attack of the



evangelizers, who branded it ‘sin’ as opposed to its multiple utilitarian ends as it serves as a social justice system that provides husband for all the women (Okadigbo; 1976, Ibenwa; 2014).

The Igbo Christians, who were disillusioned with the “aggression” of Christianity to Igbo traditional religion, resorted to establishing the Independent African Churches, some of which ratified polygyny (Ndiokwere 1994). Some who remained in the mission churches namely the Church Missionary Society and the Catholic Church also became syncretistic as Leith Ross as cited in Ibenwa (2014) observed that the Igbo Christian “attends the communion at the same time, he believes in the potency of traditional magic--- he ties in the same handkerchief, the rosary and the traditional talisman” (p 151). It is therefore appreciable, why in recent times; avowed Igbo Christians can deviate to practice polygyny at the face of infertility which threatens the continuity of life of the individual, the family and of the human race. Even preference for a male child, when lacking is treated seriously as lack of a child because, inheritance is by agnatic line (Nwoye 2011). Inheritance to a throne or headship of kindred “*umunna*” among the Igbo is exclusively for the “*okpara*”, the first male-child (Okadigbo, 1979). Begetting female children without a male to succeed and inherit the fathers place is likened to the closure of that family regardless of the opposing stance of Christian doctrines and Western world view against Igbo’s reincarnation (Madu, 1999). Even priests in the mainline churches have apparently expressed anxiety over situations of childlessness and some have allegedly secretly fathered some children, outside the societal approved limits (Ekwunife, 2016).

According to Madu (2003), religion permeates everything that the Igbo engage in including seeking solution to childlessness and infertility. Added is the notion that “nothing happens for nothing” (5). Infertility and childlessness is not restricted to natural or scientific causes. The Igbo therefore insist that for the “effect” of infertility, there must be an unknown “cause” that must be redressed through his religion. To determine the “cause”, divination, prophesy, libation and other rituals may have to be performed. Psycho-somatic and psychic approach to realize solution is often proffered as childlessness may have been caused by a breach of cosmic harmony that must be redressed through the use of holy water, prayer and fasting and other forms of sacrificial or rituals as Christians.

Madu (2003) described the evangelicals as itinerant, always preaching and stressing holiness and ever ready to confront enemies. Their peculiar posture in seeking solution to infertility and childlessness within the ambient of their belief system is their emphasis on faith. They hold that monogamy is the bible’s standard in marriage despite all odds. However, they insist that omnipotence of God defies every hindrance to realizing a birth child, including old age. The requirements for realizing a birth child are basically conversion, holiness of life, ethical conduct, baptism of the holy spirit and faith in loving and caring father, God (Madu; 2003, Heb 11: 1-3, Math 7:7-11). Faith in God for a birth child, which cannot be compromised by doubt, guarantees that man can receive anything from God (James 1; 5-7) as experienced by Abraham, Hannah, Zachariah among others. Embarking on child adoption in anticipation of a birth child is perceived as an alternative measure against the failure to achieve a natural child, thereby compromising total faith in God and indicative of doubt. Engaging in polygamy, as enunciated by the conveyors of Christianity to Africa, are “sinful” and a denial of the faith, which attracts some punitive measures like deprivation of the Holy Communion and some other sacramental.

Implicating or arresting one of the actors in the chain of baby factory operation, exposes the rest to the hazard of being arrested, including the Igbo Christian adopter. Above all, the



clandestine nature of “breeding” and “adopting” from baby factories, with the actors, suggest that the process is riddled with illegality which to the Igbo Christian is sin. Deliberately involving himself in a sinful venture for the desire of a child makes nonsense of his profession of the Christian faith. Yet he is in need of a birth child or perhaps a particular gender.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The age group of the respondents showed that most of them, 97 (60.2%) were between 25-34 years of age, while only 5 (3.1%) of them were 45 years and above. Their gender showed that three quarters of them, 122 (75.8%) were females who often bear the brunt of childlessness and would always seek solution, while the remaining one quarter, 39 (24.2%) were males. They were all Christians by religion (100%). The respondents' educational background showed that most of them, 64 (39.8%) had degrees. The marital status of the respondents showed that almost all of them 152 (60.8%) were married.

Table 1: Community/Tradition Acceptance of Adoption

N=161		
Community/tradition acceptance of adoption	No of Respondents	Percentage
Is adoption accepted in your community/tradition?		
Yes	73	45.3%
No	52	32.3%
Don't know	2	1.2%
No response	34	21.1%
If yes, explain?		
It is individual's choice	31	42.5%
A child is needed to stay with	13	17.8%
It is believed that adoptive child attracts a biological child thereby ending bareness	6	8.3%
The child may not have portion in the family	1	1.4%
No response	22	30.1%
Total	73	100%
If no, explain?		
There is no fear because existing reluctance is due to lack of awareness	6	11.6%
The child must know the truth later	5	9.6%
No response	41	78.8%
Total	52	100%

A little below half of the respondents 73 (45.3%) said that their community/ tradition accepted or approve of adoption. However, 52 (32.3%) of them said that their community/ tradition did not accept adoption, while 2 (1.2%) of them did not know whether it is accepted or not, and 34 (21.1%) of them did not give any response. It could be inferred from the above, that some cultures in Igbo land are not insistent on consanguinity in modern times, perhaps due to the influence of Christianity, westernisation and globalisation that conveyed child adoption.



However, the cherished traditional value of consanguinity is still guarded and preserved by most Igbo communities.

Table 3: Acceptance of Adoption in the Community/ Tradition and Adoption of a Child

Acceptance of adoption in the community/ tradition	Adoption of a Child			χ^2	df	P-value
	Yes	No	Total			
Yes	36(49.3%)	37(50.7%)	73 (100%)	6.730	1	0.009
No	13(26.0%)	37(74.0%)	52 (100%)			
Total	49(39.8%)	74(60.2%)	125(100%)			

The relationship between acceptance of adoption in the respondent's community/ tradition and the individual willingness to engage in adoption of a child if need be showed that 49.3% of the respondents that said adoption is accepted in their community/ tradition and also said that they can adopt if need be, while 26.0% of them that said adoption is not accepted in their community/ tradition said they can adopt if need be. This implies that the adoption of a child is dependent on acceptance of adoption in the respondent's community/ tradition ($P < 0.05$). Therefore, acceptance of adoption in the respondent's community/ tradition is a factor affecting adopting a child.

Table 2: Christian Religion's Acceptance of Adoption

N=161		
Christian Religion Acceptance of Adoption	No of Respondents	Percentage
Is adoption accepted in your religion?		
Yes	73	45.3%
No	51	31.7%
Don't know	3	1.9%
No response	34	21.1%
If yes, explain?		
It is encouraged	59	80.8%
It is individual's choice	8	11.0%
It is not against the Bible	3	4.1%
It is gift from God	2	2.7%
It is better than abortion and abandonment	1	1.4%
Total	73	100%
If no, explain?		
It is not in the Bible	4	7.8%
It is against God's plan for man	3	5.9%
But it is good to help the child	3	5.9%
No heaven for such people who adopt	2	3.9%
It is risky	1	2.0%
No explanation	38	74.5%
Total	51	100%



A little below half of the respondents 73 (45.3%) said that their religion accepted adoption. However, 51 (31.7%) of them said that their religion did not accept adoption, while 3 (1.9%) of them did not know whether it is accepted or not, and 34 (21.1%) of them did not give any response. Out of the 73 respondents that said that their religion accepted adoption, the explanations given suggested that it is mostly encouraged 59 (80.8%). Others include that it is an individual's choice 8 (11.0%), it is not against the Bible 3 (4.1%), it is a gift from God 2 (2.7%), and it is better than abortion or abandonment 1 (1.4%).

Table 4: Acceptance of Adoption in Christian Religion and Adoption of a Child.

Acceptance of adoption in the community/ tradition	Adoption of a Child			χ^2	df	P-value
	Yes	No	Total			
Yes	38(53.5%)	33(46.5%)	73 (100%)	9.586	1	0.002
No	13(25.5%)	38(74.5%)	51 (100%)			
Total	51(41.8%)	71(58.2%)	124(100%)			

The relationship between acceptance of adoption in the respondent's religion and adoption of a child if need be showed that 53.5% of the respondents said that adoption is accepted in their religion and also they can adopt if need be, while 25.5% of them that said adoption is not accepted in their religion and they cannot adopt if need be. This implies that the adoption of a child is dependent on acceptance of adoption in the respondent's religion ($P < 0.05$).

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

Virtually every sub- culture or tradition in South East of Nigeria can be said to practice child adoption. However, child adoption in the modern sense may have been approved in some communities/tradition and disapproved by some. Okodo (2005) noted that culture or tradition is not static but dynamic. Among other agents of cultural change is cultural diffusionism which Okodo (2005) described as a culture that existed at a particular place from where it spread to other places. Child adoption in the modern sense may have started from Rome but has spread to other parts like Igboland.

Some decades back, Igbo culture did not recognize child adoption in the modern sense, as a means of begetting children at the face of infertility and childlessness. Instead other forms of marriage arrangements were made. However, the arrival of western education, civilization and Christianity, aided by the tools of globalization, imported the notion of child adoption into Igboland. Hence, a type of change which Ejiofor in Okodo termed cultural decay, took place. Some cultures in Igboland therefore turn a blind eye to decay or rot of the religious implication of child adoption. Hence, they are nonchalant or silent about child adoption as a way of begetting children.

Igbo communities and traditions respondents are not immune to the effect of westernization and globalization that have impacted on other Igbo societies. To, Ikara in Okodo's (2005) perception of culture, it is a people understanding of the physical and metaphysical world around them that shapes their attitude to it, and implicates their religious belief and world view. Madu (1997) cautioned that world views are mutually hostile and intolerant. They compel strong emotions that find it hard to listen to reason. Consequently in situations where the place



of an adopted child challenges the world view of the people, cultural conflict emanates. Consequently, such communities will ridicule, and refuse to give adopted child recognition. This will naturally discourage persons from such community from adopting at the face of infertility.

However, some Igbo Christians who are holding on strongly to their traditional religious values may decide to be syncretistic, acknowledging their traditional religious recommendation for dealing with infertility, by resorting to polygyny. Ibenwa (2015) reiterated this in his analogy of a Christian that ties both charm and the chaplet in a handkerchief. Therefore, being a Christian does not prevent the Igbo person from holding on to his traditional values which extol consanguinity and perpetuation of the life of the family through the family bloodline.

The dual religious posture constitutes a source of dilemma for the contemporary Igbo Christian who has been caught up by family life stressors in form of infertility and childlessness. Some respondents indicated that they cannot adopt because of their faith in Gods procreative and healing power, which sometimes did not yield positive result, thereby denying child adoption. That means that religion can encourage, prompt or influence the Igbo person to adopt or do otherwise. Even where Christianity supports child adoption, Igbo traditional religion disapproves of it, thereby generating a situation of dilemma.

This work recommends that it is therefore imperative to attempt to resolve the problem with the same agent of religion by situating the notion of child adoption within the theology of Christianity. Igbo are adjudged predominantly Christians. Therefore, Madu's (2004) recommendation for a reconciliation of cherished African traditional religious values with the teachings of Christianity in a form he tagged traditionalisation, is indispensable. Traditionalisation entails the polishing of the Christian message to suit the African psyche through cordial dialogue. It is the recognition of the right of others to hold views that are dear to them, their identity and self-reliance. A couple who decides on polygyny for remedying childlessness should be respected by the church, as much as the ones that chooses to exercise their faith for a birth child or the ones that wish to adopt.

The traditional religious values of the Igbo are innate even in Christians. Ekwunife (2016) cited occasions where priests that have taken the oath of celibacy and life of absolute denial of self, for the service of God, still went out of their way to beget children to ensure consanguinity rather than adopt. This shows that the effect of Igbo tradition is as strong as the persuasion of Christianity. The history of Christian missionary activity as demonstrated in Fishers (1973) theory, reveals that in Igbo land, the first stage was the "quarantine" of orthodoxy of the mainline churches, next is the "mixing" stage which saw the brand of Christianity that approves of some Igbo traditional religious practices like polygyny which is Igbo traditional instrument for remedying infertility and the last is the "reform" stage that depict the activities of the Pentecostals or evangelicals who are fervent and decry polygamy but insist on faith in God for a birth child. A childless couple's membership to any of these Christian brands will no doubt determine their choice or decision whether to adopt or not, in the quest to redress childlessness.

Ugwueye & Umeanolue (2015) arguing for consanguinity and polygamy at the face of childlessness as opposed to monogamy and child adoption as Christians, noted that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Solomon who occupy central position in the Christocentric (sic) religion were all polygamists. Some Christian denomination supports of child adoption although with metaphorical citations from the bible shows that child adoption is rather a culture that may have



been ferried from the ancient Greco-Roman culture. Since then, it has served the human race to the extent that it can no longer be sideline. As long as it serves the human race, it should be accepted. The adopter, the adoptee and the wider society are mutual beneficiaries to the act of child adoption. Therefore the practice should be upheld as rational thinking is often objective.

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